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Stitching the Pieces Together

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April 26, 2023

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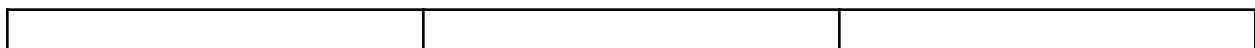
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Introduction

The thread throughout my learning experience in the University of Montana's Master of Social Work (MSW) program is spun on the value of *relationships*. This common theme has sewn together coursework, practicum experiences, self-reflection, and the teaching-learning process with my professors and cohort to create an ever-evolving tapestry of my professional growth. I have learned that relationships are foundational to practicing effective social work at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels. This is the reason I currently choose to operate mainly from a relational, humanistic theoretical perspective. Being mindful of my privilege and positionality and staying grounded in humility and cultural sensitivity are crucial elements to building relationships across culture, race, gender, class, physical ability, and religion. My current practicum experience at a public middle school has taught me that without first forming relationships with the students, there is little to no opportunity for the clinical work to begin. This is a valuable learning experience and just one of many that I have been afforded through the MSW program.

In this portfolio, I will take the reader through highlights of my professional growth and personal and professional process over the past two years. This narrative is sectioned into five elements of advanced integrated practice with corresponding competencies for each element. In each corresponding competency, I explain the knowledge, skills, values, and cognitive and affective processes that have shaped my growth throughout the program. The appendix includes course assignments and practicum documents which are used as reference points and examples of my learning.

Engage in Ongoing Critical Self-Reflection and Examination of Values & Assumptions

I entered into the MSW program with a desire to work with tribal communities. Nearly all of my first semester assignments were focused on tribal issues, and the main goal of my foundation year practicum at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) was to decolonize

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NAMI's programs (see Appendix A). Later on in my foundation year, I learned that using the word *decolonize* as a metaphor to describe anything other than giving back stolen land to tribes can be interpreted as further centering whiteness by making no mention of what it does mean. "The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or 'settler moves to innocence', that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p.1). To be clear, I fully believe in making all possible steps towards decolonization in addition to giving land back, which might include donating money to Indigenous efforts, restructuring educational programs to bolster Indigenous ways of knowing and disrupt the notion of the dominant, Western ideology as superior, and supporting NA clients by advocating within systems for their self-determination. I began to question, however, whether I should use the word "decolonize" as a metaphor, after reading the Tuck and Yang (2012) article.

I later observed some Indigenous social workers, whom I had the honor of listening to speak very recently, use the word *decolonize* as I had also initially used it: to describe changing our societal systems, attitudes, and beliefs to be freed from dominant colonial, patriarchal, Western, white supremacist ideals. This showed me that there will be different schools of thought on the use of this term, and instead of getting caught up in the intricacies of the term itself, I can focus on the action steps I can take towards decolonization, *both* literally and metaphorically. For example, I can advocate within the public school system for tribal involvement rather than police involvement in cases of suspected child neglect, which is discussed later in this paper. I can also support the Land Back Movement with monetary donations. This highlights my learning process which involves listening to, learning from, and following the lead of NAs, and always being ready to learn and grow from multiple sources.

Amidst class discussions in Human Behavior and the Social Environment II (SW 511), much self-reflection, and research, I asked myself if I was making attempts at "settler moves to innocence" in an effort to reconcile any remaining guilt I felt for being a white settler (Tuck &

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Yang, 2012). The term *white saviorism* was new to me upon entering the MSW program. I needed to reflect on why I was so driven to work with Native Americans (NA), having had no previous connections to any tribes or individuals. Reading Tatum (2003), assigned in the reading list in SW 511, helped me identify where I was in Janet Helms's six stages for white people to "achieve a healthy sense of White identity" (p. 83). This model was transformative for me because it gave me instructions on how to progress through the stages. I realized I had started the MSW program in the fourth stage of *pseudo-independence* where I had an "intellectual understanding of racism as a system of advantage, but (didn't) quite know what to do about it" (p. 90). According to Tatum, what I needed most to progress into the next stage was not necessarily people of color as resources to my growth but "other Whites who are further along in the process and (could) help show (me) the way" (p. 91). Fortunately for me, I was surrounded by peers and professors doing this same work, and some of whom were further along in their white identity process development. In addition, studying articles written by NA scholars and social workers and listening to my NA classmates taught me more, week by week, about how white social workers can ethically engage in social work with tribal communities. Developing relationships of trust with my cohort and professors, especially in Foundation Integrative Seminar, allowed me to be vulnerable and honest about my identity development as I worked through my practicum project of connecting NAMI with the tribal health center.

As I was doing some sort of version of "the work", I realized I had moved too quickly into it, even though I thought I was moving slowly by allowing time for research on cultural sensitivity (see Appendix A). For example, I learned that before offering support to a tribal community, I must honestly self-reflect on the length of time I am willing to dedicate to it; my practicum placement at NAMI was only one year. I have learned that long-lasting relationships are the foundation for trust in many tribal communities. To be accepted into a tribal community and then leave a program after a couple of years perpetuates white colonialism by reinforcing that I, as a

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white settler, can walk away from their challenges at any time, while they are left to stay in the reality of the adverse situations that my white supremacist culture has laid upon them.

Another key lesson I have learned is to not ask for labor from NAs when approaching a partnership with a tribal organization. My white supremacist culture has already taken enough. Instead, research their mission, listen to their needs, build relationships in person or on the phone if possible, instead of attempts through impersonal emails, and see where I can fit into *their* needs. I came to the tribal health center seeking a partnership with NAMI with *my own* ideas for a project: to make NAMI's programs more adaptable for various tribal cultures and more culturally sensitive. Perhaps what the tribal health center needed more was political advocacy work aimed at upholding the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in preparation for the 2023 Montana legislative session. I might never know. Since I did not work to first establish a strong relationship as the foundation to our partnership, nor reflect first on the longevity I was willing to commit to the tribal health center, the project went nowhere. It does not matter if my heart was in the right place. What matters is creating a trusting relationship which takes time, and the dedication and education of the white settler.

I began to shift away from the term *cultural competence* to instead use *cultural sensitivity*, because I will never know the injustices NAs and other people of color face and, therefore, I will never be able to fully comprehend their experiences (Gray et al., 2007). I also began focusing on the incredible resilience of NA communities and Indigenous ways of knowing instead of focusing on any feelings of white settler guilt. I learned that if I ever work at an Indigenous organization, I now understand that there are Indigenous scholars, researchers, and social workers who are already doing the work, and asking where I could support their efforts would be my starting point (Gray et al., 2007).

Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior

A code of ethics, no matter the source, does not provide clear cut answers to common

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problems. Since no two client cases or ethical dilemmas are alike, the codes serve as guides to arrive at a best possible answer. This process is based on the values of the social worker who is evaluating the situation, and what might be the obvious answer to one person might not be to another. During my foundation year and prior to my work at a public middle school (PMS), I compared the Radical Social Worker (RSW) Code of Ethics and the National Association of Social Worker (NASW) Code of Ethics using a hypothetical ethical dilemma in an assignment for Foundations in Social Work Practice (SW 505). In the dilemma, a school social worker is faced with reporting to Child Protective Services (CPS) a NA family due to the children being left at home alone while the parents attend an eight-day ceremony, because the school policy states to report to CPS if a child is left alone for multiple days. The children, however, were being fully cared for by kinship who were not living at the house (see Appendix B).

In my foundation year, I was too quick to conclude that following the NASW Code of Ethics meant placing a call to CPS even though the child showed no signs of neglect, abuse, or endangerment and was being cared for by kin. This was disheartening for me, because I aim for NA self-determination and keeping NA children connected to their tribes and culture. I imagined that if I was the school social worker, I would have to decide whether to quit working at the school to stay true to my values, or keep my job but go against my values by placing the call to CPS which would risk starting the child removal process. I based this assumption on one section of the code in the Ethical Standards section which states, "...promote ethical practices on the part of the organization with which (social workers) are affiliated" (National Association of Social Workers, Ethical Principles, 2021), assuming that there was no way to advocate within the school itself on behalf of the child.

At PMS, the social workers have more power in decision-making about the school policies on child welfare than I originally thought they would; their opinions are valued by administrators. Administrators and school support staff come together to work through student

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cases; it is much more person-centered and culturally aware than I had envisioned for a school setting. I feel fortunate to have ended up at PMS and hope it is not just a diamond in the rough. Additionally, I see the school social workers have strong relationships with each other that are built on trust, and they make time to consult with one another to work through ethical challenges together. Seeing this in action, and having a mutually trusting and supportive relationship with my practicum supervisor, affords me the skills and confidence to be honest and vulnerable in sharing about ethical dilemmas I face such as issues related to confidentiality with students and their teachers. In fact, I have learned it is best to gather another perspective from a trusted colleague, while maintaining confidentiality as best as can be done, in order to come to an ethical decision. This way, one is able to broaden their perspective of the situation, draw from similar experiences, and feel supported in the process.

Within the public education system, it is often the duty of school personnel to call CPS on a student's family on the basis of educational neglect or contact law enforcement to do a well-child home visit after a certain number of unexcused absences and attempts at meeting with the student's caregivers have failed. When the student is NA, this could begin a process of separation from family, tribe, and culture. The focus of SW 532, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), is to develop NA cultural sensitivity in the MSW students and broaden their understanding that, for centuries, NA children have been removed from their families at disproportionately higher rates largely in an effort to assimilate NAs into Western culture, a form of cultural genocide (Cross, 2014) (see Appendix E). With ICWA in jeopardy in the current legislative session, this becomes an even more important consideration (see Appendix J). I am learning, however, that PMS is understanding about tribal ceremonies lasting multiple days and often requiring distant travel, adding on more days of absences. Additionally, the school policy is not the law, and it can be altered through the advocacy efforts of the school social workers.

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I had previously thought that working in a public school system would challenge my ethics of advocating for the self-determination of NAs. I now know I can be a voice in the system that the boarding school era was not long ago; NA students have grandparents who lived in these institutions of abuse and genocide. Keeping this in mind, it is no wonder that there are NA parents, families, and kin who do not press for their children to attend the Western colonial institutions of public schools. While it is true that research shows children thrive when they attend school (CDC, 2022), it is also true that research shows NA children thrive when they are connected to their culture (Center for Native Child and Family Resilience, n.d.). It is possible as a school social worker to advocate for contacting the student's tribe instead of CPS or law enforcement to report suspected neglect, citing *American Indian Children and the Law*:

In judging the fitness of a particular family, many social workers, ignorant of Indian cultural values and social norms, make decisions that are wholly inappropriate in the context of Indian family life and so they frequently discover neglect or abandonment where none exists. (Fort, 2019, p. 18).

While I *can* be the voice amplifying this message in the public school system, I have experienced fear the times I have done so at PMS and, therefore, did not advocate as strongly and persistently as I wish I had. To address this barrier, I will continue to engage in personal work and build my own capacity for resilience to help me face my fears of not being liked or accepted by colleagues if I do speak up for my values. This will help me put my focus on serving others instead of being protective of my own insecurities.

I reflected on my reluctance to be persistent in my advocacy efforts for NA self-determination to PMS personnel and saw that I was triggered and wanted to protect myself. In SW 595 I learned about the polyvagal theory (Porges, 2022) which describes one's nervous system that signals danger. Threat responses that lead to hypo- or hyper-arousal states affect one's ability to live skillfully, communicate effectively, and experience human connection. When

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the nervous system is in an optimal state of arousal, or window of tolerance, individuals are able to tolerate emotions, integrate experiences, and engage with others (Corrigan et al., 2010). By growing my window of tolerance for self-regulation, I can improve my capacity for empathy for other people's stances and views, let go of my defenses, and communicate authentically yet compassionately during the advocacy process. Interestingly, I can turn towards Indigenous ways of knowing to grow my window of tolerance. Through the lens of the polyvagal theory, activities like singing, dancing, art-making, and togetherness - all healing practices that are common to many tribal communities - help broaden the capacity to regulate one's nervous system (Beacon House, 2022).

Understanding Difference and Oppression

As a white, CIS-gendered, straight, able-bodied person who was raised middle-class, I have been afforded many opportunities, some of which I am not even aware of, that others with marginalized identities have not received. I cannot understand nor pretend to know what each person's trauma or *positionality* is like to experience. The Just Practice Framework (Finn, 2021) was introduced to me in SW 505. Finn encourages social workers to examine our positionality, seeing that "our location in the social world is shaped in terms of these multiple identifications... cultural practices, gender identity and expression, racial/ethnic identification, social class, citizenship, sexual orientation, ability status, age, livelihood, education" (p. 43-44) and "is a determinant of our relative power in a given social context" (Perry & Kim, 2013, p. 128, as cited by Finn, 2021, p. 44). It is especially imperative, therefore, that I view the client as the expert of their situation and engage in ongoing critical self-reflection about my positionality in relation to my clients. Using Finn's (2021) Just Practice approach pushes one to critically self-reflect and be with the discomfort of one's power over others that is due to their positionality. It "tells a story of the meanings, contexts, histories, power, and possibilities of social work and its relationship to social justice" and "provides a framework for diverse voices to be heard" (p. xviii).

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Competency 2: Advance Human Rights & Social, Racial, Economic, & Environmental Justice

As I write this paper, House Bill 234 which would ban any materials considered “obscene” made available to students attending public schools has passed through the Montana House of Representatives and is currently pending in the Senate. Historically, in other states with similar bills, the word “obscene” has been interpreted as any books LGBTQ+ and race-related. The bills are undoubtedly targeting the LGBTQ+ community, specifically transgender people, as legislators who are sponsoring the bills focus on books and materials about transgender youth such as “Gender Queer” and same-sex couples like “And Tango Makes Three” (Sakariassen, A. & Kimbel-Sannit, A., 2023). During my foundation year in SW 505, I analyzed a Texas case study using the Just Practice framework (Finn, 2021) on this topic using the point of view of a school social worker once again (see Appendix C).

Today, one and a half years later, I find myself in a practicum placement at PMS as a school social worker supporting many LGBTQ+ students while Montana bills like HB 234 are being passed that mirror the Texas legislation from the case study. I am now in a position to hold myself accountable to the actions I theorized I would take if I had been working in Texas as a school social worker. This fortuitous situation is giving me a great opportunity for self-reflection.

While writing Appendix C, I did not consider the main thing I would focus on that I understand now after learning from my practicum supervisor at PMS and working with LGBTQ+ youth: establishing rapport to build relationships is the place to start. I have learned to empathize with their feelings and validate their experiences so that I can be a trusted adult in their lives to help them feel safe and supported while at school. I aim to help them understand that there is nothing wrong with them nor their identities, despite what harmful legislation is suggesting. In alignment with the Just Practice framework (Finn, 2021), I strive to come into the helping situation at PMS as a listener and learner, honoring the experiences of LGBTQ+

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students, and seeing them as the experts. Using Carl Rogers's person-centered theoretical approach, of which I learned practice skills in SW 515, I aim to use: unconditional positive regard of the students by showing them I genuinely accept them for who they are; empathic understanding by being willing to be sensitive to their feelings as they shift moment-to-moment; and congruence by striving to be authentic and genuine in my interactions with the students (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2016).

If the slate of harmful legislation in this year's legislative session that targets Montana's LGBTQ+ youth does pass, it will hopefully get stopped in the judicial branch on the basis of being a violation of human rights. If it still passes yet, I aim to continue supporting this population of children through advocacy work or continued clinical work with LGBTQ+ youth. Facilitating teaching-learning groups with students, school administrators, and lawmakers would give students an opportunity to share their experiences. Making sure I center their voices is very important; I cannot speak for them as I cannot fathom the injustices and feelings that these youth face (see Appendix C) due to my positionality as CIS-gendered and straight. Connecting students who have had similar experiences in other states for mutual support is another action step to take (see Appendix C).

Competency 3: Engage Ant-Racism, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion in Practice

An example of the application of skills related to this important competency is addressed in this section. On March 10th at UM, I protested against the slate of harmful legislation attacking transgender rights (Sakariassen, A. & Kimbel-Sannit, A., 2023). SW 531 taught me how to directly advocate to legislators. I submitted written testimony to the Montana state legislature advocating for the opposition of Senate Bill 99 which would prohibit minors from receiving gender-affirming care of any kind including chosen name and pronoun use by school support staff to support their social transitioning (see Appendix L). It is highly important to me that I fight this legislation given the research showing that the use of chosen names and

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pronouns for LGBTQ+ youth is linked to a reduction in mental health risks such as depression and suicidality (Russell et al., 2018) (see Appendix K).

After revisiting the Texas case study from my foundation year (see Appendix C), I see that I am now more educated about the serious health risks that are associated with unsupportive school environments for LGBTQ+ youth (see Appendix K). Today, I have more fervor for advocating for this population which is due to the relationships I have formed and clinical work I have done with LGBTQ+ students at my practicum, my new breadth of knowledge on the harmful effects of non-affirming environments for transgender and non-gender conforming youth, and the current push in the Montana legislature to attack this group.

I have also since learned more about where I might choose to channel my energy. Instead of attempting to shift the mental models of the opposition, such as Montana’s Republican legislator Bob Phalen who is sponsoring HB 234, I would instead consider coalition-building with advocacy groups such as Montana ACLU Human Rights Campaign, Montana Human Rights Network, the Coalition of Advocates for Montana’s Public Schools, and the Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Drafting new legislation that would designate transgender and non-gender conforming people as a protected class under Montana law could be a more fruitful channeling of energy as well. Efforts that focus on continuing to build the coalition of LGBTQ+ allies to broaden support of the draft bill and finding a moderate-Republican legislator to sponsor the bill would also likely be a more strategic use of my time (see Appendix K).

Integrate Skills & Creatively Bridge Multiple Levels of Intervention

In addition to the Just Practice framework and a Rogerian theoretical approach, I also heavily rely on Stephen Porges’s polyvagal theory and Dan Siegel’s window of tolerance model to approach trauma. SW 595 introduced me to these important theories. Each person’s window of tolerance varies in size depending on past experiences, traumas, and levels of resilience.

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This is a strengths-based concept, because there are strategies such as empathic relating, mindfulness, and play that can help grow the window of tolerance. As a social worker, I can use strategies to grow and stay within my own window of tolerance to help protect myself from secondary trauma and self-regulate in stressful situations while working at any level of social work, in addition to teaching it and using it with clients.

Competency 6: Engage

I gained valuable clinical experience through a simulated clinical assignment in Advanced Practice (SW 535). My client, "K", was an undergraduate student living in rural Montana and taking online classes. Over the course of three clinical sessions, I used a Rogerian approach which included compassionate responses, plenty of space for K to share freely, and remembering what she had shared with me from previous sessions. I also showed K that I cared to genuinely understand her by using directive listening skills, mirroring, reflection of feeling, feeling validation, open-ended questions, and therapeutic silence which I began developing in SW 515 (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan 2016). This approach appeared to help K feel safe enough to quickly share openly with me which was especially beneficial because of the limited amount of time we had together.

By watching the recordings of our sessions, I identified where to improve my practice skills with the help of my instructor and peers. Areas for growth include using fewer filler words and leaving more space for therapeutic silence. Practicing my own self-regulation with techniques, like deep breathing and noticing sensations in my body as they arise, will help me to stay within my own window of tolerance. This will allow me to use more eye contact, more receptiveness, and be better able to create a calmer space for the client which will signify to their nervous system that they are safe thus creating more trust between myself and the client.

I am also learning to let go of perfectionism so that I can be more fully present. This might mean taking fewer notes during the session, coming into the session with less of a written

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plan, and having confidence in the skills that I already possess. By using the polyvagal theory and window of tolerance, I can build capacity for my own emotion regulation and increase awareness of my reactivity and senses. I find the polyvagal theory very useful since our nervous systems are constantly taking in information at much higher rates than our minds are capable of processing and, therefore, it makes sense to me to use mind-body integration methods of practice. I plan to use the window of tolerance in psychoeducation with clients, as a trauma-focused intervention with clients, and as a way to protect myself from secondary trauma as a clinician (A. Laue, personal communication, March 12, 2023).

I learned from K about the challenges of living in rural Montana and used the Just Practice framework to understand them. K's mental health was suffering due to the stressors of working multiple jobs while attending school full-time. She opted to keep her emotional needs to herself due to the stigma of being vulnerable with emotion-sharing in her community, and also to not bother her family and friends with her personal stressors. She witnesses them as well as herself stuck in a cycle of oppression yet believed that her struggles pale in comparison to theirs. I heard K justify stress as a way of life in her community, and this can lead to negative health outcomes. My sessions with K demonstrated the capitalist system that is intended to keep generations of low-income people in rural areas like K living at or below the poverty line to further perpetuate systems of oppression and maintain existing colonialist power structures (see Appendix F). I grew up middle class near Boston and will never fully be able to grasp the challenges of being raised in impoverished, rural Montana. Once again, this highlights the importance of placing the client as the expert on their own situation. This is why I use a person-centered Rogerian approach and also why the Just Practice framework is so effective.

Competency 7: Assess

A colleague and I partnered for a group project to complete a course assignment in SW 535 where we created and analyzed a case study that we loosely based on an eleven-year-old

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student from my practicum (see Appendix G). This student is a sexual abuse survivor and whose name I have changed to Jason. Living with immense trauma, Jason regularly expresses suicidal ideation and receives frequent emotion-regulation interventions from school support staff including myself as he fluctuates between states of hyper- and hypo-arousal.

We looked at Jason's case through the lenses of contemporary trauma theory (Goodman, 2017), attachment theory (Southwell, 2016), and relational-cultural theory (Banks, 2006) which helped de-pathologize and see the person-in-environment. Using Just Practice as a lens helped us to further identify Jason's strengths of humor, playfulness, intelligence, and ability to bring joy to those around him through song and dance (Finn, 2021). Contemporary trauma theory "refrains from viewing survivors' poor functioning as resulting from sickness, weakness, or deficiencies in moral character, and reframes viewing survivors as psychologically and physically injured, and instead, in need of healing and help" (Goodman, 2017, p. 187). Contemporary trauma theory de-pathologizes Jason by explaining that his behaviors deemed disruptive in class, such as throwing objects, yelling, swearing, and ignoring teachers' requests, are explained as being reactions to childhood sexual trauma (Field, 2016). Relational-cultural theory can also be beneficial for abuse survivors. It is based on developing and increasing the number of healthy relationships that foster growth. This includes the client-therapist relationship in which it is important to have an equal power distribution (Banks, 2006). Giving Jason choice in all aspects of the intervention from start to finish affords him power. Through the lens of attachment theory, emphasis is placed on the ability for the attachment figure to be responsive, nurturing, and trusting in order to establish secure attachment between child and caregiver. By school support staff filling this role for Jason during the school day, he will be more able to self-regulate, cope with shameful feelings, and inhibit violent and aggressive impulses (Southwell, 2016). Attachment theory strongly resonates with me, and I look forward to learning more in the future about its application in the clinical setting. We also considered the

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implications of using interventions from trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), expressive arts (EA) therapy, and an integration of TF-CBT with EA therapy (see Appendix G).

I gained the knowledge in SW 595 that as a basis of EA therapy, the body is better equipped than the brain to work through negative emotions and feelings, making it effective for trauma-focused work; art starts with our bodies, not our brains (Malchiodi, 2020). In a school setting where time spent with students is limited, interruptions can occur and the student might later be returning to class so it is important to consider the ethics of practicing a type of therapy that can unearth trauma experiences during the school day (see Appendix G).

Competency 8: Intervene

At PMS, I have been afforded opportunities to practice techniques that I learned in SW 595. One day through a soft handoff, I met with “J”, the student on whom I based Jason’s case, when he appeared to be in a state of hypo-arousal. His speech was regressed and he was slouched in a chair with his head down, showing that he was unwilling to talk, only making loud noises when I told him I was there to listen and help.

Since J was clearly out of his window of tolerance, I chose to try trauma-informed EA techniques (see Appendix H). I started by offering him choice in a range of art supplies which he swiped off the table when I placed them near him. Knowing this student to be humorous and expressive in his body movements and through song, I decided to try another trauma-informed expressive arts-based intervention that I learned the previous weekend from Dr. Carew in SW 595, this time it would be playful and movement oriented. At this point in time, J and I had not yet built a relationship of trust. To create an environment of safety, I gave J choice in aspects of the physical space, such as leaving the door open or closed and choice in lighting. I invited J to play a mirroring game, in which we stood facing each other and took turns leading, giving him further choice in the option of proximity to me while also letting him know my spacial boundaries (Malchiodi, 2020). Soon, J was jumping, smiling, and creatively began incorporating sound into

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the intervention. We shifted to mimicking our favorite animals. I practiced co-regulation with him by together slowing down our movements and breathing to help bring his excited energy back down before doing a soft handoff to support staff.

In the situation with J, I weighed the ethical consideration of using an EA-based intervention which can trigger a trauma response. I decided it was appropriate since it was taught in SW 595 as a warm-up exercise to build safety and relationship between client and therapist, and also as a way to grow the window of tolerance through play. By staying far away from asking Jason for any sort of trauma narrative, and by using the expressive arts interventions to bring Jason up from a state of hypo-arousal back into his window of tolerance in order to be able to engage with others at school, it felt like a safe and ethical intervention to use.

Competency 9: Evaluate

Aside from my one EA intervention with J at PMS, a variety of interventions are regularly used by his dedicated, skilled, empathetic support team to help him throughout the school day. I was included in discussions with his team at PMS on how best to track his progress and evaluate the success of the interventions being used. The team discussed gathering data week by week. His teachers, behavioral support staff, counselors, and academic support staff would collaborate to track the following: the times of day J chooses to walk out of class, the classes he most frequently walks out of and the gender of the teachers (male or female figures of authority) of those classes, prompting events that led to his aggressive behaviors, and the number of times per week and per day he leaves class.

In my practicum at PMS I have gained knowledge in important data points that can be used in cases like J's. Data collection can help with identifying triggers and, therefore, interventions to support him during school. For example, if J only walks out of classes that are taught by male teachers, then an intervention would be to place him in classes with only female teachers. The relevance of this evaluation data point is based on J's abuse history in which the

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perpetrator was a male. Another example is if J is noticeably more emotionally dysregulated in the early mornings, then an intervention might be to ease him into the school day via a fifteen-minute check-in with trusted support staff upon arrival. This would allow for J to start the school day by co-regulating with a nurturing and responsive attachment figure which can lead to a greater ability to self-regulate (see Appendix G).

Regular communication with J's mother, his primary caregiver, to stay abreast on behaviors at home, expressions of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and tracking new triggers would all be helpful to continually evaluate J. Interpreting the data alongside J to gain input on his behavior patterns could be very useful for evaluation purposes and also for strengthening his relationship with evaluators by giving him power. Signing a release of information with J and his mother to communicate with his outside therapist would help support J by exchanging helpful interventions and effective coping skills. Contacting J's previous schools to gather information on past evaluations which might include more information on triggers, effective interventions, and coping skills would also help support J. This would need to be done in an ethical way, by both schools taking measures to maintain confidentiality. If confidentiality cannot be maintained, then it would not be a viable option as it would conflict with social work values.

In the case study from SW 535 that I based on J, I identified a variety of tools as possible methods of evaluation including the Child Behavior Checklist, Child PTSD Symptoms Scale, and Child Trauma Screening Questionnaire. Identifying these particular assessment tools and my familiarity of the assessments speak to my knowledge of measuring J's progress week by week. A Youth Suicide Risk Screening and Assessment form was administered in real life in the practicum setting as soon as J expressed suicidal ideation; I was able to observe my supervisor's skills in administering the assessment to use in my future practice. Identifying the value of using a Just Practice lens (Finn, 2021) as an approach to ACES exhibits the cognitive and affective processes I used to reflect on my positionality and the oppressive forces the client

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has faced. By adhering to confidentiality of information sharing between J’s current and previous school underlines the social work value of client privacy (see Appendix G).

Continually Bring Knowledge & Skills of Research, Policy Analysis, & Advocacy to Bear

It was a relief to learn from Dr. Jim Caringi, professor of Advanced Research (SW 521), that The Octopus Project (TOP), my group research project on expressive arts-based interventions, did not need to prove that arts-based and embodied practices are effective; that research has already been done. TOP’s group members, including myself, knew the effectiveness of these practices in our own hearts and minds, as we have reaped the benefits in our own lives. Other therapeutic approaches like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) have been widely researched largely by white scientists in institutions of the Western world. As such, they have a wealth of evidence-based studies and, therefore, are covered by insurance companies. We are living in a dominant culture that “value(s) only one way of knowing, the one grounded in data, analysis, logic, and theory” (Perry & Duncan, 2017, para. 2). It is important to understand that “privileging one way of knowing over others (e.g., generalized knowing, with its focus on measurable data) marginalizes and ignores other truths that people bring from other ways of knowing. This marginalization often lies at the core of conflicts, systemic barriers to change, and inequity” (Perry & Duncan, 2017, para. 6). There is a need for a paradigm shift in our culture to value multiple ways of knowing, including those of the arts and Indigenous culture, as trauma healing practices and ways to build well-being and resiliency (see Appendix D).

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

In SW 521, four colleagues and I engaged in action research where we conceptualized TOP, an adaptable framework using expressive arts, mindfulness, connection, and embodiment to build resilience and foster well-being in youth (see Appendix D). We wanted to address the national endemic of rising suicide rates, decreased mental health, and social isolation that is plaguing youth. We used action research knowledge and skills to create a program that would

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be accessible across many different populations including marginalized and vulnerable youth. TOP is guided mainly by Dan Siegel's concept of Interpersonal Neurobiology which is rooted in attachment theory and has integration at its core. According to Siegel (2009), *integration* is "the linkage of differentiated elements of a system (and) leads to the flexible, adaptive, and coherent flow of energy and information in the brain, the mind, and relationships" (p. 137), which helps to establish mindfulness. Siegel (2009) also states, "By freeing the individual from the top-down associations of memory, mindfulness also promotes an emergent sense of a vital and resilient self" (p. 137).

Because TOP's values center around human connection, love, and community, we wanted the entire process of forming TOP to be grounded in these values. Our group meetings started and ended by emotionally checking in with each other, and we made space for laughter, art, story sharing, and dance breaks. Through this, our creativity flowed and group communication blossomed because we co-created a shared, safe space of support and compassion in which to do the work. With an action research approach and using cognitive and affective processes, we engaged in a creative, reflexive, and reflective process while mapping TOP. For example, we initially planned for TOP to be a brick-and-mortar single location but then realized this would limit our objective of reaching the maximum number of youths. We approached dilemmas like this by communicating openly as a group using a "round robin" approach to decision-making which ensured every group member had a chance to speak for an equal amount of time. We practiced minimal defensiveness, shared leadership, and informed decision-making. In this example, we arrived at the outcome of TOP becoming an adaptive framework to be delivered online and through in-person training at implementer sites in addition to being a brick-and-mortar location to be aligned with our objective to reach more youth (see Appendix D).

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We chose to use interpersonal connection in our qualitative methods for data collection as well, where we would use skills with stakeholders to listen, show them we care, and engage to create TOP in a way that will meet their needs. By using Community-Based Participatory Action Research where “researchers and community members collaborate as equals in the research process” (Duke, 2020, p. 1), we would be practicing relational engagement, mutual learning, and trust building with participants and researchers. Not only is Interpersonal Neurobiology TOP’s guiding model, but it also guided our approach in forming TOP.

An ethical consideration with TOP was to be mindful of not devaluing talk therapy. We acknowledged that many forms of talk therapy work well for a great number of people and are evidence-based and legitimate. Another ethical consideration was to acknowledge that we as a research group are biased towards wanting TOP to be effective because we are passionate about EA therapy. To address this bias, we planned to use methods of *triangulation* in analyzing data that would be collected from focus groups, interviews, and observation. Triangulation finds commonalities by “relying on more than one type of data to corroborate findings and enhance the accuracy of interpretations” (Royse et al., 2016, p. 96). We would avoid seeking out research that supports our biases by using triangulation to look for patterns found in multiple sources of data.

Competency 5: Engage in Policy Practice

Early in the MSW program, I learned to shift my view of NAs from struggling and downtrodden to strong and resilient. In SW 530, I researched intertribal activism of the 1970s and explored the unintended positive effects of the federal government’s Urban Indian Relocation Program (UIRP) of 1952 under the BIA. With promises of guaranteed employment, housing, and an escape from poverty, the BIA enticed NAs to leave the impoverished reservations and move to urban cities. The BIA then abandoned the NAs and did not fulfill their promises of opportunity and safety. Instead of being left with broken spirits, however, the

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relocated NAs engaged in community building, political activism, and a cultural revival. What was devised as a program to further assimilate NAs into Western culture and end tribal sovereignty, UIRP ultimately led to intertribal unity; consciousness raising among the general public of NA's desire for tribal sovereignty and an end to BIA paternalism; and fueled NAs to push for and achieve federal legislation that renounced termination policies and moved towards self-determination (see Appendix E).

Learning in SW 530 and SW 532 about the many ways NAs have resisted and thrived time and time again in the face of adversity changed my perspective on what it means for a white social worker like myself to “help” tribal communities. Instead of coming in with my own ideas, I will follow their lead, and see if what I have to offer can fit in with their needs. Indigenous ways of knowing have kept NA people and culture alive amidst genocide, thievery, broken treaties, forced assimilation and migrancy, and stolen children, all at the hands of the U.S. government. As a white person, I will never know the strength and resilience it takes for this, and I do not know a culture of my own that has community practices and ways of knowing that can sustain this adversity. Therefore, I have more to learn from NA culture and clients when it comes to resilience than they can learn from my experiences and my culture.

Efforts to terminate and assimilate NAs began with Christopher Columbus’s arrival to native land and has not stopped since then; through resolutions, policies, and programs, the U.S. government has forcefully and manipulatively tried to whitewash native culture and end the existence of tribal nations (see Appendix E). We see this continuing today through the disproportionate removal of NA children from their homes as well as in the current national legislative push to end ICWA. I practice skills to advocate for Montana ICWA legislation by leaving messages for legislators through the leg.mt.gov website and the Montana Capitol Switchboard. At PMS, I create opportunities for NA students to connect to their culture, by

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sharing information with them about youth programming at the tribal health center and making them aware of the presence of the NA education specialist and student club.

Assume a Leadership Role to Promote Social Justice

My concept of leadership evolved over the course of the MSW program, and a guiding light for me was reading and discussing excerpts from *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown in SW 525. Brown (2017) states:

Many of us have been socialized to understand that constant growth, violent competition, and critical mass are the ways to create change. But emergence shows us that adaptation and evolution depend more upon critical, deep, and authentic connections, a thread that can be tugged for support and resilience.

The quality of connection between the nodes in the patterns. Dare I say love. (p. 14)

Once again, the concept of relationship emerges as central to growth and change processes.

Competency 10: Apply Forms of Leadership

When I first started my practicum at PMS, I learned from my colleagues at Missoula’s refugee resettlement organizations, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Soft Landing Missoula (SLM), that the youth they serve were emotionally struggling at PMS. After spending a couple of months at PMS, I learned that there was one particular group of refugee students who were struggling behaviorally and causing disruptions during class which was concerning for teachers. I saw this as an opportunity to connect with IRC and SLM with a goal of increasing the thriving of refugee students at PMS. Through lessons learned from my foundation year practicum project with NAMI and the tribal health center, I used cognitive and affective processes of reflecting on my positionality as well as cultural differences to develop greater cultural sensitivity. I used this knowledge to apply skills in culturally sensitive facilitation to the meetings I am presently coordinating with the IRC and SLM (see Appendix I).

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As the start of a new potential partnership between PMS and the refugee resettlement organizations, it is crucial to take time to build trust and relationship. The first meeting was largely focused on forming connections between PMS and the resettlement organizations which I explicitly stated as a desired outcome. A substantial amount of time was taken for welcoming and personal introductions in an effort to begin the foundation of depth of relationship (brown, 2017). I also asked each participant to state a limitation of their job position, anticipating there would be unifying factors. The overwhelming response was capacity and time. This led to chatter, laughter, and a common bond right away. Additionally, grounding our work in cultural sensitivity was the main value of the first meeting's agenda. After introductions, IRC and SL were asked to share preferred terminology of the refugee community and resources for PMS staff to learn more about the regions, cultures, histories, and displacement of the refugee students which I later dispersed in the meeting notes (see Appendix I). Additionally, each meeting invitation has been extended to SLM and IRC's adult volunteers from the refugee community in an effort to center the voices of the community we wish to serve.

By including in the meetings staff from IRC and SLM, and PMS support staff, teachers, administrators, and English Language Learners (ELL) staff, I invited people from multiple areas of involvement with the refugee students. This is aligned with brown's concept of integrated collaboration, which states "the more people that collaborate on that ideation, the more that people will be served by the resulting world" (2017, p. 21). What has evolved from these meetings is the formation of a refugee student group which meets weekly at PMS during the school day. The purpose of the group is to build relationships between the refugee students, the school, and the refugee resettlement organizations through soccer and social-emotional skill building. We also are centering refugee students' voices by giving them power through choice in inviting peers, naming the group, and letting them co-create the group rules. I am co-facilitating the group with adults from IRC and SLM (see Appendix I).

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Conclusion

My process of working through Helms's six stages for white people to "achieve a healthy sense of White identity" (p. 83) is ongoing and has not been linear. At times, I can dip back into the third stage of *reintegration*, in which thoughts of "*I can't get this right*" creep in when trying to engage in anti-racist work. When this happens, I am now able to quickly recognize that I must channel any feelings of white settler guilt towards effective change instead of dwelling on them which can be paralyzing and only further centers whiteness. I am trying to live more in the fifth stage of *immersion/emersion*, for example by taking what I have learned into my specialization year practicum and attempting to support the refugee community with greater intention and more knowledge. I began the process by asking what the needs are of the refugee students instead of coming in with my own plans. Resource sharing is now occurring between PMS and the refugee resettlement organizations, and I am working on solidifying these connections for next year after I am gone. It is my hope that a thread of relationship has been sewn to stitch together future work in support of the refugee students at PMS.

Reflecting on all I have learned and experienced over the past two years, I am left feeling inspired and fulfilled. My time in the MSW program has been transformative, both personally and professionally. It is exciting to think that this is only the beginning; there are so many more pieces of education, lived experience, and human connection that I will gather along the way. These pieces will be sewn into my ever-evolving tapestry of professional growth, to be carried with me on this big adventure.

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APPENDIX A**Applying Critical Race Theory and Integral Theory to Cross-cultural Social Work**

A graduate student of White, Anglo-Saxon heritage wishes to enter into Social Work (SW) with local tribal communities during her student-practicum experience with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Multiple and diverse tribes comprise the local area's tribal communities and hold differing spiritual and cultural practices, histories, and social and familial structures. The SW student seeks to determine the best approach to communicate and collaborate with the tribes in a culturally competent way in order to offer NAMI's services to the Native American (NA) community in Montana's Missoula County. By applying Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Integral Theory (IT) to this real-life scenario, the SW student hopes to gain insight into best practices for engaging with the tribal communities to serve their needs while preventing any harm or divisiveness throughout the processes.

Applying (CRT) calls upon the SW student to step into this situation with an awareness that systemic racism is foundational to society in the United States (and globally) and therefore: to function as if race and racism always matter. This approach facilitates work that affirms the experiences of racially oppressed groups and recognizes how social constructs undermine their liberation. Thus, CRT encourages social workers to be ever mindful of structural (macro) roots of individual problems. (Sule, 2020, p. 2)

Entering a helping situation with tribal communities using a CRT approach requires the SW student to have a thorough knowledge of the oppression NA peoples face because of the socio-political systems that are in place. Having a deep understanding that systemic racism affects every aspect of NA lives will be crucial, as it "is an all-encompassing form of oppression... in which every facet of a minoritized person's life is dismissed and undermined" (p. 3).

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Since the SW student is White, she needs to acknowledge and accept that the oppression and racism directed towards the people she is wanting to serve “is a normative and nearly immutable structural feature employed to maintain white privilege” (Sule, 2020, p. 2). Because her very own white privilege is held in place by this racism, she “must be ever mindful of the interpersonal power imbalance between (herself) and service users” (p. 3). Sule suggests ways to remove the power imbalance, such as by working with clients in peer-led groups and having intergroup dialogue. The SW student could prepare to enter the helping situation by becoming a trained group facilitator for NAMI’s peer-to-peer mental health support groups for example, with the intent of eliminating herself as the person holding the power.

Because systemic racism reinforces the SW student’s white privilege, she can also be continually mindful of *interest convergence*, another tenet of CRT (Sule, 2020). The SW student will need to hone her advocacy skills to show the people holding political and social power and resources that they too will benefit by supporting tribal communities, even though they “may not necessarily relate to or care about the circumstances of service users” (p. 4). This could be done through grant applications and working with NA advocacy groups at the macro level.

While CRT is helpful for the SW student to use when stepping into the helping situation in terms of cultural sensitivity and understanding systemic racism, she needs to be careful to not present herself as an expert or a radical changemaker for tribal issues and instead listen to the lived experiences of the tribal members. As CRT’s fourth tenet of *experiential knowledge* states, “(people of color’s) stories are the best resources to challenge normative knowledge and to introduce social practices that are optimally inclusive” (Sula, 2020, p. 6).

To prepare to enter the helping situation with female tribal members, the SW student must be cognizant of the CRT tenet of *intersectionality* (Sule, 2020). It is crucial for the SW student to continually practice cultural competency and not generalize the NA human experience, even within a tribe. She needs to recognize, for example, that a Blackfeet female’s

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access to resources such as a job is likely much more challenged than a Blackfeet male's access to jobs due to her added layer of her sex as a marginalized identity. Furthermore, the SW student must always be aware that her own experience as female is vastly different and more privileged than that of NA females. While facilitating a women's mental health support group, she would therefore engage in discussion humbly and as a learner of their experiential knowledge.

By applying Ken Wilber's Integral Theory (IT), which Robbins, Chatterjee, Canda, and Leibowitz (2019) categorizes as a *transpersonal theory*, the student is able to view the aforementioned scenario through a lens that "concerns (humans') highest aspirations and potentials and (their) needs for love, meaning, creativity, and communion with other people and the universe" (p. 401). Immediately, this informs the SW student of the importance of fostering a sincere human connection with the groups she will be attempting to serve. Transpersonal theories postulate that humans can become deeply connected with the universe and all beings by investigating within themselves to gain a complete understanding of their true nature, whether that be through meditation, religion, spirituality, or some other means. By developing a deeper consciousness, humans can transcend the ego and strive to unite an "actualization of self and actualization of others" (Robbins et al., p. 401). The SW student can take a personal focus on investigating her own true nature, perhaps through meditation or spiritual practice, in order to work towards a more integrated self and better connect with the populations she aims to serve.

Wilber's IT takes transpersonal theories further by embracing cross-cultural studies to account for cultural differences in human experience at individual and systems levels (Robbins et al., 2019). This cultural sensitivity makes IT more relevant than other transpersonal theories for applying to tribal communities. By taking a spiritually sensitive approach to social work, IT and transpersonal theories suggest the SW student take a body-mind-spirit holistic view of

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individual clients and their relationships to others, the world, and the universe. These theories also call for acceptance of spiritual diversity, no matter if it conflicts with the practitioner's beliefs, and supporting the client's path to reaching their greatest potential in relation to their own spiritual meaning. For the SW student, this might mean learning about each tribe's spiritual traditions and beliefs prior to entering the helping situation and fully respecting those beliefs before engaging with the communities. The student can refer to Canda and Furman's "guidelines for ethical reflection about the use of prayer, meditation, ritual, collaboration with religious helpers, and other religious and nonreligious spiritually based practices" to ensure she completes this process competently and according to social work ethics (p. 431).

It is important for the SW student to know that although Wilber's Spectrum Model of Human Development:

seems to imply that tribal societies and shamanistic forms of spirituality should be (or will be) superseded by supposedly 'higher' forms of society and mysticism ...Wilber promotes an approach to global social justice that honors and protects all individuals' and cultures' dignity. (Robbins et al., 2019, p. 430)

Thus, the tribes' spirituality and culture will always take precedence. The SW student might connect with the spiritual and religious support systems within the tribe to prepare to work together to cultivate the spiritual strengths of clients. Familiarizing herself with the Indigenous Medicine Wheel can prepare her to support clients in substance use recovery, such as in spiritual twelve-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous. Additionally, the SW student would need to be aware that during Wilber's Integral "vision-logic" level in mid to later adulthood, clients might experience mystical experiences as a step towards developing deeper consciousness, and this could be misinterpreted and pathologized as psychosis (Robbins et al., 2019).

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In addition to the micro systems level, the IT approach also addresses the macro level of SW practice and human behavior, helping to “develop a holistic and integrative perspective” of each (Robbins et al., 2019, p. 401). For societal change to occur at the macro level, people’s mindsets need to change first. When consciousness is raised towards compassion for all beings, worldviews and patterns can reflect this. Knowing this, the student can advocate for the use of mind-body-spirit practices amongst people in power who hold the resources that would benefit marginalized peoples like NAs. According to IT, this holistic integration is a step towards macro level change, with IT’s “ultimate goal being global conditions of justice and natural ecological balance that sustain and support everyone’s spiritual development” (p. 425).

Both CRT and IT stress the importance of being sensitive and respectful towards cultural and spiritual diversity. Like CRT, IT “promot(es) peace and justice for all people and all beings” (Robbins et al., 2019, p. 402). However, while Wilber continually worked towards incorporating cultural sensitivity into his theory, CRT takes a more radical and direct approach to achieving racial equity and cultural competency. As such, IT does not urgently call for advocacy work for marginalized groups as CRT does. Both IT and CRT can be applied at both the micro and macro systems levels, however at the macro level these theories look very different. Strong advocacy work would be pursued under CRT, for example for equitable resource distribution. With IT, a goal of developing deeper consciousness among the masses might be pursued and possibly connecting with spiritual and religious leaders to promote mindfulness to people in power.

The main take-away is that CRT and IT can be used simultaneously in this scenario, however CRT would best be used as the primary theory. It brings the highest level of cultural competency to the situation, since battling systemic racism is at its core, and referring to the CRT tenets holds the SW student accountable to her unconscious biases. The continued oppression of tribal communities is dire and demands attention now. There is no time to waste,

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so a theory that is designed around racism and equity must be at the forefront of this helping situation. IT can help the SW student to better connect interpersonally with her diverse clients and gain a deeper understanding of spirituality in NA cultures. Applying both theories would be greatly beneficial, with CRT guiding the way.

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APPENDIX B**Ethical Decision Making: Comparing the NASW and RSW Codes of Ethics**

Social workers will inevitably find themselves in ethical dilemmas in the value-based helping profession of Social Work. The following is an example of a possible ethical dilemma that a school social worker might face while working with Native American (NA) students in a public school in the United States which inherently would be Anglo-Saxon-cultured:

Anne is a white social worker at a rural Montana public middle school which sits adjacent to a NA reservation. Jack and Carla are parents to three children who attend the school, and the family technically lives off-reservation and are an active part of their tribal community. During a routine student check-in, Anne is nonchalantly informed by one of Jack and Carla's children, Max, that his parents left town for the week to attend their grandfather's funeral, an eight-day long ceremony in Wisconsin. When asked if he and his siblings have been left for long periods before, Max informs Anne that they are occasionally left alone for roughly one week at a time when ceremonial events are happening out of state, but he assures Anne that they are always well cared for by other tribal members.

Anne suddenly is facing an ethical dilemma of whether or not to contact Child Protective Services (CPS) to report child neglect. Her past experiences with Jack and Carla have given her reason to believe they are loving and attentive parents, and likewise their children have never shown signs of neglect. Anne is aware that school administrators mandate employees to report when children are left alone overnight. If Anne follows the school's protocol, it is possible the children could be removed from the home. However, she feels passionately for keeping families together within tribal communities and values the same often-shared indigenous values of "interconnectedness includ(ing) relationships, responsibility, reciprocity" (Finn, 2021, p. 114). Anne wishes to not intervene out of fear of the children's removal and respect for their culture but feels obligated to report to CPS due to school policy and the situation violating state laws.

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If Anne was to apply the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics to this ethical dilemma, she would likely report child neglect to CPS. Even though she feels passionately about stopping the disproportionate removal of NA children from their tribal communities due to their differences from the dominant culture, her obligation to school policy would likely supersede her personal values. As stated in Section 4.06a, “Social workers should make clear distinctions between statements made and actions engaged in as a private individual and as a representative of the social work profession, a professional social work organization, or the social worker’s employing agency” (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). Anne might interpret this as neglecting her personal values in order to abide by school policy.

In reporting child neglect, Anne might also experience an ethical dilemma within the initial dilemma: being a mandatory reporter and therefore breaking confidentiality with her minor client, Max, as the NASW Code of Ethics states, “disclosure of confidential information may be legally required” (2021, Section 1.07). This would make her weigh the NASW Value of “Importance of Human Relationships”, which is seen in the trust relationship she has established with Max, against the NASW Value of “Integrity” which states, “act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which (social workers) are affiliated” (National Association of Social Workers, Ethical Principles, 2021). As stated previously, since Anne’s organization is the school, she is expected to follow and promote their practices of mandatory reporting in Max’s case.

According to the NASW Code of Ethics, the very first section of *Commitment to Clients* reminds the social worker that “specific legal obligations may on limited occasions supersede the loyalty owed clients” (2021, Section 1.01). Since this mention of legalities is stated immediately under the very first *Ethical Standard*, one might argue it sets a conservative tone of erring on the side of caution, and it undoubtedly encourages acting within parameters of the law

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as opposed to in a revolutionary manner. As a result, Anne might take this as a forewarning, in a sense, to adhere to state law and report to CPS. She would likely also refer to the section on *Cultural Competence* and consider the phrasing, “Social workers must take action against oppression, racism, discrimination, and inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege” (National Association of Social Workers, 2021, Section 1.05). Immediately underneath that section, though, Anne would read in *Conflict of Interest*, “Social workers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment” (Section, 1.06), which could lead her away from her personal values and once again towards being confined to working within the social system in place.

If Anne were to make her ethical decision based on the Radical Social Worker Code of Ethics (RSWCE), she would certainly not call CPS to report neglect. Her personal interests in this situation are against intervening, because she believes the children are not being neglected and also holds cultural knowledge and respect for the different family structure and communal-living style of the tribal community. By keeping her “personal interests... consistent with (her) interests and actions as a worker” (Galper, 1975), Anne would be aligning with the Third Plank of the RSWCE. Based on the Sixth Plank, Anne would not only refuse to report neglect, but she would also take direct action to “facilitate humanistic, revolutionary change in society” as a result of “the information gained from her work” (Galper, 1975). This “information gained” could be that state and federal government systems do not recognize culturally diverse family structures and communal living as being viable ways of life.

Following the Eleventh Plank of the RSWCE, Anne might choose to remove herself from the government-run school system altogether and begin community organizing in order to “commit (her)self fully in the struggle for revolutionary change” (Galper, 1975). Before doing so, she might have dialogued with school administrators about culturally sensitive inadequacies of the school policy, and in the likely case that the administrators would not waver from school

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policy, Anne might subsequently engage in verbal conflict with them in an effort to organize them into her revolution for change, as Plank Seven states to “treat the findings, views and actions of colleagues with the respect due them. This respect is conditioned by their demonstrated concern for revolutionary values and radical social change” (Galper, 1975).

If I were in the same position as Anne, I truly hope I would follow the RSW Code of Ethics; simply writing this very statement gives me a sense of purpose and a feeling of integrity at the thought of aligning my “personal interests and... actions... with my interests and actions as a worker” (Galper, 1975). Up until this point in my life, I would have most certainly followed the NASW Code of Ethics. The past two months of being immersed in a social justice-focused Master of Social Work program, however, have been transformative for my world paradigm. My previous values of striving for perfection and success – and being well-liked along the way – are now shifting towards values of social justice above all else, authenticity, and bravery. I now hold knowledge of the true history of NA peoples in the U.S., including genocide, broken treaties, termination of land rights, relocation to areas urban and foreign to them, forced assimilation into a dominant Euro-centric culture, and stolen land and children which are still being taken *today*. The resiliency of NA peoples in the U.S. is informing and fostering my new, developing values. There is no time to waste in making retributions in every possible way. Challenging the social systems that contribute to the oppression and assimilation of these communities, even if that would entail leaving a job position or committing an illegal act by not reporting Jack and Carla to CPS, is where my new values of justice, bravery and authenticity now lie.

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APPENDIX C

Applying the Just Practice Model

In late October of 2021, a Texas Republican state representative named Matthew Krause called for all Texas school districts to report back to the state regarding their school library books that cover subjects such as gender, race, and sexuality. Krause gave every school district a list of over eight-hundred book titles, asking schools to respond with how many books from the list they have in their school libraries and also how much money they spent on the books.

School districts had mixed responses to Krause’s inquiry. The North East Independent School District (NEISD) in San Antonio, which is the state’s largest district, obliged with the inquiry and in fact reported that they were already reviewing their schools’ library books prior to the inquiry. Dallas and Austin school districts, on the other hand, refused to comply with Krause’s investigation.

When asked the reasoning behind his inquiry, Krause replied that he chose books that "might make students feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race or sex or convey that a student, by virtue of their race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously" (Treisman, 2021). One of the children’s books on Krause’s sixteen-page list is titled *And Tango Makes Three* which is about a penguin family with same-sex parents. Other books include subject matter on sexual health, race, and gender identity.

Many students in NEISD, especially those in the black and LGBTQ+ communities, expressed outrage at the school district’s agreeableness to conform to Krause’s inquiry. Students have gathered thousands of signatures in an online petition protesting the review of books. In the petition, the students call attention to the important information that the books in question provide, such as safe sex. These books, the students say, give students who belong to marginalized communities some representation. They stated, “We are asking for NEISD to take

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action against the suppression of our resources, and we are asking students to help us in advocating against this Krause list” (Treisman, 2021).

In response to the students’ petition and concerns, NEISD claims they aim to decide if the books are age-appropriate and will “reshuffle” them into older age categories or require students to get parental consent to read them. The school district is also implementing a system where parents get informed on the books that are being checked out by their children (Treisman, 2021). Krause’s inquiry is coming at a time when there is a nationwide debate as to whether schools should be teaching critical race theory. Using Janet Finn’s (2021) Just Practice framework, I will explore this matter as if I were in the role of an NEISD school social worker.

Application of Just Practice Conceptual Framework

Key Issues

A key issue in this case study is that many students in the NEISD are feeling hurt by the very adult educators whose role it is to make them feel safe. Many of the students that are expressing outrage belong to marginalized groups and therefore already face adversity and othering. The investigation into the books that represent their marginalized identities only would further cast them as different and underrepresented. Having the educators in their lives – their assigned role models and daily support systems - deem their identities as “inappropriate” is dangerous and harmful to the students’ senses of self and wellbeing.

Another key issue is that the students who do *not* have marginalized identities will be undereducated on the important issues of race, gender, and sexual identity that can negatively impact their peers. They will also not be afforded the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and therefore compassion for the plight of the stigmatized groups of students around them. Without compassion and understanding for their peers, non-marginalized students are more likely to perpetuate closed-minded beliefs that are harmful to society and to the world.

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A third key issue is the mindset being displayed by the NEISD, Krause, and other Republican lawmakers that books speaking to underrepresented peoples' experiences are inappropriate for children. This communicates to the children and adults across Texas that it is accepted and encouraged to "other" marginalized peoples and not give them a voice. Furthermore, it suggests that there is something inherently wrong about their identities. This harmful messaging can lead to an unsafe and unwelcoming environment for these children who are cast as the "other" in the form of oppression. It can also lead to mental health risk in disempowered communities such as LGBTQ+ students. As Gnan et al. (2019) states, "Negative experiences relating to being LGBTQ may be associated with the increased risk for mental health problems, suicide risk and self-harm in LGBTQ students".

A fourth key issue is the new electronic library system which will allow parents to know what books their children are checking out at the school libraries. Students who are questioning their sexual identities, for example, would likely find solace and connection through these books, providing them with support in their experiences. They also would likely not want their parents to know that they are questioning their sexuality and/or gender identity. Denying students of this support can perpetuate mental health risks even further.

Meaning

In the role of school social worker, I would need to investigate the meaning I bring to the situation by first examining my own positionality as a white, straight, Anglo-Saxon cultured, privileged, and educated female. I also was raised in a household with Democratic voters for parents, grew up in the liberal state of Massachusetts, attended a progressive university for my undergraduate degree, and am currently enrolled in a social justice focused master's program with many liberal, like-minded individuals. Understanding my own liberal, "left-leaning" positionality will help me be more mindful of others' positionalities and the subsequent meanings they make in the world.

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According to Finn (2021), *reflexivity* is the process in which “we examine our self-perceptions in relation to the perceptions of others and the influence of social context, thereby trying to see the world from multiple perspectives” (p. 24). I would need to examine my taken-for-granted assumptions about Krause and the NEISD administrators, and consider their positionality of living in a Conservative, Republican state which is heavily steeped in Christian values. I would also need to consider that just because I have liberal views and am supportive of the NEISD marginalized students’ desire to keep the books available to them does not mean I can understand the students’ feelings and positionalities, and therefore cannot speak for them and should instead come into the helping situation as a listener and learner of their experiences.

Context

It is important to understand the various contexts at play in the NEISD issue, for social workers are called to consider “cultural beliefs and assumptions about reality and social, political, and economic relationships” (Finn, 2021, p. 24). For example, because Texas public schools are funded by the state, they must follow certain rules and regulations, and each individual school and school district might have certain patterns of interaction with the state and local governments that give them funding. Keeping this in mind, I would consider that there could be other factors at play in the NEISD’s review of the library books, rather than arriving at the possible assumption that the NEISD school board is homophobic and racist.

Power

Because the state funds public schools, Krause and other Republican lawmakers are in a position of power and influence. On one hand, they could use this power to dominate the situation by demanding that all schools remove the library books, thus imposing their beliefs and agendas onto the schools. On the other hand, they could use their power to collaborate with the school districts that are not complying with the inquiry, and work to fulfill the collective needs of the students by listening to their advocacy efforts and learning from the mental health research

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that supports providing resources like these books to marginalized students in the schools. An example of resistance as power in this situation is seen in the students organizing, starting a petition, and advocating for themselves.

History

Texas is a very Conservative state, which typically votes against measures relating to social justice matters of race, gender, and sexual orientation. It is important for me as the school social worker to recognize if I already have assumptions about citizens of Texas based on the state's history with civil rights. I need to be critically reflective about the stories I tell myself that could potentially generalize Texans as being racist and homophobic, biases which I may have subconsciously formulated based on my experiences and historical situations.

It is also crucial to critically reflect on the words of the main storyteller at play, Krause, and understand that "the event is storied through the layered nuance of the historian's perspective" (Finn, 2021, p. 27). Krause's personal narrative that the messages of the library books are unhealthy for the student readers who do not belong to the marginalized groups is shaped by his own past histories and experiences. Being mindful of this would help me as a social worker to understand his positionality, thus gaining perspective and helping me to build relationships and potentially work on bridging gaps between our opposing viewpoints to best serve students.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is giving the marginalized students a voice, for it is their identity-groups' voices that have largely been silenced throughout history. Hearing from these students can lead to greater understanding by the school district and state leaders about the adversity they face and their resiliency, opening possibilities for greater acceptance for the students' experiences and the books that tell their stories.

Possibility

The students who will be denied representation if these library books are banned are in dire need of the authority figures in their lives to conceptualize *possibility*. Exploring possibility is

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needed to break the cycle of oppression to ensure that these youth's lives have not been predetermined by history. I as the school social worker could collaborate with Krause and NEISD and advocate for using Kelly and Sewell's *Head, Heart, Hand* approach, for example (Finn, 2021). An approach like this has the potential to create change and discover new courses of action that embody thoughtfulness and empathy.

Using Just Practice's Core Processes in Assessment, Intervention, and Evaluation

Critical Reflection

After considering the concepts of *meaning, power, history, context, and possibility* in relation to Krause's inquiry into the school library books, it is time to put them into practice. This entails critical reflection, including my own constant self-reflection when working with participants. While working with the marginalized student groups, it requires I continually recognize my *difference* from the students, acknowledging my positionality as a white, heterosexual, cisgender person, and understand that I have not known the injustices and corresponding feelings that these students know.

Critical reflection also requires an "examination of relations of power at play" (Finn, 2021, p. 180). I would like to question what assessment tools, if any at all, Krause has used to determine "psychological distress" that students experience when reading the book material on issues of gender, race, and sexual identity. If Krause in fact has used a psychological assessment tool, I would inquire about the reflected values and assumptions about the group's participants that are made in the tool's questions. I would also question if the tool is problem-focused, what language is being used in the tool, and how it addresses strengths.

Engagement

Engaging with the students through empathy will be crucial to building relationships with them. Since the NEISD is in support of Krause's inquiry, there is a likely chance the students do not feel a sense of safety from their school administrators. Coming into the helping situation with

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the intent of stepping into the lived reality of the marginalized students can foster strong ties between myself and the students, and will hopefully create a sense of safety for them. Alone in my office, I could use *anticipatory empathy* to prepare for engagement with the students and ideally would practice this prior to every meeting with them.

Anticipatory empathy can also be used to prepare for meeting with Krause and school administrators. This is when I would use mindfulness and quiet reflection to tap into my own biases that I hold for them, so that I might attempt to gain a deeper understanding of their positionalities, and in turn engage with greater empathy. The goal in these meetings would be to advocate for the marginalized students, so building relationships with those in power is crucial.

Teaching-Learning

Since my own positionality is not marginalized in the ways of race, sexual orientation, or gender identity, it would be beneficial for me to take on the role of a learner, and welcome the student participants as my teachers to their experiences. Gaining a deeper understanding of the students would allow me to better advocate to the school district for their wishes to keep the books on the shelves.

I might also form a group between students, school administrators, and invite Krause and other state representatives for a teaching-learning experience. This would give the students an opportunity to use their voices and share their experiences, and I would be present as their advocate. Prior to this meeting, I would present to the students the concept of “power over, power with, power within, and power to act” (Finn, 2021, p. 234). Students could gain insight into how the administrators have *power over* the students, by restricting books that they find solace in, and how this shapes their lives as being further marginalized and othered. The concept of *power within* might allow the students to find strength in sharing experiences. The concept of *power with* would serve to prompt them into further action beyond the petition,

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knowing that much is at stake, and *power to act* would be seen in the concrete action steps they take towards further advocacy for themselves.

Action and Accompaniment

Seeking out other students in Texas who are experiencing this same situation with their school boards in relation to the Krause inquiry would be one form of accompaniment that could amplify the students' voices in the large group discussion with the school administrators and Krause. Finding faculty and school staff who oppose the Krause inquiry is another source of accompaniment that would give the advocacy efforts strength as well. Parents, community leaders, and organizations that are in support of the students' cause could be considered for allyship. Allies would need to agree to certain principles of accompaniment that are based on respectful and nonintrusive collaboration, solidarity, equality of partnership, and language to use for the movement, to name a few. It would be important to note that "allyship is a lifelong practice of trust building, commitment, and accountability" (Finn, 2021, p. 267).

Forming alliances particularly with students from other school districts would not only give more power to the students' cause, but it would also mean that the students could help each other heal from common painful feelings of being othered and unsupported by their school administrators and state leaders. They would have each other for mutual support in the event that their efforts to keep the books in the school libraries was not successful.

Evaluation and Celebration

Evaluation could be ongoing throughout the process, such as through individual and group memory. By students continually sharing their experiences, struggles, and hopes with each other, this would allow them to determine what needs to be changed in their action processes, and it would keep them motivated to continue with the change process.

After the large group student advocacy discussion with the school district and Krause, and after a decision is reached from the school district as to whether the books stay on the

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library shelves, it would be time to further evaluate the efforts. I would work with the students to arrive at their definition of *success*. In the event that the driving goal of keeping the books on the shelves proves unsuccessful, it will be important to recognize other gains made through the process. Building allyships with marginalized students from other schools could be deemed a success. Knowing that their efforts promoted social justice could also be seen as a success.

Evaluation would seek to determine if the advocacy method of using a large group setting with the school administrators for their change efforts was a good choice. This evaluation could take place in the form of a small student group discussion, and then larger group discussions with students from other schools to see how their efforts went in their home districts. This would allow students to share ideas and adjust tactics for next time. Having the students do photo voice projects is another form of evaluation of the change efforts which could also serve as celebration in bolstering feelings of hope for change.

Human Rights and Social Justice

In this case, I would argue that the marginalized students' human right of "equal treatment regardless of gender, race, or cultural background" (Finn, 2021, p. 197) is being violated in the Krause inquiry. Removing the books that give representation to students of oppressed groups is an oppressive act. I would bring human rights to bear by pointing to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, specifically to article 26, the right to education. The violation is that both the marginalized and non-marginalized student groups are being denied access to educational stories of oppression, social justice, and information on safe sex. I would also point to article 27, the right to participate in the cultural life of a community, for without representation in literature, these already othered student groups are at risk of further isolation. Additionally, I would point to article 19, the freedom of opinion and information, as students are being denied the valuable information from the many books in question.

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I would engage in practice that advances social and economic justice by taking a human rights approach and putting the clients, in this case the students, at the focal point. Using the idea of “ethics of participation” (Finn, 2021, p. 141), I as the social worker would include the students in all aspects of the decision-making and evaluation processes. The students would be active decision-makers, and this would empower them.

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APPENDIX D

The Octopus Project: An Arts-based Approach to Develop Well-being and Resilience in Youth*

**This was a group collaboration in which every member contributed to all aspects of the project.*

Statistics reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that rates of suicide, social isolation, and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression in youth have continued to increase every year (CDC, 2021). This data supports the notion that many youth today are experiencing depressed resiliency and challenges to thriving. Through this project we have identified a deliverable approach that provides an opportunity for increased well-being, resilience, and thriving for youth of all ages.

The mess we are focusing on for this project is the need for youth to have more foundational skills and traits in order to develop resiliency, creativity, and gumption to survive and thrive in our changing world.

While American main-stream mental health therapeutic approaches such as evidence-based talk therapies may be effective for some, they may not work for everyone or there may be possibilities for expanding the effectiveness of such treatment modalities by combining them with other approaches rooted in expressive arts, creativity, mindfulness, connection, and embodiment. We recognize a need for a paradigm shift where the arts are more broadly viewed as a legitimate practice both from a therapeutic and cultural lens. As therapist Cathy A. Malchiodi (2020) puts it:

...the integrative use of movement, music, sound, art, improvisation, theater, creative writing, and play - has often been left out of the array of recognized psychotherapeutic approaches to traumatic stress. One reason for this derives from the marginalization of the arts themselves within modern society; their impact on quality of life, mental health, and general wellness is often misunderstood or devalued. (p. x)

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This devaluing of the arts-based treatment modalities is reinforced by the current American medical insurance billings system. If insurance covers treatment for a DSM-5 diagnosis, it typically only covers the costs of therapeutic approaches deemed legitimate (or evidence-based) such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy(CBT) or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Many arts-based or other more embodied practices such as mindfulness, Rolfing, or structural integration will typically not be covered. In fact, according to health insurance researcher Julia Pak, individuals may only receive arts-based therapy reimbursements that are deemed “medically necessary” by medical providers. Insurance companies review one’s claim on a case-by-case basis if the treatment was provided by a licensed professional (Pak, 2021).

While our team recognizes the value of these legitimized practices, we believe arts-based and embodied practices can be equally beneficial both on their own or in addition to other more accepted modalities.

What is *The Octopus Project*

In response to the mess we have focused on for this assignment, our team has conceived of something we are calling *The Octopus Project* (TOP). It is an adaptive framework that utilizes arts-based approaches for building foundations of resiliency and well-being in youth. Additionally, it supports stronger and more connected relationships and communities.

Significance of *The Octopus Project*:

The Octopus Project offers an adaptable approach for building necessary and foundational skills for youth to develop and maintain resiliency, well-being, and to thrive. It brings forward the use of under-utilized and perhaps under-valued yet effective arts-based approaches. TOP offers a user-friendly and adaptable way to access these modalities and makes them highly accessible to many different populations and contexts. Additionally, the

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program is youth focused and may include opportunities for youth to be leaders, teachers, and facilitators themselves both within the context of TOP and beyond.

The potential of The Octopus Project reaches beyond the individual and expands into the family (chosen or otherwise) and community context. TOP invites more connection both to self and others, therefore helping foster more supportive families and communities.

Furthermore, the framework we are envisioning is one that could help shift our collective mindset around the value of art. In this paper we will address some of the mental models that need to be challenged in order to help legitimize arts-based approaches. In this way we believe that the process of developing this framework in and of itself *is* action research.

Formative Evaluation Report

Stakeholders

There are a number of several essential stakeholders to consider when thinking about TOP. Included would be: 1) creators of the framework, 2) youth, and 3) implementers. Implementers could encompass any organization or institution that serves youth of diverse ages. Some local and regional examples are public or private schools, juvenile justice related programs, and child welfare agencies. An example of local and regional welfare agencies may include YWCA, Partnership for Children, Intermountain Children’s Home, Soft Landing, Shodair Children’s Hospital, Youth Homes, LGBTQIA+ Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Empower Montana, and Youth Empowerment Program.

Guiding Theories

Our group used a strengths-based approach with our project, guided by the meta-theory of Interpersonal Neurobiology (Siegel, 2009, 2015), systems theories, Resilience Theory (Van Breda, 2018), and Theory of Well-being (Seligman, 2018).

Usefulness of Formative Evaluation

As evaluators, we will perform a *formative evaluation* because we are in the process of creating, or *forming*, TOP as a program. Formative evaluations can be used to “adjust and

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enhance existing interventions or programs” (Royse et al., 2016, p. 148). One major purpose of our formative evaluation is to determine what interventions are necessary to guide the creation of TOP and ultimately achieve our goal of *building resilience and well-being in youth through expressive arts-based approaches*. This goal is at the top of our Theory of Change (TOC) map and might become TOP’s *mission statement* (Figure 1), for one of our first tasks as evaluators is to help form the program’s mission statement. Through this map-making process, we also realized that we need to target the “hard-to-reach” youth and to augment the interventions as needed to further serve this purpose. Interventions we use are represented as orange “starfish” in our TOC Map (Figure 1) and can be found in Table 1. These interventions include: stakeholders meetings to define the mission, goals, and values of the project; education on value-shift training for the entities that will be implementing the framework; collaboration between systems that affect youth access to the program (i.e., food, housing, transportation, childcare, and internet access); as well as the bigger issues of paradigm shifts and systemic change in areas such as health insurance coverage and concept acceptance which our project does not address. Adjusting and augmenting interventions and adding new interventions will surely come as we engage in process and program outcome evaluation once the project is underway (Royse et al., 2016).

As a next step in our formative evaluation, we will look to programs and frameworks focused on youth resilience and well-being as well as expressive arts-based programs geared towards youth. Because TOP has many “tentacles” (Figure 2) - or options, which range from the multiple skill sets on which to build (i.e. attachment/interpersonal skills, self-regulation, etc.), to wide-ranging approaches to cultivate these skills (i.e. expressive arts, mentoring, EMDR, etc.), and to a variety of settings/organizations/institutions this framework can be applied (i.e. schools, youth service agencies, etc.) - we will research a wide variety of model programs.

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Referring in part to model programs with a trauma-focus will be beneficial in determining the systems to which TOP might provide services, for example, “schools, behavioral health providers, child welfare agencies, and juvenile justice systems” (National Native Children’s Trauma Center, 2022). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services organization SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency) has an initiative called the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI). NCTSI has a wealth of resources for training offerings, statistical information on youth resilience as it relates to childhood traumatic stress, evidence-based mental health treatment options, and a network of trauma centers such as the National Native Children’s Trauma Center (NNCTC) located in Missoula, Montana (National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, 2022). NNCTC’s website could be an exemplary resource for TOP’s up-and-coming website, as it includes webinars, educational resources, descriptions of training offerings, and a request form for trainings. While TOP is not specifically geared towards children who have experienced trauma, we anticipate that many of TOP’s participants will fall into this category.

Multidisciplinary research centers in the realm of human resilience and thriving, such as the New York-based Thrive Center for Human Development (TCHD), are model programs to look at as well. TCHD’s website includes many research initiatives in areas such as compassion, gratitude, and spirituality measurements in adolescents which can be referenced while building TOP’s approaches to cultivating desired skill sets (King & Erikson, 2022). The Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), a nation-wide non-profit organization, has valuable statistical resources for addressing protective and promotive factors of youth resilience. CSSP has a framework called *Youth Thrive* which is a guide for caregivers, workers, and administrators serving children who have experienced trauma, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences as well as children living in foster care. *Youth Thrive* can help guide the creation of TOP’s framework, as there is overlap in stakeholders: the population served (all

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youth overlapping with youth who have experienced trauma) and youth service agencies, caregivers, school administrators, etc. (Youth Thrive, 2022).

We will take all three of Royse’s (2016) recommended approaches to our formative evaluation. First, we will locate model standards by looking to the Council on Accreditation’s standards for childhood and youth development programs, specifically its After School, Expanded/Extended Learning Time (ELT), Out-of School–Time (OST), and Youth Development (teen) programs (Child and Youth Development, 2022). These standards will help answer our questions about building the physical location, The Octopus Collective, as well as with recommendations for length and amount of sessions and facilitator training (Royse et al., 2016). Second, we will seek free consultation from a state official in the mental health arena who might be interested in TOP’s success, for example, Dr. D’Shane Barnett who is the Director at the Missoula County Health Department. Ideally, we would also seek consultation or a site visit from experts in the field, for example, Yalini Dream who is Program Director of the New York-based *EM Arts* which uses movement and the arts to help enhance school culture and students’ well-being through services and instructional support (EM arts, 2022). We do not, however, anticipate having the fund the latter. Third, we will plan on forming an ad hoc committee once the project is underway. This committee might include our future staff, mental health professionals in the community as well as anywhere else in the country or world and specifically expressive arts therapists, and service consumers such as the youth and parents of TOP. We would be honored if Maeghan Rides at the Door, Director of NNCTC, would join the committee, since NNCTC is a model program for TOP as it provides products, practices, and training to support youth mental health in our community specifically for tribal youth. The ad hoc committee will interview service users and perform focus groups for evaluation purposes (Royse et al., 2016).

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Our formative evaluation is rooted in the process of improvement prior to implementation, and qualitative methods are best suited for this type of evaluation. We will use qualitative methods, because our main goal is to make TOP the most adaptable and accessible program, curriculum, and framework that it can be before sending it out into the world. We want to bring the program to its fullest potential from the very start. Additionally, one of the pillars of TOP is building strength through interpersonal connection, so it is fitting to use research methods that compliment this. The very interpersonal essence of qualitative methods often allows for stakeholders to feel appreciated by engaging with them and showing them, we care, are listening, and want to create a program that will benefit and support their needs (Royse et al., 2016).

Use of Action Research

We will use an *action research* approach by engaging in practice-based research while being committed to changing our program for the better over time. The American Educational Research Association's Special Interest Group (2022) states:

Action research seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection. Action research practitioners reflect upon the consequences of their own questions, beliefs, assumptions, and practices with the goal of understanding, developing, and improving social practices. This action is simultaneously directed towards self-change and towards restructuring the organization or institution within which the practitioner works. (What is action research?, n.d., par. 2)

We also hope to improve ourselves as social workers in this process by questioning our motives, releasing judgements we hold, and being open to other perspectives, for we as humans have mental maps and models that are deeply embedded and can inhibit the action

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research process. We will aim towards this goal of constant improvement by engaging in *double-loop learning*, which will enhance TOP as a *Model II program* (Smith, 2001).

Double-loop learning “occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization’s underlying norms, policies and objectives” (Smith, 2001). We continually engaged in this reflective, creative, and reflexive process during our Theory of Change (TOC) backwards mapping. For example, we modified an outcome to achieve a desired objective of reaching the maximum number of youth. Initially, this particular outcome was for TOP to be solely a brick and mortar location, but we realized that having only a physical space would limit our objective. We then engaged in open communication as a group, shared leadership with one another while using minimal defensiveness, and used informed decision-making to shift our outcome into creating TOP as an adaptive framework in addition to having a physical location (Figure 3). From the start, we have been creating TOP as a Model II program in an effort to strive for organizational development. Also in Model II programs, “The process entails looking for the maximum participation of clients, minimizing the risks of candid participation, starting where people want to begin (often with instrumental problems), and designing methods so that they value rationality and honesty” (Smith, 2001, sec. 7, par. 5). We will continue to engage in double-loop learning as widespread data is collected once the program is underway and then adjust interventions, outcomes, and assumptions as needed.

A process evaluation will come later, however, we would like to note that in our process evaluation, we plan to gather both quantitative and qualitative action research data through Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR). An example method to gather quantitative data through action research will possibly include a simple self assessment tool. We will gather qualitative data through focus groups or individual interviews with stakeholders involved and participants alike. By being rigorous with our data collection, we will strive to make sure the information we are gathering is consistent over time (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). To

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ensure rigor, we will provide adequate training in our framework for the implementers who will be collecting data.

We want to note that we are aware that qualitative methods are typically limited in gathering data from multiple participants. We are also aware that TOP will likely have many participants spread far and wide geographically. Because the TOP framework will be implemented across multiple agencies, organizations, and institutions, however, it will have implementers that are trained in the framework and, therefore, in data collection since TOP in itself is action research. Consequently, there will likely be enough capacity to be rigorous in data collection at each respective site. Having staff that is skilled in qualitative data collection is important in order to gather credible and trustworthy information. A more detailed explanation of methods for gathering data is outlined later in this paper (Royse et al., 2016).

Informed Consent Procedures and Concerns

Informed consent procedures will follow the five elements recommended by the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (FPPHS) and be carried out as follows: First, all participants will be given an informed consent document to sign that states that their participation in this project is voluntary and that their feedback will be evaluated for the purpose of research. Secondly, participants will be given a summary of the research, its intended purpose, duration, and a detailed description of our methodology and procedures likely to be used. Third, participants will be informed of the potential risks and possibility of discomfort by their participation in our program. Fourth, participants will be briefed on the expected benefits and potential outcomes by investing their time in our program. Finally, fifth, participants will be informed of alternative courses of action, should they choose not to consent, and offered immediate termination from the program if desired. (FPPHS, 2017)

Research Methodology and Plan

The Octopus Project will utilize Community-Based Participatory Action Research as its

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research methodology of choice. Its inherent ability to allow for the collaboration of researchers, community members, and participants is aligned with TOP’s mission. Its attentiveness to relational engagement and rapport building offers opportunities for mutual learning and building trust throughout the process. CBPAR’s flexible nature will be advantageous as well, in its ability to adapt to the different settings or organizations TOP may be employed.

For all intents and purposes, we will use a public school as an implementation site for TOP to demonstrate our hypothetical methodology and plan. Ideally, The Octopus Project framework and its corresponding principles would be tailored to school staff interested in taking the lead on our expressive arts-based program. By design, individuals would be trained, not only in effective, expressive arts-based modalities and interventions, but also in standardized data collection strategies to streamline the gathering of information on the reliability and success of the program.

In the case of our hypothetical academic setting, we propose that the TOP framework be implemented via trained individual mentors. School-based mentoring (SBM) has proven to be an effective tool in building relationships and a brighter future, especially when coupled with other complementary, skill-building techniques (like expressive arts) within an institution (Rhodes, 2002). Furthermore, Lyons, et al. (2018) found that combining activities with SBM sessions were especially effective for positive behavioral outcomes... mentorship pairs were estimated to have the “greatest treatment effects compared to those who did not” (p. 96). We feel that by utilizing this delivery method, combining TOP’s framework and the proven effectiveness of SBM programs that implement instrumentally based activities, will lend validity and long-term success to our plan.

In terms of data collection strategies, we envision using qualitatively based interviews, conducted by mentors with their participants on a quarterly basis. We could also explore the possibility of collecting quantitative data by training our mentors to administer a Brief Resilience

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Scale (BRS), for example, which is a self-reported measure of resiliency and an individual's ability to bounce back or recover from stress (Smith et al., 2008). Further appraisal of the quality of our data could be measured via the practice of respondent validation as well, which involves researchers (i.e., mentors) sharing their interpretations with the participants who could indicate whether or not the findings rang true to them (Rubin & Bellamy, 2012).

We recognize there are many contexts and entities where TOP could be implemented and training would occur. We chose to select just one possibility for this paper and acknowledge that not all elements of this example mentioned here would apply in every situation.

Threats to Validity, Reliability, Credibility

Threats to validity include but are not limited to the personal and professional bias toward the use of expressive arts modalities carried by the founders and facilitators of TOP framework as well as the inherently subjective nature of qualitative data. Reliability of the performance of this framework will primarily be threatened by the lack of empirical evidence, backing the effectiveness of expressive arts-based modalities and their implementation. It may also be negatively affected by inconsistencies in training facilitators of the framework and lack of uniformity in data collection efforts. Additionally, TOP framework will need to be assessed for its socioeconomic, cultural, and educational appropriateness over time to ensure its long-term consistencies as well. Credibility, or the trustworthiness of our framework and data, will be threatened by its lack of objective evidence and qualitative nature overall, however, we hope that over time this could be proven otherwise (Royse et al., 2016).

Design Causality

According to Rubin & Bellamy (2021), design causality depends not only on the correlations surrounding intervention effectiveness, but also the ability to eliminate alternative, plausible explanations for differences in outcomes. At a glance, TOP's primary research methodology utilizing qualitative descriptions of client experiences would likely rank quite low in

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the hierarchy for assessing intervention effectiveness and causal inference, however, some of its design elements have the ability to strengthen its design over time. For instance, Rubin & Bellamy (2012) state that even though these types of studies rank low, “they each offer some useful preliminary evidence that can guide practical decisions when higher levels of evidence are not available for a particular type of problem or practice context” (p. 60). Over time, TOP’s research methods could lend strength to the detection of causality by implementing a pretest to help measure pre-enrollment differences, or perhaps increase its utilization of simple quantitative assessments throughout its programming.

Triangulation Methods

We aim to find best practice principles among model programs, such as the programs mentioned earlier, and use *triangulation* to find commonalities in principles by “relying on more than one type of data to corroborate findings and enhance the accuracy of interpretations” (Royse et al., 2016, p. 96). We will then invite key stakeholders, for example youth agency directors and school administrators, to join us in interpreting our findings to help determine which principles are viable for applying to TOP and within their institutions and organizations.

We will also triangulate by collecting different types of qualitative data from multiple sources such as focus groups, interviews, and observation. This will allow us to more accurately interpret our findings by looking for commonalities across data sources which will provide greater credibility and trustworthiness to our approach. Triangulation will also keep us accountable as program evaluators. We acknowledge that we are a group of four graduate students who are passionate about expressive arts therapy and want this program to be effective and, therefore, are biased. Through triangulation, we will prevent ourselves from leaning on a singular method that supports our biases and will instead be forced to look for patterns and agreements within multiple sources of data. Because so much of our data will be qualitative, we must be thorough in our triangulation process even though it will be

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time-consuming (Royse et al., 2016).

Human and Capital Costs, Budgeting

Because we have chosen to do a formative evaluation, we did not focus deeply on all implementation factors including human and capital costs, and budgeting considerations. If we were to fully implement The Octopus Project we imagine there being a broad range of human and capital costs, and budgeting factors many of which would emerge through the planning and implementation phase. We acknowledge that since that process is beyond the scope of this assignment there are many items and expenses that have not yet come to mind, yet we will offer those that are currently held within our imaginations.

We have identified three methods of delivery for TOP (Figure 3); online, in-person, and a brick-and-mortar center called The Octopus Collective. While there would be unique expenses for each of these methods, one of the largest would fall within staffing, materials, supportive resources, and marketing & sales. Some tasks covered by staff would include framework and strategic development, curriculum creation, marketing and sales, fundraising, and technical support. For the brick-and-mortar Octopus Collective, there would also be in-house framework implementers and therapists. We would seek to pay a living wage based on current regional cost-of-living standards.

We imagine there would be a diverse range of material and supportive resource costs that would surface throughout the planning and implementation of The Octopus Project. These may include brochures and other marketing materials, computers & other technology equipment. The supportive resources that make TOP accessible to many youth and communities would also be a major budget item. These include but are not limited to transportation, food and housing support, internet access, and childcare. Material expenses would be even greater within the Octopus Collective and might include furniture, arts-based supplies, and office supplies. Marketing & sales, and technology support would be essential in

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rolling out TOP. Some of these associated expenses may include advertising, website creation, and maintenance.

We also envision the possibility of collaboration with other entities as a way of supplementing or discounting some of these imagined costs. For example, to help cover some of the supportive resources we could partner or receive sponsorship from local agencies, businesses, and institutions such as local food banks, public schools, internet and technology providers, housing support services, etc. In order to supplement some of the building and lease expenses for the brick-and-mortar Octopus Collective we could allow community members to rent the space for events and gatherings. This also contributes to one of our objectives of fostering community connection.

Communities of Inquiry in Communities of Practice

Communities of practice is defined by Etienne Wenger as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1998). We would argue that the four of us on this team are a community of practice. We have shared concerns and passion for the mess that we are addressing and for the interventions that we have highlighted in this paper. A community of inquiry within a community of practice is descriptive of what may take place if The Octopus Project was to be implemented with potential stakeholders we have identified.

Victor Friedman defines the concept of action science as “a form of social practice which integrates both the production and use of knowledge for the purpose of promoting learning, and among individuals and systems whose work is characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty and instability” (Bradbury et al., 2015, p. 159). If a research process was carried out for The Octopus Project, we feel it could be described as a form of action science because a big picture goal we have is to generate knowledge about the positive impacts of our proposed interventions on the resilience and well-being of youth and communities.

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Theory Of Change

A theory of change is “a method that a community group can use to think critically about what is required to bring about a desired change” and is helpful in “developing solutions to complex social problems” (Anderson, n.d., p. 1). The theory of change for the Octopus Project identifies our long-term goal, desired outcomes, and the steps necessary for reaching our goal. We include assumptions, interventions, and the process of developing a pathway of change map (ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2003). Our Theory of Change map (Figure 1) illustrates the preconditions (prompted by the repeating question *What is needed for this condition or outcome to happen?*), the relationships between actions and outcomes, and highlights some interventions.

What follows is a summary or final narrative of The Octopus Project theory of change and the Theory of Change map accompanied with further explanation of content, interventions, and process. The interventions offered include: action items; opportunities for shifting mental models; opportunities for collaborating with and in support of others for systemic change; action-research; and evaluation, assessment, and modification of the program (Table 1). Opportunities for self-reflection, well-being and resilience building, and celebration for the Octopus team also are included.

Final Narrative

The Octopus Project was founded by a group of four Master of Social Work students to form a community collaboration to address mental health wellbeing and resilience of Montana youth. The group’s goal was to develop an integrated expressive arts-based approach, adaptable and easy to implement, that: provides a curricula and framework for building skills and qualities that contribute to well-being and resilience; offers mentorship opportunities and leadership growth; and engages with and builds community.

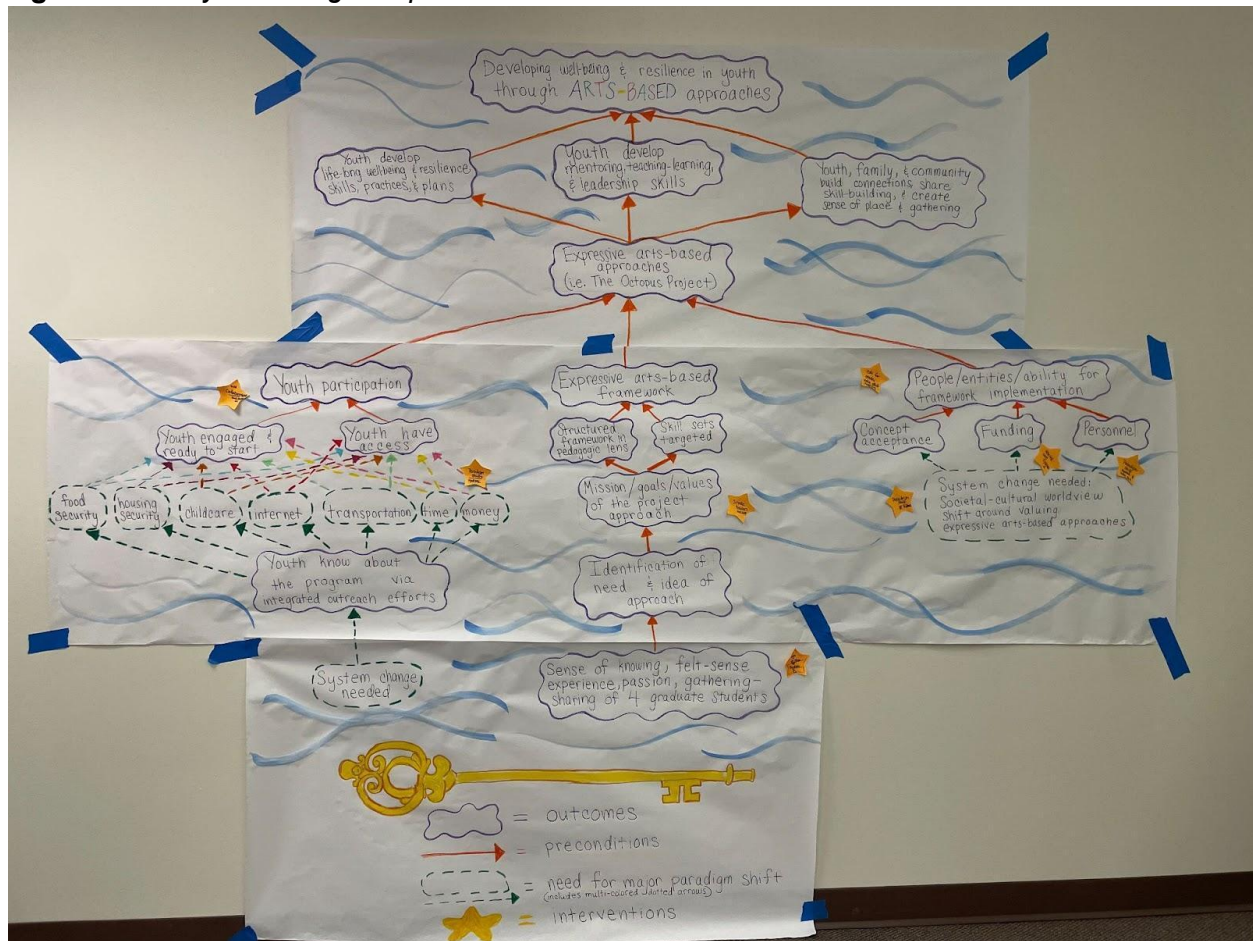
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Our assumption is that by providing opportunities to build a foundation of well-being and resilience in youth, individuals and communities would gain protective measures against mental health crises and live more supportive and fulfilling lives. Our belief is that developing well-being and adaptive resilience is a process that is life-long, integrative, and entails the combined engagement of individuals, family, community, and supportive systems. Our assumption includes that using an integrative expressive arts-based approach is effective and valid, though under-researched and under-utilized.

We assume that the Octopus framework will be developed and implemented in stages and program review, assessment, and action research is on-going. Collaboration and community building are key for success, and work toward shifting paradigms and systemic change are identified as important elements to consider. As such, many of our action items/interventions target these. Our group also recognizes our limitations in affecting systemic change and believe that together with other groups and organizations, greater influence and change is possible.

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Figure 1 Theory of Change Map



Tier One:

The top tier of our map reflects the “mess” we have chosen to focus on, that being the mental health and well-being of youth. More specifically, we are interested in developing well-being and resilience in youth through arts-based approaches.

Tier Two:

The second tier has three pieces to it. In order for youth to develop well-being and resilience through arts-based approaches, we identified three components that would need to be present within the population utilizing our framework:

1. Youth develop life-long well-being and resilience skills, practices, and plans.
2. Youth develop mentoring, teaching-learning, & leadership skills.

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- 3. Youth, family, and community build connections and share skill building, and create a sense of place and gathering.

The resilience skills, practices, and plans would vary depending on the implementers and specific community that would be using the program and would support participants from the present into the future. We envision mentorship and mutual teaching-learning as an integral part of this program and that youth would become part of the teaching team. Finally, another strength of arts-based approaches is their possibility to deepen human relationships and build community which is why we envision the participation in this program to expand to facilitators, family, and community groups.

Tier Three:

In order to reach the three objectives in tier two, we created an arts-based framework called The Octopus Project.

Tier Four:

In order for the The Octopus Project to be implemented we determined that three things would need to be in place:

- 1) Youth Participation
- 2) Expressive Arts-Based Framework
- 3) Ability and Desire for Individuals and Entities to Implement the Framework.

Youth Participation

In order for youth to participate in the framework, we would need youth who are engaged and ready to start as well as youth that have access to the program in whatever delivery form is being made available. For these to be in place, there are several fundamental youth needs that must be considered including food security, housing security, childcare, internet, computers,

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transportation, time, and money. Finally, for youth to participate, they would need to know about the program through a well-considered communication plan by implementers.

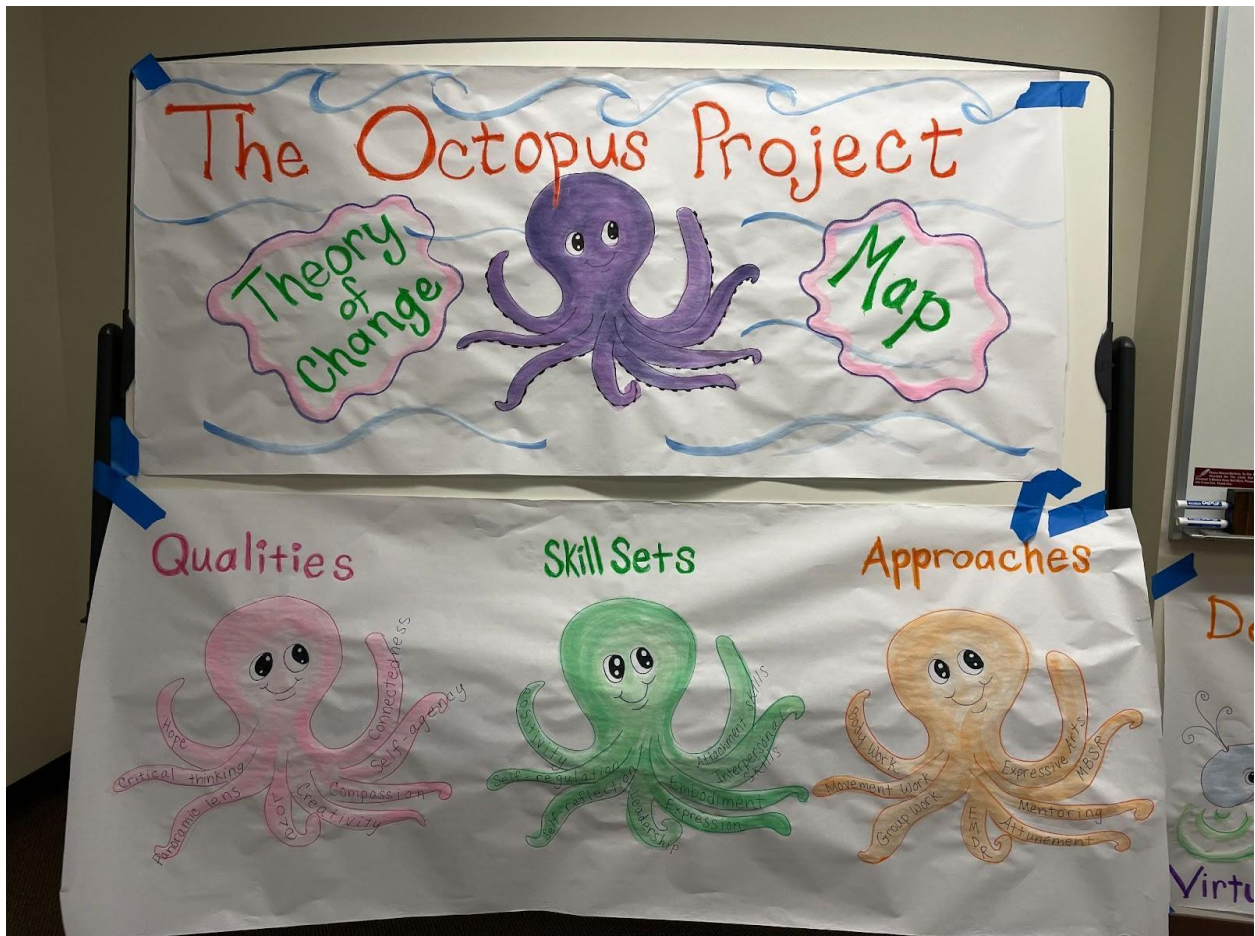
Expressive Arts-Based Framework

These arts-based experiences are delivered to individuals, communities, and families through an adaptable, accessible, and structured framework. It is adaptable to serve the unique needs and goals of each entity using it. One way the framework is accessible is that it does not require an outside professional to be hired. Rather it can be carried out by anyone who receives simple foundational training (the specifics of which are beyond the scope of this map and assignment). The values of adaptability and accessibility allow each participating entity to have agency and are not required to bring in an outside professional.

The framework is structured through a pedagogical lens with targeted skill sets. Possible skill sets and qualities we hope would emerge can be viewed in Figure 2 in the tentacles of the octopuses with coinciding labels. Skill sets may include positivity, self-regulation, self-reflection, leadership, expression, embodiment, interpersonal skills, and attachment skills. Qualities may include hope, critical thinking, panoramic lens, love, caring, creativity, compassion, self-agency, and connectedness.

Figure 2
Qualities, Skill Sets, Approaches

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In order to be the most accessible, the framework would have three different options for delivery as seen in Figure 3. One is a virtual via zoom or other similar platform. A second is on-site or in-person at whatever space or facility an entity wishes to present it at. The third is an on-site brick and mortar center called The Octopus Collective. The Octopus Collective provides a geographical home-base and would be regularly staffed. It is a place for individuals to attend workshops, engage with others, and be part of a community. The center would also offer in-house group and individual therapy.

Figure 3
Delivery of Framework

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Ultimately, the catalyst to forming this framework was four University of Montana Master of Social Work graduate students taking Advanced Research (SW 521). The four of us have shared passions, values, and lived experience that has fueled our curiosity and interest in conceiving of this project.

Finally, in alignment with the highly adaptive nature of TOP, we have chosen not to specify an age group that this framework would serve. As the framework develops, we imagine that it could accommodate youth of any age.

How we define expressive arts. In figure 2, the tentacles of the octopus labeled *Approaches* list examples of arts-based practices that may be included in the framework. We are viewing expressive arts within a larger umbrella that may include theater, movement, mindfulness, visual arts, music, group work, therapeutic modalities, and more. These practices

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are adaptable and expandable based on the population and their goals. These practices may also be utilized in conjunction with other therapeutic modalities including forms of individual and group therapy.

Ability and Desire for Individuals and Entities to Implement the Framework.

For individuals and entities to have an ability and desire to implement the arts-based intervention, three things would first need to be in place. First is an acceptance of the concept of an arts-based framework, second is funding, and third is personnel that are available and interested in implementing the TOP framework. To ultimately support this, would require a paradigm shift at the mezzo and micro level toward a deeper valuing of the arts in general and as a legitimate intervention for improving mental health, well-being, and community. (We expand on this further in the *mental models, systemic shifts, and interventions section.*)

Table 1. Theory of Change Interventions

Tier Location	Reference Code	Intervention
Tier 4, middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, lowest	1	Dreaming and scheming session - 4 grad student
Tier 4 middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, moving up	2	Planning meeting - Small group of potential stakeholders

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Tier 4-middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, cont.. to move up	3	Value sharing, goal, setting, mission statement - larger stakeholder meeting
Tier 4 -middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, cont.to move up	4	Identification of working groups:skill sets, curriculum, framework, etc
Tier 4 - middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, near top of tier	5	Start of working group meetings
Tier 4 - middle column of Exp. Arts-based Framework, near top of tie	6	Integration of workgroup into framework
Tier 4-First column: Youth Participation. at bottom	YP1	Identify ways to engage/support/collaborate around systemic change and mental model shifts i.e., justice issues around internet access
Tier 4- First column: Youth Participation. Moving up	YP2	Develop and implement integrated outreach/advertising program
Tier 4-First column: Youth Participation. Near top.	YP3	Collaborations with other services to provide needs/service of participants; i.e. food banks' mini-pantry at Octopus Collective
Tier 4- third column:People/entities. At bottom	Pe/imp 1	Identify ways to engage/support/collaborate around systemic change and mental model shifts i.e., Health care reform, societal valuing of non-conforming approaches (Exp. art-based)
Tier 4- third column:People/entities. middle	Pe/imp 2	Relationship building with & outreach to those with differing views around concept acceptance
Tier 4- third column:People/entities. middle	Pe/imp 3&4	Funding outreach- grants, legislative work
Tier 4- third column:People/entities. middle	Pe/imp 5	Recruit and train educators
Tier 4- third column:People/entities. middle	Pe/imp 6	Relationship building with & outreach for workplace cultural shift of well-being and resiliency building
Tier 2,3	7	Roll out framework, launch training
Tier 2,3	8	Start action research - ongoing
Tier 2,3	9	Evaluate, Assess, and modify program - ongoing
Tier 1 & throughout process	10	Celebrate , celebrate, celebrate! - ongoing

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Mental models, systemic shifts, and interventions

The Octopus Project is an example of an integrated expressive arts-based approach to develop well-being and resilience of youth. Through the process of creating a Theory of Change map (Anderson, n.d.) and using the tool of backwards mapping, our team identified key mental models at work, the presence of major systemic forces, and recognized the importance and need of engaging in the collaborative justice work required for systemic change. Reaching the goals of TOP is inextricably linked with larger systemic shifts. The impacts of TOP reach beyond the individual and serve to deepen relationships and build community. They influence implicit conditions that shift systems to enable transformation social change (Kania et al., 2018).

The interventions offered include: action items; opportunities for shifting mental models; opportunities for collaborating with and in support of others for systemic change; action-research; and evaluation, assessment, and modification of the program. Opportunities for self reflection, well-being and resilience building, and celebration for the Octopus team also are included.

Mental models dictate how we understand and make sense of the world. They influence how we take in and interpret information, make meaning, and react or respond. Mental models can be barriers to change and also can support change (Connelly, 2020). In mapping The Octopus Project we identified several important mental models that were important to address in order for objectives to be more fully met and for systemic change to occur.

Mental models that presented as obstacles for TOP were often based in resistance to change; belief that value is determined by capitalistic or economic gains; deficit/not enough to go around/us-them perspectives; western medical lens of linear, mechanized, need to fix it

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approaches; dismissal of that which is different; and a defeatist or overwhelm-based belief that the problem is too big, it no longer matters what we do, why try?

In mapping, we also noted that a combination of mental models yielded the resistance or lack of willingness of some agencies or organizations to support and embrace staff well-being and resilience building as part of their own workplace culture and responsibility, and as well as recognizing that it was a necessary precursor for offering TOP activities. Another example of the effect of combined mental models is the hesitancy of some to accept integrated expressive art-based approaches as valid and practical approaches for developing well-being, resilience, and for application within therapy.

Our team decided to address shifting or influencing mental models by offering interventions targeted towards individuals, the immediate structure or environment, and the overarching system. We drew from approaches that work toward transformational system change and are based in curiosity, a learner-teacher view, and a desire for greater understanding and to embrace commonality (brown, 2021; Finn, 2021; Kania et al., 2018).

Implications

Practice

The Octopus Project provides a highly adaptable framework that can be utilized by any professional who attends the training that will be offered. Many potential users of the TOP framework may currently have a desire to implement arts-based and embodied practices into their programming, but may not have the resources and knowledge to do so. Currently, an agency or school for example would likely need to hire a professional teaching artist or arts-based therapist equipped with the experience and skills necessary to serve diverse populations. This is an expense that may not be budgeted for at a lot of agencies. Additionally, especially in many rural communities, skilled professional teaching artists and arts-based therapists may not be available and would have to be brought in from outside areas. The Octopus Project allows professionals already working within the institution to utilize it.

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We strongly believe there is interest in an accessible arts-based framework like TOP. Anecdotally, one of our team members, Lisa, is doing her practicum at Shodair Children's Hospital in Helena, Montana. Shodair is a specialized psychiatric residential care facility for children and adolescents. When Lisa discussed TOP with a colleague, they responded with curiosity, and enthusiasm, saying that their agency would be eager to explore a framework like TOP. The interest represented in this anecdote, from a professional working within a medical model is promising. Just because Shodair or similar institutions primarily use commonly accepted evidence-based therapeutic practices, it does not mean they are not receptive to other methods. For Lisa's colleague to show such enthusiasm suggests that the value of TOP interventions is recognized as having value. Even though institutions are not utilizing these embodied and arts-based practices does not mean the interest is not there. It *could* simply mean there isn't the in-house knowledge or experience to add it to their programming.

Policy

One of the goals of The Octopus Project is to advocate for systems level change at both the macro and mezzo level. One area we hope to impact systemic change would be in the realm of insurance coverage for interventions emphasized in our framework. Currently, many embodied and arts-based interventions are highly scrutinized and only covered by insurance under specific circumstances (Pak, 2021).

We also hope that The Octopus Project will contribute positively to more federal and state support of the arts in general. The current under-valuing of the arts is clearly illustrated by our country's lack of funding at the state and federal level. For example, the U.S. is one of the only developed nations to not have a national theatre that is federally funded. Federal and state level funding is limited, and organizations rely heavily on private and corporate donors, which has the added effect of censorship as those funding entities may feel their financial contribution gives them the authority to dictate the artistic programming that is put forth. Performing arts

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organizations especially, also rely heavily on earned income so when the Covid-19 pandemic happened, there was a painfully high financial loss leading to thousands of layoffs and out-of-work artists. While there were some federal recovery funds provided, it was not enough to keep many small to mid-sized entities afloat (Guilbert & Hyde, 2021).

There is a dire need to change policy to more adequately fund the arts. Because arts-based interventions are so central to The Octopus Project, we feel that it could play even a small role in pushing the needle.

Future Research

To facilitate some of the macro level policy changes, gathering research throughout the implementation and utilization of The Octopus Project would be highly useful. We plan to utilize Community-Based Participatory Action Research as our methodology of choice. The collaborative nature of this research approach compliments the framework that we have developed.

Discussion/Meaning Making

Process and Positionality

Another significant part of The Octopus Project, is the process that our team has undergone together throughout the months we have been working on this assignment. We so often found ourselves in a state we describe as “eddying.” Our collaboration involved a great deal of dreaming, exploring, rabbit-holing, supporting, listening, questioning, unfolding, and *celebrating*. We often note the “meta” nature of this: *being* in a mess as we *uncover* the mess we want to explore for this assignment. As we eddied along, we continued to find more specificity and clarity, leading us to TRUST the process and TRUST each other...and find some joy and laughter along the way.

The Octopus Project is also very much shaped by the mutually held values that informed the way that we treated each other as fellow cohort members and co-designers of this

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framework. Some of these values included respect, compassion, integrity, support, encouragement, communication, vulnerability, generosity, stepping forward-stepping back, joy, silliness, affirmations, and honesty. There were several practices that we regularly folded into our process including personal check-ins at the start of each meeting, regular text communications, and snacks during our in-person meetings. We also regularly utilized timed sharing rounds, where in response to a question we would set a timer for a designated length of speaking time. This practice ensured that each member of the group had equal time for their voices to be heard. We also organically developed a silly octopus' arm movement "dance" that we would close many of our meetings with. This brought an arts-based element to our process and helped instill a sense of joy and play.

Additionally, The Octopus Project was informed and fueled by a genuine care that each one of us has toward the well-being of youth in our state. In fact, three of our group members are currently in practicum placements that specifically work with youth. Those day-to-day learning experiences have informed and deepened what we have put forth in this paper.

TOP is also informed by our personal interest and passion for many of the modalities that we have chosen to recommend and highlight in this assignment. We recognize the lack of published research and yet we feel that the lived experience that we bring to the table is also a form of data. Each of us, in our own way have felt or witnessed the benefits of things like theater, music, movement, visual arts, and mindfulness and while that does not come in the form of numerical data, it has value and is ultimately part of what we have brought forth.

Why Octopus?

The octopus is a central image and metaphor has guided our process. First, it provides a fitting visual representation of the various modalities, goals, and potential outcomes highlighted in our Theory of Change map. Additionally, we are tickled by the playfulness that the octopus itself and the under-water imagery bring forward. It evokes a sense of play, joy, and imagination

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we feel is fitting for a youth focused project. This is at the heart of why we chose to present our map and accompanied figures as hand-made works of art.

The beings of Octopuses embody many of the values that we have held with each other as a team. For example, they have multiple brains and hearts suggesting that they have a great capacity for intelligence, curiosity, and heart-centeredness. They are highly adaptable, resilient, and tend to live very long lives. They are known to be affectionate and love to connect with others of their own species as well as other species (O'Driscoll, 2022). For these reasons, we feel that the octopus poetically represents the *spirit* of TOP.

Limitations

What we have developed for this assignment is very much the beginning phase of The Octopus Project. A challenge for our team throughout the process was keeping our scope narrow enough to fit within the requirements of the assignment and not be overly expansive in what we included. Our instinct and passion led us to want to dive in and begin articulating and strategizing essential components of TOP. Some of these rabbit holes included implementation strategies, curriculum planning, fundraising, communication and marketing strategies, training methods, and more. While we understand that these components would be critical if we were to fully develop The Octopus Project, we had to keep reminding ourselves to stay within the scope of the assignment.

We recognize that there are still many unanswered questions that are appropriately not addressed within this paper. As a team we carry excitement and curiosity about what is possible if we were to actually fully design and implement this framework throughout the state of Montana.

Conclusion

For this assignment, we have conceived of an original arts-based framework called The Octopus Project. It is an adaptive and accessible integrated expressive arts-based approach to

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develop the well-being and resilience of youth. This framework would be appropriate to use independently or in addition to other common therapeutic practices like individual and group therapy. The modalities offered through TOP include theater, movement, mindfulness, visual arts, music, body work, and more. The framework could be delivered virtually, in-person, and through a brick-and-mortar Octopus Collective.

The impacts of TOP reach beyond the individual and serve to deepen relationships and build community. They influence implicit conditions that shift systems to enable transformation social change (Kania et al., 2018).

We have identified several primary stakeholders including creators of the framework, youth, and implementers. Implementers could encompass any organization or institution that serves youth of diverse ages. Some local and regional examples are public or private schools, juvenile justice related programs, and child welfare agencies.

In order to implement The Octopus Project and for our proposed interventions to be accepted, there are a number of paradigm shifts that would need to occur at the mezzo and micro level toward a deeper valuing of the arts and other embodied practices. Creating the Theory of Change map and using the tool of backwards mapping, our team identified key mental models at work, the presence of major systemic forces, and recognized the importance of engaging in the collaborative justice work required for systemic change.

As evaluators, we will do a formative evaluation because we are in the process of creating, or forming, TOP as a program. A process evaluation will come later, however, we note that in our process evaluation, we would gather both quantitative and qualitative action research data through Community-Based Participatory Action Research.

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Photo by the Lee Winters

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APPENDIX E

Intertribal Activism and Cultural Renewal: Unexpected Effects of the Urban Indian Relocation Program

As part of United States' termination policies to assimilate Native Americans (NAs) into Western culture, the government lured multitudes to relocate into urban areas with empty promises of federal support and opportunity. Shared experiences combined with the fervor of the Civil Rights Era prompted intertribal activism particularly amongst college students who were relocated in San Francisco. Richard Oakes led activists in the occupation of Alcatraz which sparked a renewed cultural interest in many NAs and prompted President Nixon to end termination policies. Oakes's assassination sparked the Trail of Broken Treaties, which led to a raising of American consciousness to the plight of NAs and a continuation of NA activism.

Intertribal Activism and a Cultural Revival: Unexpected Effects of the Urban Indian Relocation Program

Urban Indian Relocation was a 1952 program under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and was one facet of the federal government's termination policies against NA tribes. The purpose of the relocation program was to further assimilate NAs into Western culture which was done by enticing them to move off reservation and into major urban areas with empty promises of opportunity (Johnson, 1994). Removing NAs from their reservations was one step closer to tribal termination, cultural genocide, and erasure of the NA.

After World War II, the government took many steps to end ties with tribes and force NAs into an Americanized way of life. Through Concurrent Resolution 108, for example, Congress: abolish(ed) the status of Indians as wards of the United States and (made) Indians subject to the nation's laws... (and) placed Indian land in California, Wisconsin, Oregon, Nebraska, and Minnesota under the civil and criminal jurisdiction of the states. (McCoy & Fountain, 2017)

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Termination and assimilation efforts existed long before the 1950s, however, beginning with the physical genocide of NAs. Christopher Columbus and his expeditions erased entire tribes of people in massacres and forcefully stole their lands (Zinn, 2005). Brutal assimilation is evidenced through the boarding school era, a time of cultural genocide which began after the Civil War. In these “schools”, children suffered loss of cultural identity and took on immense physical and emotional traumas (Weaver, 2020). Another effort at termination was the General Allotment Act of 1887, which was strongly supported by non-NAs for economic profits but was devastating for tribes, was used as a way to force American cultural ideals onto tribes and take away their lands with the notion that “instilling the concept of private property and dependency would solve tribal poverty” (Puisto, 2002, p. 51), ignoring the fact that the tribes had lived successfully prior to any settlers’ arrival.

The federal government also weaponized language to foster fear and racism amongst the American public towards the NA ways of life. In Montana, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai (CSK) tribes were accused by Montana state officials of being “selfish” for “wanting the land for themselves” (Puisto, 2002, p. 51). The government called the Blackfeet tribe “un-American” and “barbaric” for using their land for ceremony and hunting post-establishment of Glacier National Park as a way to convince park officials and future park visitors that the Blackfeet were not welcome on park land (Spence, 1996). These are just a few of countless examples of the government’s attempts at erasing NA tribalism over centuries, with U.S. paternalism permeating these termination policies and assimilation tactics. Nevertheless, tribal communities have maintained an overarching theme of resiliency in the face of adversity.

Through the termination policy of the Urban Indian Relocation program, the federal government used propaganda and a series of broken promises to convince many NA peoples to move off of their reservations and into major urban areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco. The government pitched the program as a way to escape

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unemployment and poverty on reservations (Plutte, 2001). Promises included vocational training, housing, support in finding employment, and financial assistance. Yet, instead of the promised three months of vocational training, they most often received only three weeks. Assistance in finding a job was seen as one referral, and many people received notices of job termination along with their first and only paychecks. Housing was the equivalent of “skid row” in which NAs found themselves living in poverty in the slums of their new “home” cities. Government financial assistance was extremely limited and ran out quickly (Johnson, 1994). Upon arriving in these major urban areas, NAs found themselves utterly abandoned by the BIA. They were assured that BIA representatives would be waiting for them at the bus stations; many waited for days or even weeks but to no avail (Plutte, 2001). The broken promises and government abandonment could have broken many groups' spirits. Instead, the newly relocated NAs, particularly in the San Francisco area which was one of the largest relocation cities, began to build community based on their shared experiences (Johnson, 1994). They acted with the same resilient fashion of their ancestors during the termination policies of their times.

Between 1950 and 1970, San Francisco's NA population grew from roughly 300 to 3,000 people as a result of relocation (Johnson, 1994). Many who relocated were sent by their families in an effort to escape the effects of termination being seen on the reservations, namely poverty and unemployment (Plutte, 2001). Members of various tribes began to meet and established gathering spaces like the Intertribal Friendship House, where they shared stories and cultural practices of cooking, music, and dance. Members of same tribes found each other and formed clubs, such as the Navajo and Pomo clubs. In 1962, the United Bay Area Council of Indian Affairs formed to have a community voice. In these spaces, people from different tribes were relating on the topics of shared traumas they experienced in the boarding schools and their recent shared experiences of being abandoned by the BIA (Plutte, 2001). Another commonality was the recent police brutality many were experiencing in the Bay area. Police would wait

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outside known NA drinking establishments at closing time and proceed to beat, arrest, and harass the patrons. What began as social gathering spaces soon turned political (Johnson, 1994). The American Indian Community Center was established, and this became the hub for San Francisco's new NA activist movement (Plutte, 2001).

The new collective's first victory was winning college admissions as recompense for BIA abandonment, for they felt vocational training would not be sufficient and wanted more educational opportunities. Now on college campuses, with the males mostly at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and females at University of California Berkeley, student groups formed between schools, also including UCLA (Plutte, 2001). Students, including Richard Oakes of the Akwesasne Mohawk tribe, helped create Native American studies programs. Intertribal activism was gaining strength (Blansett, 2018). Often referred to as *Pan-Indianism*, this author chooses to use the term *Intertribalism*, as Blansett explains that the former term can seem to insinuate this group of people from various tribes as having a homogenous cultural identity. This was not the case, as a large part of this movement was celebrating the diversity among tribes, bands within the tribes, and families within those bands, yet they united through their shared experiences that are unique to NA peoples (Blansett, 2018).

At this time of the Civil Rights Era, black Americans, feminists, housing advocates, and other groups were organizing for social justice causes, and college campuses were the centers of action. This created an ideal environment for intertribal activism to take root, fueled with inspiration from other student activist groups and a heightened political tone and fervor. Oakes was a pivotal leader in the movement. He was raised on the St. Regis Mohawk reservation in northern New York, a part of the Iroquois Confederacy of tribes which laid the foundation for his intertribal leadership (Blansett, 2018). Many hailed Oakes as a natural leader, charismatic, a great orator, and one who could unite students (Plutte, 2001).

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Oakes and fellow students discussed occupying the island of Alcatraz off the coast of San Francisco as a symbolic protest and a call for self-determination (Plutte, 2001). A student recalled the occupation of the island five years earlier, planned by Belva Cottier, a Sioux activist and social worker. She had remembered an 1889 treaty provision understood by the Sioux tribe as stating that “all federal lands, which became unused or abandoned, reverted to ownership by the Sioux people” (Johnson, 1994, p. 64). Her initial occupation in 1964 called for the island to be used for a cultural center and an NA university, and demanded better treatment of urban NAs. While it ended after a few hours, Cottier’s occupation was significant because it planted the seed for the 1969 larger occupation, and it also showed future occupiers that the government did not use force against the initial ones (Johnson, 1994). This influenced NA activists to believe a peaceful occupation of the island was possible, and the initial occupiers’ wishes were carried on with the later occupation (Plutte, 2001).

The San Francisco American Indian Center burned down which catalyzed the 1969 occupation, as they needed a new meeting place. The United Bay Indian Council, which included thirty tribal clubs, along with student organizations and other Bay area NA groups united to occupy Alcatraz in the fall of 1969 (Johnson, 1994). They first notified the press in order to spread their message to the masses, and Oakes read the Proclamation of the Indians of All Tribes which asked for the deed to the island in addition to the 1964 occupiers’ wants, and federal funding for everything (Plutte, 2001). When asked the reason for the occupation, Oakes stated:

‘It would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation. This tiny island would be a symbol of the great lands once ruled by free and noble Indians’. (Plutte, 2001, 1:30)

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When asked how long they would stay at the abandoned prison of Alcatraz, another occupier explained to a reporter that the adverse conditions of Alcatraz were no worse than what they experienced on reservations or what they have been experiencing in the cities (Plutte, 2001).

Once on the island, a renewal of cultural traditions took root. As in many of the occupiers' tribal cultures, they made unanimous decisions, everyone had a job on the island, and women kept the island running and also elected the council which met multiple times a day (Plutte, 2001). For nineteen months, the peaceful occupation received national attention through media coverage and drew support from American citizens. The occupation ended due to a combination of pressure from the Coast Guard, the government cutting off supplies which were being donated and shipped to the island by supporters of the cause, and many of the original occupiers leaving to return to school (Johnson, 1994).

Although the Proclamation's demands were not met by the government, the occupation was nevertheless a major victory. While on the island, President Nixon renounced the termination policies and vowed to work towards NA self-determination (Green & Tonnessen, 1991). As Oakes had stated to the press, "Alcatraz is not an island; it's an idea" (Johnson, 1994, p. 74). As Johnson (1994) explains, the occupation raised the consciousness of the government and the public to the NAs' need for self-determination and to their plight. In Plutte's documentary (2001), one occupier recalled feeling that NAs were invisible to the nation before the occupation of Alcatraz. The involvement of the media gave the movement a voice. The media coverage caused a cultural interest amongst many NAs across the country as well (Plutte, 2001). It also played a key role in creating a large intertribal movement and government recognition of the need for NA self-determination.

It was during an altercation with a known white supremacist that Oakes was shot and killed in 1971, a death which many considered an assassination since the murder was a result of Oakes's political leadership. According to McCoy & Fountain (2017), plans were formulated at

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Oakes's funeral for the Trail of Broken Treaties march on Washington, D.C. Michael Morgan, the man who shot Oakes, was found not guilty by an all-white jury after a mere three days of deliberation (Blansett, 2018). The fact that Morgan was so quickly declared innocently acting in self-defense by a jury of all white people illustrates the deeply embedded racism and the power that accompanies white privilege which exists in the American judicial system and amplifies the injustices faced by NAs in this country.

In November of 1972, the Trail of Broken Treaties was led by members of the Indians of All Tribes, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and other NA activist groups from across the nation and included groups from South America and Canada as well (McCoy & Fountain, 2017). AIM's St. Paul, Minnesota director Eddie Benton drafted a letter to President Nixon, asking him "to speak with approximately 5,000 representatives of the sovereign nations" to address "the welfare of the 800,000-plus Native Americans, Eskimos, and Aleutes whom are being daily subjected to untold atrocities at the hands of big government and big business" (Benton, 1972). During the march, protesters presented President Nixon with a proposal of twenty points, calling for land restoration, a new entity to replace the BIA, new treaties, and cultural and religious protection (Plutte, 2001).

NA activism and renewed interest in culture was growing strong across the nation. In Montana, for example, Billings protestors were calling for justice for Reynold High Pine of the Oglala Sioux tribe who was unarmed and had been killed by police with no repercussions ("Indian march recalls bitter memories", 1972). University of Montana (UM) students in the NA Studies program caravanned from Missoula to Washington, DC for the Trail of Broken Treaties to film a documentary of "the local problems of Indians at the various reservations, agencies, and other Indian communities" ([Student Contract], 1972). Reverend Robert Border of the Blackfoot Church in Seeley Lake requested UM students speak to the youth in the church "about the present situation of Indian people, its causes and possible cures... and (the youth)

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would like to know the part 'Indian Religion' has played in the development of Indian - Non Indian Relationships” (Border, 1973).

Strides were being made. In 1974, the Supreme Court finally upheld the Puyallup Tribe's fishing treaty rights in Washington State after two decades of “fish-ins”, protests which were modeled after sit-ins. Despite many AIM leaders being imprisoned after the occupation of Wounded Knee II in 1973, their efforts were carried on. The Women of All Red Nations (WARN) formed in 1974, and also at this time scholarly journals and newspapers were coming into circulation on the plight of NAs (McCoy & Fountain, 2017). This same year, the American Indian Declaration of Sovereignty was written by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), demanding tribal sovereignty, treaty acknowledgments, the end of BIA paternalism. Nixon passed the Indian Self-Determination Act in 1975, making his verbal repudiation official. In 1983, self-determination was seemingly established when President Reagan moved Indian Affairs to the office of Intergovernmental Affairs in the White House (Green & Tonnesen, 1991).

Despite the federal government's best efforts to continue NA assimilation into Western culture through the Urban Indian Relocation program, resilient NAs organized to bring an end to termination policies and a beginning to self-determination. Their protests in the 1970s led to greater federal legislation in support of their rights to self-govern and to end BIA paternalism. The student-led occupation of Alcatraz and their involvement of the media took NA activism to a new level by giving the movement a national voice and raising awareness in the general public to their plight. The intertribal unity, which was held together through shared traumatic experiences of oppression, ignited a renewed interest in NA culture and gave the movement strength in voice and numbers. Once again, the resiliency of the NA peoples is made clear through their ability to find strength in the face of adversity, and to unite, innovate, and collaborate when odds are stacked against them, all while holding their culture strongly at the

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center. The question now is, “How much longer will the government put NAs in the position where they will *need* to stay resilient?”

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APPENDIX F

Simulated Practice: Just Practice Assessment

Identity and Issues

Katie, whose name has been changed, is a CIS, white female in her early twenties who lives in rural Montana on “the Highline”, an area of substantial poverty. A dedicated and caring family-member, Katie chose to move back home to Havre, the same town she was born and raised. Most members of her large, blended family still reside in Havre including the niece she helped raise, and she maintains close contact with them, helping whenever possible. Strong-willed and driven, Katie is a first-generation college student in her third year of the 2+2 program through the Montana University System. She attended her first 2 years at Montana State University - Billings where her friendly, easy-going demeanor surely led to the close friendships that she made there.

Katie is now back home, courageously finishing her Bachelor of Social Work degree online through the University of Montana, as being an online student is new territory for her. Katie currently resides in a house with multiple roommates in order to afford rent. When she is not doing full-time online coursework, Katie juggles multiple jobs - bartending, ranch work, and tree trimming - to pay for her passion to be a social worker. Naturally, this constant schedule of school and work is stress-inducing and allows little time for self-care.

Meaning

Katie makes meaning of her current circumstances through the lens of family - both in their importance to her and also in not wanting to repeat the mistakes she believes her parents made. Although doing college online is not her ideal choice, Katie has chosen to pursue an online education to be nearer to family. Maintaining close relationships with her parents and full-siblings holds high importance, and she found it difficult to be away from the half-niece that she helped raise. Proximity to her family has taken precedence over the challenges of doing school online and the circumstances of leaving a healthy friends-group at MSU-Billings.

Family also, in her words, “drives (her) to be a better person”. She witnessed her family struggle financially throughout her life which has inspired her to pursue financial independence. To avoid debt, she is immersing herself in school and work which is leading to feelings of stress. It is also less expensive for her to pursue this online degree than if she were to stay at MSU-Billings. She also witnessed her parents working unfulfilling jobs during odd hours to make ends meet and the toll this took on their wellbeing. Seeing their discontent and experiencing the reverberations of it has led Katie to pursue a college education to lead to a steady career that she is passionate about.

Context

Having been raised in Havre, Katie witnessed her family and neighbors live trapped in a cycle of oppression often marked by unfulfilling, low-paying jobs that demand long hours which often lead to stress and other problems. Katie chooses not to discuss her stress with family and friends, because she assumes their problems are of greater importance. Since the nature of her

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lower income positionality has normalized stress as a way of life, she is at risk of dismissing self-care which could lead to negative health outcomes.

Dis/Similarities in Positionality

Like Katie, I am a CIS, white female. This shared sense of identity allows me to have an understanding of her position in the world of having a marginalized identity of being female while simultaneously having the significant privilege of being both white and identifying with the gender we were assigned at birth. Unlike Katie, I was not born into a lower-class, rural area, but rather I had more opportunities by being born and raised in a middle-class city near the major hub of Boston. Fortunately, working with low-income youth in my hometown and currently in my practicum, in addition to my social work education, I have gained *some* insight into the challenges and struggles of living in impoverished, rural Montana, but this will never compare to the lived experience of Katie. Therefore, I enter this helping situation as a learner and by no means an expert on Katie's experience. Additionally, I was not a first-generation college student, but rather I was encouraged and guided by parents throughout the college application and search process. Katie, on the other hand, utilized her own self-will, determination, and intelligence to seek out the proper resources to apply to and attend college. This reinforces my need to take on the role of a learner when working alongside Katie.

Power and History

Katie is in a cycle of oppression of poverty. It is known that stress causes physical and mental harm to individuals. In order to pursue the lower-than-average paying career of her dreams - Social Work - Katie is forced into a stress-inducing schedule of school and work so that she does not go into debt. For that debt will be challenging to pay off given the salary of her future degree. Additionally, the stress results in forced negligence of her mental, emotional, and physical health, as she does not have much time to exercise, socialize as much as she would like to, and be well-rested. This is all an unfortunate product of the capitalist system that is designed to keep people living at or below the poverty level.

Power and Possibility

Katie's pursuit of a steady career can lead her to the financial independence that she desires. In this female-dominated profession, it is possible Katie will experience less oppression in the form of sexism than she might otherwise experience in a field that has a larger male presence. Additionally, Katie's whiteness inherently gives her power and privilege in our white supremacist society. As a result, she will benefit from this system of oppression simply by being white. This will be shown through being afforded more job opportunities, better health outcomes, a greater chance of owning her own home, and staying out of legal trouble than if she were a person of color. It is possible Katie will recognize this, and her social work career will allow her opportunities to fight for social change if she chooses.

Conclusion

Katie is a highly motivated, dedicated, and passionate budding social worker. Sadly, our capitalist social structure places limits on the very people, like Katie, who are determined to

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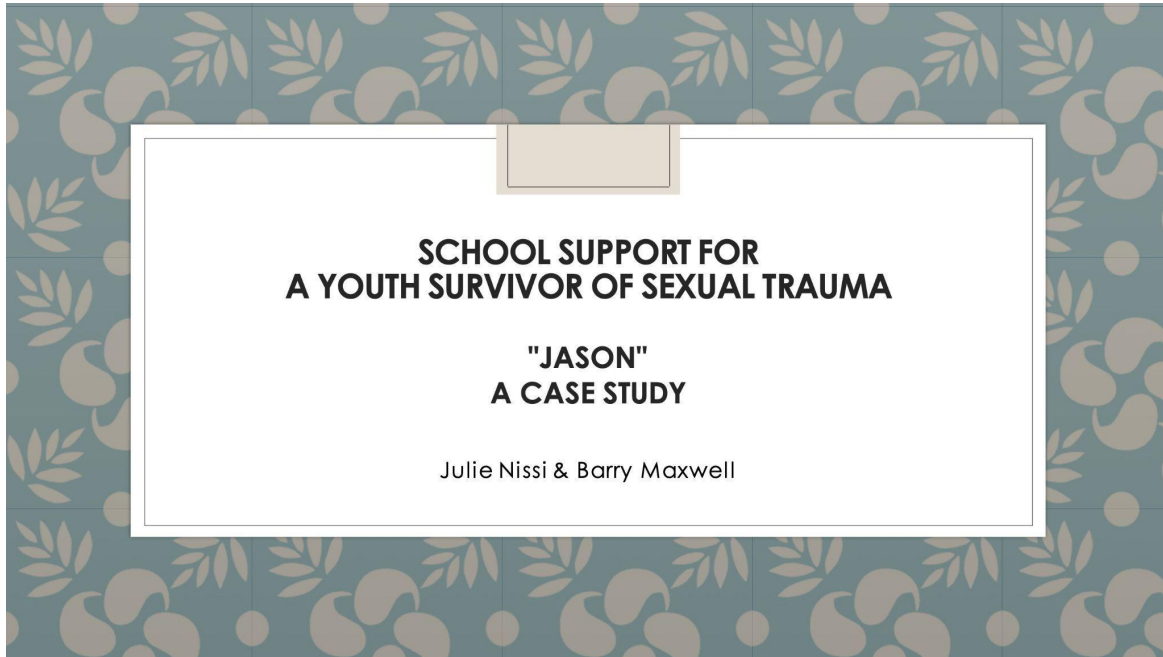
devote their lives to work for social welfare. Her drive to avoid going into debt from her college education leaves her overworked and stressed which leads to poor health outcomes. Someone like Katie who is accustomed to putting aside self-care in order to pursue continuous hard work is likely at risk for continuing this trend as a social worker, a professional role that is known to lead to burnout. The social work profession needs Katie and other passionate professionals like her who have lived experience to best serve populations in need. It is the duty of the social work profession to prioritize self-care amongst its workers for longevity.

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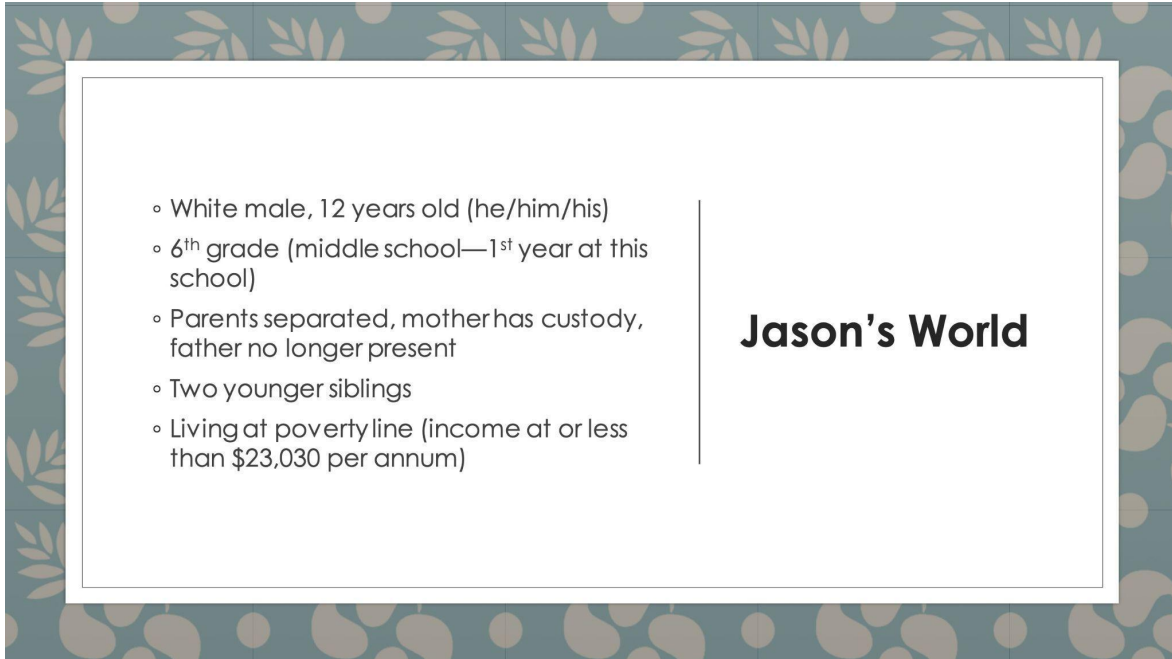
APPENDIX G

School Support for a Youth Survivor of Sexual Trauma: “Jason” A Case Study

This was a group project. My contribution is the slides on practice theories; ethical considerations and possible dilemmas; courses of action (various styles of therapy); possible methods of evaluation; and the subject matter of the case study.



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◦ White male, 12 years old (he/him/his)

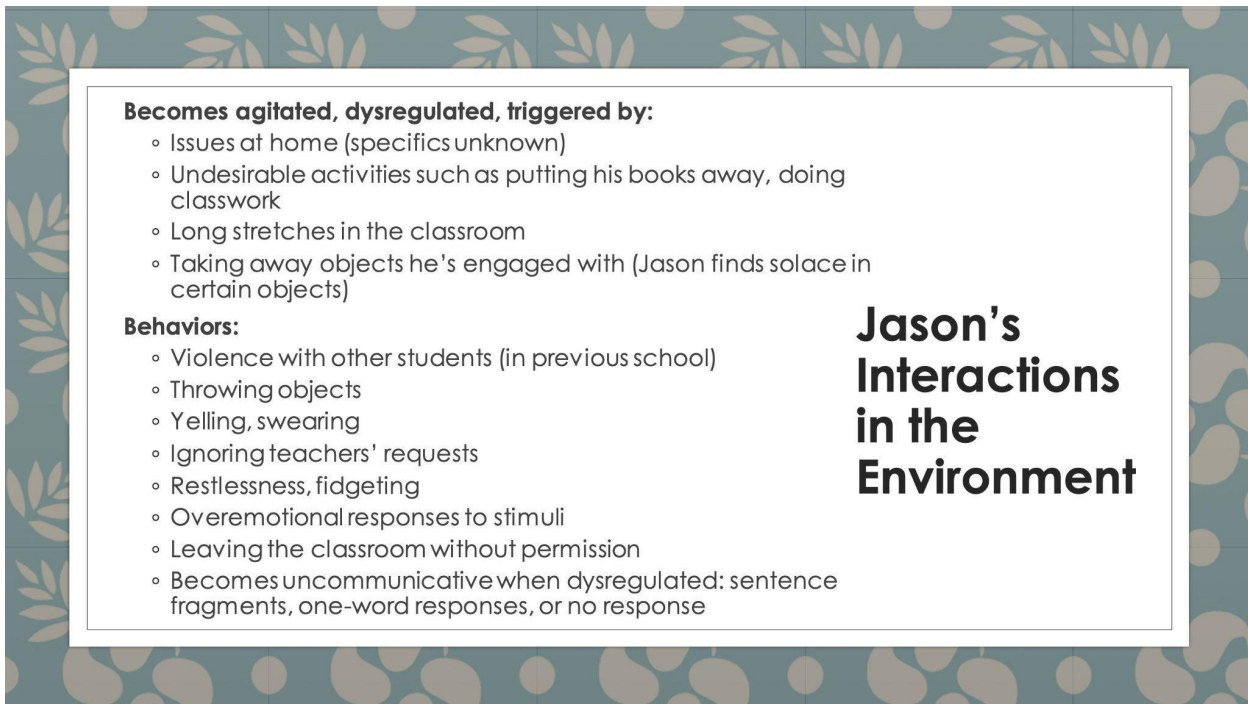
◦ 6th grade (middle school—1st year at this school)

◦ Parents separated, mother has custody, father no longer present

◦ Two younger siblings

◦ Living at poverty line (income at or less than \$23,030 per annum)

Jason's World



Becomes agitated, dysregulated, triggered by:

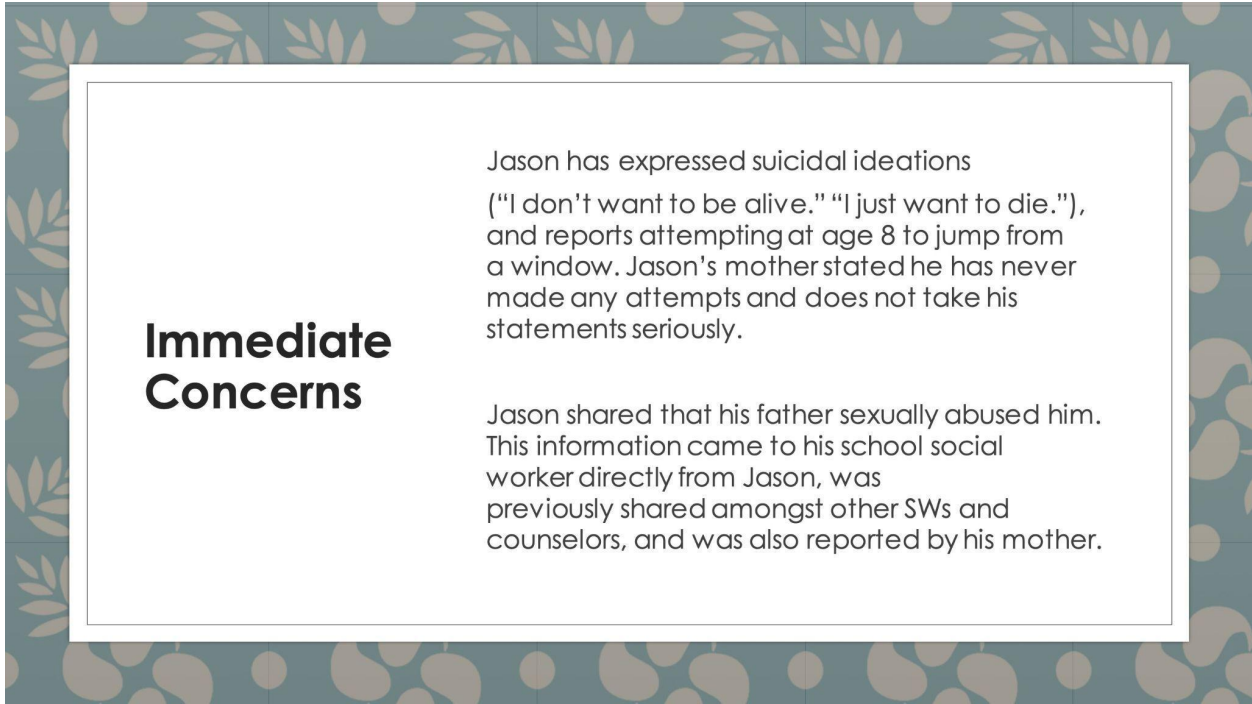
- Issues at home (specifics unknown)
- Undesirable activities such as putting his books away, doing classwork
- Long stretches in the classroom
- Taking away objects he's engaged with (Jason finds solace in certain objects)

Behaviors:

- Violence with other students (in previous school)
- Throwing objects
- Yelling, swearing
- Ignoring teachers' requests
- Restlessness, fidgeting
- Overemotional responses to stimuli
- Leaving the classroom without permission
- Becomes uncommunicative when dysregulated: sentence fragments, one-word responses, or no response

Jason's Interactions in the Environment

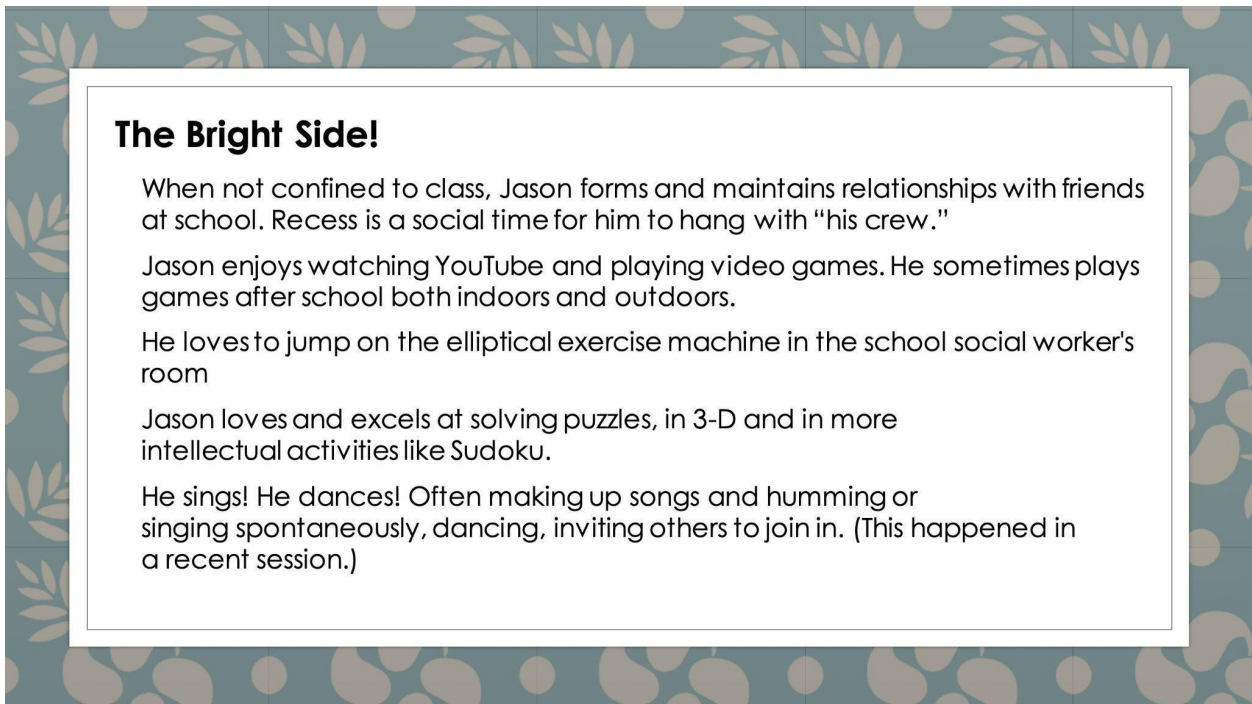
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Immediate Concerns

Jason has expressed suicidal ideations ("I don't want to be alive." "I just want to die."), and reports attempting at age 8 to jump from a window. Jason's mother stated he has never made any attempts and does not take his statements seriously.

Jason shared that his father sexually abused him. This information came to his school social worker directly from Jason, was previously shared amongst other SWs and counselors, and was also reported by his mother.



The Bright Side!

When not confined to class, Jason forms and maintains relationships with friends at school. Recess is a social time for him to hang with "his crew."

Jason enjoys watching YouTube and playing video games. He sometimes plays games after school both indoors and outdoors.

He loves to jump on the elliptical exercise machine in the school social worker's room

Jason loves and excels at solving puzzles, in 3-D and in more intellectual activities like Sudoku.

He sings! He dances! Often making up songs and humming or singing spontaneously, dancing, inviting others to join in. (This happened in a recent session.)

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Helpful Strategies

A “regulate and return (to class)” practice, including 5–10-minute breaks walking inside or outdoors are helpful, as well as spending time in one of the social workers’ rooms where there are fidget spinners, an exercise machine, sand tables, a large ball to bounce, and art supplies. They are calm spaces to self-regulate.

Breaks also offer the opportunity to talk to the SW about what happened and what can be done to self-soothe next time.

Support staff has a running list of objects they co-created with Jason for self-soothing, including books, fidgets, and tactile things like sand tables and putty.

Rapport and comfortable engagement came when creative approaches were used. Somatic movements—mirroring motions (first as the “follower” then as “leader”) and alternating motions between fast and slow.

Childhood Trauma & Childhood Sexual Trauma

ACES

- **64%** of children have been exposed to one or more ACE.
- **38%** of children have been exposed to 2 or more ACEs.
- **36%** = zero ACES
- **26%** = one
- **16%** = 2
- **9%** = 3
- **13%** = 4 or more

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention & Kaiser Permanente. (2016). The ACE Study Survey Data [Unpublished Data] Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Childhood sexual abuse is defined as:

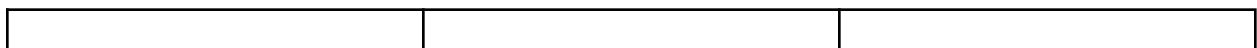
Any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer. Sexual abuse can include both touching and non-touching behaviors. Non-touching behaviors can include voyeurism (trying to look at a child's naked body), exhibitionism, or exposing the child to pornography. Children of all ages, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds may experience sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse affects both girls and boys in all kinds of neighborhoods and communities. (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

Peterson, S. (2018, January 25). *Sexual Abuse* [Text]. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse>

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime website, studies by David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, show that:

- 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse;
- Self-report studies show that 20% of adult females and 5-10% of adult males recall a childhood sexual assault or sexual abuse incident;
- During a one-year period in the U.S., 16% of youth ages 14 to 17 had been sexually victimized;
- Over the course of their lifetime, 28% of U.S. youth ages 14 to 17 had been sexually victimized;
- Children are most vulnerable to CSA between the ages of 7 and 13.

Child Sexual Abuse Statistics – The National Center for Victims of Crime. (n.d.). Retrieved October 7, 2022, from <https://victimsofcrime.org/child-sexual-abuse-statistics/>



Potential reactions to childhood sexual abuse include:

- An increase in nightmares and/or other sleeping difficulties
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Not wanting to be left alone with a particular individual(s)
- Sexual knowledge, language, and/or behaviors that are inappropriate for the child's age

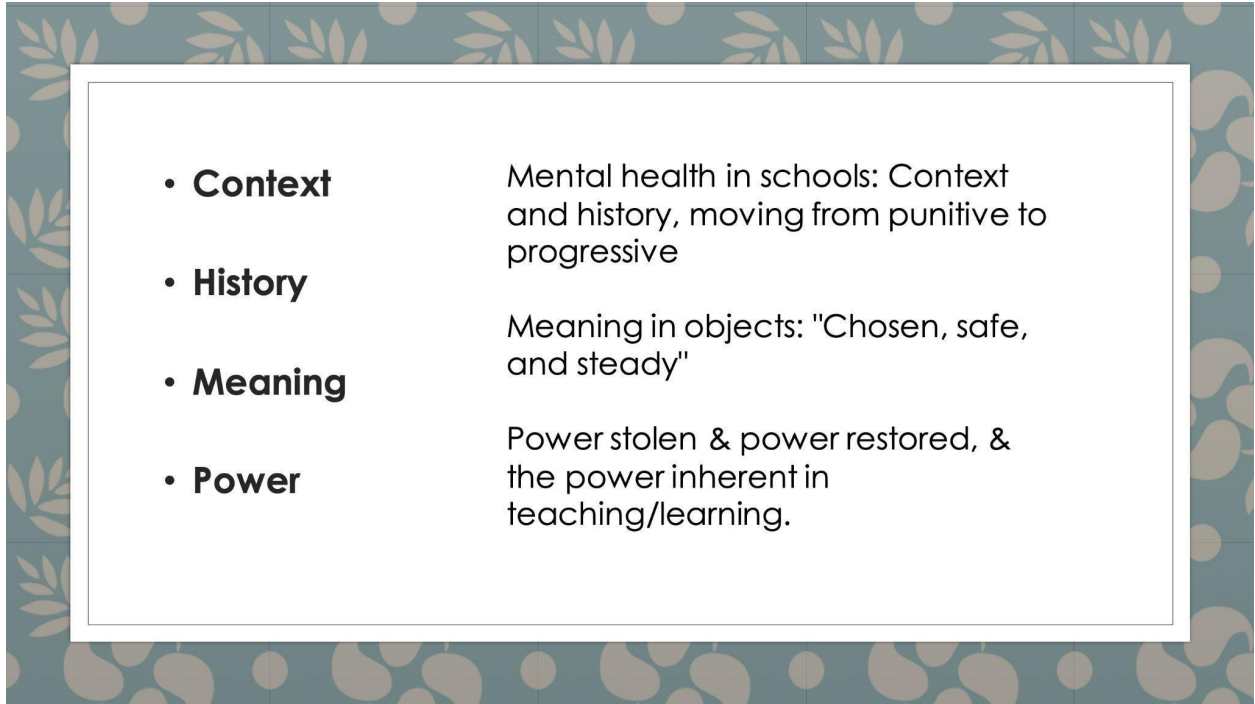
Peterson, S. (2018, February 1). Effects [Text]. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. <https://www.ncitsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/sexual-abuse/effects>

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network's website (rainn.org), adult survivors of childhood sexual trauma are:

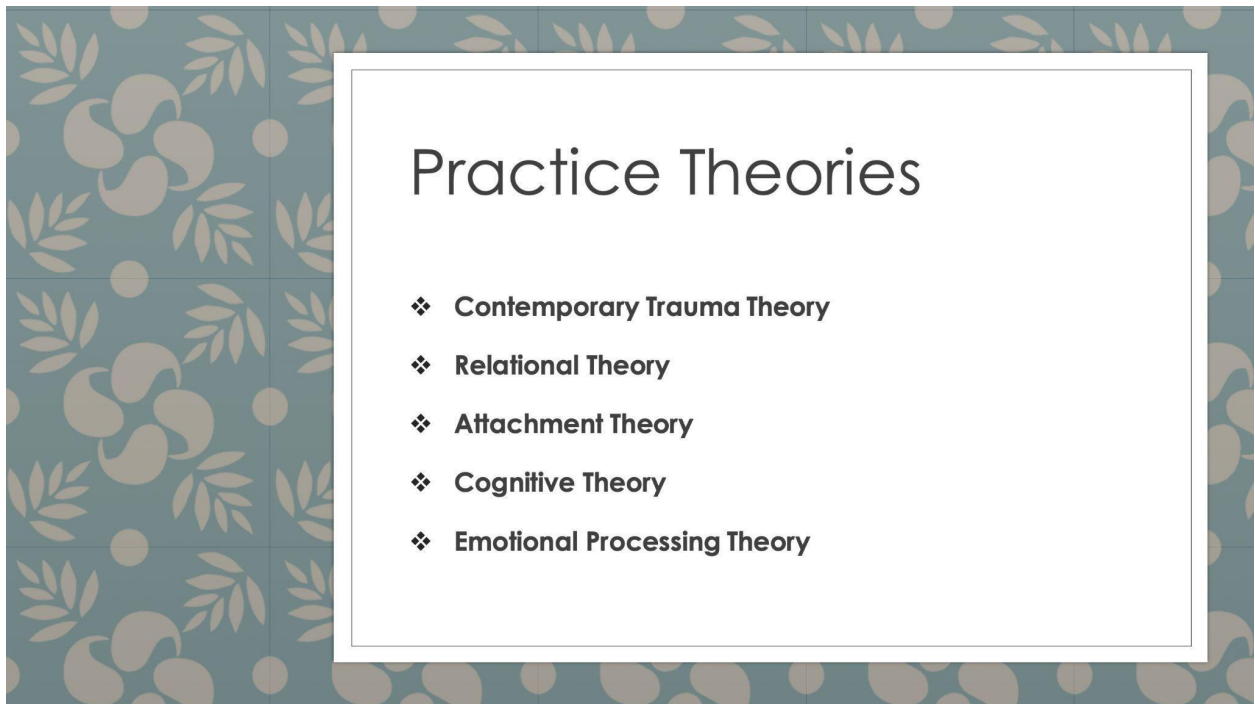
- About 4 times more likely to develop symptoms of drug abuse
- About 4 times more likely to experience PTSD as adults
- About 3 times more likely to experience a major depressive episode as adults

Zinzow, H. M., Resnick, H. S., McCauley, J. L., Amstadter, A. B., Ruggiero, K. J., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2012). Prevalence and risk of psychiatric disorders as a function of variant rape histories: results from a national survey of women. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 47(6), 893–902. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-011-0397-1>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Context	Mental health in schools: Context and history, moving from punitive to progressive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meaning	Meaning in objects: "Chosen, safe, and steady"
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power	Power stolen & power restored, & the power inherent in teaching/learning.



Practice Theories

- ❖ Contemporary Trauma Theory
- ❖ Relational Theory
- ❖ Attachment Theory
- ❖ Cognitive Theory
- ❖ Emotional Processing Theory

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Contemporary Trauma Theory (CTT)

- Views trauma survivors as needing to heal from their psychological/physical injuries rather than pathologizing their poor functioning or viewing them as morally deficient (Goodman, 2017).
- Trauma is disproportionately distributed across society due to social and economic injustices, with vulnerable populations and the economically disadvantaged bearing the burden.
- Exposure to trauma & violence >>> being locked in the fight-flight-freeze response.
 - >> Reactions to nonthreatening, everyday occurrences as if one's life were in danger
- Children that live in this fear response and are unsupported with emotion regulation end up overusing/overdeveloping their amygdala, the brain's emotion regulator.
 - >> High levels of impulsivity and reactivity, and inability to complete tasks of a high-order thinking ability. In the classroom, children might experience this as difficulties with emotion regulation, and information processing including sensory information processing. (Field, 2016)
- FRAMEWORK:
 - Disassociation – Individual's biopsychosocial system (personality, behaviors, actions) divides. Main defense mechanism for toleration and negotiation of trauma experience;
 - Attachment – Childhood trauma negatively impacts development of healthy, trusting relationships >>> insecure attachment; difficulty with interpersonal relationships
 - Reenactment – Trauma survivors seek out familiar relationships and show behaviors that reenact trauma experience(s) >>> Tension/anxiety release; feelings of control and connection
 - Long-term effects (adulthood) – (If left unresolved) can hinder stages of development and lead to physical and mental health comorbidities; can inhibit intra/interpersonal capabilities
 - Impairment in emotional capacities – Negative impact on limbic system (emotional support system) >>> inability to recognize/understand/self-regulate emotions; mood dysregulation (Goodman, 2017)

Field, Miranda. "Empowering Students in the Trauma-Informed Classroom Through Expressive Arts Therapy." *In education* 22.2 (2016): 55-71. Web.

Goodman, R. (2017). Contemporary trauma theory and trauma-informed care in substance use disorders: A conceptual model for integrating coping and resilience. *Advances in Social Work, 18*(1), 186-201. <https://doi.org/10.1896/21312>

Relational/Cultural Theory (RCT)

- Develop healthy relationships that foster growth; includes the client-therapist relationship (equal power distribution)
- Increase the number of mutual, growth-fostering relationships
- Empathy and mutuality are pillars
- Survivors of abuse can benefit from this approach/lens
- Herman's 3 stages of RCT trauma therapy:
 1. Safety – establish healthy, safe relationship with oneself and their therapist
 2. Recovery and mourning – develop complete, detailed narrative of the abuse/trauma (Banks, 2006)
 3. Reconnection – "clients have reconnected in a safe, integrated, respectful way with both themselves and the therapist and has been able to bring together the effects of their lives with the cognitive knowledge of what has happened in that life" (Banks, 2006, p. 32)

Banks, Amy. (2006). Relational Therapy for Trauma. *Journal of Trauma Practice, 5*:1, 25-47, DOI: [10.1300/J189v05n01_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J189v05n01_03)

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Attachment Theory

- "Responsive, nurturing relationships with caregivers are essential for a child's emotional and cognitive development" (Southwell, 2016, p. 115)
- Childhood trauma can disrupt the development of trusting and healthy relationships, leading to insecure attachment.
- Healthy developmental tasks*, because of having trusting, nurturing, and responsive caregivers, are:
 - Ability to self-regulate
 - Regulate shameful feelings
 - Stop dangerous impulses
 - Develop secure emotional base (sense of self-efficacy)
 - Positive sense of self and others
 - Capacity for trust, empathy, and effective relating (Southwell, 2016, p. 115)
- *Repeated abuse and neglect from caregivers can prevent a child from completing these core developmental tasks.

Southwell, J. (2016). Using 'expressive therapies' to treat developmental trauma and attachment problems in preschool-aged children. *Children Australia*, 41(2), 114-125. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cna.2016.7>

Cognitive and Behavioral Theories

- Behavioral Theory:
 - "Behavior (B) is triggered by preceding antecedents (A) and/or reinforced by following consequences (C)" (Early & Grady, 2017, p. 42)
- Cognitive Theory:
 - "Activating events (A) give rise to mediating beliefs (B) that then determine consequential feelings or behavior (C)" (Early & Grady, 2017, p. 43)
- Our thoughts influence our emotions and our behaviors.
- Our thoughts are influenced by our beliefs about ourselves, other people, and the world.
- In Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), attention is not given to what is causing the negative thoughts. Rather, attention is placed on moving forward and how to change the negative thoughts.
- Criticism: Very individual-focused. "The problem is within YOU." Does not look to external factors nor social problems as contributors to the problem.

Early, B. P., & Grady, M. D. (2017). Embracing the contribution of both behavioral and cognitive theories to cognitive behavioral therapy: Maximizing the richness. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 45(1), 39-48. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-016-0590-5>

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Resilience Theory

- Strengths-based
- Focus attention on student/client's positive, promotive factors (their assets & resources), thus interrupting risk factors and problem behaviors.
- Assets = self-efficacy and self-esteem
- Resources = Adult supports, mentors, youth programs
- Adverse life experiences lead to harmful impact (Zimmerman, 2013)
- Paying attention to both personal agency and structural systems is necessary for resiliency
- Important to note: Criticized as neoliberalist
 - Debated that the client/survivor is left with the responsibility of improving their life
 - >>> allowing for adverse social conditions to be disregarded (Van Breda, 2018).

Van Breda, A. (2018). A CRITICAL REVIEW OF RESILIENCE THEORY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR SOCIAL WORK. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 54(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.15270/54-1-411>

Zimmerman MA. Resiliency theory: a strengths-based approach to research and practice for adolescent health. *Health Educ Behav*. 2013 Aug;40(4):381-3. doi: 10.1177/1090198113493782. PMID: 23863911; PMCID: PMC3966565.

- TRIAGE - Student support staff (counselors, behavior interventionists, CSCT staff) is often limited; ratios of staff to students in need is disproportionate. Therefore, student support sessions are often interrupted by other students facing crisis situations.
- BOUNDARIES - Students' only trusted adults might be the student support staff. Student survivors of trauma often need more than what can be provided by the school/during the school day.
- Time spent with students is limited. School social worker/counselors must consider implications for diving into trauma work and then sending the student back to class.
- Working within an education system that prioritizes academics and test scores, the sad truth is that the school social worker's goal might be to keep the student regulated/help student self-regulate to get them back to their academic work instead of addressing presenting problem(s).
- Sharing student information between schools and within schools can be complicated. Staffing and funding limitations can inhibit immediate action.

Ethical Considerations & Possible Dilemmas

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Courses of Action

- ❖ Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- ❖ Expressive Arts Therapy
- ❖ Integrating Expressive Arts Therapy with TF-CBT
- ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)

- Developed specifically for childhood sexual abuse
- Adapted to treat other trauma
- Ages 3-21
- Short-term treatment: 12-25 sessions, 60-90 minutes
 - Parent involvement in treatment
- Didactic material and exercises:
 - Psychoeducation on trauma's impact and common reactions among children
 - Identifying and coping with wide range of emotions (parent and child)
 - Stress management for parent and child
 - Learning connection of thoughts > feelings > behaviors
 - Trauma narrative
 - Encourage communication between child and parent regarding sexual abuse experiences
 - Modify unhelpful or inaccurate trauma-related thoughts
 - Parent skills-development for child's emotional-behavioral needs (Faller, 2022)

Faller, K. Interventions for Physically and Sexually Abused Children. *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. Retrieved 3 Oct. 2022, from <https://oxfordre.com/socialwork/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.001.0001/acrefore-9780199975839-e-1224>.

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Expressive Arts Therapy

- Emphasis on feelings of safety (Field, 2016)
- "Tell without talking" about the trauma, especially the somatic experiences of it
- Imagine new narratives
- Play / Curiosity >> Opposes fear (fear goes away when people take risks)
- Self-regulation
 - Doodling, drawing, moving, singing, drumming – are all self-regulatory activities
 - A form of "doing" which can bring about self-regulation
- Social engagement (when done as a group) >> A way for people to be doing similar things together
- All this leads to how we repair trauma / how we experience ourselves >> Trauma disrupts the restoration process
- Psychological Trauma
 - Often difficult/impossible to explain with words
 - Impacts mind and body
 - Affects memory, social engagement, and quality of life
- Feelings, sensations of anxiety, terror, dissociation and loss of pleasure come with unresolved trauma aftermath
- Healing occurs in the PROCESS (interpreting imagery is NOT the main source of repair/transformation)
- "Response Art"
 - to communicate empathy to client/student during a session
 - for your own potential secondary trauma as the therapist (Malchiodi, 2020)

Field, Miranda. "Empowering Students in the Trauma-Informed Classroom Through Expressive Arts Therapy." *In education* 22.2 (2016): 55–71. Web.
 Malchiodi, C.A. (2020). *Trauma and Expressive Arts Therapy: Brain, Body, and Imagination in the Healing Process*. The Guilford Press.

Integrating TF-CBT with Expressive Arts Therapy

- "The large body of scientific evidence backing the usage of TF-CBT with child survivors of trauma, coupled with the knowledge that not all child survivors have verbal means to express experiences and emotions, supports the integration of expressive arts into TF-CBT practice" (Wymer, et al., 2020, p. 131)
- Meaning-making and processing >>> Children can externalize trauma through arts-based expression
- Uses guidance and assistance from a counselor
- Communicate their own trauma narrative and experiences how they choose
 - I.e. through play, writing, drawing/painting/sculpting, music
- Includes both individual sessions with child AND focused sessions with child and trusted caregiver that are facilitated by counselor. With caregiver,
 - Child shares trauma narrative in safe, supportive space
 - Plan developed between child and caregiver for anxiety and avoidance related to trauma
 - Strategies shared with child and caregiver for future risk reduction

Wymer, Brooke et al. "Integrating Expressive Arts Techniques Into Trauma-Focused Treatment With Children." *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 42.2 (2020): 124–139. Web.

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Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Program

- Psychoeducation, relaxation, social problem solving, cognitive restructuring, and exposure.
- Goals:
 - Change unhelpful thoughts and behaviors
 - Process trauma; create trauma narrative
- Exposure to traumatic stressors without any bad consequences decreases anxiety
- Created for school setting; training is required for counselors/school support staff
- Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET) Program
 - Sprung from CBITS Program
 - Not recommended for student survivors of sexual trauma or physical abuse
 - Conducted in a group setting
 - Opportunity for further research of SSET and Expressive Arts integration for group therapy?

Jaycox, Lisa H., Audra K. Langley, and Kristin L. Dean. Support for Students Exposed to Trauma: The SSET Program. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009. https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/R675.html.

- Child Abuse Potential Inventory, Child Behavior Checklist, Child PTSD Symptoms Scale, Child Trauma Screening Questionnaire (Horton, 2019)
- Youth Suicide Risk Screening and Assessment
 - (see handout)
- ACES, through a Just Practice lens
- Gather data throughout the school year. What time of day is student leaving class? Which classes? What were the triggers? Days per week/times per day? Male or female teachers?
- Regular check-ins with Mom. Questions for Mom: how is his behavior at home? Any statements of self-harm to self or others? Any new triggers? Gather data.
- Regular check-ins with outside therapist, with signed ROI
- Prioritize gathering information (without breaching confidentiality) from student's previous school(s) to identify potential triggers.

Possible Methods of EVALUATION

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References (p. 1)

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- Zinzow, H. M., Resnick, H. S., McCauley, J. L., Amstadter, A. B., Ruggiero, K. J., & Kilpatrick, D. G. (2012). Prevalence and risk of psychiatric disorders as a function of variant rape histories: results from a national survey of women. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 47(6), 893–902. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-011-0397-1>

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APPENDIX H

Expressive Arts-based Intervention



Case Presentation (through a Just Practice lens)

My hypothetical client (JD) is a 12-year old female. JD has a great sense of humor, is a loyal friend, a talented artist, and is generous and kind. JD is of Mexican ethnicity and lives significantly below the poverty line and currently resides in Missoula, Montana. She shows high levels of strength and resiliency against the systemic racism, oppression, and historical and generational trauma that she and her family constantly face. JD also has a history of sexual trauma which lasted for two years and ended three years ago. She has been diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety, and depression. She has had a recent suicide attempt and reports frequent suicidal ideation.

JD is parented by her single mother with whom she lives; JD's mother also has a history of childhood sexual trauma and suffers from Substance Use Disorder. JD often is left to her own devices to wake herself and her two younger siblings and assist them to school, make meals, and care for them throughout the evening as her mother works a night shift. She appears to be regressing after the death of her cat who has been a comfort to her. Regression is evidenced by increasing isolation from friends and family, frequent crying throughout the school day, and difficulty sleeping.

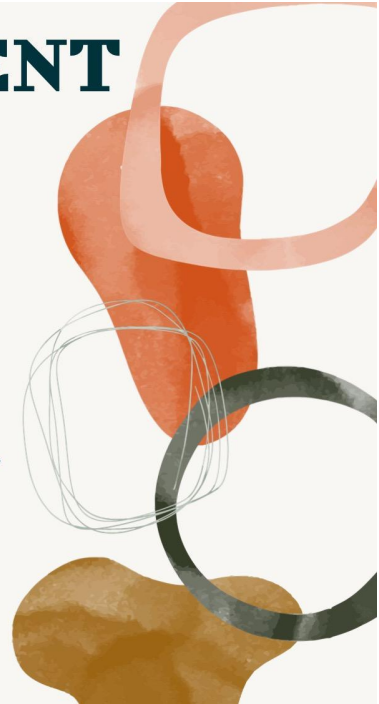
The arts-based intervention will take place in a private counseling room at JD's school during the last period of her school day, which is her free period and is 50 minutes long.

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BILATERAL MOVEMENT and DRAWING

This movement-based activity can be used as a warm-up or as the main intervention. I will use it as the main intervention. For a warm-up, I will ask the client to mirror me as we pair our breath with arm movements; the arms will move in the same motions that we will later use with our drawing utensils on paper.

Five drawings will be created using distinctly different movements. Prior to the first drawing, the client will be asked to recall a memory of feeling held and supported in a time of tension. The imagery for the five drawings will be reminiscent of 1. a cradle, 2. pendulum, 3. circle, 4. vibrant outward movement, and 5. return to the cradle image.



Identifying SENSORY COMFORT

Cultivating Trust and Creating a Safe Space



01

Lighting

Ask the client if they prefer natural light, bright, or dim lighting

02

Music

Offer to provide soothing, calming music (i.e., nature sounds, low pitch, slow rhythms)

03

Snacks

Have client's favorite snacks on hand to provide comfort and gratification

04

Freedom

Give client freedom to walk around and explore the room (i.e., touch puppets, sand table)

05

Tactile

Allow client to feel different art mediums (i.e. pastels, crayons) and explore tactile and olfactory sensations

06

Humanistic

Use unconditional positive regard to client's expressions, vocalizations, process, creations, and trauma narrative if they choose to share it

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Providing CHOICE and PACING Exposure



Modalities

Offer an assortment of art modalities for JD to choose from. Perhaps she will tell her trauma narrative through drawing, puppets, movement, or writing... or perhaps she will choose not tell any of it at all which is perfectly okay



Movement

Lead with a simple, relaxing movement activity to release any stress or physical tension before starting the Expressive Arts Continuum. I would also offer mindfulness, meditation, and breath work as options to start the session.



Mirroring

If JD comes to the session emotionally dysregulated, I will offer a body mirroring exercise where she and I take turns leading the movements, and also pacing each other in the same way through drawing (following each other's marker), allowing her to be the leader as much or as little as she wants.

Choice and Pacing Exposure

Accommodating for client's Multiple Intelligences



Power

I will frontload JD by letting her know she can start and stop the activity at any point, and restart if she chooses, letting her know she is in control and shares equal power ("power with") in the intervention.



Mediums

JD will have the choice in what art medium she would like to use (i.e., oil or chalk pastels, watercolors, crayons, markers, or colored pencils).



Mars

JD will know that the space we are in is safe and free from possible interruptions, even though we are located in her school. There will be a "do not disturb" sign on the door, and I will leave time for further processing and debriefing at the end of the intervention.

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Establish STRUCTURE and PREDICTABILITY

- Inform JD of the process: “I have been noticing that people often find this art activity to be very relaxing and calming. Would you like to hear more about it?” If JD says ‘Yes’, I would continue, “Great! You will make 5 separate drawings on 5 different pieces of paper. Don’t worry about what it’ll look like or about drawing a picture. It’s more about movement - you’ll see once we get started.”
- Explain to JD the different tactile sensations of each medium and allow her to explore them for herself. I will also explain some mediums allow for less control but are more fluid than others and vice versa (i.e., oil pastels vs colored pencils)
- Instruct JD to choose only two colors (one for each hand) and to keep her drawing within the confines of the edges of the paper for structure. I would also inform her at the start of the activity that she will be able to switch colors between each of the five bilateral guided drawing exercises to give her a sense of predictability.
- Through the warm-up (using arm movements), JD will be familiar with the hand/arm motions used for the drawing portion.



Identifying the WINDOW of TOLERANCE

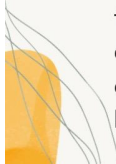
With JD who has experienced trauma and abuse...

I will try to provide lightheartedness, joy, and playfulness when appropriate in order to help grow her Window of Tolerance.

I will also aim to keep a calm, quiet presence when she is sharing intense emotions and entering either hyper- or hypo-arousal.

I will try my best to stay grounded in my own Window of Tolerance to "demonstrate" to her nervous system what it looks/feels like to be inside the Window.


If JD seems ready to tell her trauma story without vocalizing it, I will offer for her to tell it perhaps through stuffed animals, a narrative activity like the Tree of Life, or use Malchiodi’s (2020) example of drawing an emotion like Fear and ask, “if Fear could talk, what would it say?” These would all create distance between my client and her distress, thus helping her move towards authentically and honestly expressing her trauma.



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Provide PSYCHOEDUCATION



- I will use mainly videos and short verbal explanations to educate my 12-year old client in order to best capture her attention.
 - To describe the Window of Tolerance, I will show her this captivating video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZnJMyNT620>
 - I will explain Expressive Arts Therapy by highlighting these points:
 - It is not about the skill, but rather the creative process. You don't know what is going to happen until the end; sit with the unknowing.
 - When traumatic things happen to us, our brains cannot usually "figure it out". Our bodies are better equipped to work through negative emotions and feelings. Art starts with our bodies, not our brains.
 - There is hope. Art can help tell trauma stories and also imagine and create stories of hope, side by side.
- 

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Appendix I

Supporting Refugee Students: Meeting Agendas and Notes

Meeting Notes

International Rescue Committee, Soft Landing, and C.S. Porter Middle School

11/28/2022

C.S. Porter Middle School, Amanda Maughan’s Room

- We started with the purpose of the meeting: To bring C.S. Porter Middle School, Soft Landing, and the IRC together to make connections and build relationships with a goal to further support our shared students.
- Introductions included names and role descriptions. Julie asked everyone to also state any limitations of their roles. (In hindsight, going around and saying a “hope” for the meeting would have been a good way to do this. Next time!)
 - The running theme for limitations is CAPACITY
- Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity
 - Preferred terminology:
 - Consider using “Students from Syria”, for example, but “refugee” is also acceptable
 - Most students identify as “refugees” - most common self-identifier
 - Educational resources (for staff/faculty on the different cultures, regions of origin of shared students)
 - Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange: <https://coresourceexchange.org/>
 - Ask students themselves and their parents
 - Gender norms and separate spaces
 - Cultural practices often vary between families
 - Switchboard: <https://switchboardta.org/>
 - Webinars
 - Info sessions
 - Community contacts
 - [REDACTED] will follow up
- Collaboration: Depending on capacity of youth program at Soft Landing: potential for [REDACTED] to come to C.S. Porter once a week to facilitate a lunch group, or a group during WIN, or Flagship type of program. Brainstorming ideas:
 - Target 7th grade boys during WIN (last period of the day, 2-2:45pm), followed by tutoring at Soft Landing
 - IRC and Soft Landing possibly can collaborate

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- Space for groups is a limitation at school... Potential for more space at the church near Porter?
- Resources: IRC - mental health side is new in Missoula
 - Individuals get screenings in 30, 60, 90 days, 6 months and 1 year
 - Mac informs refugees on mental health resources during intake
 - Up to the families to decide what to do from there
 - Stigma exists quite a bit primarily with males
 - Parents “we’re just happy to be here” even though the kids might not feel the same
- More Notes...
 - Oftentimes refugee parents report they do not know how to parent their kids here (in this country)
 - How do we communicate our systems (school)?
 - Could there be more events where we invite families in and have translators?
 - Community-based cultural learning meeting
 - Students not eating at school due to choices
 - Go over food at enrollment with the families
 - Other information to parents about various things
 - Students getting to sports - access
 - Activity bus - Kammy trying to champion
 - Figuring out transportation is a challenge
 - Behavior concerns at school:
 - Cell phone behavior
 - Worries classroom teachers
 - Inform parents?
 - Mostly boys. Lead a boys group?
 - Internet safety course
 - It isn’t just refugee students, but what makes it different is talking with the parents and communicating repercussions
- Information sharing between us all
 - Do we sign ROIs with each other and with parents? Can this happen?

Thank you all! It was a pleasure coming together. I will send out another meeting invitation soon.

Take care, Julie

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Meeting Notes from 1/23/23

- We started with introductions for a few new people who joined the group. So glad you could join us!
 - ██████████, IRC; ██████████, 7th gr teacher; ██████████, 7th gr teacher

- In-School Group for Refugee Students
 - Purpose of group
 - *Not* academic; students need a brain break
 - Connection; safe space; acceptance
 - Create bonding experiences
 - ██████████ is learning ways through Trauma Initiative Network
 - **Ask refugee student participants** what they want/need
 - Ideas: Actual soccer and video game soccer (FIFA); movement-oriented
 - Needs to be structured
 - Invite non-refugee peers; ask students and teachers who to include
 - Paper football game; see ██████████
 - Establish subcommittee
 - Julie as primary leader for student group
 - ██████████ and/or AmeriCorp volunteer from Soft Landing to support/co-lead
 - ██████████, ██████████, and/or others from IRC (adult from refugee community?) for guidance and ideas, not for co-leading (however, they are welcome to)
 - ██████████ is connecting Julie with IRC therapist for further guidance
 - Student representative?
 - Others are welcome

- Students are struggling with being seen as “the other”
 - Ideas to enhance connection to refugee students within the school/classroom
 - Strikers Soccer teams - ██████████ and Julie
 - IRC might also help with incentives, shin guards, etc.
 - Inviting students to share about their culture with peers, teachers
 - Bulletin boards with info on language and possibly culture

- Undesirable food choices impede student success
 - Access and/or information on culturally relevant food - *IRC connect with ██████████?*

- Teacher training materials for those who work with refugee students
 - ██████████ (the ESL teacher at high schools) has created materials

- Next Steps
 - Schedule next meeting date - *Julie*
 - Invite adult(s) from refugee community; **center these voices** - *IRC*
 - Invite 7th gr. teacher ██████████ (has more contact w/ 7th gr. boys) - *Julie*
 - Subcommittee mtg date TBD; anyone is welcome to be a part of that - *Julie*

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C.S. Porter, IRC, and Soft Landing
Group for Refugee Students

Meeting Agenda: March 28, 2023

Recap from last meeting (3/13):

We finalized some logistics for the refugee student group:

- When:
 - Tuesdays, 2-2:45pm; Weekly for 4-6 weeks; Hopeful start date April 4th... need to send students home with opt-out forms and give some time to get them back
- Where:
 - C.S. Porter Soccer fields or the Cougar Gym if needed
 - [REDACTED] is at Porter on Tuesdays to bring some of the kids to Soft Landing after.
- Who:
 - Five 7th graders and possibly three 6th graders (Syrian, Afghan, and Congolese)
- Facilitator: Julie (middle school); Co-Facilitator: [REDACTED] (IRC)

We need to square away Parent Permission and Volunteers:

- Parent Permission
 - Opt-out form - will be translated and explained to parents
 - [REDACTED] is working on it
- Volunteers
 - Do NOT need background checks
 - DO need to sign up in Volunteer Portal on C.S. Porter website and sign a confidentiality agreement - *Julie is working with [REDACTED] (FRC) to set this up. Julie will send link when it is ready to be shared with volunteers.*
 - Interested volunteers: IRC ([REDACTED]); SL ([REDACTED], plus UM Master of Ed. grad student)
 - Soccer Alliance might be able to help with low-barrier access and possibly volunteer to help with soccer portion of the group - [REDACTED] and Julie are currently playing phone tag
 - Connection to adults is great, and we want this! However, at this point we have just as many adult volunteers as students in the group. - *Topic for further discussion. Perhaps start with just [REDACTED] and Julie for the first week until this gets ironed out.*
- Group purpose -
 - Peer Connection - Create bonding experiences between refugee students and with some of their non-refugee peers
 - Adult Connection - with adults from IRC, Soft Landing, and C.S. Porter
 - Idea: Invite 8th grade teachers to quickly “sub in” on the soccer field, if it falls within their prep to make connections in preparation for next year?
 - Social-emotional learning, conflict resolution skills

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C.S. Porter, IRC, and Soft Landing
Group for Refugee Students

- Identified by SL as areas for growth: Consent; Communicating frustration
 - Brain break after being overloaded all day as ELL students
 - Academic programs for ELL learners (via [REDACTED], a Master of Education student at UM who is connected with Soft Landing - [REDACTED] is the contact.)
 - Future possibilities at Porter?
 - C.S. Porter could use interested volunteers to help at recess
 - Possibly next year with AmeriCorp volunteers from SL and IRC
 - *Please see shared Google Doc to add ideas for a Group Name and Discussion Topics*

Topics for Next Meeting

DISCUSSION TOPIC ideas:

- Consent- at Soft Landing after school tutoring, a phrase we repeat a lot is “you can touch yourself but you have to ask before you touch other people” so I think consent is a really important topic to talk about
- Communicating frustration- a lot of the boys can get reactive when they feel like something is unfair, so it would be nice to have a session talking about how to communicate that
- Resource: page 106 in this toolkit. I think we could do a lot around “Step 1: Cooling off when upset” using mindfulness and emotion regulation skills. We could also practice Steps 2-6 with them using mock scenarios:
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/new-comer-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf>

GROUP NAME ideas:

- Refugee Boys Social Emotional Learning Group
- Soccer and Strengths

Details:

- Julie will be in touch re: start date once opt-out forms are distributed. Possible start dates are hopefully no later than April 4th or April 11th.
- Be on the lookout for an email with a link to the Volunteer Portal and more information about how many volunteers we are able to have.

Thank you so much!

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C.S. Porter, IRC, and Soft Landing
Group for Refugee Students

Meeting Notes: March 28, 2023

Group Logistics:

We finalized some logistics for the refugee student group:

- When: Tuesdays, 2-2:45pm; for 5 weeks
 - **April 11th - May 9th**
- Where: C.S. Porter Soccer fields or the Cougar Gym if needed
- Who: Five 7th graders and possibly three 6th graders (Syrian, Afghan, and Congolese students.) [redacted] identified which students would benefit the most.
- Facilitator: Julie (middle school); Co-Facilitator: [redacted] (IRC)

We need to square away Parent Permission and Volunteers:

- Parent Permission Opt-out form - will be translated
 - *Plan is to send it out at the end of this week or early next week.*
- Volunteers
 - Do NOT need background checks
 - DO need to sign up in Volunteer Portal on MCPS website and sign a confidentiality agreement - *Here is the link:*
https://mcpsmt.galaxydigital.com/need/detail?need_id=794907
 - Interested volunteers: IRC ([redacted]); SL ([redacted], plus UM Master of Ed. grad student); Missoula Soccer Alliance
 - Volunteers will need to contact Julie for more information prior to the session(s) they plan on joining: jnissi@mcpsmt.org

Ideas for 1st Group Session -

Building the Container

- Students lead the creation of the group rules and name the group = shared power
- Create opportunities for joy = provide favorite snack (Takis); soccer

Future Sessions -

Skill-Building Curriculum:

- Consent-
 - Phrases Soft Landing uses:
 - “You can touch yourself but you have to ask before you touch other people”
 - “Show me you can do it”
- Communicating frustration-
 - Teaching to use “I” statements instead of “we”, for example, “I feel x when y happens”, and model this for them
- More ideas in Ch. 4 of this toolkit from the Dept. of Ed. for supporting social-emotional needs of refugee and asylum seeker students-
 - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/new-comer-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf>
 - Practice mindfulness techniques for “Step 1: Cooling off when upset”
 - Practice Steps 2-6 using mock scenarios

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APPENDIX J

The Indian Child Welfare Act: The Importance of Child Welfare Practitioners Developing Sonar

Today, many white people in the United States find talking about race to be very challenging indeed. Even a student who is in a social justice-focused, masters-level university program, in which they and their peers are working towards careers in fighting racial oppression, can feel discomfort while talking about race in class. Why is this? According to Treuer, there are a few main factors: “*blind spots, misunderstandings, and fear*” (Treuer, 2021, 0:45). This paper will discuss these reasons behind why white people resist talking about race and how this resistance negatively impacts the efforts of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) to unify Native American (NA) children with their families, tribes, cultures, and communities.

The ICWA is a piece of legislation that was passed in 1978 and was prompted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians v. Holyfield case, which gave the final jurisdiction in a NA adoption case to tribal court, and was also a general response to:

rising concern in the mid-1970’s over the consequences to Indian children, Indian families, and Indian tribes of abusive child welfare practices that resulted in the separation of large numbers of Indian children from their families and tribes through adoption or foster care placement, usually in non-Indian homes. (Fort, 2019, p. 3)

One of these abusive child welfare practices that is spoken of here is the U.S. government’s systematic removal of NA children from their homes during the Boarding School Era, which included atrocities such as “American Indian children (being) beaten for speaking their native languages, (and) removed from their families and communities” which had “devastating consequences for American Indian families and communities” (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2016, p. 59). This era, along with NA assimilation and adoption eras, has since led to intergenerational and historical traumas, “ie the enduring effects of trauma due to the colonization,

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marginalization, oppression, and destruction of (NA) peoples and their cultures that persist across multiple generations” (Snowshoe, 2016 p. 69), to which social workers gravely need to strive to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to today, in order to be effective and ethical child welfare practitioners for NA children and families.

If non-NA social workers can first acknowledge that they have racial discomfort, then they can begin the process of seeing ways they themselves can change, thus leading to sparking further change in the current U.S. child welfare system as a whole. They play a crucial role in whether or not the ICWA is upheld and, therefore, in determining outcomes for NA children, families, and tribal nations. As Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Chief Isaac stated in 1978:

Culturally, the chances of Indian survival are significantly reduced if our children, the only real means for the transmission of the tribal heritage, are to be raised in non-Indian homes and denied exposure to the ways of their People (Fort, 2019, p. 4).

In order for improvements to be made, child welfare practitioners, who are primarily white people, must first use what Treuer metaphorically refers to as “sonar”, which he describes as “sound waves going out and sound waves coming back” (Treuer, 2021, 01:52). Using sonar will allow practitioners to take a deep and meaningful investigation into their own personal *blind spots, misunderstandings, and fears* in relation to NA culture, tribal sovereignty, and the survival and potential growth of NA communities.

White Americans are often oblivious to the everyday unearned benefits that they have just by being able to retain their culture, heritage, language, and ancestors’ (stolen) land, which are *blind spots* (Treuer, 2021). Even for those white Americans who are trying to be “good people”, these blind spots are inevitably going to be present and will lead to ignorance in situations concerning race such as the traditional Americanized family structure as being the “correct” family structure. This dangerous way of thinking has led to U.S. child welfare

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practitioners' removal of NA children from their homes and tribal communities because of cultural differences in family structure. To avoid this severance of generational culture and community, child welfare practitioners need to be attune to the variances from tribe to tribe, such as the fact that "many Native parents relied on the help of their families, extended families, and community members to raise their children" and that "native children could be left for long periods of time with extended family members, with the trust that the child would be well cared for" (Fort, 2019, p. 6). In fact, "Indian communities are often shocked to learn that parents they regard as excellent caregivers have been judged unfit by non-Indian social workers" (Fort, 2019, p. 18). By practicing using sonar, child welfare workers can shift their perspectives and gain a better understanding of the validity of family structures that are unfamiliar to them.

Social workers, among other Americans, often maintain the *misunderstanding* that the ICWA is a discriminatory, race-based law, while in fact it "seeks to protect the rights of the Indian child as an Indian and the rights of the Indian community and tribe in retaining its children in its society" (Fort, 2019, p. 5). It is important for social workers to know that Native Americans "are nations... That is, they are separate peoples inhabiting specific territories over which they wield some governmental control or jurisdiction" (Wilkins, p.55). As such, the ICWA is an effort to restore the lineage and generations belonging to sovereign tribal nations that the U.S. government forcefully took away. Other misunderstandings by social workers include,

In judging the fitness of a particular family, many social workers, ignorant of Indian cultural values and social norms, make decisions that are wholly inappropriate in the context of Indian family life and so they frequently discover neglect or abandonment where none exists. (Fort, 2019, p. 18).

Such misunderstandings and lack of knowledge on the part of child welfare practitioners often lead to child separation from their extended families and tribal communities, and therefore their

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cultural connectedness which has “strong associations with the mental health... with (NA) youth” (Snowshoe, 2016, p.67).

Treuer uses the concept of “white fragility” to illustrate the unsupported *fear* that white Americans have over losing their Euro-centric, colonially-based, dominant culture as other racially diverse cultures grow in the U.S. White Americans are “steeped in the culture of colonization” which Treuer defines as “taking one culture and language, and using it to supplant others” and therefore was “about erasure, so naturally one of the greatest fears of someone who is steeped in that culture of colonization is in fear of their own erasure” (Treuer, 2021, 21:25). Social workers need to dig deeply for the bravery within themselves in order to face these unfounded fears and try every day to overcome their white fragility in order to best serve other racial groups. How can this be accomplished? As Truer states, “as we go forward, lean in, read, talk to people who have perspectives different from your own. Take all those folk you want to give a good talking to, and give them a good listening to” (Treuer, 2021, 26:00).

Child welfare practitioners need to look at their blind spots and take action to educate themselves on the fact that different tribes, and even individual families within each tribe, have diverse family systems that will vary from their own. They must become knowledgeable and culturally competent, so that they can recognize that *different* does not mean *wrong*. When practitioners can begin to develop sonar by listening to the various experiences of others across race and culture and being open to understanding new concepts, then it will become possible to avoid blind spots, misunderstandings, and fears which ultimately lead to detrimental outcomes for NA children and families in the U.S. child welfare system.

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APPENDIX K

Social Policy Analysis: Recommendations for Policy Change and Fiscal Summary

We have come together to form a coalition to stop Montana state legislation that harms transgender, non-binary, two-spirit, and non-gender conforming youth (TGNC). Member organizations of the coalition include: Montana ACLU Human Rights Campaign, Montana Human Rights Network, the Coalition of Advocates for Montana’s Public Schools, and the Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The coalition also includes various members of Montana’s LGBTQ+ community and their allies, as well as several of Montana’s school administrators, faculty, and staff. The following set of recommendations outline in detail the changes that our coalition is proposing to achieve our goal of stopping state legislation and policies that are harmful to TGNC.

The first recommendation is to enlarge our coalition and build a broader base of supporters who care about this issue across the state of Montana. Potential new member organizations are: Love Lives Here (Flathead Valley), Anaconda Coalition for Tolerance Education - ACTE! (Anaconda), Montanans for Immigrant Justice, Missoula Rises (Missoula), Flathead Reservation Human Rights Coalition (Flathead Reservation), Not In Our Town Billings - NIOT (Billings), Montana Interfaith Network, Helena Youth Against Gun Violence, and Montana Gender Alliance. These organizations have been identified because they are affiliates of the Montana Human Rights Network and most likely have the common values of equality for all people, safety and well-being of youth, and, therefore, non-discriminatory policies for TGNC (*Montana Human Rights Network*, 2016). These organizations are connected to their communities respectively across Montana and can likely generate support through their members, who also presumably care about our coalition’s goal. This will broaden our reach across the state and amplify far and wide our message to stop legislation that harms TGNC youth.

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Another way to build the coalition is to utilize the trainings and resources that are accessible to MHRN from the Equality Federation, a national nonprofit of which MHRN is a member organization. According to their website, “The Equality Federation is an advocacy accelerator rooted in social justice, building power in our network of state-based lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) advocacy organizations” (Cruz et al., n.d.). Through their Advocacy and Civic Engagement Program, there is potential for help with organizing, messaging, and strategizing. It would be worth exploring all the training opportunities that are offered to MHRN through this program, for according to their website, “We provide our entire member network of state partners with coaching, training, cutting-edge technology, and data tools so that leaders on the ground can maximize their impact” (Cruz et al., n.d.). Maximizing the potential of any of the Equality Federation’s offerings and leveraging those resources could have profound impacts on building the coalition.

The second recommendation is to create a Bill Draft Request for the 2025 Montana legislative session. The purpose of the bill draft is to create legislation that will establish gender identity and gender expression as protected classes in Montana. Currently under Montana’s protected classes, “Sex” is listed, followed by, “including pregnancy, maternity, sexual harassment, sexual orientation” (*Human Rights Bureau, 2023*). Gender identity and gender expression are not explicitly listed as protected classes under Montana state law according to the Human Rights Bureau page on the Montana Department of Labor and Industry website (2023).

There are currently twenty-one states plus the District of Columbia that have “full LGBTQ Nondiscrimination Protections” meaning that “state law protects people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations” (Freedom for All Americans, n.d.). It will be wise for us as a coalition to refer to some of these twenty-one states for guidance. To start, I recommend that we refer to

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Washington state as a guiding example. Washington not only has full LGBTQ nondiscrimination protections written into the state law, but it also has gender-inclusive schools (*Gender-inclusive schools*, n.d.).

As a result of gender identity and gender expression being protected classes under Washington state law, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been able to enforce gender-inclusive schools. This shows the positive trickle-down effects that are possible through this legislation. Their website reads: “Civil rights laws prohibit discrimination and discriminatory harassment on the basis of gender expression and gender identity in Washington public schools. **All** students have the right to be treated consistent with their gender identity at school” (*Gender-inclusive schools*, n.d.). This is precisely the type of legislation to which we will be aiming at the state level in the 2025 Montana legislative session.

We can look to Washington state as a guide for its use of legislative language as well. According to the Washington OSPI website, “Gender identity and gender expression are protected classes under Washington state law, which means schools cannot discriminate against students based on their gender identity or gender expression” (*Gender-inclusive schools*, n.d.). Like Washington state law exhibits, it will be important for us to include both “gender identity” and “gender expression” into the legislative language of our bill draft in order to provide wider protection for the LGBTQ+ community and avoid creating any potential loopholes that opposers might find.

We will need to give the drafter as much information as we can provide in the bill draft request. We will first inform the drafter of what the problem is that we are addressing: legislation that harms LGBTQ+ youth, specifically TGNC youth (O’Connell et al., 2023). The Problem Statement and Analysis report that was sent to our coalition members has data points and research that will be useful for the bill drafter. Key points to highlight from that report are:

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- Recent studies tell us that TGNC youth have a greater chance of thriving when their chosen gender is affirmed. The use of chosen names and gender-affirming pronouns for TGNC youth is linked to a reduction in mental health risks such as depression and suicidality (Russell et al., 2018). To deny TGNC youth of their gender-affirming names and pronouns is, therefore, cruel and discriminatory.
- National data shows that LGBTQ+ youth are four times more likely to die by suicide, and almost half of TGNC youth have strongly considered suicide (Rosston, 2022).
- Research shows that when TGNC youth are in non-gender-affirming spaces and segregated based on gender assigned at birth, they experience greater mistreatment and negative experiences (Coolhart & Brown, 2017).
- It is important to recognize that TGNC are a part of every community and “are present in every racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographical group” (CDC, 2021). We must advocate for what we all know to be true: the existence of TGNC youth is not up for debate, and we need to do all we can to keep this population of children safe from harm.

Logistically, we as a coalition will need to decide if we want to complete a bill draft request form, send an email to the Montana Legislative Services Division, or directly ask a staffer of the Legislative Services Division. We will also need to provide the best contact information for our coalition and for our partner organizations (O’Connell et al., 2023). It is my recommendation that we directly ask a staffer of the Legislative Services Division for the purpose of making that human contact and building relationships. Taking seemingly small steps to connect with others and build authentic relationships is foundational to Adrienne Maree Brown’s (2021) concept of *emergent strategy*. According to Brown, using this strategy “is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for” (2021, p. 6). Establishing a human connection with a staffer of the Legislative

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Services Division could have ripple effects that lead to greater support of LGBTQ+ rights, spread our messaging of the importance of gender identity and gender expression being a protected class, and further our goals and connections down the road.

The final recommendation is to find a moderate Republican legislator who is willing to carry this bill into the 2025 legislative session. We will need to wait until the 2024 elections to determine who we will approach for sponsoring the bill. The fact that there is a federal law in place that prohibits discrimination due to gender identity in the workplace (Hudson, 2014) might help to convince the legislator to support our bill. Additionally, our coalition could point out to the legislator the 2020 Supreme Court case, *Stephens v. Harris Funeral Home*, where the Court ruled that Yellowstone County unlawfully discriminated against a transgender woman employee of the county and therefore violated the Montana Human Rights Act “because it denies coverage to those of transgender status on the basis of sex” (Gender Identity is Protected by the MHRA, 2020). Our coalition could also pose to the yet-to-be-found moderate-Republican legislator that by *not* including gender identity and gender expression as protected classes, it is in violation of Montana’s constitution which “provides independent protections, including an explicit right to individual dignity” (Gender Identity is Protected by the MHRA, 2020).

Washington state and Washington OSPI can serve as a gold standard for what we want to accomplish through our coalition. We must draft new legislation that will make gender identity and gender expression to be protected classes in Montana. Once that is accomplished, we can begin to advocate to the Montana Office of Public Instruction to create gender-inclusive schools which would include civil rights guidelines that protect TGNC youth. It is important we look to the future in a positive light to keep us motivated. At the same time we need to stay focused on our goals. On this note, in summary, I recommend 1.) Enlarge our coalition and build a broader base of supporters who care about this issue; 2.) Create a Bill Draft Request by directly asking a Legislative Services Division staffer; 3.) Refer to Washington state as our guide for legislative

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language and action steps; and 4.) find a moderate Republican legislator who is willing to carry this bill.

Fiscal Summary

This fiscal summary is for the recommendation to build a broader base of supporters who care about this issue of establishing gender identity and gender expression as a protected class in the state of Montana. Hiring Equality Federation for “coaching, training, cutting-edge technology, and data tools so that leaders on the ground can maximize their impact” (Cruz et al., n.d.) can cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000 based on the level of support that we need and the amount of funds we can generate.

Assumptions

1. Since Montana Human Rights Network (MHRN) is a member organization, many of Equality Federation’s trainings and tools will be accessible to our coalition at no cost.
2. MHRN’s affiliates will join our supporter base right away and assist in fundraising efforts along with our coalition member organizations.

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APPENDIX L

Testimony to Montana Senate Judiciary Committee: In Opposition to SB 99

Julie Nissi
February 5, 2023
Testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee
SB 99

It is important to understand that the gender spectrum is not new. We just have language for it now. Questioning one’s gender and sexual identity has always been in existence, and it will continue to be so. LGBTQ youth who are discovering their sexual identities need trusted adults in the school system to talk to and support their mental health. To take that away would mean putting LGBTQ youth at risk of increased mental health issues and suicidality. We know the statistics, as stated by The Trevor Project (www.thetrevorproject.org) and referenced in the Montana DPHHS’s Suicide Safe Care for Patients document:

- “LGBTQ youth are 4 times more likely, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers.
- Nearly half of young transgender people have seriously thought about taking their lives, and one quarter report having made a suicide attempt.
- LGBTQ youth who come from highly rejecting families are 8.4 times as likely to have attempted suicide as LGBT peers who reported no or low levels of family rejection.
- Each episode of LGBTQ victimization, such as physical or verbal harassment”

I urge you to be on the side of Montana’s youth. We cannot put more of our youth at risk of suicide. Now is not the time to keep LGBTQ youth from talking with trusted, safe, professionals. Do your part on behalf of Montana’s youth and vote NO on SB 99.

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Portfolio Competencies and Dimensions Checklist

Competencies	Narrative	Appendices	Presentation
1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior (K,S,V,C&A)		K, S, C&A, V	
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice (K,S,V, C&A)		K, V, S, C&A	
3. Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice (K,S,V,C&A)	S, C&A	K, V	
4. Engage in Practice-informed Research and Research-informed Practice (K,S,V,C&A)		K, V, S, C&A	
5. Engage in Policy Practice (K,S,V,C&A)	C&A	S, K, V	
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities (K,S,V, C&A)		K, S, V, C&A	
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities (K,S,V,C&A)		K, V, S, C&A	
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities (K,S,V,C&A)	V, C&A	K, S	
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities (K,S,V,C&A)	V, C&A	K, S	
10. Apply forms of leadership to support collaborative, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary relationships, and active community participation in addressing the intersection of local and global issues impacting your community and greater geographic region (K,S,V,C&A)	K, S, V, C&A		

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