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### Knowing I Don't Know

Leo Justin Keiser  
keiserleo10@gmail.com

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MSW Portfolio: Knowing I Don't Know

Leo Keiser

University of Montana

Committee:

Jen Molloy Ph.D., MSW, Portfolio Chair

Sarah Reese, Ph.D., MSW, Portfolio Committee Member

Amy Allison Thompson, LCSW, MSW Portfolio Committee Member

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<b>Competencies</b>	<b>Narrative</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Presentation</b>
1. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior	X	X	X
2. Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice	X	X	X
3. Engage in Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice	X	X	X
4. Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice	X	X	
5. Engage in Policy Practice	X	X	
6. Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	X	X	X
7. Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	X	X	X
8. Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	X	X	X
9. Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities	X	X	X
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	X	X	

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you, mom, dad, and Lindy, for never giving up on me, the love and support you've given me cannot be put into words. Grandma and Grandpa for showing me what unconditional love is. Tanner, James, James, Eric, Harold, Brad, Mason, John, Bill, Dave, Michael, and Jeff you guys saved my life, and I wouldn't be here without your wisdom and guidance. Megan and Lorna, for the friendships built and the laughing in difficult times, you are appreciated more than you know. Thank you for teaching me another way to live. Shala and Lisa, you're an inspiration and I appreciate everything you've done for me while pushing me to make a dream a reality.

## **Introduction**

Throughout this paper I will be sharing things that I have learned throughout my life. There will be a focus on the knowledge and experience I have gained while in the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Montana. It will include my academic and practicum learnings and how they connect to the broader Social Work Competencies. These competencies will appear in **bold** lettering to help highlight which competency is being met in that section of the paper.

I never planned on living past 30, let alone making it through undergrad and being on the brink of graduating with a master's degree. I will never forget waking up on the morning of December 18, 2015. I was in the hospital wing of a treatment center I had been discharged from 5 months earlier. My previous counselor was standing next to my bed with a big grin on his face. He told me that he was glad I made it back alive. I wasn't. I knew I was in for some very difficult and painful experiences over the next few months. I was unaware that this was the beginning of a

new chapter of my life that was going to open me up to new opportunities that I did not think were possible. I know that I am yet to fully realize or see all these opportunities.

As I sit here today, unsure of what's to come once I graduate, I go back to an adage that has helped me through some of my most difficult times, "one day at a time". I know that I want to help people live lives that they are happy and content with. I knew for so many years of my life what not being okay felt like. Today I know what it means to be okay. The amount of people I know who have lost their lives due to addiction or suicide reminds me of how many people are not okay. As I write this, I found out I lost another friend to the opioid crisis over the past weekend. I know that I do not have all the answers, or even some of the answers, but that there is hope for people's experiences to change for the better.

I made it into the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at the University of Montana through a combination of continuing to show up for life, having friends and family that believed in me, and meeting some amazing clinicians through a job that changed my life. Well, that's the simple story. I had a friend recommend me for a job at the non-profit he was working for. It was doing Peer Support for the treatment side of Treatment Court. I was blessed to fall into this position, surrounded by experienced clinicians whose stories were full of despair, pain, trauma, but most importantly, redemption. Some had spent time in prison for selling narcotics, others for robbing banks, mothers who got their children back and built beautiful lives, and a few twenty-somethings who were determined to support others in making positive changes in their lives.

This is where I got a firsthand glimpse at the power of mental health professionals working alongside addiction counselors. I didn't realize that a couple years later these two amazing women would be the catalyst for me to go back to college and finish up my undergrad schooling just a few months shy of my 30th birthday. After quite a few failed attempts in higher

education, this time I had a plan, with a set of goals that I was unsure that I could accomplish. Shala and Lisa showed me the power of therapy that was approached with empathy and love. The way they practiced is the catalyst that really cemented my path to the MSW program.

### **A New Lens**

A few months before I was to move to Missoula from Eugene, Oregon I tore my ACL and had to have surgery. As I was lying in bed recovering from knee surgery, I began looking for housing in Missoula. I hadn't been working while I was finishing undergrad, so I did not have a lot of money or any income. My housing search came to a screeching halt as every property management company I applied to required me to have a cosigner, and I realized I was in a bind. If I had not been able to get into student housing, this chapter of my life would not have happened.

Ironically enough, a few weeks before I moved to Missoula, I was offered a practicum position at the City of Missoula with Reaching Home. There were hundreds of folks who were not as lucky as me, and student housing was not an option for them. I didn't realize that my experience at Reaching Home would be a catalyst for a new social issue that I cared about, access to housing. I took the practicum at Reaching Home as an opportunity to work on some strong biases I had about government and people who work for the government. Emily and Sam changed those biases about the people, though my apprehension and critical views towards government systems and structures remain. The works that will be presented will expand upon these feelings of apprehension and serve as the foundation for why I continue to remain critical of these systems. I am also aware that I will likely be working in said systems and to a certain degree accountable to the harm, as well as the help that they do.

My experience at Reaching Home really showed me how difficult it is for people to find housing and access housing once they are unhoused. It also led me to focusing on housing for many of my papers during my first year in the MSW program. In *Just Practice Framework and the Housing Crisis* (Appendix A) I applied a lot of the knowledge I gained from my time at Reaching Home, and other research I had done throughout the first semester. In this paper I explored my own positionality regarding housing, as well as systemic barriers like racism and stagnating wages. I also addressed ways to **Advance Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice**. Furthermore, I critically reflected on the government's attempted responses to a lack of accessible housing including the racist elements of the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), a screening tool that until recently, was used in Montana to determine the most at-risk individuals.

During my first-year practicum I was able to take part in a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program called an Equity Cohort. The cohort was made up of people working in housing from around the country. We got together for weekly Zoom meetings with people leading the effort to create housing equity in the United States. Additionally, a team from Missoula's coordinated entry system (MCES) would meet with coaches in an attempt to make MCES more equitable. The cohort was a collaborative process with an overall goal of creating more equitable housing systems throughout the country. This opportunity allowed me to explore and **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**.



I have always had a fondness for history, even from a young age. History was what piqued my interest growing up. I found science, math, and writing to be less than interesting. The thing about history I was fond of, was the critical lens through which many historians look at the world. One of my greatest strengths, that can also be problematic in my life, is my hyper critical lens of myself, and the world around me. This likely can be attributed to my father and his thinking patterns I inherited; as well as his words of wisdom “question everything”, I remember receiving at a young age from him. I am sure there were days that he really wished he didn’t give me that advice. Coming into the program I already possessed some background knowledge on how racism, individual greed, government corruption etc. played a leading role in where the United States is today. Though I had a general understanding of this history, I wasn’t well versed in any particular area.

In SW 530: History of Social Policy I was able to explore an area of history that I had minimal knowledge of, housing policies in the United States. Like the brutal history of colonization in the Americas, housing policies in the United States were designed to help middle class white people and oppress people of color. In the paper *United States Housing Acts of the 1930’s* (Appendix C) I had the opportunity to **Engage in Policy Practice**. I was introduced to Katherine Bauer Wurster, a woman who was operating in the field of politics in the 1920’s and 1930’s, an area dominated by white men. Bauer was an advocate for housing for all and held the belief that the private real estate sector could never meet this need. Bauer also held the belief that a fully housed population was integral for a functioning democratic society. Nearly 100 years later we can see that this belief remains true. Knowledge I gained from researching and writing this paper, coupled with my experience with Reaching Home allowed me to **Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research Informed Practice**. Furthermore, this experience helped tie

together my belief that housing is a human right, as well as the fabric for a healthy, just, and safe society for all.

My experiences throughout my first year were not what I initially expected. I entered the program with the belief that most of my focus would revolve around drugs, drug policy, drug law, access to treatment, and mental health care within substance use treatment. But because I was willing to take a practicum that was outside of my comfort zone, I was able to learn and expand my thinking around these topics. What good is substance use treatment if the person doesn't have anywhere safe to go when they are leaving treatment? Questions like these helped reshape my thinking around treatment and helped form a more holistic and comprehensive idea in my mind about how we should approach substance use.

It is hard to put everything in a functioning chronological order from my time in the program because different experiences weaved and interlocked at different times. The culmination of all my experiences at Reaching Home and researching and writing about housing came to a head during the Fall Semester of my second year in SW 521: Advanced Research. My partner and I pitched the idea a community readiness assessment for the city of Missoula that revolved around creating housing for all. In *Community Readiness Evaluation: Accessible and affordable housing for all of Missoula* (Appendix B) we explored the idea of what the process of creating housing for all may look like. This paper was built upon throughout the semester and we were able to touch on multiple competencies including but not limited to **Engage with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities; Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities; Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities; Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**. We examined potential stakeholders, study

designs, data gathering modalities, potential barriers to success, and future implications. On top of that we looked at how we could engage with the community in a collaborative process to reach our ultimate goal of eradicating homelessness. My experience working within housing will be touched on more later, as I moved from the macro level to the micro level of housing in Missoula.

### **What Do I Know?**

Sometimes it feels like I know roughly 3 things about the world, other days I feel inundated with the amount of knowledge I have. At this exact moment I am looking at the paragraph above this one and getting upset that google docs still can't accept my use of homelessness instead of homelessness. There are days that I feel it would be easier to be blind or impartial to things like this. Although it may seem trivial to many, simple language like this is so powerful in the narrative that has been created around people who live without shelter. The word "homeless" is so stigmatized in our society that it can bring up unconscious biases in the best of us.

Because of the often-unforeseen power that language has on the way we think and act in the world, I took on the role of gently reminding people about the stigmatized nature of the word "homeless". This is not something I would have imagined I'd be doing, but my willingness to be open minded about my first-year practicum placement has had positive effects I would have never imagined. As housing became more and more of my focus, I once again became very critical of the "programs" we have in place, not just in Missoula, but on a state and federal level as well.

In this process I became more aware of the complete lack of social safety nets for people who were on the verge of becoming unhoused. The lack of social safety nets for people who

could become unhoused with one missed paycheck made me realize that simply housing people who were already living unsheltered was only part of the equation if the goal is to house everyone. How can we reach that goal if for every person that gets housed, another becomes unhoused due to stagnant wages, increasing rent prices and cost of living, and an ever-increasing wealth gap?

A program that was in its infancy when I started at Reaching Home was the Centralized Housing Solutions Fund (CHSF). Initially CHSF was designed as an open fund to help people with the costs of moving into housing. But as it became more well known, requests started coming in for people who were housed but had run into financial problems that were putting them at risk of becoming unhoused. As the effectiveness of the fund became apparent to everyone involved, more flexible funding sources were sought so that funds would also be available to people who were already housed. CHSF is the type of social safety net that should be available to everyone. The CHSF is not a solution that everyone would know about or have access to. If a person is not connected with a service provider who is part of MCES they likely would not know about the existence of the fund. Finding ways to expand access would benefit many people who are facing the prospect of losing their housing due to financial reasons.

As part of wrapping up my first-year practicum, I collaborated with another person in my cohort on a project analyzing and presenting data about the *Centralized Housing Solution Fund* (Appendix F). The breakdown in spending highlighted some things that had become obvious to me during my time with Reaching Home. First, Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in the unhoused population in Missoula. Indigenous people make up less than 2% of the population in Missoula but represent 17.1% of the unhoused population. This was also highlighted in the CHSF data that showed that 23.8% of funding requests came from Indigenous

folks. This is unfortunate because Indigenous people are so overly represented in the unhoused population. What is positive is that they can access these funds at a fairly accessible rate. We were able to present this data to many city employees and the data was used to seek more flexible funding. This project is a good example of **Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.**

### **Cultural Humility**

As someone who moved here to attend school, I had minimal exposure to being around Indigenous folks, let alone supporting them in any capacity in a work setting. I grew up in a place that had a large indigenous population, but there were no federally recognized tribes. Sadly, most of the Indigenous population had been murdered or forcibly relocated to reservations in different parts of Oregon. Being aware of the genocide and ethnic cleansing that took place on these lands did not give me a framework for supporting Indigenous peoples.

In SW 511: Human Behavior in the Social Environment II I had the honor and privilege of working with a couple Indigenous women in my cohort on a project. This experience was humbling, because it showed what little knowledge, I actually had about the different Indigenous tribes that existed within Montana, let alone cultural differences between the tribes. It also placed me in an interesting spot. I was in a group with experts, and I was a novice. As a white male, I was aware that no other demographic has done a fraction of the harm to Indigenous peoples as we have. I took this opportunity to educate myself, follow, and attempt to be someone that took accountability for my responsibility to learn while not relying on them to teach me. Though they were gracious enough to answer questions I had.

In our project *Cultural Humility in Montana: An Approach to Working with Indigenous People* (Appendix D) I was first introduced to Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit).

TribalCrit was developed by Bryan Brayboy to “address the complicated relationship between American Indians and the United States federal government and begin to make sense of American Indians’ liminality as both racial and legal/political groups and individuals”. (Brayboy, 2005). For a white male entering the field of social work, understanding TribalCrit has helped me **Engage Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Practice**. I had prior knowledge of Critical Race Theory but was unaware of the cultural adaptation for the tribal population. My whole life has revolved around the traditional Western models of learning and living. Learning about TribalCrit helped challenge my rigid ideas of learning and knowledge that I have been exposed to for the entirety of my life.

Our society places a big emphasis on traditional education and academic achievements, while often ignoring the expertise that so many people possess through the experiences they have lived, and cultural ways of knowing that have been passed down to them. Lived experience as a way of adapting and existing in the world is a part of TribalCrit that really resonated with me. As a person who used to use drugs to cope with my existence in this world, my life changed when I learned from people who had found other ways to exist. Learning from others who had similar experiences to myself about how to live life differently is the most profound experience I have ever had. Many of these people would be considered misfits and less than by mainstream society. Their pasts would be held against them in their search for traditional jobs and access to housing. To me, they had found a way of living that was profoundly more meaningful than most will ever experience. My experience in SW 511 was bolstered by my willingness to remain open minded and was guided by my more unique experiences in life.

### **Growing Through Experience**

As someone who struggles with applying theories to my practice because I view people as unique and individual, whose experiences are never the same, I find that I gravitate towards more macro level theory. Marxist theory is a theory I resonate with because it relates to my belief that everyone should be cared for and have access to basic life necessities such as food and shelter, without having to sell themselves. An ever-increasing wealth gap and the exploitation of the working class have driven me in a direction that resonates with Marxism. Though Marxism has been blacklisted in mainstream society due to its connection with authoritarian government regimes in the last 100 years, I find that at a theoretical level it fits well with social work.

In my second year of the MSW program I was lucky enough to have my practicum placement at Open Aid Alliance (OAA). Here I was able to expand and practice Harm Reduction, something I was introduced to from my experience in the Recovery Community. Harm Reduction is known to many in relation to policies and practices put in place to support people who use drugs. This was also my experience. The National Harm Reduction Coalition defines Harm Reduction (2023) as “a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs”. But as the semester went on, and my understanding of Harm Reduction developed, I was able to diversify my thinking and ideas about how it can be implemented. Through a process of critical self-reflection and learning from the people I met at OAA (my co-workers and OAA participants) I **Engaged with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**. It was here that I came to strongly believe in Harm Reduction as a practice that can be used in most areas of social work. It can benefit individuals in many ways, while also helping to build supportive and healthier communities.

Harm Reduction aims to increase the well-being and ultimately the survival of marginalized groups of people. Though many forms of harm reduction exist in mainstream society such as seatbelts, sunscreen, and toothpaste. Early Harm Reduction movements in the United States can be traced to the Black Panthers and their Free Breakfast for Children, and Activist led movements in response to the rise of AIDS (National Harm Reduction Coalition, 2023) For me, Harm Reduction as a framework can be applied on a larger scale with things like housing for all, food security for all, and access to healthcare for all. Ideally this would be free of cost, and at the end of the day would increase the overall well-being and safety of everyone, creating a safer society for all.

It was at OAA that I began to be able to apply my knowledge in the applicable form of skills. Working as a Case Manager I have been given the opportunity to experience the hardships alongside of people who are using drugs (PWUD), many of whom are simultaneously unhoused. The structure of OAA has enabled me to **Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**. I was part of the team that evaluated our practice of getting people access to Chemical Dependency Evaluations. As a team, we had to reconsider our approach of doing CDEs on an appointment basis. Appointments were clearly not working as our data showed most people did not attend their scheduled appointments for CDEs, therapy sessions, and case management sessions. This approach affected our population's ability to access CDEs, which also affected their ability to access Case Management with me. As a team, we decided on implementing an Open Access model to receive a CDE at OAA.

The Open Access model aligned with OAA's commitment to Harm Reduction by creating less barriers to access services. This change also gave me more opportunities to **Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities** because more people were



able to complete a CDE and get access to case management. The team was aware of this, and the goal is to be able to provide CDEs and case management to anyone who needs it, with no barriers. This is an evolving process that is not as straightforward as we would like.

From my experience with Open Access and other practices at OAA such as no penalties or repercussions for missed appointments it has shown me the power of harm reduction, which could also be described as Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). TIC is described by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2014), and points to six-key principles of TIC. They are “safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues”. My time at OAA has shown me how we apply principles of harm reduction and TIC into our approach. From the way we interact and talk with people, to our lighting and arrangements within offices. Creating a space of safety and trust is something that we work on as a group, on a day-to-day basis.

During my first year of the program, I explored my past work experience in conjunction with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics. In *Reflection Paper #2* (Appendix E) I explored some ideas I had surrounding the legal system and how it operates, challenging oppressive drug laws and policy, and a safe drug supply approach to harm reduction. I also examined some of the principles from the Code of Ethics that I most aligned with. “The right to self-determination” was a principle that at the time I found I aligned with.

Today I still feel strongly about people’s right to self-determination. Though NASW definition of self-determination could be at odds with OAA stance on self-determination. NASW discusses the social workers duty to broader society, and many in our society to not agree with substance use. This clashes with my personal belief that everyone has worth and a right to make

their own choices. It is not my job to push sobriety on people because of societies views on substance use, nor is it helpful or “right”. At OAA we operate from a participant led framework. That means that if you qualify for services, we won’t turn you away regardless of what you are partaking in. This means that clients can use substances and receive services, as well as present under the influence of substances and still receive services. Participants take the lead in what they want support in, and how that support looks. My time at OAA has allowed me to put this principle into practice while also giving me the opportunity to **Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior; Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.**

In SW 535: Advanced Practice I was part of a group project that explored incarceration and housing stability. In *Effects of Incarceration on Housing Stability: A Case Study* (Appendix G) we investigated major barriers for people who have been incarcerated in their attempts to access housing in Montana. I was simultaneously working at OAA during this project and was actively seeing people struggle with housing because of their involvement in the criminal justice system. Specifically, not being eligible for HUD housing vouchers. Individuals in Montana with a criminal background can legally be discriminated against. They are the only group not protected under Montana’s Fair Housing Law (**Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities**). At OAA I get the unique but difficult job of helping some of these people in their journey to get access to housing where I practiced **Intervening with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities.**

Part of the case study presentation included facilitating a larger conversation. We had people discuss their personal biases towards individuals who are violent and/or sexual offenders. The purpose of this was to bring awareness to people's own feelings around a subject that is

fairly taboo within our cohort. We also did this to highlight the disconnect between social workers, the criminal justice system, and access to basic needs (rights). If social workers are negatively biased towards a specific group of people, the public will likely be less forgiving or caring. Creating a community that supports one another, finds solutions to difficult situations, and works together to do this means finding places for people who have harmed others in their past. In this conversation we were working towards **Advancing Human Rights and Social, Racial, Economic, and Environmental Justice**. Depriving people of housing is not a form of rehabilitation, but rather a social failing that leads to higher rates of recidivism (Burrows, 2019).

My time at OAA has deepened my interest in housing equity. As soon as I graduate from the MSW program I will be facing housing uncertainty and will likely be forced to move away from Missoula. As Missoula continues to grow in popularity, housing prices will likely continue to increase. That means that more people who are at risk of losing their housing due to an increase in their rent will become even more vulnerable to losing their housing. I realize that the intersectionality of the criminal justice system, PWUD, and equitable access to housing will have an immediate effect on my work. Whether that be at a micro level where I imagine myself, or at the macro level working on housing rights.

I would say that one of the best experiences I've had with my time at OAA was doing outreach at the Authorized Camp Site (ACS). This was a low barrier experimental approach to legal camping in city limits. People would get assigned a site where they were allowed to put up a tent. There were armed security guards on site 24/7. I have conflicting feelings about the use of security guards in a setting like this. Though I did receive reports from a few women who lived there that it was the safest living environment they ever experienced because of the security guard's presence. These conversations made me realize that there will always be people who are

positively affected by policy, as well as people who are negatively affected by policy. We are humans, which means we are complex, and there is not always simply a “right way to do things”.

Once a week I would go to ACS with another person from OAA. We would hand out safer use supplies, socks, bottled water, and snacks. Sometimes we would set up a table, other times we would pull a cart around and go from site to site seeing if people needed anything. One week I was stopped by a gentleman as I was passing his site. He said he wanted to thank me for being there the week prior. He noted that it was pouring down rain and how grateful he was that we had showed up regardless of the weather. He continued by talking about how it made him feel seen and worthy, something he didn't experience often anymore. It was a humbling conversation.

Those days I spent at ACS, and the conversations I had with people were a constant reminder of why I wanted to get a MSW degree. I believe that everyone deserves dignity. This means that I am willing to work with all people, regardless of their backgrounds. Although I am committed to doing my best to prevent further damage happening through person-on-person violence of any sort. My experiences in life prior to the program, in the program, at Reaching Home, and OAA have shown me that people are the experts in their own lives, and that often they have the solutions to their own problems if given the opportunity to find them.

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**Appendix A**

**Just Practice Framework and the Housing Crisis**

Leo Keiser

School of Social Work, University of Montana

SW 505: Foundations of Social Work

Dr. Molloy

December 14, 2021

### **Overview of Case Study**

The United States, a country where many citizens believe it is the greatest in the world, has an undeniable crisis with folks living without access to shelter. Many people still refer to these people as “homeless”, though that language is stigmatizing and has become outdated. In this paper I will be using the term “unhoused”, which more accurately describes this group of people. It is common for people to view the town/city/state/country that they live in as their home, but they do not have access to housing or shelter.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects data on the unhoused population; they unfortunately still use the term homeless. The way they collect data is problematic. Data is collected from a Point in Time Count (PIT count) which involves communities across the country going around on one night of the year (in January) and attempting to count how many people are accessing services or are visibly unhoused in their community. The data collected in the 2020 PIT count showed there were 580,466 unhoused Americans, or about 18 for every 10,000 people in the country (HUD, 2021). These counts are not very accurate. For instance, in Austin Texas’ 2018 PIT count showed there were 2,174 unhoused individuals. But Central Health in Austin served 10,564 people who identified as housed in 2018 (By the Numbers, 2021). This discrepancy shows that HUD’s data regarding the unhoused population is likely to be significantly underrepresenting this demographic. The lack of accurate data is problematic because PIT count numbers are what the federal government uses when creating budgets in relation to funding for programs across the country that serve the unhoused demographic.

Issues regarding federal housing programs isn’t anything new in the United States, and problems date back to before the formation of the country. Federal policies that were rolled out

in the 1930's were undeniably racist and oppressive while also being oriented to helping middle class white people. This inevitably affected all poor people of any race. Important policies that were enacted in this time was the creation of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) as well as the decision for the federal government to fund Local Public Housing Agencies (LHA's) to build subsidized low-income housing.

The HOLC immediately began grading neighborhoods based almost entirely on their racial make-up which began being termed redlining. Homes in neighborhoods that were graded as a "D" did not qualify for mortgages or refinancing. All the neighborhoods that were given a D were made up of almost entirely Black Americans. Some of the language used in the redlining maps didn't even try and hide their racist nature in grading. "Respectable people but homes are too near negro area" was a label for a neighborhood in Virginia. "Infiltration of: Negroes" was a common label to fill in the blank for neighborhoods that were deemed "hazardous" (Domonoske, 2016). The ripple effects from redlining are still felt today as many of the occupants in these neighborhoods live much shorter lives, sometimes up to 20 to 30 years shorter than people living in different neighborhoods within the same city (Godoy, 2019).

Today the country's unhoused population is still disproportionately Black. In 2018 Black Americans accounted for 40% of the unhoused population while only making up 13% of the United States entire population (Racial Disparities in Homelessness, 2019). This does not discount the multitude of white folks who are also unhoused, nor does it discount all the other folks of different races and ethnicities who are also without shelter in our country. There are far too many people without housing, and access to housing for many of these people is filled with barriers that are nearly insurmountable. There is also a major shortage of affordable housing for



the tens of millions of Americans who rent and are living paycheck to paycheck. With rent prices skyrocketing and wages stagnating, many more people may likely become unhoused soon.

### **Application of Just Practice Framework**

I wholeheartedly believe that housing should be considered a basic human right in the United States. If we are going to have an overbearing federal government system it should be fully responsible for providing every single person in the U.S. with safe, quality housing. I did not start in this frame of mind, rather it developed throughout my twenties as I experienced housing insecurity, drug addiction, recovery, and some years working with many individuals who were unhoused, or constantly faced housing insecurity.

The significance of having housing and what it means to me developed through a combination of personal experiences and interactions with people and the world around me. Most people have not had my experience or even one similar, which means they don't see the world in the way that I do. A lot of people do not believe that housing should be a basic human right. I can do my best to actively engage with these people to create dialogue around housing, housing insecurity, and folks living without housing. To persuade someone to change their views I must understand the basis of those views and how they reached that point. It can also give me an opportunity to better understand someone who thinks differently than I, and hopefully be able to learn something about them or myself. I started engaging with my father when I began to change my stance on unhoused individuals. Those conversations have always been beneficial but not always productive. Today, my father has empathy for people living unhoused and supports policies designed to help with our current housing crisis. 20 years ago, he likely would not have considered such a stance, let alone practice it.

Taking people's experiences and situations in life out of context can lead to misunderstanding, or worse, manipulation by those who have an agenda that doesn't include helping those living in poverty. Every time I judge someone, I do this. I am just as guilty as the next person, and more guilty than others. It is something I've worked on, but I still have my moments that do not live up to my expectations. Starting with myself is the proper starting place for creating environments of understanding, teaching, and learning.

When it comes to advocating for the unhoused folks of our country and the world it is crucial for me to understand the general context of their experiences. Understanding the social forces that are at play such as discriminatory policies, lack of wage increases, high rent prices, and racism that have led to creating the situation they are in. Furthermore, I must understand the context and meaning that people who oppose providing housing for the unhoused population view people without homes. If I cannot do this, I will be ineffective in creating an environment for purposeful and meaningful conversation. I will not be able to help anyone have a mutual learning experience, and progressive action will be null and void.

To create a better understanding of the context surrounding unhoused folks I believe that learning how to engage in beneficial and sometimes uncomfortable conversations is essential to progress. These conversations will begin at the micro level. Big media corporations have the power to change the public's perceptions on just about anything, but almost nothing of any substance has come from them. That's why it is so important to be able to create meaningful engagement at the interpersonal level, which has the chance to develop communal environments of teaching, learning, and action.

Brittney Myers (2021) noted in an article in USA Today that in 2021, 63% of urban American households were living paycheck to paycheck. In this context it almost seems too

sensible that the masses would be advocating for policies that increased their own housing securities and seeking to create access to housing for those who do not have shelter. It could be due to bigger forces that are at play. The United States economic system is centered around profits, and continual growth. To maximize profits and create growth, low wage workers continue to be exploited. Exploited for their labor, and then exploited for what they are compensated for that labor through high costs of living, especially in the realm of housing, access to medical services, and an urban environment built around access to cars. All these factors have played a role in exacerbating the housing crisis that the country is faced with.

As a white male who is going to graduate with a master's degree, I will be facing crippling debt from an exorbitantly high tuition rate throughout my college career. But I will not be faced with the possibility of receiving lower wages than my peers based on the color of my skin, my gender, or the way I look. Nor do I have to worry about being denied housing for any of those reasons. Being able to engage with other white males about their positions of privilege has always been a difficult thing to do. It has often felt like individuals either understand it, or completely deny it. I know that this is an area where I struggle, and I could use my position to try and continue to create an environment of understanding. There is also the other facet that involves human beings enjoying being in positions of power and rarely giving up those positions. I need to remember that not everyone has access to the same resources I do, and this will directly affect other's ability to get and maintain housing.

Currently, government agencies control a vast majority of housing resources. Recently the state of Montana reviewed their statewide assessment tools (VI-SPDAT) used in determining who in the unhoused population gets access to resources. The state found that these tools were geared toward prioritizing white individuals for housing resources. Surprisingly, the state

replaced their tools with a new assessment built by an individual who specializes in creating equitable assessment tools. This was good news for many disenfranchised folks living unhoused in Montana. Unfortunately, a vast majority of states still use the VI-SPDAT, meaning in many states white folks are still getting priority for housing resources, and people of color continue to fight discrimination and racism to become sheltered. The power that lies in the hands of the government is going to continue to serve white people because the system has been designed to serve white people. Only when folks who were advocates for equity got into positions of power within the government did anything change. This change is worthy of recognition and celebration. It involved folks who care integrating themselves into the system and disrupting it from the inside, leading to change of substance.

The five-step process of systemization described in *Just Practice* could be a useful tool for many agencies to create equitable access to services for serving the unhoused population. It would also be useful for helping the federal government to look at their housing policies, and the effectiveness of those housing policies in helping EVERYONE get access to housing. Step 1 - Describe: Would involve going to the people who are accessing services to understand what their experience was like and how well these services are serving and helping folks. It would also involve asking these people what their needs are, and not having people who go home from work every day to their warm cozy homes determine what their needs are. People are experts in their own lives and creating effective and efficient solutions requires knowing what their true needs are. Step 2 Organize: Collecting data, analyzing it, and attempting to understand it would lead to a better understanding of these folks' realities (relationships with service providers, family, community, economic positions). It could also give insight into social and cultural forces at play that have led them to their current positions. Step 3 Prioritize: This requires listening to people

and to hear exactly what they say and attempting to understand what they need when they tell you their needs, prioritizing properly requires listening as well as understanding. Step 4 Analyze: Is what we are doing working? Are the people getting into housing proportionate to the racial make-up of our unhoused population? Do we know what is not working in our system? These are some of the questions that could be asked to help analyze the changes that have been implemented within the system. Step 5 Draw Conclusions: With the data collected from the folks being served, and the input of those serving them, begin to look at the bigger picture to get rid of barriers, and aspects of the system that are not serving the people as they deserve to be served. This step can lead to potential progressive and positive outcomes, like the example noted earlier about the state of Montana changing their assessment tool to create equity throughout the system and the services being offered (Finn, 2021).

Powers' role in creating an unhoused population is undeniable, and that power comes from history. In the United States, discrimination started with the stealing of indigenous land, and the genocide that followed. Economic power was established via the exploitation of poor people's labor and grew tremendously from the labor of enslaved Black folks. Today this economic power lay in the hands of a few. According to Katharina Bucholz, a Data Journalist, article *Wealth Distribution*, the top 10% of wealthy households in the U.S. own 70% of the wealth in the United States (2021). This economic disparity, which has been present since Europeans arrived on the shores of the Americas has continued to place the poor and people of color at an extreme economic disadvantage. If you cannot pay rent, you don't get housing. When 10% of households control that much wealth, the other 90% are fighting for the other 30% just to simply survive. For too many, this is a losing fight, and housing insecurity will remain with them throughout their lives. And for too many others it simply means they will not have access to any

sort of housing outside of shelters that serve the unhoused. This is not equitable, nor is it just in any sense of the term.

When I critically reflect on the history of the U.S. I often wonder why some choose to ignore a lot of the events that have shaped where we are as a country. Trying to understand where others are coming from is difficult. Is it the possibly outdated idea of “kill or be killed”, basic human greed, or some psychological process such as ego that creates this cognitive dissonance? I do know that I have a lot of learning to do in this realm because right now I just dismiss these ways of thinking as ill-informed and ignorant, and that is a mistake on my part that leads to more misunderstanding. The use of photovoice projects in a community setting could be an interesting place to start conversations. Having people make a photovoice presentation on what history in the United States means to them while having others listen could create a broad range of perceptions could create some great dialogue and allow everyone to have a voice. I must also accept that people won't change their views, and they have that right. It means working with or around them to create a better environment for everyone. Providing access to housing for everyone is essential to this.

Race based tensions and issues are not only present in the United States. This is nothing new and has been a historical phenomenon that has led to the brutalization of people for far too long. The U.S. is one of the largest racially diverse countries in terms of population. The road we are walking in creating racial equity is unpaved and open to possibility. Creating equity in a society does not mean that some people will lose their positions or livelihood, though it is often framed like this in the news. The far too often phrase of “they're coming to take your jobs” in relation to immigrants coming over the southern border is an unfortunate example of this. Creating new possibilities and change will not start at the macro level. It will start at the micro

and meso level and will involve people coming together, sharing experiences, listening, and learning from one another, and finding solutions within their communities to create better lives for all.

I have a glimmer of hope that one day as a society we decide to prioritize people over profit and things. Placing value on everyone's life will be important if we are to live in a world where everyone has their basic needs met. One way I see the housing crisis being improved would be through the allocation of funds away from the military budget and towards things like food and housing security for everyone. Another thing I hope is that people seek to understand the context and power structures that have created impassable barriers for low-income folks, people of color, and everyone who is in lower socioeconomic classes. Efficiency, effectiveness, and a goal of equity in the distribution of resources at the federal level would immediately make things better, but I am not holding my breath.

My positionality in all of this is not derived from my economic status, but rather from the color of my skin, my gender, my education, and my understanding of the forces and systems at play. I have developed my meaning and understanding of the housing crisis through interpersonal relationships, personal experiences, and engagement with people of differing points of view. I have sought to understand the context through which I view the issue, and the context through which others view it, and the context of the situations that has led people to becoming unhoused. Continuing to be aware of my own positionality in relation to power and the change that I can help bring is something I will continue to look at. And I will continue to question the powers that be, their motives, and I will not stop questioning or resisting those power structures. The lack of accessible and affordable housing is not just a matter of human rights, but also one of socioeconomic justice. In a country where resources are abundant, housing issues should not

exist to the extent that they currently do. Racism and private property exploitation through the private real estate companies among other factors have created a situation of socioeconomic discrimination towards people living in poverty. Within the U.S. system, one way to support justice on these fronts is to continue to advocate and participate in creating housing solutions that are equitable and accessible. Furthermore, supporting workers' rights and the unionization of workers would help to raise wages and create economic justice through the capitalist system. If nothing else works, being ready to be a part of a worker's revolt and revolution is something that I passionately support, regardless of how diplomatic that revolution is.

While working within the system I will continue to seek knowledge around how power structures work, and how everyone I engage in practice with is affected by those structures. I will also continue to develop an understanding of how my position of power can affect people I work with and do my best to have those affects be positive. I will critically examine the systems that are in place in any organization I am a part of, and I will advocate for changes that create equity, I will point out racist and other discriminatory policies and practices to help create change at a meso level, where change is enacted quicker and can lead the way towards bigger changes. Without advocates and people not afraid to stand up to the systems in place currently, the housing crisis will continue to worsen as the wealth gap increases, wages remain stagnant, and housing prices continue to inflate at an unprecedented pace. Nothing will change if nothing is done by people who are in positions to create change. Remaining consistent in my practices is what I will do, with the goal of being a small part of the change that helps create a world that incorporates everyone.



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**Appendix B**

Leo Keiser and Mackinley Gwinner

Community Readiness Evaluation:

Accessible and affordable housing for all of Missoula

SW521: Advanced Research

Dr. James Caringi

December 11, 2022

## Theory of Explanation and Program Evaluation

### Introduction

In mainstream culture in the United States people commonly refer to those living without shelter as homeless, bums, hobos, or other stigmatizing labels that continue to perpetuate the societal failure that is houselessness. In this paper we will use intentional language when referring to the marginalized population of people that are unhoused. Deliberate use of language is one step that individuals can take to help reduce the stigma that many people living without shelter face, a stigma that can play a key role in keeping people from attaining shelter.

Houselessness has often been looked at as a moral shortcoming by mainstream society. Francis Wayland who was a former dean of the Yale School of Law wrote in 1877 “And as we utter the word Tramp, there arises straightway before us the spectacle of a lazy, shiftless, sauntering or swaggering, ill-conditioned, irreclaimable, incorrigible, cowardly, utterly depraved savage. He fears not God, neither regards man. Indeed, he seems to have wholly lost all the better instincts and attributes of manhood” (Wayland, 1877). Though our paper is not focused on language and terminology, it helps to shine light on the issues that those living unhoused face, as well as the battle that those advocating for housing for all face.

There have been several Housing Acts passed in the United States in the last 100 years. The 1929 stock market crash and the ensuing Great Depression led to the one of the first Housing Acts which was part of the *Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932*. This act led to the sanctioning of loans to private companies that “supplied” housing to low-income families. The *New Deal* (1933) helped form the Homeowners Loan Corporation to help refinance peoples home mortgages in an effort to stop homes from being foreclosed on. The *Housing Act of 1937* gave the federal government the ability to issue loans to local public housing agencies so they

could destroy “slums” and build subsidized low-income public housing. Other housing acts have been passed since the 1930’s but these were the first “efforts” by the federal government to address houselessness (HUD, 2020).

In more modern times the federal government uses a Point in Time Count (PIT Count) to determine how much funding the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) gets to allocate towards the unhoused population, housing vouchers, and the construction of subsidized housing (HUD, 2022). The PIT Count is inherently flawed in accurately assessing the number of people living unhoused. First off, it takes place over one day/night around the country. Service providers and volunteers go out on the street and interview people about their housing status. It is usually done in January or February which can often have frigid temperatures, leading some people to be able to get temporarily sheltered, though it is not permanent housing. The lack of accuracy of this count leads to less funding for local housing agencies, subsidized housing vouchers, and housing being constructed. In our current political and societal structure, this is very problematic.

The problems can be highlighted when looking into our local housing crisis here in Missoula, MT. The 2022 PIT Count found 325 people who were living unsheltered in Missoula (Serbin et al., 2022). In September of 2022 there were 792 clients enrolled in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in Missoula (City of Missoula, Slide 15, 2022). Since 2008 the Section 8 Voucher waitlist has had over 1,000 people on it, and since 2010 the number of people on the waitlist has been over 1,500 people. In 2021 the number dropped below 1500, but this was due to people receiving vouchers but were unable to get into housing because of the unhealthy rental market. The issue with the PIT Count and funding provided federally is apparent. They are providing “funding” with the understanding there are 325 unhoused

individuals, when the number is much closer to 800 unhoused individuals. Additionally, the Voucher success rate has dropped significantly in the last few years. In 2017 the success rate was 77%. In 2021 that rate dropped to 57%. This is a trend that has been happening for the past 6 years, while the number of people on the Voucher waitlist has been trending upwards (City of Missoula, Slide 13, 2022).

In an attempt to address the housing crisis in Missoula the city approved two housing sites that were going to provide an additional 202 apartments. One major problem Missoula is facing is that the rising cost of rent/living is not only affecting those that are currently unhoused, but also low-income individuals and families who are one incident/accident away from becoming unhoused (Engage Missoula, n.d.). The rising cost of rent has put more people on the street, and is threatening many more. In 2010 the median monthly rent paid by individuals in Missoula was \$705, in 2020 it was \$908. Furthermore, a healthy rental market has vacancy rates between 5% - 8%. In 2022 Missoula's vacancy rates were under 1% for the first three quarters of the year (City of Missoula, Slide 4, 2022). One of the consequences of low vacancy rates and a high cost of living come in the form of new subsidized housing being sought after by a wide range of people who are housed and unhoused. This means people are being pushed down the housing ladder in the housing they can access and in turn does not create housing for those who are already unhoused.

In our project we will complete a community readiness evaluation of stakeholders and the public in Missoula County to determine the willingness to change the housing landscape. The areas we will examine are community values and access to affordable housing. This evaluation will likely highlight community needs as well. It is our belief that housing is a human right, a belief that is held throughout many places in the world. France, Scotland, and South Africa have

included housing as a right in their constitutions (Solomon, 2020). Housing for all would increase the wellbeing of not only individuals, but also the wellbeing of our local community. On a broader scale it would increase the wellbeing of states and the country as a whole. Our approach as a community, state, and country in finding solutions to houselessness has so far not worked. Furthermore, housing everyone will create an overall safer, but more importantly, healthier community.

### **Program Evaluation Report**

#### **Stakeholders**

Due to the complex nature of the housing problems facing Missoula, the entire community can be considered a stakeholder. Though there are some entities and organizations that will likely bear most of the weight when approaching the multifaceted task of solving the housing crisis. Here is a list of currently identified stakeholders, though more will likely come to light: People experiencing houselessness, Missoula City Government, Missoula County Government, Saint Patrick's Hospital, Community Medical Center, The Poverello Center, The International Rescue Committee, Soft Landing, Open Aid Alliance, YWCA, All Nations Health Center, The Salvation Army, Hope Rescue Mission, Winds of Change, Missoula Police Department, Business Owners, Home Owners, The Office of Veterans Affairs, The Homeless Outreach Team, Missoula Fire Department, Missoula County Jail, Missoula Housing Authority, Missoula Food Bank and Community Center, Public Schools, Crisis Intervention Team, Mobile Crisis Team, Missoula Interfaith Collaborative and the Housing Advocate Network

There are some things we will need to know to help us apply a theory of change to the community at large.

1. Is housing a basic human right?

2. Do current working wages provide a fair and livable income?
3. Whose job is it to help ensure a healthy, safe, and thriving community?

The findings will help us to determine where to start and how to begin creating solutions that work for our community. Our research will attempt to include as much of the community as possible, and thus will include vulnerable populations. These populations will include those living unhoused, and more specifically BIPOC folks living unhoused. The rates of Indigenous people living unhoused is extremely disproportionate to their White counterparts. In 2021 Indigenous people made up 1.6% of the population of Missoula, while accounting for 17.1% of the unhoused population in Missoula (HMIS Data, 2021).

### **Action Research**

Within the realm of Social Work Rebecca L. Mauldin describes Action Research as “research that is conducted for the purpose of creating social change. When conducting action research, scholars collaborate with community stakeholders at all stages of the research process with the aim of producing results that will be usable in the community and by scientists” (Davis et al., 2020). The goal of this project is to create lasting and meaningful change within our community, Action Research provides the framework to begin the process of change.

Importantly, action research leverages community participation and utilizes this voice as an active part of the research and change process. Within these parameters, this project will analyze the effectiveness of current interventions and the development of interventions utilized for access to housing and seek to pinpoint Missoula community’s readiness to employ new and innovative housing solutions to our community.

### **Appropriateness of Research**



Access to safe, stable, and affordable housing was first acknowledged as a human right in 1948 during the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United States signed. This alone could justify the need and appropriateness of our research. But, because the cost of living/housing in Missoula touches all but the very wealthiest, the appropriateness of this research project and those who are participating becomes stronger. Argyris and Schone described double loop learning as probing long held beliefs about “systems and policies” by interrogating the nature in which they currently operate (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2016).

Double loop learning will be utilized in our project so that beliefs that are held surrounding the systems we have in place, the people operating in them, and the ones proposing policies that affect them will be thoroughly examined and questioned. It will likely be helpful in changing community values by having people examine their own ways of thinking and believing, hopefully leaving them open to changing or growing their current beliefs and feelings around the unhoused population and housing solutions.

### **Relationship of the Evaluation Project to Policy and Program Theory**

The City of Missoula Community Development Division website states that they aim to “Increase and diversify housing options that are affordable to all levels of our community. Ensure a strong safety net for houseless residents through the implementation of Reaching Home: Missoula's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness” (Development, 2022). Our research project lines up quite well with these desired goals and outcomes of the Missoula Community Development Division. These ideas and policies, while great in theory, are much more difficult and convoluted when being put into practice. The community readiness evaluation aims to find a deeper understanding of the barriers that are at play when it comes to housing for all.

### **Housing First Model**

The Housing First Model is an evidenced based approach to helping end the cycle of being unhoused. It is predicated on getting unhoused individuals into permanent housing while also providing support for mental and physical health and well-being, employment, education, and substance abuse (Heading Home, 2021). A study conducted in New York that applied the housing first model to dually diagnosed unhoused individuals found that around a housing retention rate of almost 80% (Tsemberis et al., 2004). These results challenge popular notions that people who are living on the street are not ready to be housed. In recent years, talk about mental health being a main factor in houselessness has gained popularity. These results show that simply treating mental health is not the solution, rather housing people first and then providing support for mental and physical health is the best way to move forward.

### **Harm Reduction**

At the core of harm reduction practice, is the goal of increasing the overall wellbeing of each person. Harm reduction is often associated with people who use drugs, though in theory, most people practice harm reduction in their daily lives. Things like seatbelts, sunscreen, and oral hygiene are all forms of harm reduction. Heading Home speaks to harm reduction and the housing first model. One of the main aims is to help people in their social and community reintegration. They also note that the estimated annual cost of supporting a person living in a shelter or on the streets is \$37,434 per person. The annual cost of housing someone is around \$25,633 (Heading Home, 2021). This means that people will pay less taxes in the long run while allowing people to be safer with a much higher chance at successfully reintegrating into their community. Harm reduction aligns with our research project's goal of helping create a healthier community.

### **Critical Race Theory**

The theoretical framework of critical race theory posits that race is a socially and culturally constructed concept that has and continues to be utilized as a form of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation of nonwhite individuals and bodies. Critical race theories assert that, “racism is inherent in the law and legal institutions of the United States insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans” (Britannica). Due to this fact housing as a formal institution within the United States must be analyzed through the lens of critical race theory. Authors Stacy Sirmans and David A. Macpherson (2003, have found that, “Minorities and immigrants are less likely to be homeowners even after controlling for income” (pg. 141). Furthermore, these authors deduced that, “Typical barriers to homeownership [among non-white populations] included (1) employment uncertainty; (2) lack of understanding of the buying process; (3) strict credit requirements; and (4) cultural misunderstandings.” (Sirmans & Macperson, 2003, pg. 141). In this way, the theoretical framework of critical race theory provides a lens to analyze the racist systems which impact housing within the United States and Missoula.

### **Program and Process Evaluation**

A helpful tool in increasing the reliability and analyzing the assessment of a community readiness evaluation such as this, is the utilization of a tool called a process evaluation. Process evaluation will be key in creating lasting evaluative tools that analyze our community readiness evaluation and increase the reliability of the overall project.

To begin with, a process evaluation will lend itself to program description, which allows for the data and program evaluation/implementation to be transferred throughout the Missoula community and allow for other communities throughout the United States to utilize the lessons learned from this project within their own communities (Royse et al., 2022, pg. 117). This

project will also create data sets and points which increase the reliability of the overall process of implementation. The way this will be conducted will be through interviews with key stakeholders, surveys, listening/education sessions, analysis of all documentation of the programs and policies, and any observations made by researchers and evaluators.

In addition to program description, program monitoring would be vital to the success of this community readiness evaluation. Research experts Royse et al. (2022) assert that, “ongoing program monitoring is essential to the sound management of all programs.” (pg. 121). This idea of ongoing monitoring remains true to the Missoula community. It is vital that the surveys, interviews, and other measurement tools are continually monitored to guarantee that they are reaching their target population and serving all members of the Missoula community. In addition to guaranteeing that this project is serving its target population, continually monitoring it will guarantee that services and processes are not being duplicated. Thereby eliminating any redundancies that may exist. Outside of evaluating for redundancies it will also allow researchers and evaluators to continually adjust the goals and objectives to best fit the mission statement of the project and subsequent programs that emerge from the research.

Finally, it is important to note the importance of standards for increasing validity, which can be applied to any community readiness evaluation. Because standards are vital to the functioning of good research so too is quality assurance vital to evaluation. Quality assurance “provides a degree of consistency and uniformity by promoting adherence to clinical guidelines” (Royse et al., 2022, pg. 133). Adhering to strict guidelines will be vital to assuring the quality of interventions and evaluative tools being utilized and implemented within the community readiness evaluation. Creating a set of guidelines for interventions and evaluative tools and tracking that these are being followed is vital to the continual success of this project. The

creation of a strict set of guidelines in conjunction with quality assurance of set guidelines, will also lead to a greater degree of accountability when it comes to the overall rigor of the community readiness evaluation.

### **Review of Literature**

The breadth of literature, studies, and research that has been conducted on unhoused issues, populations, and community houselessness problems cannot be understated. There exists a plethora of studies and writings which address unhoused populations needs, the barriers that prevent individuals access to affordable housing options, data collected on relevant interventions including but not limited to housing vouchers, Centralized Housing Solutions Fund, Temporary Safe Outdoor Space, Emergency Winter Shelter, and various unhoused shelters and many more housing related interventions. Though these needs and interventions have a vast amount of writing, very few of these solutions or interventions address the roots of the problems that exist within the United States housing crisis. Furthermore, there exists a vast pool of data and writings on the lack of access to affordable housing for individuals throughout the United States. While different opinions and interpretations of research can be taken, generally speaking one agreed upon value within the literature that exists is that some of the largest issues facing unhoused communities and access to affordable housing options are a lack of community tailored housing programs, a lack of affordable housing for low-medium income individuals/families, limitations of financial tools, and the vast wealth gap which only continues to grow within the United States. Indeed, most studies and authors agree that the United States current approach to unhoused issues and creating affordable housing in its current form is not working. Author Rochelle et al. states, "If the last few years of declining housing market, the displacement of families due to foreclosure, the chronic problems brought on by abandoned properties, and declining revenues to

cities and counties causing a huge reduction in services have taught us anything, it is that we must do things differently” (2011). Though the solutions proposed, programs implemented, and funds dispersed differ city to city and county to county, one agreed upon fact remains in the literature surrounding the housing crisis and issues facing unhoused populations is that the current housing solutions that are being utilized within our local community and national community are not working.

A gap that currently exists within the overall literature surrounding unhoused populations and the housing crisis is that of research and literature that directly addresses the needs and attitudes of rural communities in addressing unhoused populations issues and access to affordable housing. Though there exists a gap in research and literature written on rural communities, Missoula is unique in its position as a rural community in so far that local governmental forces and researchers have access to funding and resources that allow for research efforts to be more comprehensive than those of their rural counterparts. Examples of this include studies conducted by the Reaching Home program, Missoula Coordinated Entry System, Missoula housing authority. Though local research and literature exists for Missoula specific access to affordable housing and addressing the needs of local unhoused populations, in no way are these studies and writings comprehensive. Although authors and researchers tend to agree that a change must occur, implementing these interventions and changes in a manner that speaks to a community’s readiness or attitudes has not occurred to a large degree.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of a project of this nature, this group proposes utilizing a mixed method approach to evaluating outcomes from our community readiness evaluation. Through evaluating

both quantitative and qualitative data this group will seek to explore the experiences of both housed and unhoused Missoula community members in accessing housing.

This project will utilize a mixed method approach to create the most holistic research picture of Missoula's need for affordable housing options as well as our community's readiness to implement long and short-term solutions to the housing crisis. Due to the fact that these researchers will be utilizing a mixed methods approach, triangulation will be key to increasing validity of this community readiness evaluation. This project will utilize a mixed method approach to create the most holistic research picture of the evaluation of our community readiness evaluation. For the intents and purposes of our project, evaluators will be administering a series of surveys to Missoula community members to determine their values and opinions surrounding local housing needs. Triangulation methodology will be imperative for validating the data collected by this study in creating better mechanisms for housing in Missoula. We will use multiple data streams from local and national entities from the past decade to inform our outcomes. In this way we will help to curb both research bias and any study flaws that may come to light throughout the research process. Current research and available data will inform the creation of a self-administered survey to zero in on current and relevant data and research that reveals information on housing access on a micro and mezzo scale. Additionally, because our study will be combining two different types of data on a large scale we will be utilizing the concept of triangulation of data. Royse describes triangulation of data as being used when researchers are collecting more than one type of data (qualitative and quantitative in our case) to confirm results and improve the accuracy of the findings. Furthermore, Royse also describes the concept of peer debriefing which is used to help keep an eye out for potential bias in research, data collection, and data analysis (2022).

The survey questions that will be included in this portion will seek to understand community members' understanding of housing access, needs, and the values that inform these ideas. It will seek to understand basic demographic data, in addition to preliminary insight into values held about housing within Missoula. The survey will also have a section for community members to make comments and suggest revisions to the survey in this way increasing the validity of the overall evaluative process.

In addition to a self-administered survey, researchers will conduct a series of semi-structured and structured interviews and listening sessions with local community members. These qualitative interviews will be conducted once to deduce Missoulians lived experiences as they pertain to housing and housing access. The sessions will seek to gain an understanding of community members values held, opinions of, and of current, ongoing, and future housing programs and housing access. Additionally, participants that take part in the overall evaluative process will have the opportunity to access their interview and make any revisions to statements or redact any content they don't want included in their final submission, which will in turn increase the validity of the overall evaluative process of the implementation of the new programs and protocols.

In addition to the qualitative and quantitative data being validated, reliability in our evaluative processes will be key to measuring Missoula communities' readiness for new and innovative housing solutions. This portion of the evaluative process will stem from the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the surveying and interviewing processes. Reliability and to a degree validity within the evaluative process of our project will be reliant on capturing the overall experiences of our various stakeholders, including housed and unhoused individuals in Missoula. Due to this fact, it will be important to capture as many



different points of views from within Missoula through sampling the many different populations in our community.

### **Quantitative**

Quantitative data collected for this project will include capturing Missoula community members demographic details, preliminary insight into values held about housing within Missoula, and seek to reveal general Missoula attitudes about housing accessibility. Additionally, quantitative data will seek to capture insights into both housed and unhoused opinions on current access to housing and housing programs. All data collected will be collected through multiple resources and at different times of the year.

### **Study Design**

This study will utilize a random sampling of local community members, while simultaneously sampling local unhoused populations through a new and improved PIT count metric. Participants in this study will be defined as both individuals who have been unhoused seeking access to services, those providing housing services within the Missoula community, and community members within the broader Missoula community. This project will seek to accomplish the goals of understanding the larger Missoula community's readiness to create systematic change in accessing affordable housing options and seek to understand the effectiveness of current housing programs within Missoula as it is relevant to both housed and unhoused individuals.

These researchers suggest adding the following questions to the PIT counter as well as including the following questions in creating a formalized survey to be dispersed amongst the random sampling of Missoula's community members. The additional questions are listed below.

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 to what degree do you believe homelessness impacts your Missoula Community? (1 - not at all, 5 - the most pressing issue in Missoula)
2. On a scale of 1 to 5 how well do you believe current housing programs are working for local Missoula community members? (1 - not at all, 5 - working to a high degree)
3. Do you believe all persons in Missoula have access to housing and housing programs? (yes, no)
4. Do you believe that all individuals in Missoula have equal access to affordable housing options? (yes, no)
5. Do you believe that housing is a fundamental human right? (yes, no)
6. Are you interested in talking to someone about unhoused populations and issues within Missoula?
7. If yes, how may we contact you?

One main sources of quantitative data that will be utilized for this project will be utilized for the intents of this project is an improved and revised PIT count. As previously noted, these researchers have identified gaps within the current PIT framework that exists in Missoula. The same PIT count survey will be utilized; there will be little to no change to the current 24 data points that are collected throughout this count. However, the count will be conducted over the course of a week rather than in a singular night and will occur in a warmer time of the year such as June or July. By expanding and moving the PIT count, greater access to insights into the breadth of unhoused populations and their needs will be given to this research. Additionally, a better representation of these populations overall will be procured. Utilizing this count will give this project greater insight into the overall issues faced by unhoused populations and will allow

the researchers insight into key stakeholders needs by revealing data on unhoused populations in Missoula.

The overarching goal of collecting quantitative data for the intents of this project is to inform the evaluators on the demographics of those unhoused in Missoula, to inform these researchers on the communities values surrounding housing issues and barriers, to determine both housed and unhoused individuals perceptions of housing in Missoula, and understand current opinions on existing housing programs, all with the intent of providing greater insight for these evaluators into the overarching readiness of Missoula as a community to employ new and innovative housing solutions.

### **Qualitative**

The qualitative section of this study will seek to engage individuals in semi-structured interviews to better understand values held by unhoused and housed individuals within the larger Missoula community regarding housing access, issues, and barriers. Additionally, local listening sessions will occur to give community members the opportunity to have their voice included in the overall discourse on housing access. This portion of the study will seek to center the human experiences, voices, and needs around housing in the Missoula community.

### **Study Design**

The main portion of this section of the study will leverage the utilization of one-on-one semi-structured and structured interviews all of which will be recorded and shared with participants. These interviews will be conducted utilizing. All participants within these interviews will be given an incentive and a series of questions prior to the interview. The interview will include but not be limited to the following questions:

1. What are the barriers people face to accessing affordable housing?

2. What has been your experience accessing housing in Missoula?
3. What does affordable housing mean to you?
4. Would you be willing to pay higher taxes if it meant everyone had access to housing?

The intent of asking the preceding questions is to begin a conversation on housing, housing access, and the values of local community members as it pertains to housing in Missoula.

Because of this, evaluators will remain flexible in each interview session and ask follow-up questions where appropriate to gather a more complete picture of the attitudes, values, and ideas of local community members as it pertains to housing.

### **Institutional Review Board**

We will be working with a diverse population of which includes vulnerable populations, due to this fact full Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be required. Interviews that are being conducted and the questions being asked within surveys lead to an overall project that falls within the minimal risk category of research (“NIMH Guidance”, N.D.). The questions being asked in the qualitative and quantitative sections of the community readiness assessment were carefully chosen to avoid any risk of re-traumatization and sought to avoid any risk of exploitation. All participants will be informed, prior to the study, of sufficient information in order to make an informed decision around participating in the study (Royse et al., 2022, pg. 37). All social workers involved in the evaluative process, including the present researchers, will be given informed consent and informed consent forms will be given to and completed with everyone chosen to participate in the evaluation of this program. Additionally, all participants will be given the option to opt out and will be given the proper forms to do so. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed to all participants (Royse et al., 2022, pg. 38). To ensure that

this project is conducted with ethical tenacity, the authors will consult with an IRB and independent safety monitor before pursuing the study further.

### **Human and Capital Costs**

The human and capital costs will vary depending on the approved scope and incentivization of this community readiness evaluation. To an extent our capital costs will be reliant upon the level of incentivization that evaluators provide to each participant in the study. This will also vary to a degree in the way we incentivize different community members within Missoula. Additionally, increasing the capacity of the PIT count will require an expansion of funding on a local level for a count such as this to be held over the course of a longer period and with more questions being contained in the overall count. It should also be noted that the human costs to conduct a survey of this type will be great and will require funding multiple specific positions to conduct surveys, interviews, and analyze data. Additional costs would include licensing to data analysis tools such as NVivo, ATLAS.ti, or Provalis Research Text Analytics Software. The licensing for each of these software's varies from the low end of being roughly one thousand dollars all the way to roughly 100,000 dollars per license. Because of the scale of this research, it is these evaluators' opinion that utilizing the ATLAS.ti software would be most appropriate for this project. For a project of this manner the overarching cost would be roughly 100,000 dollars and would need to be funded through grants, city funds, and a variety of private donors. Depending on data analysis tools pricings, incentivization, survey dispersal, and the pricing of conducting qualitative interviews the capital costs within this project will vary.

## Action Research/Theory of Change Report

### Backwards Map

**Outcome #1:** Local Housing agencies begin changing policies and practices for housing individuals who are unhoused.

Indicator: Qualitative and quantitative data gathered in community readiness evaluation is presented to proper people.

Population: Housing navigators

Threshold: A 10% increase in housing success rate 1 year after readiness evaluation is completed.

**Outcome #2:** Community members begin to support new housing policies through voting (Community values shift).

Indicator: Local officials begin introducing new ballot measures to support housing accessibility.

Population: Local voting community.

Threshold: Ballot measures supporting affordable/accessible housing, and safety nets for those at risk of becoming unhoused being to pass within 2 years of community education sessions.

**Outcome #3:** Begin to see a decrease in the number of people who are living unsheltered.

Indicator: Begin to see a reduction in total number of individuals in the HMIS.

Population: Unhoused folks.

Threshold: Total number of individuals in HMIS reduced from 792 to under 300 within 5 years of the community assessment.

### Assumptions:

- There is a local housing crisis forcing more people out of their housing.

- There are shortcomings in local housing policies and housing navigation agencies.
- Houselessness is multifaceted and not fixed through access to jobs.
- Missoula will continue to see a rise in the total number of unhoused people living here.
- There may be community backlash.
- We need to do better as a community supporting our most vulnerable populations.
- Community values shift will take a long time (3+ years minimum).

**Interventions:**

- Community education sessions.
- Outreach campaign geared towards stakeholders and policy makers.
- Agencies supporting housing policies are tweaked/updated to reflect the qualitative and quantitative data that has been gathered supported by local housing experts.
- Bi-annual meetings of stakeholders to compare data/outcomes.
- Policy makers and housing navigators continue to work together to find solutions.
- Regular community updates via television, radio, and newspaper to keep the community informed on the effectiveness of their tax dollars at work.
- Improve communication between local agencies through a centralized meeting and communication channel.

*Project Superwoman* is guiding our theory of change and has helped us develop key components to creating meaningful and lasting change. The numbers gathered through HMIS show there has been a steady increase in the overall number of people living without permanent housing in our community. This likely means that more people are losing housing than are finding housing. Our ultimate goal in the community readiness evaluation is to create accessible and affordable housing for everyone in Missoula, rich or poor, housed or unhoused. While also

establishing safety nets for people who are at risk of losing their housing due to financial or other reasons (i.e., mental health, physical disabilities, etc.) Our intermediate goals are to increase the effectiveness of local housing navigation success rates before any policy changes or new housing is built, while simultaneously decreasing the stigma that people who are unhoused face within the local community.

We believe that housing is a fundamental human right and that everyone deserves access to permanent shelter if they want it. We are also of the belief that if everyone has access to housing who wants it creates an overall healthier and safer community for everyone. The interventions we outlined above will have an overall positive impact for the Missoula community. There is an understanding that after consulting with local stakeholders, those who are living unhoused, and the community at large, we will have to make adjustments to our overall approach in order to improve its long-term effectiveness and sustainability.

### **Definition of Action Research**

When attempting to solve multifaceted and complex social issues, the use of quantitative data is often very important for framing and communicating the matter with the public. But this does not simply give the whole picture of such an issue. Simply stating that a community has X amount of unhoused folks does not shed light on the situations, structures, and systems that played a role in that number of people becoming unhoused. This approach, often defined as realism, or an objective truth that exists in the world separate from the onlookers' recognition; for our case does not account for the experiences and situations that led people to becoming unhoused. This kind of approach also leads to the idea that “just getting a job” or “taking accountability for your own life” could solve the problem at hand. While a positivist approach to



the 1,000 unhoused individuals would attempt to seek a clearer picture of those individuals' world or "reality" (Royse et. al., pg. 23-24, 2022).

Dr. Andrea Anderson explains in *The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change* (2006) describes theory of change as a theory that elucidates the process which short-term and mid-term goals and achievements lays the groundwork for achieving long-term outcomes. The power of combining aspects of both positivism and realism, our qualitative and quantitative data, is how we landed on our design and the subsequent theory of change. Our desired outcomes rely on connecting the many dots and commonalities that lead people to being unhoused. The quantitative data is important, but it does not help paint the full picture. It does not tell us how people have become unhoused, it does not explain why people remain unhoused, and it does not explain why people are continuing to lose their housing, along with many other important factors that will need to be taken into consideration when trying to solve the problem. The outcomes we covet have been sought after by many social activists, experts, and politicians but to no major avail. *Project Superwoman* talks about collaboration between agencies and service providers. We wanted to take it a step further and collaborate with the people who are accessing the services. Harm-reductionists approach problem solving from the lens that the client is the expert in their own life (Vakharia, Little, 2016). Getting the client's input and experience helps give us a clearer picture of forces that are invisible to most people who have never experienced being houseless. In the article *The Virtue of Specificity in Theory of Change Evaluation: Practitioner Reflections* Susan Philliber describes how theories of change are enticing to researchers working on research that cannot be conducted with more commonly established experimental models (1998). Our theory of change proposes a model that cannot be conducted in a laboratory, though some aspects can be more controlled than others. For instance,

some data collecting will be done on the street, while more structured interviews with housing navigators can be done in controlled environments. This model gives us the best chance of acquiring useful data, both qualitative and quantitative.

This action research project is in no way straightforward or not convoluted by a multitude of factors. Some may say to start smaller and grow, but the housing crisis in Missoula does not seem to be slowing down, especially for those most economically vulnerable. Andrea Anderson describes why people should use a theory of change in action research, she notes that it makes stakeholders state exactly how resources will be allocated to reach overall long-term goals. This holds true for our desired outcome of having housing for the entire community in Missoula.

### **Communities of Inquiry in Communities of Practice**

Friedman describes action science as a type of “social practice” that seeks to amalgamate the creation and implementation of knowledge and understanding between people, societal structures, and organizations whose jobs are “characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty, and instability” (1985). Thus, we are seeking to bring the community (stakeholders, people living without shelter, and general community members) together within our action research project to better define current barriers while simultaneously finding solutions to those barriers. Along with this is the ultimate goal of creating housing opportunities for everyone which will lead to an overall healthier community. Combining the whole community (not just “professionals”) to find solutions to community wide issues makes the most sense and will likely lead to the best outcomes.

### **Implications**

There are many implications that could arise from our community readiness evaluation. To what degree these implications will affect certain groups is more difficult to predict. Because

we are examining political structures and policies, agency practices and policies, as well as community values, the outcomes will likely vary in how groups accept or deny findings.

Throughout history, marginalized voices have rarely been given a platform that gives them access to power. In our research project, marginalized voices will have a voice throughout. This may lead to a portion of the Missoula community hearing things that contradict their personal values and beliefs as well as challenging long accepted structures of power that have been accepted as well intentioned. Creating tension is not our goal, but rather building a space of openness to learning and new knowledge, though some tension will be inevitable. Change is often uncomfortable on the personal level, moving to the societal level will lead to potential unforeseen factors that are not easy to predict. Our overall goal is to create meaningful and well-intentioned change for the betterment of everyone.

On a smaller scale, the implications for practice may be redefined for some agencies as well as the local government. Agencies could get an insight into where they are doing well, while also discovering unseen gaps in their practice and care. The existence of structural racism will become more glaring as both qualitative and quantitative data shows that racial minorities are more affected by the housing crisis than whites.

Policy implications will be highlighted by the growing wealth gap and lack of living wages for many people living in Missoula. This will create issues for policy makers as historically American society does not like the idea of raising taxes for anyone. Policy makers may also see how disconnected they are from the lived experience of many people residing in Missoula. Ideally this would lead to policy that attempts to connect those who are creating and proposing policy with those who are affected by those policies.

Our research project and findings could potentially lay the groundwork and act as a framework for larger communities who are experiencing issues with housing everyone. Because we are not a huge community like Seattle or San Francisco our research is more easily isolated. This gives us the ability to monitor outcomes more closely, specifically for those experiencing houselessness. This framework could be expanded on in larger metropolitan areas and give action researchers a clearer path forward.

### **Discussion**

As the solution to houselessness in our community continues to go unanswered and unaccounted for, highlighted by the closing of the Authorized Camping Site on November 16, 2022, we felt a sense of duty to explore the issue. Finding solutions to complex issues without inquiring with the populations that are affected (in this case, nearly the entirety of Missoula) did not make sense to us. Action research gave us the framework to approach an issue that is not simply solved by making basic changes to policies and structures that are currently in place. Creating communities of inquiry throughout the general population, led by the voices of those who are most affected give us as a community an opportunity to thoughtfully examine the way things are, and the possibilities for the way things can be.

As researchers and community members who are also affected by the housing crisis Missoula faces in not only our professional lives, but our personal lives, we are invested in finding solutions that benefit everyone. Because we are both able bodied white males we realize that the solutions that will benefit us, likely will not benefit a majority of the people most affected by this problem. Finding ways to create and implement solutions through collaboration of everyone is the ultimate goal and will inevitably define the success or failure of this research project.

**Limitations**

Above we discussed how conducting our research in Missoula could be a potential benefit to researchers in larger communities. Doing this research in Missoula is not straightforward. We will likely run into issues surrounding funding and manpower. Creating and implementing a research project for a community that consists of nearly 120,000 people is not a simple feat. It will require immense and intricate planning and collaboration throughout many facets of the local community, likely unprecedented. This means we will be doing groundbreaking work that will come with unforeseen issues that cannot be planned for.

As we highlighted, the issue is getting worse every year and by the time our research is completed, new issues may have already arisen that are not accounted for in the data we collect and analyze. We will also be asking for a lot of help and participation from the general public, and it is unrealistic to expect all people brought up in an individualistic culture and society to care about this cause. Nevertheless, we believe that many people will be willing participants in the project because of how many people are affected by houselessness, regardless of their housing status.

**Conclusion**

Oftentimes in our society, we are faced with economic denominators for many values and norms. Common beliefs about houselessness are chalked up to moral shortcomings attributed to laziness and helplessness. Solutions like “just get a job”, “work harder”, or the American classic “pick yourself up by your bootstraps” are thrown around in the media and have spread to many people in our country. Pieces that are usually ignored regarding houselessness are systemic issues like racism, lack of living wages, increased cost of living, wealth distribution inequality, property ownership for monetary gain, amongst others. Our research project aims to highlight

these through our process evaluation, education to policy makers and the general public to help create a shift in values within the entire community. Value shifts are never straight forward and will take time and effort.

This process will also help create accountability to not only those who make policy decisions, but also the community. The research project will seek to create awareness of the issue while also putting the reasons houselessness persists in bold for all to see. Inevitably this experience will be different for everyone. Some will experience a value shift through double loop learning because they'll see it as the right thing to do. For others, education on how housing people is a better solution economically long term may guide their values shift. We aren't here to say who is right or wrong, but rather give the people the whole picture in an attempt to make what we believe is right happen, housing accessibility for everyone.

Our assumptions help drive our interventions and efforts to create a better and healthier community. Some of these will likely need to be tweaked and revised as the process moves forward. Participation from the whole community means that we can find community solutions. Creating accountability all around will help maintain the long-term changes we are seeking to enact through our short and mid-term goals. Housing is a human right, and every single person deserves access to it.

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**Appendix C**

Leo Keiser

The United States Housing Acts of the 1930's

SW 530: History of Social Policy

Professor Trautman

### **The United States Housing Acts of the 1930's**

In 1960 then Senator John F. Kennedy remarked that “today the United States of America is the greatest Nation on earth” in a speech at a Veterans for Foreign Wars convention in Detroit, MI. This was twenty-three years after the passage of the *United States Housing Act of 1937*, also known as the Wagner-Steagall Bill, and four years prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Such a claim utterly ignored the rampant racism and segregation that was normal in the United States. It also ignored the 22% of Americans that were living below the federal poverty line in that same year. Poverty created minimal housing options for millions of Americans, while systemic racism made it even worse for Black and Brown Americans. The *Housing Act of 1937* was supposedly intended to provide financial assistance to states for the construction of “decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income”. It was also intended for getting rid of “unsafe and insanitary housing conditions” (Longan, 1937, p.1125). With Senator Kennedy’s claim in 1960 you’d think that the Housing Acts of the 1930’s and subsequent housing acts had been a great success. For some it was a success, for others it was not (HUD website).

The 1929 stock market crash and the subsequent Great Depression ushered in the first housing act of the 1930’s in 1932. Part of the *Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932* created the *Reconstruction Finance Corporation* to sanction loans to private companies that supplied housing for low-income families. In 1933, as part of the *New Deal*, the *Home Owners’ Loan Corporation Act* formed the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) to refinance home mortgages to help stop homes from being foreclosed on. The *National Housing Act of 1934* started the Federal Housing Administration which was a federal agency that dealt with mortgage insurance. The *Housing Act of 1937* allowed the federal government to issue loans of local public

housing agencies to pay for the destruction of “slums” (slum clearance) and fund the construction of subsidized low-income public housing.

The topic of affordable public housing cannot be written about without mentioning Catherine Bauer Wurster, the leading advocate in the field and the main author of the *1937 Housing Act*. Bauer was considered a “Houser”, which is a person who “is a reformer, a lobbyist or activist, who seeks to influence policy and practice to provide good quality housing, especially — but not exclusively — for low-income families” Catherine Bauer studied architecture, housing policy, and urban planning in Europe prior to her housing policy work and advocacy in the United States. In 1934 Bauer was appointed to be the executive director for the Labor Housing Conference (LHC) by the American Federation of Labor (Vassar, 2019). The LHC was born out of a lobbying group to create “a workers housing movement” (Fagan, 2020). In 1934 Bauer published a book, *Modern Housing*, in which Bauer examined economic, social, and political facets of housing in the United States. In her book Bauer compellingly advocated for government subsidized housing. She also went on a long lecturing tour in which she promoted her thoughts and beliefs surrounding public housing, the tour was quite successful. The passage of the *1937 Housing Act* led to the first time that government subsidized housing existed in the United States. Catherine Bauer Wurster is considered the primary architect and advocate behind the Wagner-Steagall bill being passed and implemented.

Bauer’s vision of public housing is idealistic, and in the introduction of *Modern Housing* she states that public housing “can never deteriorate into a slum, or a ‘blighted area,’ or a case for expensive remedial ‘city planning’ (Bauer, 1934, p. 3). Unfortunately, many public housing units throughout the country became “blighted areas” and are considered “slums”. Nevertheless, she was an advocate for the basic human rights of ALL people, and her intentions were to create

better living situations for Americans stuck in poverty and without access to safe and sanitary living conditions.

Bauer's vision for housing for all included a belief that all people deserve housing, and that having a fully housed population is critical in maintaining a democratic society. To Bauer, housing was not simply a roof over one's head, but "well-designed, high-quality housing for all citizens". Bauer also argued against social homogeneity and racial segregation within communities. It was also her belief that the private real estate market could ever necessitate and meet the essential needs of impoverished people (Penner, 2018). Her vision of public housing and her advocacy for the poor, while actively working with the United States government is quite an impressive feat given the time-period and the extreme, rampant sexism that existed in the 1930's.

A great example of political manipulation through rhetoric by using citizens' good faith in their government comes from Coleman Woodbury, the *Director of the National Association of Housing Officials* (1937). In his article *The New Housing Act* which addresses the *Housing Act of 1937*, Coleman attacks "Housers" in a section called *Will it Work?* Coleman states:

Although some important sections are open to different interpretations, my answer to this question is "Yes." Like the reports of Mark Twain's death, the rumors of the assassination or mutilation of the housing bill have been greatly exaggerated. Some of this exaggeration has come from detractors of the Administration; some of it from enthusiastic and well-intentioned housers, whose ideas of what the bill ought to be are considerably clearer than their understanding of what actually has been provided. Many of the statements have been unfair to the sponsors of the bill and unless counteracted at

once may do much harm. Several points which have been heralded as ruining the bill or which actually do present substantial difficulties may be noted briefly. (p. 415)

Colemans position on “Housers” is quite clear, and in this article it’s easy to see his eagerness to protect those political figures who endorsed the bill at the expense of advocates who had a much greater understanding of the country’s housing needs at the time.

The Great Depression hit the housing market hard and was one of the driving catalysts behind public housing policy in the United States. The Great Depression created more unemployment, poverty, and Americans without access to housing. It also critically affected the private housing market's ability to maintain economic profit. It is not recognized in the mainstream that a lot of these policies were enacted to stave off protests or the possibility of a revolution. The first chair of the New York City Housing Authority was Langdon Post who stated:

Let us face facts squarely. All revolutions are germinated in the slums; every riot is a slum riot. Housing is one of the many ways in which to forestall the bitter lessons which history has in store for us if we continue to be blind and stiff-necked. (Marcuse, 1995, p. 242)

To make matters worse for the private real estate industry, “radicals” such as Catherine Bauer were successfully campaigning public housing ideas around the country, leading to wide acceptance from the American populace “radical” ideas such as subsidized public housing for low-income citizens (Campbell, 2021).

Elizabeth Longan who was part of the *National Association of Housing Officials* noted in her article *The Present Status of Municipal Housing and Slum Clearance in the United States* (1937) that “reduction of un-employment and the stimulation of business activity are important

but secondary objectives” (p.1125). Contrary to this, a Housing Authority brochure from early on claimed “These projects were undertaken primarily to create employment and stimulate the building industry rather than to wipe out the social evil of the slums” (Marcuse, 1995, p.242). Here we see American political rhetoric and ideals (hard work, employment, poverty as a moral shortcoming) having a significant amount of influence over a policy that should have been intended to help impoverished people living in the United States escape the squalors of living in poverty.

Ideological forces were ever present in resisting government subsidized public housing. Government programs being used to enhance living conditions conflicted with ideologies surrounding the “American Dream” such as “providing for oneself”, “working hard for what you have”, and limited “government involvement in citizens lives”. There was fear that programs like government subsidized housing would give validation to “socialist” ideas. These forces inevitably had strong influence on the early housing policies of the 1930’s and limited who was helped, often behind the idea of “only those who really deserved it” (Marcuse, 1995, p. 243). These ideas are still present today and continue to be political talking points. The “left” leaning Bill Clinton pledged in his 1996 presidential campaign to “end welfare as we know it”. Private property, or the ability to acquire private property is seen by many as a means to gain personal and economic freedom in the United States. The private housing industry has long been an adversary of public housing. Today, the private housing industry in Missoula, MT. is glaring in its disregard for societal well-being. The price of homes has skyrocketed, and the ability of minimum wage workers to afford rent has become nearly impossible. This powerful industry has historically been about economic profit. Regarding public housing, private property owners are

often most worried about the drop in real estate prices in the surrounding areas, or the lack of profit that would accompany building subsidized housing on private property (Marcuse, 1995). The combination of extremely powerful ideological beliefs coupled with an incredibly influential and dominant economic force (private real estate) created large barriers to housing reform in the United States in the 1930s. Today, these forces continue to be substantial barriers to housing policy reform and progression. Considering the forces housing reform is still facing, only a drastic change in public opinion or a social revolution can lead to true, just, and equitable housing policy solutions.

A couple very important points to touch on some of the outcomes of the Housing Acts of the 1930's are "redlining" and "white flight". The *Housing Act of 1934* began the process of Redlining, and its effects are still felt today by people of color in the United States. Redlining was a process by which the Home Owners Loan Corporation "graded" neighborhoods throughout the United States based almost entirely on their racial demographics. White flight refers to white Americans "fleeing" the increasing racial diversity in large metropolitan areas and relocating to white suburban neighborhoods, continuing the theme of racial segregation in the country.

Redlining graded neighborhoods as either an A, B, C, or D. Neighborhoods graded as a D were made up of minority citizens and were outlined in red, which meant they were deemed high-risk for mortgage lenders. The redlined neighborhoods were often explained by terms such as "Infiltration of: Negroes". White neighborhoods that were too close to redlined neighborhoods were explained in terms such as "respectable people but homes are too near negro area". This racist process led to the occupants of homes in minority neighborhoods (mainly made up of Black Americans) to be unable to secure mortgages for purchasing homes or refinancing the



homes they already owned (Domonoske, 2016). These neighborhoods often fell into disarray and severe poverty. Furthermore, the FHA was subsidizing the construction of neighborhoods for white people. One of the requirements for these subsidies was that “none of the homes be sold to African-Americans” (Gross, 2017). This blatant and disgusting act of racism has effects that are still felt today in many of these communities.

Maria Godoy (2019) notes that “People who live in neighborhoods that were once subjected to a discriminatory lending practice called redlining are today more likely to experience shorter life spans – sometimes, as much as 20 or 30 years shorter than other neighborhoods in the same city” (para. 6). Many of the inhabitants of these neighborhoods face increased health issues coupled with systemic poverty that has been perpetuated by racist policies that trace directly back to the Housing Acts of the 1930’s.

White flight was fueled by racism as well increasing white affluence. White flight is directly correlated to redlining and the policies surrounding it. The FHA had a lot of influence on this, as Jon Gorey (2020) notes that “The FHA also subsidized the construction of entire suburbs—including 85 percent of New York-area subdivisions built during the 1930s and ‘40s—with explicit covenants barring developers from selling to Black homebuyers” (para. 5). The FHA’s racist policies also influenced the GI bill's potential to help Black Veterans purchase homes due to the Veterans Administration following FHA procedures on housing. This is not to disregard the blatant, rampant racism that existed in the United States Military.

The private real estate industry also had their hand in white flight through “blockbusting”. Blockbusting was carried out by real estate companies selling one home to a Black family in a white neighborhood. They would then go around to white owned homes in the neighborhood to incite racial fears of home prices dropping due to the presence of Black folk.

They would be able to buy the homes at deflated prices, and then sell them at inflated prices to Black families. These acts of market manipulation based solely on racism led to homes being sold to Black folks at a markup of 80% to 100% (Gaspaire, 2013). The private real estate industry was profiting massively off racism in an environment created by the federal government's policies. Weak efforts to stop redlining and its effects did not happen until the 1968 passage of the *Fair Housing Act*.

When looking at the history of the housing policies that came out of the 1930's and their effects on housing in the United States it is impossible to ignore the unbridled, glaring racism that accompanied them. It also points to the strong ideologies and beliefs that exist in the United States surrounding who is worthy of government help and who is not. A line from the late-great 2Pac's song "They Don't Give a Fuck About Us" sums it up quite well: "Give us a chance, help us advance cause we trying, ignore my whole plea, watching us in disgust, and then they beg when my guns bust, they don't give a fuck about us" (1996, disc 2, track 13).

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**Appendix D**

Leo Keiser, Misty LaPlant, Crystal Little Owl, and Rayne Sage

Department of Social Work, University of Montana

SW 511: HBSE II: Differences, Diversity, and Oppression

Professor Ashley Trautman

May 10, 2022

### **Cultural Humility in Montana: An approach to working with Indigenous People**

We developed an integrated Interprofessional Education (IPE) and cultural humility training that will help prepare first year graduate students from two or more professions to improve the ways in which they work with Indigenous People living in Montana. Ideally, this training would take place-prior to students working directly with Indigenous people within their practicum or field experience. Training would be interactive and include opportunities to learn about, from, and with each other, as well as, intentionally engaging in self-critique and reflexivity to recognize and accept biases and assumptions. We would also utilize a pre- and post-training survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. Our training goals would include:

1. Improve students' basic knowledge of the Indigenous People and Tribal Nations that are in Montana (e.g. be able to identify the federally recognized Indian tribes and where tribal people live in the state and acknowledge differences in culture and traditions between Indian tribes).
2. Encourage students to commit to lifelong learning, self-reflection, and the willingness to learn from Indigenous people and what is important to them and work together to provide optimal services.
3. Teach students the skills to redress the power imbalances in the client-professional dynamic, build trusting partnerships with Indigenous people and the communities they serve, and advocate for and maintain institutional accountability.

To accomplish this, we propose educational activities and examination of one's own bias, beliefs and assumptions are part of the self-reflection piece. Furthermore, the training will emphasize

the principle of “client as the expert” when students serve Indigenous people and their communities. Students will learn how to practice respectful and curious inquiry about Indigenous points of view, values, and life experiences, by holding the stance of “listening as if the speaker is wise.” Students will also learn to use trauma-informed approaches that recognize how trauma has created and perpetuated the alarming trends such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) movement and what role resiliency has played in the preservation and endurance of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Finally, students will practice strategies to redress power dynamics that negatively influence or obstruct healthy and helpful service delivery. To follow is a brief overview of the literature that informed our approach.

### **Foundational Literature**

Although not comprehensive, here we describe potential theoretical frameworks, trauma-informed approaches, and how experiential learning is key to making the integrated IPE and cultural humility training a success.

#### *Theoretical frameworks*

In framing our training opportunity, we first turned to Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit; Brayboy, 2005), which expands on critical race theory by recognizing how traditional tribal community values intersect with the values embedded in larger societal institutions and power structures that perpetuate racism and injustice. Using TribalCrit as a foundation, our training would expand participants’ knowledge and perspectives by acknowledging that (1) colonization has been incredibly harmful to our society, (2) material gain, white supremacy, and manifest destiny are at the root of United States policies impacting Indigenous people, (3) tribal communities occupy a unique and liminal legal and political position within the United States, (4) tribal sovereignty is desired and necessary, (5) an



Indigenous lens is necessary for understanding culture, knowledge, and power, (6) the impacts of forced assimilation must be recognized, (7) the lived experiences and beliefs of tribal ways provides an alternative way of adapting and being in the world, (8) storytelling and narratives are key tools for teaching and learning, and (9) tribal theory and practice are key in bringing about social change.

Another related way to enhance cultural humility is to use what Abe (2020) calls a liberation psychologies framework. Fitting with TribalCrit, liberation psychologies emphasize conceptualizing cultural humility at the individual, interpersonal, and collective levels. At the individual level, Abe calls for folks to take on a perspective of critical consciousness of self-critique and self-awareness - not as an outcome, but as an ongoing part of the process of cultural humility. In this way, individuals must be continually reflecting on their positionality and how the way they exist in the world is situated within the larger culture. At the interpersonal level, a liberation psychology lens calls for the conceptualization of “others” without “othering” them, acknowledging that we can never truly “know” another and their experiences, but can create environments where others have the opportunity to tell and have their own story heard. Finally, using liberation psychologies means thinking about cultural humility at the collective level by recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every person and believing that every person has the capacity to contribute to the good of society. Abe (2020) calls this psychosocial accompaniment.

### *Trauma-Informed Approaches*

Another key element behind our training is ensuring that participants leave the training with a strong understanding of the importance of providing trauma-informed services, especially for those from minoritized communities (Ranjbar et al., 2020). Recognizing the vast negative

impacts of colonization, a trauma-informed approach asks practitioners to reflect on how the related series of historical and contemporary events has caused harmful, threatening, and distressing adverse effects on the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous people (Gone et al., 2019). Trauma-informed care is individualized and tailored to the unique needs and strengths of the client and should emphasize “empowerment, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and safety” (p. 9). In this way, trauma-informed care is particularly person-centered and facilitates healing by recognizing that trauma experiences often lead to a sense of a loss of control or lack of power. Participants in our training would learn about the cultural-ecological model of health (Ranjbar et al., 2020), in which individual experiences are embedded in relational, structural, and cultural contexts that must be taken into consideration.

Finally, to be truly rooted in cultural humility and trauma-informed practice, the training would also need to include the voices and perspectives of Indigenous people in a meaningful way. Participatory and collaborative approaches are the best way to ensure that participants receive the most relevant and applicable training. For example, Gone and his colleagues (2020) used these methods to create Indigenous spiritual practices for health equity training that was “by Indians, for Indians” (p. 280), highlighting the importance of including people who will actually use the programming in design and implementation. This is a great example of practice that is empowering.

### *Experiential Learning*

In order to ensure engagement and long-lasting impacts of the training, we would use experiential learning techniques. For instance, we would use reflective writing in which participants would reflect on their experiences, their positionality, and what beliefs and

understandings they bring to the training (Sanchez et al., 2017). This exercise would enhance self-reflection and encourage participants to develop their own ongoing practice of self-reflection in the future. We would also use this training opportunity to integrate anti-racist principles and acknowledge the impacts of white supremacy and the experience of whiteness in our practice (Lerner, 2021), encouraging participants to “neurodecolonize” their thinking by replacing negative and harmful thought patterns with more healthy and productive thinking. This experiential approach also invites facilitators to use examples of problematic behaviors and thinking in real time as learning opportunities to be approached with curiosity and kindness. Lerner recommends using an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy approach because of its emphasis on the importance of language, relatedness, and self-determination. We might consider using the tool presented in his article illustrated in Figure 1.


*Figure 1.* The acceptance and commitment matrix applied to reflecting on whiteness in the classroom (Lerner, 2021)


### **Conclusion**

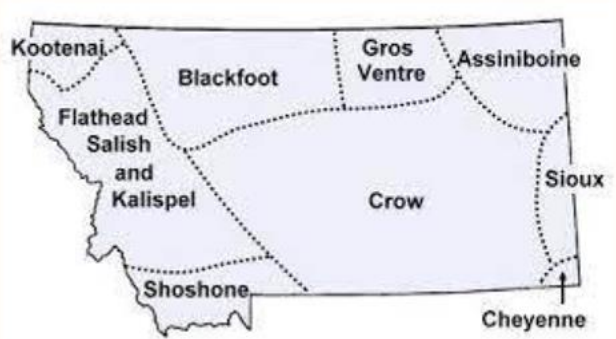

We believe first year graduate students would benefit greatly from an integrated IPE[AT9] and cultural humility training who would be working with other professionals to enhance their services and working relationship with Indigenous people in Montana. The experiential learning techniques emphasize the importance of trauma-informed care and increase basic knowledge of Tribal Nations and customs; furthermore, orients students to a TribalCrit approach that also highlights individual, interpersonal, and collective knowledge needed when working with people from a place of cultural humility.

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<h2>Cultural Humility in Montana: An approach to working with Indigenous People</h2>	
<p>Crystal Little Owl, Misty LaPlant, Leo Keiser, Rayna Sage</p>	

<h3>Where are the federally recognized tribes in Montana?</h3>	
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<h3>Pre-Colonization</h3>	
	



### Target Audience and Format

- Interprofessional Learning - Anyone in a graduate program, planning to work with people
- Pre-practicum/field experience 4-hour interactive training
- Self-reflection and small group discussion
- Online evaluation using pre and post training survey

### Goals and Objectives

- Have understanding that cultural humility is a lifelong process of critical self-reflection and self-critique
- Redressing the power imbalances in the client-professional dynamic
- Provide career development for emerging professionals to build trustful partnerships with the Indigenous people and communities they serve
- Advocating and maintaining institutional accountability that parallels the three bullet points above

## Specific Content

- Participants can identify personal beliefs and values and how these factors influence their own behaviors when working with Indigenous people and communities
- Participants can use tools to practice the Cultural Humility principle of "client as the expert" when serving Indigenous people and communities
  - I.e., How trauma perpetuated MMIP (Trauma-informed): Traditions and customs and how they differ between tribes
- Participants practice respectful and curious inquiry about individual and community points of view, values, and life experiences, holding the stance of "listen as if the speaker is wise."
  - I.e., Urban Indigenous populations living in Missoula
- Participants practice strategies to redress power dynamics from negatively influencing or obstructing the content of service delivery
  - I.e., Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)



## Closing Question

- You will likely work with other professional who have had very little exposure to and experience working with Indigenous people from a social justice framework. What is your role in these types of situations?



**Appendix E**

Leo Keiser

Reflection Paper #2

SW 505

Professor Molloy



## Reflection Paper #2

When I worked for Lane County Treatment Court in Oregon, I was part of the treatment side of the program. Almost all our new clients were physically dependent on opiates, amphetamines, or alcohol. Our agency's goal was stabilization and long-term abstinence with the hope of reducing recidivism. Stabilization and abstinence often required inpatient treatment for many of these individuals. A major problem with this was the waitlists for the state funded treatment centers that accept OHP (Oregon's version of Medicare for all) had waitlists that were often two to three months long. These were the only places a large majority of our clients could get into treatment due to cost of treatment. The court side of this process wanted these folks to immediately attain abstinence from drugs and alcohol. Most of the treatment team I was a part of had pasts that involved substance abuse and shared a level of empathy with the clients that the judicial system did not and understood that immediate abstinence was nearly impossible.

It was not uncommon for the treatment team to encourage harm-reduction to maintain a level of well-being that allowed the clients to show up to court, treatment, and other appointments. Therefore, it was not unusual for this advice to be in contradiction to what the judge and probation officers were telling these same clients. This would create an interesting ethical dilemma because the court team and law are the overarching power structure that everyone is operating under in this situation.

I am going to approach this situation from the International Federation of Social Workers *Statement of Ethical Principles and Professional Integrity*. One of the first principles listed is 1.1 which is "The Right to Self-Determination". My personal goal in these situations was to make people as comfortable as possible in an uncomfortable time, while also attempting to put them in the best position to succeed in a difficult time. Principle 1.2 also falls in line with this approach,

as it promotes individuals' full involvement in the decisions that they make that affect their lives and the actions they take. It gets convoluted because of the legal system and the dangers of substance abuse though and advocating for education on safe use is an important factor that should be promoted in these environments (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018, p.1).

An interesting dilemma arises out of this type of decision though. Drugs and alcohol are not free and oftentimes our clients relied on committing crimes to support their habit. This means that if they continued to use, they could potentially be causing harm to people in the community. An ethical solution to this problem becomes very convoluted within our society and will probably always be controversial no matter what approach is taken. Approaching this through harm reduction it seems that supplying people with substance use disorders could be beneficial in reducing drug related crime, but also could be contributing to hurting the individuals. The topic is so much more complicated than that, as many in our society do not like the idea of any kind of handouts, especially if it were illicit drugs.

Principle 2.1, "Challenging Discrimination and Oppression", and principle 2.4 is "Challenging Unjust Policies and Practices". Many would argue that our drug policies and laws are outdated and create victims in an endless cycle of discrimination and oppression. Many of our clients were without housing and had been stuck in the addiction-criminal justice system cycle for long periods of their lives. Others were self-medicating for untreated mental health complications, and some were third or fourth generation children in a long line of folks who struggled with substance abuse. A lot of these people had slipped through the safety nets of our social services and programs. Coming from a client-centered approach to helping these folks, that means that challenging the justice system and its history of suppression against people of

color and those living in poverty falls in line with principle 2.1 and 2.4 (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018, p.2).

The reality is that my personal beliefs and opinions regarding the social justice system are quite extreme. These beliefs are not something that I should ethically place on anyone I work with, especially folks navigating the criminal justice system because I should not be placing people in a position to be unsuccessful or experience further punishment based on what I believe. It should also be mentioned that colluding with the clients against the court team is a big no-no. So, navigating new clients who were still using substances while finding ways to get them access to treatment and not putting them at medical risk (unsupervised detox) was difficult.

Principle 3.5 and 3.6 are also important in this situation. Social workers engaging in social debate with the court-team and our (treatment) team took place often. The problem is the court-team is bound by the law even though they understood where the treatment team was coming from. Principle 3.6 was addressed regularly as well regarding the treatment of human beings in an ethical and humane manner, regardless of what they have done and/or where they are at in life (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018, p.3).

There are a few principles I feel align most with my personal values. 1.1 “The Right to Self-Determination” is one of the main values that I relate to. So many people have been cast out in our society and deemed not worthy due to some of their choices and experiences in life. I think that everyone should be given a chance to make their own choices, and that they should have more than one option when making decisions. Another Principle that I relate to strongly is 2.4 “Challenging Unjust Policies and Practices”, as many of our laws regarding substance abuse are rooted in racism and oppression. Finding ways to create drug law reform and approaches to substance abuse is something that I strongly believe in. These are a couple of principles that will

guide my work if I end up back in this field (International Federation of Social Workers, 2018 p.1-2).

It was interesting analyzing my personal choices in approaching this dilemma, as well as the choices made by the team I worked with. I think it shows the discrepancy in the social work side of substance abuse treatment and the judicial systems approach to it. Without education and proper policy reform, creating better programs and approaches to treating folks who experience substance use disorder will continue to struggle to make a significant impact on the crisis that our country has been experiencing for quite some time.

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## Appendix F

### CENTRALIZED HOUSING SOLUTION FUND 2020-2021

The Centralized Housing Solution Fund (CHSF) was created to allocate funding to individuals who are at risk of being displaced from their homes. Individuals are referred by various agencies to request funding for various purposes.

#### HOW MANY PEOPLE USED THE FUND

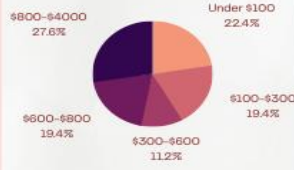
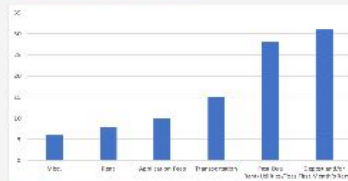
The fund was used 97 times by 87 unique individuals.



#### What were the funds used for?

##### What does this tell us?

Most of the funds were used for a deposit and/or first month's rent. Many of the funds were also used for past due charges on rent, utilities and fees.



#### AMOUNT REQUESTED

This shows a breakdown of how much money individuals requested.

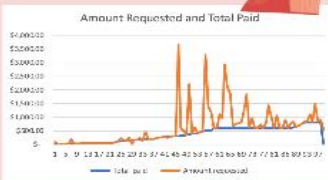


#### AMOUNT PAID

This shows a breakdown of how much money individuals were actually paid.

#### What does this tell us?

While there were multiple requests for funds exceeding \$800, the amount paid did not exceed \$800. The majority of the funds were in a higher range of \$600-800.



#### A VISUAL OF THE AMOUNT REQUESTED AND PAID

This shows a breakdown of how much money individuals requested against how much they were paid from the fund.



## Appendix G

# Effects of Incarceration on Housing Stability: A Case Study

Megan Stull, Leo Keiser, Lorna Buckingham

## Language and Terminology

- HUD Definition of "homeless" - "Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution" (HUD).
- "Homeless" - outdated language that comes with negative stigma
  - Unhoused, unsheltered preferred.

## Magnitude of the problem

- Point in Time Count in October of 2021: 425 people
  - Folks active in MCES in June of 2021: 741
  - People on MHA Voucher (Section 8) Waitlist in 2021: 1,421
  - People housed with Vouchers in 2021: 85
- (Staff, 2022)

## Context

### Legal Context

- Montana's [Fair Housing Law](#) prohibits discrimination based on sex, race, religion, family status, disability—this law excludes carceral status from discrimination, making it legal for landlords/property managers to refuse to rent to anyone with a history of incarceration, regardless of time passed since incarceration.

### Local Housing Context

- Missoula County has less than 1% rental vacancy rate, with a high demand—landlords/property managers increasingly using an applicant's history of incarceration as an immediate eliminator tool.



## Power & Meaning

### Landlord/Property Management, City:

- Stabilizing housing is one of the fastest ways to reduce recidivism (Burrows, 2019, para. 1). Landlords and PM companies legally discriminating is an insurmountable barrier towards stabilization.
- Decriminalizing homelessness also reduces rates of incarceration significantly (Ibid., para. 2), leading to fewer arrests and justice involvement.

### Social Meaning:

- Disenfranchisement coupled with implementation of ALL barriers to services and resources contextualizes justice-involved people as socially unwanted.
- Organizations and services working with this population are notoriously and significantly under-/unfunded, leaving justice-involved people with significant incentives to recidivate.

## Conviction History & Housing

### Statistics

- Formerly incarcerated people 10x more likely to be unhoused.
- Formerly incarcerated women are much more likely to experience homelessness.
- Being homeless makes formerly incarcerated people more likely to be arrested and incarcerated again, thanks to policies that criminalize homelessness—leading to cycles of incarceration and homelessness.

### Considerations

- Housing authorities exercise their individual discretion to set eligibility criteria—no standardization across nation/states/cities/counties.
- "...securing employment, maintaining sobriety, or participating in prosocial activities, for example, are extremely difficult without stable housing," (Fontaine & Biess, 2012).
- "Historically, correctional departments have viewed the provision of long-term housing for released prisoners as outside their agencies' mission or purview," (Fontaine & Biess, 2012).

## Applicable Theories

- Rational Choice Theory - (RCT) starts with the basic assumption that people are rational actors. When determining whether to commit a crime, RCT asserts that people act rationally, weighing the costs and benefits. Becker's model highlights three influences on perceived benefits and costs: the (a) likelihood of getting caught engaging in crime, (b) severity of the consequence if caught, and (c) magnitude of benefits if not caught.
  - When benefits outweigh costs, people seek to maximize utility by engaging in crime; when costs exceed benefits, people will maximize utility by choosing not to engage in crime. From a RCT standpoint, housing insecurity may increase the benefits of criminal behavior without impacting typical costs, like furthering material hardship.
- General Strain Theory - (GST) asserts that exposure to strain or stress leads to criminal offending. GST highlights three types of strain that often lead to offending: (a) lack of success (expected or actual) in meeting goals, (b) the loss of something viewed as important, and (c) a negative experience.
  - In response to strains, people often experience anger, anxiety, depression, resentment, and other negative emotions. GST postulates that people resort to crime as a coping mechanism to ease these emotions.
- Abolition - the construction of a society without imprisonment and policing. It is about dismantling institutions and systems like prisons, jails, detention centers, psychiatric institutions, policing, immigration restriction, state surveillance, and many others.
  - The abolitionist response seeks to restore both the criminal and the victim to full humanity, to lives of integrity and dignity in the community. Abolitionists advocate the least amount of coercion and intervention in an individual's life and the maximum amount of care and services to all people in the society.
- Social Capital - examines how social relationships once formed can benefit individuals and organizations beyond their original context of creation.

## Ethical Considerations & Dilemmas

- Lack of consistent, voluntary participation in data collection regarding unhoused people.
- Use of detention centers and medical emergency rooms as "catch-alls" for unhoused people experiencing crises, financially costing far more than a community providing permanent housing: unhoused people make up almost 30% of the daily population intake at the Missoula County Detention Center.
- Unhoused adults and youth intentionally being incarcerated as a form of harm reduction—using incarceration as a form of temporary housing.

## Courses of Action

- Guillotine
- In a 2020 Marshall Project survey of currently incarcerated people across the country, when respondents were asked what could have kept them out of prison, among the top answers were access to affordable housing and living wages (Lake, 2021).
- Massive increase in funding to build long term low barrier subsidized housing.
- Abolition (stop arresting people, get rid of cops).
- Increase access to services so people don't have to commit crimes to survive.
- Make it illegal to ask about criminal convictions on housing applications.
- Decriminalize sex work.
- Universal healthcare/income
- Abolish cash bail system
- Increase access to probation officers
- Free substance treatment centers

## Methods of Evaluation

- How would success be defined? Who is defining it?
- How would bias-free evaluation take place when previously incarcerated people have been villainized?
  - What organization/government agency would oversee this without a bias or without political influence?
- How would the evaluation center the needs of formerly incarcerated persons/soon-to-be released persons?
- What is the capacity & willingness to change for agencies, including government, service providers, and community- and faith-based organizations, to provide housing to formerly incarcerated persons/soon-to-be released persons?
  - How would that be measured?

## Let's examine our biases

- Break into small groups of two or three.
- Discuss your own personal biases against individuals who are violent and/or sexual offenders.

## Discussion Questions

- What can be done to more effectively manage populations exiting incarceration?
- How can justice-involved social workers mitigate or help navigate social challenges faced by the exiting population?
- What strategic partnerships in our community would be beneficial for a prison social worker to collaborate with? How would this affect continuity of care for an exiting person?
- Which assessment or evaluation tools would be beneficial to use for this population?
- What systems may have an unforeseen impact of having safe and stable housing of justice involved folks?
- How can the NIMBY stigma be addressed in our community? Think of the Just Practice in Action chapter about the Pov.
- <https://www.missoularealestate.com/social-data/>

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