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Breaking the Cycle: An Analysis of the Reduction of Single Women in the Homeless Community

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Abstract

An analysis of homelessness with particular attention to King County and a focus on single women. This paper aims to address gender disparities in housing prioritization and homeless reduction solutions while suggesting gender-conscious policies and programs. The current system of housing prioritization is aiming to be neutral; yet it falls to the side of white, cisgender, heterosexual men. Single women without children have specific needs that are not met because the absence of children in their lives makes them insignificant, which feeds into the cyclical nature of chronic homelessness. By analyzing the specific pathways that women take into homelessness, this paper highlights innovative approaches towards a long-term solution to the homeless crisis. This paper also advocates for a community-based approach targeted towards single women, urging educational institutions to step into the picture.

Keywords: homelessness, women, mothers, sexual assault, domestic violence, gender disparities, pregnancy, abortion, education, cycles, educational institutions

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1. The Bigger Picture: An Introduction to Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) separates homelessness into four different categories: "literally homeless, imminently homeless, homeless under other federal statutes, and victims of domestic violence[1]." Literally homeless can be defined as an "individual or family living in a place not meant for human habitation[2]" (i.e., people living in the streets, in cars, in emergency shelters, in transitional housing, in hotels or motels, etc.). Imminently homeless can be defined as "people who lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing[3]" or obtain new housing. Homeless under other federal statutes can be defined as "families with children or unaccompanied youth under the age of 25 who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state[4]." Victims of domestic violence are defined as "people who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking and have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.[5]" There has been an influx in people experiencing homelessness in the last two years due to many factors, the Covid-19 pandemic being a considerable reason.

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[1] From the Homelessness Policy Research Institution as sourced by Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing HEARTH Act of 2009, Pub L. 111-22. 123 Stat 1632. (2009).
[2] From the Homelessness Policy Research Institution as sourced by Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing HEARTH Act of 2009, Pub L. 111-22. 123 Stat 1632. (2009).
[3] From the Homelessness Policy Research Institution as sourced by Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing HEARTH Act of 2009, Pub L. 111-22. 123 Stat 1632. (2009).
[4] From the Homelessness Policy Research Institution as sourced by Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing HEARTH Act of 2009, Pub L. 111-22. 123 Stat 1632. (2009).
[5] From the Homelessness Policy Research Institution as sourced by Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing HEARTH Act of 2009, Pub L. 111-22. 123 Stat 1632. (2009).

According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) of Harvard University, "as of January 2019, 568,000 people were experiencing homelessness, an increase of nearly 15,000 from 2018.[6]" The trends in sheltered and unsheltered homelessness varied. Those experiencing unsheltered homelessness "increased by nearly 17,000 in 2019 to 211,000[7]" in 2020. On the other hand, those in shelters decreased "by nearly 2,000 to 356,000[8]." When reviewing the data and trends in homelessness, it is clear that some gender-specific groups are showing more increases than other groups. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, women experiencing homelessness has increased "almost 17 percent overall, since 2016[9]," equaling about 115,635 women total. Overall, the United States has the largest number of homeless women of all the industrialized countries.

Notably, these trends differed across the country according to state. In 2020, Seattle/King County had the 3rd largest homeless population in the United States totaling 11,751 (Los Angeles and New York City taking 2nd and 1st, respectively). For Seattle, this was "a 30.2 percent increase since 2010[10]." Of the 11,751 people in Seattle experiencing homelessness in 2020 "3,902 were women.[11]" Women that are considered the head of the household in families with children make up 60% of that population. There are gender disparities, as can be seen, but there

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[6] In accordance with the most recent data from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
[7] From *Homelessness Was on the Rise, Even Before the Pandemic*, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2020 (https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/homelessness-was-rise-even-pandemic). In public domain.
[8] From *Homelessness Was on the Rise, Even Before the Pandemic*, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2020 (https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/homelessness-was-rise-even-pandemic). In public domain.
[9] From *State of Homelessness: 2021 Edition*, National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021 (https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-2021/). In public domain.
[10] From *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: An Analysis of Current Conditions* by Sophia Sin, 2021 (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7c0161c3e76419ca5e13acdd4cc1aed). In public domain.
[11] From *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: An Analysis of Current Conditions* by Sophia Sin, 2021 (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7c0161c3e76419ca5e13acdd4cc1aed). In public domain.

is also an imbalance within those specific groups. Looking at the female population alone, women of color are at a greater disadvantage than white women.

Some factors that contribute to the rising homeless population is the increase in housing costs across the country, which are marked by racial disparities[12]. In 2019, "the median household income of White households…was $96,333[13]" compared to Asian households at $77,470, Latinx households at $64,240, Black households at $39,936, or Native American households at $31,519. Not only that but white residents are statistically more likely to complete higher education (40.2%). While groups like Asian, Latinx, Black and Native American only had 30.7%, 27.6%, 17.3%, and 15.7%, respectively. In 2019, the population of white residents was "3.8 times more…in Seattle than any other race or ethnicity.[14]" Seattle has come to be known as a melting pot of cultures and backgrounds, yet "White people represent the highest percentage of the population at 62.8 percent.[15]" Black or African American individuals only make up 7.3 percent of the overall population in this area.

2. Homeless Population: A Look at the Underrepresented Mass

Although there is a growing abundance on research surrounding homelessness,[16] gender disparities are seldom brought into the conversation subsequently creating a skewed perception of the homeless population. Women have a history of being omitted from most matters,[17] of being belittled, and of only being allotted limited time and restrictive spaces within society. This

[12] Meaning that those groups that are considered marginalized (like people of color) live on the margins of a rising economy and their household income shows to be far less than those with more privilege (like white/Caucasian people).
[13] From *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: An Analysis of Current Conditions* by Sophia Sin, 2021 (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7c0161c3e76419ca5e13acdd4cc1aed). In public domain.
[14] From *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: An Analysis of Current Conditions* by Sophia Sin, 2021 (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7c0161c3e76419ca5e13acdd4cc1aed). In public domain.
[15] From *Seattle's Homelessness Crisis: An Analysis of Current Conditions* by Sophia Sin, 2021 (https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e7c0161c3e76419ca5e13acdd4cc1aed). In public domain.
[16] i.e., prevention, management, specific needs of the individuals, different housing prioritization models etc.
[17] i.e., economic, political, social, etc.

historical oppression has led to an increase in the homeless community specifically in the percentage of women experiencing homelessness. Homelessness in the United States has been an ongoing struggle and "has been present in one form or another since at least the second quarter of the 18th century[18]" (Tobin and Murphy, 2019, p. 29-30), the demographics of these populations changing overtime. For women, prior to the 1870s, their presence in the homeless community was significant. At the end of the nineteenth century that number decreased shifting the dynamic towards a primarily masculine population. However, after 1980, there was a "dramatic increase in the number of women without housing, as single adults and heads of families." It's important to note that the visibility of homelessness is unevenly distributed across subgroups.

Given the history of failed homeless interventions, it is time to turn the page towards a new goal. In a 2020 article, for example, the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism analyzes two cities that attempted to "fix homelessness[19]" during the Covid-19 pandemic, but only one proved to be successful. Houston and San Diego took "fundamentally different approaches[20]" to their problems. While Houston focused on the implementation of the Housing First strategy; San Diego "attempted a series of one-off projects but was unable to expand on the lessons.[21]" In Houston, they rushed to house people without any prerequisites—people were not obligated to be sober. Treatment came only after they were housed, which is an important aspect that separates Houston from other cities that have also attempted to run the Housing First

[18] From Chapter 3 "The New Demographics of Homelessness" by Kerri Tobin and Joseph Murphy of *Ending Homelessness: Why We Haven't, How We Can* by Donald W. Burnes, David L. Dileo
[19] From *Caring for Covid's Invisible Victims* by Jensen et al., Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, 2020 (https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/howardcenter/caring-for-covid-homeless/index.html). In public domain.
[20] From *Caring for Covid's Invisible Victims* by Jensen et al., Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, 2020 (https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/howardcenter/caring-for-covid-homeless/index.html). In public domain.

[21] From *Caring for Covid's Invisible Victims* by Jensen et al., Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, 2020 (https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/howardcenter/caring-for-covid-homeless/index.html). In public domain.

program. Most cities neglected to come up with a comprehensive system and "fell victim to poor planning or scant resources.[22]" As opposed to Houston that "centralized decision-making[23]," which sped up the process. Houston has housed more than 24,000 people since 2012, more importantly the data shows that "once people are housed, they remain housed: Of the clients housed in the past two years, over 90% have maintained stable housing or have not returned to homelessness.[24]" Their success is attributed to cooperative and united leadership and "buy-in among local elected officials and local direct service provider agencies.[25]" Further, Houston initiated an organized system for data storage and collection meant to drive decision making. The Housing First program in Houston offers two types of permanent housing: "Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) that is prioritized for [the] most vulnerable people and has no length of time limits, and Rapid Re-housing (RRH) that is targeted for those who fell into homelessness recently and is shorter-term in length[26]." Further, Houston stuck to three main components: "(1) rental assistance, (2) case management and other voluntary services, and (3) a physical housing unit[27]." Another important factor that led to Houston's success was dependent on building

[22] From "Houston Is Hailed as a National Success for Fighting Homelessness. But the Reality Isn't Quite as Rosy" by Sam Russek, The New Republic, 2022 (https://newrepublic.com/article/165368/houston-homeless-population-reality-isnt-rosy). In public domain.
[23] From *Caring for Covid's Invisible Victims* by Jensen et al., Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, 2020 (https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/howardcenter/caring-for-covid-homeless/index.html). In public domain.
[24] From "Houston Is Hailed as a National Success for Fighting Homelessness. But the Reality Isn't Quite as Rosy" by Sam Russek, The New Republic, 2022 (https://newrepublic.com/article/165368/houston-homeless-population-reality-isnt-rosy). In public domain.
[25] From "How Close is Houston to Ending Homelessness? Closer Thank You Think" by Housing, Urban Disparity, Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 2021 (https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2021/11/28/houston-ending-homelessness). In public domain.
[26] From "How Close is Houston to Ending Homelessness? Closer Thank You Think" by Housing, Urban Disparity, Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 2021 (https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2021/11/28/houston-ending-homelessness). In public domain.
[27] From "How Close is Houston to Ending Homelessness? Closer Thank You Think" by Housing, Urban Disparity, Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 2021 (https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2021/11/28/houston-ending-homelessness). In public domain.

affordable apartment units because of the flexibility offered by working directly with service partners.

The Housing First results speak for themselves: "in 2011, the Houston area had one of the highest homeless populations in the country…by January 2020 that number had decreased by about 55%[28]." One lesson that became clear through Houston's Housing First project was that it does indeed take a village. Local funders were brought together and were educated on the benefits of Housing First, which served to broaden their minds. Full comprehension made them more willing to offer funding. The providers were made to fully understand the impact that their funding had in changing the experience of receiving aid.

Most solutions aim to manage homelessness, which have proven to be fruitless in most cases (as can be seen by the increasing rate of the homeless population across the country[29]). The purpose of aid needs to be shifted towards providing the necessities that promote an individual's financial and social freedom. In other words, our aim needs to be a long-term solution that addresses the specific needs of the individual experiencing homelessness. While women experiencing homelessness do share some characteristics with homeless men; some of their needs are gender specific.

Health challenges commonly found among women include heart disease, cancer, diabetes, depression, osteoporosis, and Alzheimer's. This is not to say that men are not at risk also, but the aid allotted to them tends to cover these health conditions. The difficultly that women face is being underrepresented and under researched. For example, heart disease is one of

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[28] From *Caring for Covid's Invisible Victims* by Jensen et al., Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, 2020 (https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/howardcenter/caring-for-covid-homeless/index.html). In public domain.
[29] From "What is the Cost of Homelessness?" 2022, Father Joe's Villages (https://my.neighbor.org/what-is-the-cost-of-homelessness/#one). In public domain. Homelessness costs the average American taxpayer "$35,000 a year (2016)." Of course, this varies by state. For example, in New York City, "the average annual cost of service use was calculated to be around $40,500 per person."

the leading causes of death for women. In terms of heart attack, "women may have more subtle symptoms[30]" often the symptoms they experience are not associated with heart attacks. The symptoms for men include sweating; chest, arm, jaw, and neck pain; shortness of breath or difficulty breathing; and heartburn. These are commonly known among physicians in the male dominated healthcare system. Women on the other hand, can experience less-recognized symptoms such as nausea, indigestion, fatigue, and dizziness. Heart attacks are not sexist—they do not discriminate; "women are just as likely to have a heart attack as men are." However, statistics show that women are more likely to die from a heart attack.[31]

Sex also contributes greatly to behavior. For example, "testosterone…causes aggressive behaviour associated with risk-seeking and neglecting personal health" (Batrinos, 2012) and high levels of testosterone are primarily associated with men.[32] Of course, I must acknowledge, there are other societal reason that contribute to male aggression. Just like women are oppressed in this system, men are often told to follow some "ideal male code.[33]" Recognition of gender-related social norms is necessary.

More so, as research has increased on the topic of homelessness, it has become clear that there are "gender differences in the paths that men and women take into homelessness" (Mayock

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[30] From "Time: Women Die from Heart Attacks More Often Than Men. Here's Why—and What Doctors Are Doing About It," Cedars Sanai, Time, 2019 (https://www.cedars-sinai.org/newsroom/time-women-die-from-heart-attacks-more-often-than-men-heres-why--and-what-doctors-are-doing-about-it/). In public domain.

[31] According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2017, "299,578 women" died of a heart attack, which equates to about 1 in every 5 women. Further, the Texas Heart Institute states that "women are 50% more likely to die than men are" due to their own lack of awareness of the symptoms associated with a heart attack for their specific gender.

[32] According to the article, "Testosterone and Aggressive Behavior in Man," published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information there is evidence that ties aggressive behavior to higher levels of testosterone. In an investigation of the levels of testosterone among 4179 veterans, the results showed that "dominance and competition are manifestations of aggressive behavior." The biological inner workings of a man lead him to try to affirm his personality by gaining influence and power. Domination can, and often does, include violent behavior.

[33] From "Harmful Masculinity and Violence: Understanding the connection and approaches to prevention," American Psychological Association, 2018 (https://www.apa.org/pi/about/newsletter/2018/09/harmful-masculinity). In public domain.

et al., 2015, pg. 879). In their research, Mayock et al. sought to address the imbalance in research by examining the experiences of 34 women (participants of a larger biographical study of homeless women in Ireland), who have experienced homelessness for extended periods of time. By conducting biographical interviews, which "assumes that each individual has a unique story to tell and a unique understanding of that experience" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 882), their aim was to construct a timeline with multiple biographies in order to adequately trace these women's housing and homeless histories. Ultimately, this methodology gave the women a sense of agency by permitting them to share their perspective. A certain level of trust and comfort was established between interviewee and interviewer because the researchers attempted to consider all life experiences beyond (and relating to) homelessness.

They paid particular attention to the paths that led these women into a cycle of unresolved homelessness. Individuals facing long-term or chronic homelessness "tend to be intensive, long-term users of emergency hostel services and…have very high support needs" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 878). These individuals are typically compromised by serious mental health conditions[34] which additionally limit the exit paths they can take out of homelessness, creating a harmful feedback loop. There is a seemingly unbreakable cycle for individuals experiencing long-term homelessness and "due to their multiple and complex needs, the long-term homeless are at serious risk of falling through the cracks of service provision" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 878). These individuals tend to cycle through costly public systems like emergency shelters, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, rehabilitation facilities, criminal justice facilities, etc. A

[34] For example, in terms of mental health, women tend to have a higher rate of depression both due to biology and due to life circumstances and experiences. From "Depression in Women: Understanding the Gender Gap," by the Mayo Clinic Staff (https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20047725). In public domain. There are many reasons that society could exacerbate feelings of depression among women: "unequal power and status…work overload…sexual and physical abuse."

large portion of this particular group may include single mothers and single women without dependents. This paper will largely focus on the analysis of the needs of single women without dependents while also examining single mothers for further emphasis of relevant information.

Gender is rarely discussed in conversations around homelessness possibly because patterns of prolonged homelessness are associated primarily with single men. The scarcity of active learning and engagement with the single women population "arguably contributes to women's ongoing invisibility within academic and popular portrayals of homelessness" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 880). In other words, the lack of research within this specific group amongst the homeless community creates many problems, which ultimately promote cycles of chronic homelessness.

3. **The Pathways that Women Take Towards Homelessness: A Risk Analysis**

Mayock et al. studied temporary exit paths from homeless services a section which, "examines the nature of these temporary exits, paying particular attention to the women's exit destinations subsequent to their first contact with the homeless service system" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 884). Included in their research was a table that laid out the main themes in exit reasoning and locations. Specifically, table 1: "identifies four main exit destinations from homeless services: (1) exits to institutional settings; (2) exits alone; (3) exits with a partner; and (4) exits to the home of a friend or family member" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 884). The researchers also acknowledged the difficulty associated with assigning precise numbers to the times a woman had moved temporarily to other places because the length of the moves was too inconsistent to assign a specific number. For example, one woman mentioned that she had been to prison maybe 90 times, but maybe 200 times. Debbie, 27 said that she "could be here (hostel) for five days, in prison for two days, back out for one day, back in prison for two days…"

(Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 884). In Debbie's case, Mayock et al. ultimately assigned her a figure of 20, which was most likely an understatement. There are a number of factors that contribute to a woman's homelessness.

Intimate partner violence (IPV), for example, is widely recognized as one of the leading causes. "Women are more likely to report relationship breakdown as a factor leading to their homelessness" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 844). IPV can put women in situations that are out of their control and have significant impact on their journey towards financial and social stability. In many cases, male partners who demonstrated abusive behavior resulted in women's removal from stable housing opportunities.

One woman recalls: "he got me kicked out, by coming by the shelter every single day, yelling out the window…they kicked me out because of him causing a disruption" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 844). Another woman with three children describes how her partner did not live with them, but he would try and when he was denied, would become violent. During one instance, he broke down her door and when she contacted the police, "CPS removed her children, and she was evicted from subsidized Section 8 housing" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 844). The experiences of these two women align with statistics that show how low-income women are evicted at higher rates than men. In poor White neighborhoods, "1 in 134 female renters versus 1 in 150 male renters are evicted" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 845). Power dynamics in gendered landlord-renter relationships also put women at more of a disadvantage as landlords might be more inclined to evict mothers because of frequent CPS or caseworker visits that bring unwanted attention to below-standard living conditions. In this case, women are reaping the consequences of substandard landlords that do not ensure they are meeting adequate living calibers for the units they rent out.

Although there is substantial evidence pointing to homelessness as a direct or indirect consequence of IPV "neither law enforcement, survivor services (e.g., emergency shelters, hotlines, legal assistance), or social services are well equipped" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 848) to address the foundational factors that make women vulnerable to IPV. These systems fail to provide aid to low-income women and mothers; but unfortunately, this is not surprising given their longstanding history of systemic oppression. Partners that are violent and abusive tend to evade effective consequences for their actions beyond an occasional arrest or even a stern reprimand.

In terms of IPV, more than 80% of "unhoused mothers report having experienced domestic violence" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 837). Consequently, mothers with a history of violence "were nearly four times as likely to experience housing instability" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 837). For women of color, who are more likely to rest below the poverty level and who live in poor neighborhoods that tend to have high levels of community violence with a significant lack of opportunities for mobility, present greater risk for homelessness. While this analysis is centered primarily around mothers, it should still be used to consider the disadvantages plaguing women without children who are more at risk of experiencing chronic homelessness and receive less aid than women with dependents. This is a problem because lower-income women are often more pro-choice, not wanting to bring a child into their current living situation.

Women experiencing homelessness tend to have a higher likelihood of poor pregnancies, and pregnancy rates of youth[35] experiencing homelessness are "4 to 8 times higher compared with those of their housed peers" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1458). In a research project by Begun

[35] Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years

et al. "'I Know They Would Kill Me': Abortion Attitudes and Experiences Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness," they focused on examining abortion attitudes, abortion experiences, and the decision-making process of 30 female, males, and non-binary young adults.[36] They found that many of the individuals interviewed knew of someone or had themselves sought out an abortion "outside of the formal medical system while experiencing homelessness" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1458). Considering how difficult it is for low-income and marginalized women to receive access to reproductive health services, this may be unsurprising to most. Begun et al. pinpoint reasons that homeless youth may decide to seek out an abortion. Three major themes emerged, "(a) 'Especially while on her own,' (b) 'she just went along with it to keep him happy,' and (c) "they changed their minds,'" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1464) among these the first being the most prevalent. Some women noted how their male partners reacted negatively to the news of pregnancy. One woman said: "'Some dudes just disappear when they find out,"' (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1465) which then leaves a woman to, if she chooses to keep her baby, sustain not only herself but her child. Childcare is one of the biggest barriers preventing women from being able to work full-time which also leads to homelessness (especially given the costs of raising a child[37]). Some women felt forced to receive an abortion

[36] Ages 18-21 years

[37] According to the U.S. News & World Report, the average cost of raising a child born in a middle-income household with both parents is about $267,000 (in 2021 dollars) over all 18 years. The average cost of a vaginal delivery is about $13,024 and $22,646 for a C-section according to ValuePenguin (this is with insurance). Childcare costs vary per state but according to the Center for American Progress in Mississippi, for example, "you might pay $12,555 a year, or nearly $1,050 a month." Consider a different city, for example, D.C., "you might pay $21,497 a year or nearly $1,790 a month" (these costs were examined during the Covid-19 pandemic). The average cost for healthcare, (it is important to note that healthcare costs have seen a steady increase over the last 10 years) according to the Milliman Medical Index, "for a family of four was $28,256 in 2020." Miscellaneous costs including transportation, living expenses, food, etc., also proved to be high. According to the Plutus Foundation, "a middle-income family with two kids can expect to spend an average of $162 a month per child on transportation (gas, insurance, vehicle maintenance, etc.) and an average of $314 a month per child on housing expenses. According to a USDA report, food costs range "anywhere from $99 to $183 a month on average to feed a one-year-old child, depending on a family's good budget." All of these are national averages and may differ greatly depending on the state.

because of their partner's attitude or reaction to the news. Not only because their partners did not want to become a parent but some "young women sometimes secretly obtained abortions, unbeknownst to their male partner(s), because of abuse occurring within the relationship[38]" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1466). Some respondents also talked about accidental pregnancies and a shift in their attitude as they experienced pregnancy. The shift in their attitude is most often seen "through unrelenting challenges, particularly in the face of ongoing economic and social marginalization" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1466). One young man spoke on the topic by summing it up to timing. Sometimes, "pregnancies come at a really awful time in the girl's life. Well, the girl and the dude, if he's still in the picture" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1466). He mentions that being homeless or not having the money to raise a child is a big factor along with a lack of support for single women or young couples. The young man describes the shock that might come with discovering that a woman is pregnant and the realization that "life is just getting harder and harder with that. It's hard for people to get their lives going. Because at the end of the day, and as the pregnancy goes on, you know what? They're still homeless. That didn't go away. So, they have not much of a choice left" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1466). Many women and young couples also fear losing their support system when sharing the news of pregnancy. The most common fear was banishment "from the family for life" (Begun et al., 2020, pg. 1467), which also leads women towards homelessness.

[38] It is important to note the average costs of an abortion. The costs vary depending on state and healthcare coverages, but according to Planned Parenthood, a legal "abortion can cost up to $750." According to the World Health Organization (WHO) about "45% of all abortions are unsafe, of which 97% take place in developing countries." Unsafe abortions led to much higher costs in health services overall because of the risks associated with unsafe abortions. These risks include: an "incomplete abortion (failure to remove or expel all pregnancy tissue from the uterus); hemorrhage (heavy bleeding); infection; uterine perforation (caused when the uterus is pierced by a sharp object); and damage to the genital tract and internal organs as a consequence of inserting dangerous objects into the vagina or anus." Further, it is important to note that about 42 million women in the world, each year choose to engage in an abortion and almost half of those are unsafe. According to PubMed Central, approximately "68,000 women die of unsafe abortions annually…of the women who survive unsafe abortion, 5 million will suffer long-term health complications."

There are also forces outside of a woman's control that places her in the uncomfortable situation of choosing to be homeless while caring for a child or aborting the pregnancy. In a report by the District of Columbia Interagency Council on Homelessness, the percentage of women that experienced "at least one type of violence in their current episode of homelessness, ranging from stalking to rape,[39]" was 54 percent. One woman shared her experience of being sexually assaulted and her reasoning for seeking out an unsafe abortion.[40] She stated that because "'[she] was raped and [she] didn't want to be pregnant. [She] was thirteen. So [she] got somebody [she knew] who'd kick [her] ass—so [she] did and [she] wasn't pregnant anymore'" (Munro et al., 2021, pg. 4). Abortions have been deemed a privilege for some women and homeless women do not meet the requirements to have this privilege. Pregnancies among women experiencing housing instability leads to cyclical homelessness and prevents them from being able to break out of this cycle because of the lack of resources allotted to them if they decide to engage in an abortion.

For women experiencing homelessness that are unmarried and were lucky enough to escape the commitment associated with pregnancy, their single or unmarried status further hinders their ability to obtain help. Mayock et al. found that "without accompanying children, their needs are less pressing due to the absence of state child welfare and protection obligations" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 880). Support seems to be tagged to women who play into the gendered role of 'mother,' which further alienates and excludes single women by making them feel inadequate. Mayock et al. suggest that the mere act of a woman hiding their homelessness within the supportive confines of the greater social network demonstrates their effective coping

[39] From "Homeless Women Face Higher Rates of Sexual Harassment and Rape" by Jess Mogk, Real Change, 2018 (https://www.realchangenews.org/news/2018/10/24/homeless-women-face-higher-rates-sexual-harassment-and-rape). In public domain.
[40] An unsafe abortion because she did not have the health benefits to obtain a medically safe one.

strategies. While the ability to conceal their living situations shows their resilience, it also disguises the full extent of the problems of homelessness within this group. Women's homelessness "has remained largely invisible because of the particular stigma[41] attached to the 'unaccommodated woman'" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 880). The idea of a woman without a home challenges the gendered assignment of mother or nurturer that society has shaped for them.[42] Therefore, leading women to feel inadequate and out of place in society and further pushes them to hide the extent of their unhoused situations. "As a consequence, women's particular experience and interaction with trajectories of repeat or ongoing homelessness are not well captured in the published literature" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 881). Due to the systemic disadvantage that women have, they present more risks for falling into cycles of homelessness. Feeling shame or embarrassment led to women's tendency to engage in strategies that conceal their true situations and in turn, remain hidden from public view.

4. The Cyclical Nature of Homelessness

Women are subject to what Mayock et al. deem "hidden homelessness" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 880) by examining "the experiences of women who have lengthy homeless histories with particular attention to the dynamics driving their homeless biographies." (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 879). The research has found that there are in fact gendered differences in the paths

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[41] Tobin et. al explain in their chapter titled: "The New Demographics of Homelessness", the third chapter of the book *Ending Homelessness: Why We Haven't, How We Can* how the attitudes towards the homeless community has shifted over time. In the last 200 years, the explanations for the growing population have been abundant. They state that "a dominant explanation for homelessness painted it as a life choice" that an individual chooses for themselves. However, that change to the image of the homeless population as "lazy and self-destructive persons unworthy of assistance." Another shift during the Great Depression made homelessness seem casual as persons without homes increased being victims of forces beyond their control.

[42] From "On Feeling like a Woman," 2018, Feminist Current (https://www.feministcurrent.com/2018/07/07/feeling-like-woman/). In public domain. Attitudes surrounding sexual assault in our country are prominently centered around victim blaming. One woman describes her experiences of living inside of a female body. Most often, when women decide to share their experience with sexual assault, they're met with "'oh, you're wearing *that* top?'" Their clothing and their decision to wear that as a reason for their bodies being violated. Even school dress codes that send young girls home because their shoulders would distract their male peers and male instructors.

that drive men and women into homelessness. Factors that contribute to women's homelessness include unequal/low pay, lack of affordable housing, discrimination, weak safety nets, punitive welfare and public housing policies, intimate partner violence, etc.; and although these factors do intersect, they are continually considered in isolation of each other. Their place in society (or lack thereof) is shown to have significant impacts on women experiencing homelessness especially when analyzing why some women may choose to forfeit aid early.

A lack of agency often drives women to leave a shelter, for example, before they can get the necessary help they need. Mayock et al. share the experiences of women in hostel/shelter life. "Many of the women struggled with the daily routine of hostel life" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 886). There was a lack of privacy and autonomy when living in these settings, "women's ability to manage their situations was compromised by the lack of privacy within hostels and by the culture of surveillance that characterized everyday life in these settings" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 886). Many women are treated like children when in these settings, which contributes to their feelings of inadequacy. Treatments of this nature ostracize women from society and make women feel as though they have no place in it. One woman told Mayock et al. about their experience in a hostel where "she was forced to sit on a bench for four hours because she returned to the hostel under the influence of alcohol" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 886), the staff apparently deeming the bench the "bold naughty bench" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 886) making these women feel as though they are preschoolers in time-out.

Homeless services like this one are "important mediating structures that can broaden or constrict the environmental affordances on an individual's freedom," (Greenwood et al., 2020, pg. 2). Meaning that the services and resources offered to homeless individuals (or not offered in the case of women) contribute significantly to an individual's feeling of themselves and their

place in society, which ultimately contribute to their being homeless or not. A positive sense of self can emerge from changes like "securing housing or resolving legal issues, and this can have long-term and far-reaching impacts" (Quirouette et al., 2016, pg. 396). How a person feels about themselves will either motivate them or demotivate them to pursue a better life, or to keep trying to seek help out of their situations. Alienation by society causes a negative view of society, which in turn cause uneasiness and lack of trust in the system feeding the cycle of homelessness. Since women have a history of being subjected to oppression and alienation within society, they often struggle with feelings of uselessness. They lose their sense of purpose and may choose to give up fighting for what in their eyes may be worth nothing. Women also complained about the presence of alcohol and drugs in these settings that tempted them into old habits along with the chaos that characterized their everyday life when living in these hostels. The stresses that come with living in emergency hostels often led women to independently leave service systems feeling as though they were better off on the streets than having to be subjected to the demeaning treatment in hostel living.

There is also a pattern of women leaving abusive partners only to be failed by the system and returning to these abusive relationships only for the cycle to repeat again. "Several accounts suggest that a number entered or re-entered these relationships simply to 'escape' hostel life" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 890). These intimate relationships were seen as a practical means to an end—the lesser of two evils. Women feeling that "they had 'nowhere to go'," led them to revert back to abusive homes, while "others who lived in sub-standard accommodation for a period returned to abusive partners because they could no longer endure these living conditions" (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 891). In a study conducted by Quirouette et al., they examined individuals exiting homelessness. The data that they collected "helped identify structural and

individual barriers, including poverty, discrimination, unemployment, addictions, trauma, and breaking ties with street culture and friends" (Quirouette et al., 2016, pg. 387). Their research proved and acknowledged the presence of women in the group of cyclical long-term or chronic homelessness. The conditions that women experienced in emergency accommodation housing along with social and emotional stresses associated with these housing conditions pushed them to seek out housing options that carried their own set of risks. This further exacerbated their already difficult situations. As can be seen, most women share the risk of getting 'trapped' in cycles of homelessness.

5. The Covid-19 Pandemic: Deepened Gender Disparities

The economic recession that began in light of the Covid-19 pandemic beginning in March of 2020 has had "a larger impact on labor market sectors, which employ more women" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 230). Those sectors being healthcare, hospitality, and education. In addition, closure of childcare institutions and the switch to online schooling in K-12 schools negatively affected women because it limited their ability to work. Not only that but women are "represented overwhelmingly as frontline workers in the United States including 93% of childcare workers, 88% of registered nurses, 85% of home, health and personal care aides and 66% of grocery store workers" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 231), which makes them more vulnerable not only to virus exposure, but more vulnerable in their society overall. Women continue to disproportionately take on informal childcare in family dynamics. The pandemic has worsened the already existing gender inequalities and power dynamic in the United States.

Feminist standpoint theory relies on the premise that "women occupy a social location in the world that affords them an advantaged access to social phenomena," (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 231) and with that being said, an understanding of the forms of oppression that women face.

Every individual's experience, depending on their material situations, is different. The male dominant mindset in our society have dictated that their perspective of the world is superior, in turn rejecting all other perspectives. It is important to represent a woman's experience at a particular time and place, which is located in a set hierarchy. Viswanath et al. argue that the forms of oppression that women experience are varied depending on their identities, which gives them a perspective vantage point in the pandemic.

Women's employment opportunities suffered more than men because of the sectors in the labor market that were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. "40% of total women's employment is accounted for in the two sectors of education and health services while 46% of total men's employment is accounted for in the manufacturing, construction and trade, transportation and utilities sectors" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 232). The Covid-19 pandemic affected women first and the hardest— "22.2 million people work in the 40 lowest paying jobs – and women make up nearly two thirds (64 percent) of this workforce" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 232). Due to the decrease of childcare options and the increase of children out of school for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic and because women still primarily perform the housework and care duties in the familial structure— the impact was felt more amongst women. According to Viswanath et al.'s research, the total number of health-care employees infected with Covid-19 in the United States during May or 2020 was "approximately 9,282 and an overwhelming 73% of these infected healthcare workers were female" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 233). Not only was employment impacted for this group, but their physical and mental health was disproportionately impacted during the pandemic. "Domestic abuse, sexual abuse and instances of street harassment targeted at women during the Covid-19 crises is on the rise," (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 233).

Due to the quarantine orders as well as the economic crisis during the peak of the pandemic, women were unable to escape potentially dangerous living situations.

Although the CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) was passed in March of 2020, it aided primarily white men. For example, the CARES Act mortgage aid covered about 70% of outstanding single-family mortgages in comparison to the CARES Act protection for renters that only covered about 30%. "Black homeownership rates are much lower than White homeownerships rates owing to historical factors such as Blacks having less wealth, less savings, and less retirement funds," (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 233). Women being historically oppressed—comparative to the Black community and other marginalized groups—were also impacted by "'neutral' budgetary appropriations which are both race and gender blind" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 234), making these groups more likely to experience housing instability. According to Viswanath et al. food insecurity would impact women and children and households headed by women more than men. "Households are more likely to be food insecure if there are members of a minority race/ethnicity, specifically African American, Latino, and American Indian; households headed by a single parent experience food insecurity…especially when the head is female" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 235). The United States government did pass large economic stimulus packages at federal and state levels, but these stimulus packages did not take into account gender and specifically "gender inclusive spending geared toward gender-based violence, women's sexual and reproductive health, or women's specific needs during the pandemic" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 236). A gender-conscious approach during the pandemic was not unachievable as proved by "countries faring much better than the US in terms of pandemic response," (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 236); countries that had female head of

states at the time (e.g., New Zealand, Germany, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Taiwan).

Countries all over the world have implemented gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) strategies at the federal, state and local levels. Viswanath et al. argue that GRB proves to be a fiscal innovation and have already "been liberally applied in the developed economies such as Germany, Italy, Australia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Canada, France, and South Africa" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 237), as well as many others equally more than 100 different countries. GRB can include four overarching components that could have been applied to the administrative process during the pandemic, "a) gendered innovations in knowledge processing and networking b) gendered innovations in institutional mechanisms c) gendered innovations in learning processes and building capacities and d) gendered innovations in public accountability and benefit incidence" (Viswanath et al., 2020, pg. 237). All of which center around three distinct dimensions of the budgetary process: profit, spending, and decision making. GRB allows for the implementation of gendered perspectives within budgetary decisions, which allows for more gender differential approaches that allow for gender-sensitive profit and spending. This innovative approach would allow money to be distributed more equally by considering those marginalized individuals that may need more help during hardships. It is time for our country to move towards progress and get with the times, following the lead of many other countries that base their policy making on gender inclusive solutions.

6. Stepping Away from Neutral Frameworks

The single axis[43] frameworks used to determine housing eligibility and whose bodies are entitled to specific aid neglects to cover the diverse experiences of diverse individuals. In

[43] Single axis meaning one-sided, primarily on the side of white, cisgender, heterosexual men.

opposition to this typical conceptualization of women's homelessness, Bullock et al. propose a "multi-level intersectional framework…attending closely to how 'identities intersect and are intricately linked'" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 836). A movement away from "single axis conceptualizations of women's homelessness" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 835) is necessary in the interlocking systems of classed and gendered oppression that we call society. This shift towards a deeper level of acknowledgement of women within the homeless community is known as the feminization of homelessness. Bullock et al. states that this feminization is often "examined via a single-axis framework that privileges gender inequality" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 836) deeming the experiences of "White, cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class women as normative" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 836). Meaning that the experiences that lead (primarily) white heterosexual women towards homelessness are seen as a standard within the framework of our society, "sidelining the experiences of racially, economically, and sexually diverse women and constraining psychological research and advocacy" (Bullock et al., 2020, pg. 836). In order to better serve these women, a shift in mindset is crucial—a shift away from 'neutral' programs and towards the recognition that different individuals have different needs especially along gender divides. This supposedly 'neutral' response is part of the problem because it further ostracizes groups that may not be at the same starting point. In a perfect world, neutral programs might work if both men and women were equal at the kickoff; but unfortunately, this is not the case for women.

a. Traditional Models

Social policies that reverse homelessness (not simply manage it) are limited. The traditional model of homeless services, "which follows a model of care that is variously referred to as 'treatment first'" (Greenwood et al. 2) limits the potential recovery of homeless individuals

in terms of growth and rehabilitation. The traditional model encourages compliance through treatment. Sobriety has prerequisites and a range of rules that promise a better future (or at least some form of independent accommodations). On the other hand, failure to comply with these set standards result in backsliding to more restrictive housing arrangements or even eviction.

The original housing prioritization model rested on the opinions of housing providers, which allowed those housing providers to cherry-pick who was able to obtain a spot in their housing programs. This model tends to give housing providers a considerable say in who they can accept into their programs, decisions that tend to favor those homeless individuals that are less at risk because they are seen as less problematic. These traditional models of housing prioritization separate those who are in greater need or those that would potentially be benefitted more by way of "lengthy wait lists or housing readiness criteria such as sobriety, psychiatric stability, economic requirements, or criminal history" (Sylla et al., 2016, 565). Obviously as a housing provider, one would prefer fewer problematic individuals and aim to aid those individuals who are the "easiest to serve" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 565); yet these are the individuals that could find more success in a different type of housing program.

Housing First, a model introduced in New York in 1992, requires that support services be tailored to clients' preferences and needs. These programs typically require users to "meet weekly with staff members, contribute 30% of their income towards the cost of rent, and comply with a standard lease agreement" (Greenwood et al., 2020, pg. 2), all of which aid an individual's attempt to reenter society. This model presented an alternative option for homeless service delivery, which was initially designed to serve the more chronically homeless adults (those with serious mental illnesses). This model is based on the principles of "consumer choice, empowerment, and recovery" (Greenwood et al., 2020, pg. 2). This model focuses on the idea of

restructuring an individual's setting—after all, it is unlikely that a person will get better in the environment that made them sick.

b. Towards Innovative Models

In October of 2016, the article "Creating a Regional Model to Coordinate and Prioritize Access to Permanent Supportive Housing" was published analyzing a couple of new prioritization models that sought out the most 'high-risk' unsheltered people. A model like this could work in highlighting which groups are receiving an unbalanced amount of aid and rested on the operation of two methods within the model.

The first method placed a priority on sorting individuals by how often they use high-cost public services. The emphasis on this method is necessary because "high-cost service use by individuals who are homeless is indicative of ongoing crises for which supportive housing could be a remedy" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 565). Giving these individuals a home will also offset the number of services used and in turn shift the dynamics of how monetary resources are used. While the amount of funding needed to combat the issues facing unsheltered people will not be reduced, it would allow for a reallocation of funding.

The second prioritization method is used to assess a person's "vulnerability to victimization, ill health, and/or mortality if left on the streets as a measure of need for supportive housing" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 565). This method, while it would show who is most in need, could also take care of identifying those individuals not considered high risk. Paired with the first model, these two would ensure those that are high risk are taken care of adequately and could make space for other methods (especially for individuals that might be ready to reenter society[44]).

[44] i.e., move to permanent housing, acquire a job, learn necessary skills like budgeting, cooking, and any job specific expertise—essentially taking the steps to become self-sufficient.

In order for a new model to work, it must have all the vital parts. Client Care Coordination (CCC) model, a comprehensive example, offers the best of both worlds. Joint notices for funding availability (NOFA) are published each year in the Federal Register that lay out the "shared priorities of the public and private funders for the CCC model" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 566) for some Housing and Community Facilities Programs (HCFP). In short, the notices describe the type of funding available on a competitive basis for programs like these. Monetary distribution is made based on certain criteria (e.g., area income, local access to credit, availability of funding from other sources). This notice "allowed providers to understand and accept the new system of prioritization access" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 566) when the program was first implemented in King County, WA.

The model of housing prioritization used in King County, or one like it could shift the dynamic of how resources are utilized and over time, will lead to a reduction of need for such resources. The first step in housing stability is recognizing that individuals are different and require different needs. The CCC model "more equitably allocates scarce resources to those most in need" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 253). Agencies that were applying for funding in order to create "permanent supportive housing were required to dedicate a number of units for CCC" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 565). In 2007, for example, the CEH's partners began to theorize how to effectively prioritize referrals into the county's pool of supportive housing. The largest entities that provided the most funding towards housing prioritization "generated resources for 2300 units of supportive housing, designating about one third for CCC" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 566). The CEH Funders Group made this initiative possible by developing the first concept of "prioritizing referrals to supportive housing units for individuals who were the most vulnerable for negative outcomes and/or had high cost, frequent service, or jail use" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg.

566). The intended result of this process was to make one pathway as opposed to the traditional model of housing prioritization, which made only one incentivized pathway to housing.

The CCC model gives those individuals who have the greatest need an opportunity to be seen and prioritized. Because women are more vulnerable to cycles of homelessness and lack many health resources needed for their gender specifically, they would be benefitted by a system that highlights them and their needs among other groups experiencing homeless. However, because the model is identifying those most in need, a different type of threat occurs. People could start falsely seeking out the use of high-cost services although they themselves are not high-risk in order to qualify for stable housing. This type of model would encourage individuals to strive for financial and social freedom and self-sufficiency. If this type of program was offered to those frequent flyers in shelters, rehab facilities, hospitals, jails, and institutions of that nature, that would clear up space for other individuals to seek out help.

Further, there needs to be a thorough and organized system for storing data. A database is necessary for the CCC model, one that identifies which individuals are accruing the highest public service costs and who are the most vulnerable on the streets. The database at the time of Sylla et al.'s research paper was storied within the DCHS (Department of Community and Human Services) because the DCHS "(1) is a covered entity under HIPAA with structures in place for collecting, managing, and securing protected health information and other confidential data; (2) has technical expertise and capability to integrate data from multiple sources; (3) already houses psychiatric hospital and sobering center data; and (4) already receives daily County jail incarceration data under an existing agreement modifiable to include the CCC" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 566). Additional data was also collected like emergency department stays and medical hospitalization by asking clients and manually entering them into the database. The

database paired with the Vulnerability Assessment Tool[45] (VAT) makes the CCC model the most optimal option for cost efficiency and accuracy. The use of this electronic database to store records increases precision over traditional models that rely on self-reported utilization. Overall, the CCC model puts all information in one central location and coordinates eligibility equitably.

With the CCC model, every individual wishing to be considered for supportive housing is initially assigned a "'score' for each institution/service based on their utilization of that particular public sector service or institution during the prior year" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 567). Scores are on a range from 0 to 10, 10 being the highest score those of which correspond to greater usage. Each individual's score for each institution/service is added together "to create a composite score" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 567). All individual's composite scores are compared to determine who is scoring high, medium, and low. Individuals with high scores become eligible to move forward with CCC supported housing and are invited to begin the application process.

There are key elements needed in order to guarantee the success of CCC: "public-private funding, stakeholder partnerships, cross-system data, standardized assessment, a utilization and vulnerability scoring rubric, protocols for referral and placement, and strong oversight and evaluation" as well as a "commitment from funders to change housing eligibility methods for supportive housing units, willingness to tie funding to the model, and support for providers to work through their resistance while insisting on change" (Sylla et al., 2016, pg. 572).

Srebnik et al. conducted a study comparing 196 CCC participants to 102 non-CCC individuals all housed in the same five supportive housing programs. The results showed that

[45] From the "Vulnerability Assessment Tool: Training Manual for Conducting Assessment Interviews," 2016, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COH_VAT_Manual_Online.pdf). In public domain. The VAT is a prioritization tool "created out of necessity because of a scarcity of shelter, housing, appropriate supports and other resources." Importantly to note, the VAT could be used to generate information about the gaps in aid.

those that the CCC individuals had "greater service utilization reductions" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 255) compared to those that weren't housed using the CCC model. Although the reduction in service utilization is notable, the CCC participants were less likely to have a 'good' program exit and often times forfeited aid making their program retention (length-of-stay) shorter than the comparison group.

The CCC model and process has proven to both fairly address the economic issues and the more hidden issues associated with individuals' vulnerability that is set forth by high service usage. According the Srebnik et al. their study demonstrated a "reduction of $2.8 million dollars in the utilization of high-cost public services comparing the year prior to and year following housing entrance" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 255). These results over time have great potential in considerably reducing costs in the public sector and the money saved on these resources could be allocated to other resources that are more specific for individuals in different tiers of homelessness. This transparent and fiscally sensible model is a promising housing prioritization method that is based on balanced criteria of high-cost public service usage and that has already shown remarkable results. Srebnik et al. conclude that this model is "feasible and cost-efficient to implement, relying primarily on centralized administrative data" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 256). This model provides an adequate starting point for systems that are working on developing a more comprehensive system of housing prioritization.

There is a limited supply of resources that are granted to homeless individuals because of the finite affordable housing available a systematic approach for prioritization of housing is necessary. When there is no set formula for determining who should receive housing when, "housing providers often select individuals who may be less challenging to serve or who are

already known to the provided" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 252). Only the most visibly homeless (e.g., those living in campsites, parks, shelters, or meal programs) are the first to be served.

There are unrealistic perquisites that neglect those individuals that might be more in need of services provided for homeless individuals. Requirements such as a clean "criminal history and housing 'readiness' criteria such as achievement of sobriety or psychiatric stability'" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 252) discourage and prevent some individuals[46] from obtaining assistance. As mentioned above, the CCC model uses the Vulnerability Assessment Tool (VAT) to measure ten domains: "mental health, substance abuse, cognitive organization/orientation, survival skills, medical risk, mortality risk, ability to communicate needs, ability to meet basic needs, negative social behaviors, and homelessness history" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 253).

It is important to note that the implementation of this model is not capable of reducing homelessness on its own. The CCC model "involves stakeholder partnership, blended public-private funding, efficient use of centralized cross-sector administrative data" (Srebnik et al., 2017, pg. 253), i.e., jail, shelters, hospitals, sobering facilities, psychiatric facilities. The CCC model entails the use of a scoring system for rating service utilization and therefore, vulnerability. The use of this standardized assessment more equitably allocates the resources that are scarce to those that are the most in need.

Given the right support and access to resources, women who have been proven to be more at risk of becoming or remaining homeless, may be able to be liberated form the cyclical nature of homelessness. The challenges women face can be overcome but only if resources are given that actually push them in the right direction and meet their needs.

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[46] Many women talk about their inability to thrive in community living or shelter life because of the constant exposure to drugs. One woman says, "'When you are in like emergency accommodation and the hotels like, whatever, there's just no way you can get clean…really hard because it's just all around you"' (Mayock et al., 2015, pg. 887).

7. A Better Environment

For people that have never experienced addiction[47], it might be hard to understand the feelings that come with it. More so, every person's experience with addiction is unique to them. In a world where most of us struggle to find our place at some point or another and may at times feel uncomfortable with who we are, suffering from an illness like addiction may make someone feel even more isolated. For a moment, imagine going out with friends to have a good time. You take a drink or try a drug or win a bet/game—suddenly the whole world makes sense. Suddenly, you're no longer an outsider. Suddenly, you feel as if you can actually make it in the world. Suddenly, you feel alive.

That feeling never lasts, though. You enter a cat and mouse game, constantly chasing that feeling of relief. The people who you used to consider your friend group don't understand you anymore. Maybe you don't understand yourself either. You find yourself spending more time with people who do understand you; but unfortunately, these friends, these habits, the relief comes with a steep price.

What happens when the addiction becomes your life? What happens when that addiction takes the life you had? When it strips you of your home, your job, your support system. What happens if you realize that you don't like your new reality?

For a person that comes to this realization, liberation from the shackles of addiction is difficult to achieve. This person may struggle to maintain a double life: hiding their addiction while trying to recover. A first step could be a rehab program, but for individuals experiencing homelessness, this will not be enough. Even if they successfully get through the program, then what? They go back to living in shelters, streets, community housing where they are put right

[47] It is important to note that according to the National Institute on Drug use, "men are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs."

back into the same toxic environment. There needs to be a middle ground for those that are on the path to recovery but feeling stuck. Adequate support that could teach them the necessary skills to be self-sufficient. Most programs seeking to provide aid offer no education. They simply attempt to help get unsheltered individuals "housed" without providing the skills they'll need to remain housed for the long term.

Let us consider a program called the Pathways from Prison at Claflin University in South Carolina. This program is "housed under [their] Center for Social Justice.[48]" A program like this is helpful in that its aim is to "unite, educate, and advocate against injustices,[49]" offering support from students, faculty, and staff to offer motivation for prisoners attempting to reenter society. Haney says that "prisoners are reluctant to open up in environments where they do not feel physically or psychologically safe;[50]" therefore, it is important for prisoners to be in a new and encouraging environment if they have a shot at long-term success. This is applicable to the homelessness issue because there seems to be a revolving door within the prison system that contributes to homelessness and vice versa. The Claflin University program also aims to create more expansive and deeper connections between the "greater Orangeburg community, South Carolina, the United States of America, and the world, particularly as it relates to education, career, and housing programming for individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated.[51]"

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[48] From "Claflin University Pathways From Prison Program," Claflin University (https://www.claflin.edu/academics-research/special-programs-and-opportunities/claflin-university-center-for-social-justice/claflin-university-pathways-from-prison-program). In public domain.
[49] From "Claflin University Pathways From Prison Program," Claflin University (https://www.claflin.edu/academics-research/special-programs-and-opportunities/claflin-university-center-for-social-justice/claflin-university-pathways-from-prison-program). In public domain.
[50] From "Incarceration Nation," 2014, American Psychological Association (https://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/10/incarceration). In public domain.
[51] From "Claflin University Pathways From Prison Program," Claflin University (https://www.claflin.edu/academics-research/special-programs-and-opportunities/claflin-university-center-for-social-justice/claflin-university-pathways-from-prison-program). In public domain.

Cooperation and teamwork is one of the most important aspects in the long-term reduction of homelessness.

In order for a program like Claflin's to generate long term success, I believe an extra step must be taken that can help the individuals reentering society along with the university. If these individuals were able to take residence on campus and their basic human necessities were being fulfilled properly, then they might be more enticed to put in the effort needed for long-term success. Reentry into society requires financial education, reading and writing skills, resume help, etc. Even offering individuals the ability to work at the university in sectors like dining, housekeeping, gardening, office assistants, etc. will give them education and work experience. A work-study program would allow individuals to receive an education while also paying for some of their education in return. An investment that might be worthwhile to some other educational institutions.

For women specifically, given their history on the social ladder, a course on financial literacy is necessary. Women are more likely than men to be unprepared for retirement, which is a problem because women tend to live longer than men. Women also make up most of the caregiver positions, which puts them at a disadvantage in the workforce making it more likely for them to quit their jobs. There are changes in demographics that make this an urgent problem among them "higher rates of divorce and lower remarriage rates[52]" Within the larger female group, race plays an even bigger role in lack of financial literacy.

8. Community Partnership

[52] From "What Explains the Gender Gap in Financial Literacy? The Role of Household Decision Making" by Fonseca et al., 2012, PubMed Central (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3462438/). In public domain.

There are potential opportunities in building community-university collaborations meaning creating partnerships between academic programs and individuals that are at a disadvantage within that community. This partnership can be an effective strategy for introducing public scholarship "that meets the civic, social, economic, and educational needs of the community" (Allahwala et al., 2013, pg. 43).

Higher education institutions could see these partnerships as an opportunity to expand their own communities. A partnership between these institutions and a community in marginalized urban areas could present education institutions "economic objectives for securing town-gown relationships with neighboring communities" (Allahwala et al., 2013, pg. 43) since these institutions tend to be some of the largest urban landowners.

This relationship can be advantages to universities that have reputations of being "spatially and culturally disconnect and politically disengaged from the needs and concerns of the communities that surround them" (Allahwala et al., 2013, pg. 43). More often than not, universities are perceived as unwilling to develop meaningful and reciprocal relationships.

Scholars have pointed out the limitations associated with traditional service-learning education (especially when pegged simply as 'volunteering,' which makes it seem more passive). Students should receive a social activism education that is "designed to engage students in and educate them about societal problems and destabilize deeply held assumptions about poverty and the nature of social inequality" (Allahwala et al., 2013, pg. 44). This gives students real-world experiences as well allowing them to empathize better with individuals in different cultures experiencing social phenomenon's that may never touch the student's lives otherwise.

The task of creating these partnerships is not easy work. Trust must be established among all partners and reciprocity is an important element of building trust. Research has shown the

positive results of service learning like "personal development and critical thinking, as well as enhanced civic awareness and responsibility" (Allahwala et al., 2013, pg. 44). These systems of learning should be focused on the learning outcomes at the student level and on the ongoing process of exchange in order to establish equality between the parties involved. Partnerships between education institutions and those marginalized communities benefit both the students and the individuals within that community. A partnership of this natural has the potential to benefit both parties and engages questions that discuss power dynamics and knowledge acquisition in terms of who has accessibility to this knowledge.

A local example brings us back to Seattle Pacific University in the winter of 2015. In response to the growing rates of homeless in the King County area, Seattle Pacific University (SPU) hosted Tent City, "the oldest homeless encampment in Seattle" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 252). In order to successfully maintain the camp for 13 weeks and provide a temporary home for about 50 to 80 men and women, SPU partnered with their community.

This was an opportunity for both students and faculty to engage and learn about the homeless community in a more personal way. The hands-on experience was also paired by three courses in order to: "(1) expose our students to the literature on homelessness, (2) focus on ethical and appropriate methods of data collection, and (3) provide a more advanced preparation in homelessness literature and the research process" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 252). Not only that but by mentoring a small research group, the students were taught how to collect data from field observations and how to conduct interviews with the individuals of Tent City.

Studying social problems (like homelessness) can be done via books, lectures, PowerPoints, etc.; but students may still struggle to fully understand the scope of the situation at hand or to "link individual problems with social structures" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg.

253). A project such as this one not only helps the students at the university level, but it also helps the vulnerable individuals seeking aid.

The partnership gave professors the space to "combine traditional course work with practical research experience, laying a foundation for civic engagement within a supportive university context" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 253). This form of active learning opens vast possibilities for students that participate. This model can "awaken and direct student' sociological imaginations as well as give students opportunities to gain job skills, a greater appreciation of diversity" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 253).

McKinney and Snedker created a course centered around preparing student researchers "to enter into the field with substantive knowledge and methodological skills" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 253). The integration of course material with hands-on learning is vital to the model of active learning. Some of the skills the students learned to prepare them for the hands-on portion of the course included: "structured reflection, application of acquisition skills, course credit, services rendered, and spending time in the community" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 253). A model like this ensures that students are adequately prepared for the hands-on learning they will be exposed to.

The data collection portion of the project required the students to complete the "first-term courses," (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254) and register for a senior research seminar. McKinney and Snedker touched on a potential problem with active learning models, particularly considering the Tent City project. Concerns that students would be "overwhelmed and lack motivation or commitment…college students may be unprepared 'to confront issues related to poverty, race, mental, illness, substance abuse, or homelessness'" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254). One way to filter out those students that may not be as interested or as prepared

could be to make this course for seniors only. McKinney and Snedker had "12 students [taking] a senior research seminar coinciding with Tent City's visit" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254). Students at this stage in their college education must begin preparing to enter the real-world and a hands-on course like this one could provide them with a soft exposure to the experiences they might encounter post-graduation.

Student feedback indicated that their understanding of homeless experiences deepened. After the course, students reported that "they became more aware of 'how really easy it is to fall into a path of homelessness'" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254). Some students reported that the stigmas they previously held about individuals experiencing homelessness began to crumble. The students were able to better relate to these individuals; one student even said that she experienced feeling "a new empathy that [she] didn't have before because [she] didn't understand…all the factors" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254). They realized for themselves that this process was necessary to adequately learn about social problems even if it was challenging to do so. The skills they developed through the Tent City project were "best realized when applied beyond an academic context" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 254). Students mentioned having feelings of self-transformation post project, "several students began voluntarily attending events such as Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day at the state capitol" (McKinney and Snedker, 2017, pg. 256). Overall, the students seemed receptive to this type of learning by showing their excitement when going to Tent City to interview people, which ultimately encouraged partnership.

A course like this would be necessary in order to create understanding between the individuals seeking aid and the students enrolled at the university. With that being said, this project could be taken to the next level by actually providing individuals experiencing

homelessness with housing, meal plans, health services, and education. McKinney and Snedker successfully got the ball rolling, sparking the interest of the students signifying that this may be of interest to them; but in order to start progressing toward long-term solutions, an extra step is needed.

9. **The First Steps**

During Richard Nixon's presidency in 1973, there was a significant decrease in the public housing stock including a lack of new construction and rehabilitation due to a moratorium put in place on housing construction, which lowered the supply of housing. Over time "decreases in other social services funding, as well as general economic restructuring, have increased the demand for affordable housing" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 111). Between the 1980s and early 2000s, the United States saw an increase of families at "the level of critical housing need" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 111). Additionally, the turn of the century saw that number increase by 70 percent. In 1996 the federal budget included the Moving to Work demonstration (MTW) that sought to address these rising concerns about public housing. According to Webb et al.'s research, the MTW has three statutory goals:

First: "reduce costs and achieve greater cost-effectiveness in federal expenditures." Second, "give incentives to families with children where the head of the household is working, seeking work, or is preparing for work by participating in job training, educational programs, or programmes that assist people to obtain employment and become economically self-sufficient." Third: "increase housing choices for low-income families" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112).

There are two main areas that the MTW allows flexibility in for participating public housing authorities (PHAs). The first allows them to "merge several separate HUD funding streams, such as those for housing choice vouchers…and conventional public housing, into a single fund"

(Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112). This fund is called a single-fund budget flexibility. The second allows PHAs the freedom to "request waivers of certain HUD regulations, such as how often to verify tenants' income eligibility, how to calculate rent, and whether to limit the duration residents may receive housing subsidies" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112). These flexibilities create a space for PHAs experiment reforms that, if successful, could be eventually adopted.

There are three conditions that limit the participants of the MTW. The first states that the PHAs "must serve substantially the same number of families they did prior to joining MTW, although legislation provides no definition of this" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112). The second condition is that the PHAs must "ensure that a minimum of 75% of families receiving assistance are low income" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112). The final condition states that PHAs must keep "HUD housing quality standards" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 112). Additionally, it is encouraged that the PHAs experiment primarily with program reforms that urge participants to move towards economic independence.

With its implementation, Congress had initially proposed to include "all 3000+ PHAs in the demonstration" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 113); however, through a compromise, they settled for 30 PHAs to participate in MTW (although, according to Webb et al., six of those PHAs withdrew before they had officially signed on to MTW). Since then, other agencies selected through HUD competitions or authorized by Congress have been added—the numbers "ranged from 22 in 2005 to 39 in 2015" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 113). Those agencies participating in MTW have implemented certain activities in order to find a balance between incentives and consequences among the program in the hopes of increasing employment among residents. Unsurprisingly, the most controversial have been the consequences, which include: "work requirements that mandate work-able…tenants to find employment and occupancy time limits that restrict how long

residents may receive assistance" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 114). For example, Webb et al. found that eight MTW authorities had work requirements stipulating that those tenants "work between 15 and 35 hours per week" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 114). Of course, almost all work agencies allow residents some flexibility in terms of fulfilling the mandate. These flexibilities include "work-related activities[53]" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 114). Many agencies have provided the residents with other resources such as case management to help them find and maintain employment.

Some agencies have also mandated certain educational programs "such as financial literacy classes" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 116) for those residents that are earning below a certain income threshold or falling short of the agencies' requirements. Some agencies like San Mateo provide residents with direct payments for completing certain tasks related to gaining their independence. San Mateo contributes $100 to residents' escrow accounts for completing a General Degree and $1 for each point improvement in their credit score. Additionally, these agencies also provide education in the way of vocation and other educational services. For example, the Tacoma Housing Authority partnered with the local community college and elementary school to offer rental assistance. San Antonio provided residents with training to become "licensed childcare providers through a local community college" (Webb et al., 2016, pg. 116) while also providing space to deliver daycare services and practice the skills they learned. We're seeing actual partnerships, while small and just starting, they are producing results.

[53] job training, job searching, educational programs, volunteer activities, etc.

The initial experiment group needs to build a strong foundation and ought to be the most likely for success. Single women are the ideal candidates for a program like this because of their mindsets, their lack of dependents, and their less violent tendencies.[54]

10. Going the Extra Mile

Consider the potential of a lengthier program for women who might be more prepared (mentally, financially, socially, etc.) to reenter society, meaning that those that are on the verge of being homeless and fit the criteria for the program could apply for a program like the one at TCC. Seattle Pacific University could investigate partnering with TCC and encourage those in the program get their AA and then finish their education at SPU. It is important to consider that type of general education that could be required for these women, particularly instating a curriculum still centered around enabling their successful reentry into society and long-term success in their future[55]. For those women who have been chronically homeless and also meet the criteria there could be a shorter program that prepares them to eventually transition to the longer one at TCC.

There might be some benefit in exploring the idea of a required skills workshop for hands-on learning and networking opportunities post-education. They could attend a few of hours of class and then step into the real world for a few hours as well. This would allow them to put credentials and abilities on their resume to increase the chances of employment post-program. The idea behind the networking portion of the skills workshop would be a way to open a door for these women so that they might have an opportunity afterwards at a job they already know.

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[54] According to the FBI: UCR, in 2012 men made up 80.1% of violent crimes. From the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States, 2012 (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3462438/). In public domain.
[55] i.e., financing, basic writing skill, resume construction, interview training, etc.

Ideally it might look something like a ladder—moving up the steps out of the abyss of homelessness. If a woman is at a certain point in their climb, these programs could serve as an extra boost to officially pull them out of the hole. The steps on the ladder as stages might look something like: Stage 1: shelters and nonprofit housing programs, from there we could recruit individuals that fit the criteria for Stage 2: choosing between programs (either the expediated version or the one targeted towards a degree). Upon completion, they could be ready for a voucher program that allows them to lease apartments in the public market. Stage 3: Housing Vouchers & Job, which means that depending on their financial status (what they're getting paid) at the moment they could get 30%, 50%, 70% of their rent covered and the rest would be on them. We can slowly wean them from the vouchers as they move up the ladder.

At the core of the project is the need for community cooperation—to work together and actually communicate towards a common and lasting solution. Right now, there are so many places that are trying to be everything for everyone, which is simply overextending funding, employees, volunteers, and it strains the services being provided to the homeless individuals. Not only that, but it makes it harder for individuals in the homeless community to know where to go for what aid. Nothing ends up getting done. From what I've found in my research women, because they have been used to fighting hard all their lives for their place in society, are more likely to have a successful reentry into society. This means that women are more likely to break the cycle of homelessness and gain financial stability. Women tend to be secretly homeless because they feel shame about their place in society. They feel as though they aren't contributing the way society has said they're meant to.[56] Not only that but now they have no home and no job so the likelihood that they'll work harder to get themselves financially and socially stable[57].

[56] Bearing children, being a wife, fill caretaker roles in the work field, etc.
[57] Stable housing, getting a job, getting an education, etc.

11. Conclusion

The experience of homelessness proves to be especially hard for women—particularly for single women. The United States is plagued by gender biases that discriminate against women; and women of color within this larger group are even more marginalized. The experience of being homeless for women is destabilizing, it is demoralizing, and it leaves them feeling insufficient.

Women are prone to cycles of homelessness, not because they're lazy, not because they do not want to help themselves, not because they refuse to work—because they lack the necessary resources to find their freedom from the shackles of homelessness. Women are prone to cycles of homelessness because we are seen as lesser than men.

There needs to be cooperation and most importantly understanding. It will not be one single program that solves the homeless crises in the United States—it will be all of us deciding to change how we view the problem. Homelessness is rooted in gender biases and flourishes because of our disinterest in recognizing individual experiences.

This paper has laid out gender gaps throughout history and their impact on women, the pathways that woman take into homelessness, and the cyclical nature of homelessness for women. This paper has laid out outdated models and has presented innovative housing prioritization guides that take into account where aid fails marginalized groups, specifically single women. This paper discusses local programs in the state of Washington that have resulted in the reduction of homelessness and analyzes the ways these programs can be targeted towards groups that have been mistreated and have been misrepresented in research.

Imagine the humiliation the comes from being evicted from your home because society has failed you. Because of your gender, you are not enough. Because of your gender, you are scorned

and criticized for a number of things— for not bearing children, for not getting married, for falling through the cracks that society refuses to pave. To be a woman in most cases, is to have your childhood cut short in often unfair ways.[58]

I remember the day that I was forced to grow up. I remember it in my dreams— years later— and still struggle with feelings of insufficiency to this day. I leave my Seattle apartment every morning with fear in the back of my mind. *What if my phone dies on my way home tonight? What if I don't get that job because I am a woman and face the risk of becoming pregnant? What if I say no, and he refuses to listen? What if he takes what he wants, and it sends me on the path towards homelessness like so many others?*

To be a girl is to be sexualized before we even know what that means and to be a woman is to fight every single day for a place in society. I see you; I understand you; and I am fighting for you.

[58] According to the National Sexual Assault Hotline, "82% of all victims under 18 are female" and 93% of the perpetrators "are known to the victim."

Honors Research Symposium Presentation, May 21st, 2022, Seattle Pacific University

This is for the woman who stands by the freeway entrance on my commute to work every morning. She stands in the same ragged clothes through rain or sun, never letting her smile waver. This is for the woman with a sign in one hand that reads "anything helps," and a bundle of roses in the other. She attempts to sell roses to provide food for the young boy next to her that carries a baby girl in his arms. This is for the woman who sits outside of my local QFC. She offers to trade stories for food swearing it'll be worth the listen. This is for the woman who works three jobs just to make ends meet, and still falls short. She passes by other women in the street and fears that she will be among them one day.

This project was born after working for a wealthy man who sought to reduce homelessness from his penthouse apartment while wrongly leaning into well-known stigmas often associated with homeless individuals. He believed that people experiencing homelessness were experiencing this phenomenon the same way and came to be homeless all the same. I began to wonder, if these stigmas were accurate, for example, the belief that most homeless people are homeless because of addiction; then surely, one of the many solutions implemented over the years would have been successful.

The deeper I dove into my research, the clearer it became that there is a plethora of reasons that individuals wind up homeless. For women specifically, there are a slew of factors (including familial history, demographics, socioeconomic status, domestic violence, sexual assault and many more) that lead them on the path to homelessness.

I decided to center my project around analyzing homelessness while focusing on single women. By prioritizing my research on this underrepresented population, I sought to address

gender differences in the paths women and men take into homelessness and how gender disparities are emphasized in housing prioritization models and homeless reduction solutions. Ultimately, I suggest that King County, in particular, begin approaching this growing crisis with gender-conscious policies and programs. Further, I urge educational institutions to step into the picture.

Out of all the industrialized countries, the United States has the largest number of homeless women. While there has been a rise in research surrounding this topic, gender disparities are seldom brought into the conversation, which creates a skewed perception of the homeless population. This imbalance can be seen in the ways women come to be homeless; and although, they do share some similarities with men, most of their needs are gender specific.

For example, men and women undergo different health challenges. Heart attacks, for example, are not sexist. Both men and women are prone to heart attacks; yet statistics show that women are more likely to die from one. The symptoms that a woman experiences are different than that of a man and many physicians lack the adequate knowledge to identify these symptoms as signs of a heart attack.

The lack of research concerning women in the homeless community creates many problems, those of which ultimately promote cycles of chronic homelessness. Women are prone to what one housing study researcher deemed ‘hidden homelessness.’ Factors that contribute to women’s homelessness include unequal or low pay, lack of affordable housing, discrimination, weak safety nets, punitive welfare and public housing policies, and intimate partner violence.

The place women are told they hold in society has shown to have significant impacts on their life, especially when experiencing homelessness. Alienation by society causes a negative

view of their community, which in turn cause uneasiness and lack of trust in the system. In some cases, women may actually choose to forfeit aid early.

According to a housing study conducted by Mayock and others there are four main exit destinations from homeless services. For the purpose of this presentation, we will only focus on one major exit: exit with a partner.

While there are women that might exit with a supportive partner, most accounts demonstrate that women choose to go back to an abusive relationship. There is clear cyclical pattern in that women leave an abusive partner only to be failed by the system and choose to return to the abuse only for the cycle to repeat again.

A lack of agency often drives women to leave a shelter before they can get the necessary help. There is often a lack of privacy and autonomy when living in these settings and a lot of women felt that their ability to manage their unstable situations are compromised by the lack of privacy within shelters, oversurveillance being a big part of that. Many are treated like children when staying in shelters, which contributes to their feelings of inadequacy. Treatments of this nature ostracize women from society and make women feel as though they have no place in it. One woman talked about her experience where she was forced to sit on a bench, which they called the naughty bench, for hours because she had come back under the influence of alcohol.

The stresses that come with living in shelters often led women to independently leave service systems feeling as though they were better off on the streets or with an abusive partner than having to be subjected to demeaning treatment. Their intimate relationships were seen as a practical means to an end—the lesser of two evils so to speak.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of homelessness for women. IPV can put women in situations that are out of their control and have

significant impact on their journey towards financial and social stability. In many cases, male partners who demonstrated abusive behavior resulted in women's removal from stable housing opportunities.

I believe that given the right support and access to resources, single women, who tend to be more at risk of becoming or remaining homeless, could be liberated from the cyclical nature of homelessness. In order to successfully become financially and socially independent, single women also need to be given an opportunity to grow in a healthy environment. There are potential opportunities in building community-university collaborations.

In South Carolina, the Claflin University launched a program called the Pathways from Prison, which offers support from students, faculty, and staff in order to motivate prisoners attempting to reenter society. This program allowed prisoners a physically and psychologically safe space where they might be more inclined to open. This is applicable to the homelessness issue because there seems to be a revolving door within the prison system that contributes to homelessness and vice versa.

In order for a program like Claflin's to generate long term success, I believe an extra step within the university must be taken that can help the individuals reentering society. First, I believe that single women are the ideal candidates for a program like this because of their mindsets, their lack of dependents, and their less violent tendencies. If they were able to take residence on campus and their basic human necessities were being fulfilled properly, then they might be more enticed to put in the effort needed for long-term success. Reentry into society requires financial education, reading and writing skills, resume help, etc. Even offering women the ability to work at the university in sectors like dining, housekeeping, gardening, office assistants, and other roles would give them education and work experience. A work-study

program would allow them to receive an education while also paying for it in return. An investment that might be worthwhile to some educational institutions.

Higher education institutions could see these partnerships as an opportunity to expand their own communities. This relationship can be advantageous to universities that have reputations of being culturally disconnect and disengaged from the communities that surround them. More often than not, universities are perceived as unwilling to develop meaningful and reciprocal relationships. A good example of an impactful relationship is how the Tacoma Housing Authority partnered with the local community college (TCC) and elementary school to offer rental assistance, childcare, and education. We are seeing actual partnerships. They are small and just getting started; yet they are producing results.

Another local example of a university willing to implement community engagement brings us back to Seattle Pacific University in the winter of 2015. In response to the growing rates of homeless in the King County area, SPU hosted Tent City. This was an opportunity for both students and faculty to engage and learn about the homeless community in a more personal way. Student feedback indicated that their understanding of homeless experiences deepened. After the course, students reported that they were more aware of how easy it is to become homeless. Some students reported that the stigmas they previously held about individuals experiencing homelessness began to crumble. This project successfully got the ball rolling, but in order to start progressing toward long-term solutions, an extra step is needed.

Consider the potential of a program for women who might be more prepared (mentally, financially, socially, etc.) to reenter society. A program for women, like the one at Claflin and TCC who are on the verge of being homeless and fit the criteria. SPU might even investigate partnering with TCC and encourage women in the program to earn their AA with the intent of

finishing their education at SPU. It is important to consider the type of general education that could be required for these women, particularly instating a curriculum still centered around enabling their successful reentry into society and long-term success in their future. For those women who have been chronically homeless and also meet the criteria there could be a shorter program that prepares them to eventually transition to the longer one at TCC.

There might be some benefit in exploring the idea of a required skills workshop for hands-on learning and networking opportunities post-education. Attending a few of hours of class, then stepping into the real world after would allow them to put credentials and abilities on their resume. This would increase their chances of employment post-program.

This concept has many working parts. Ideally, it might look something like a ladder—moving up the steps out of the hole of homelessness. If a woman is at a certain point in their climb, these programs could serve as an extra boost to officially pull them out of the hole. The steps on the ladder as stages might look something like: Stage 1: shelters and nonprofit housing programs, from there we could recruit individuals that fit the criteria for Stage 2: choosing between programs (either the expediated version or the one targeted towards a degree). Upon completion, they could be ready for a voucher program that allows them to lease apartments in the public market. Stage 3: Housing Vouchers & Job, which means that depending on their financial status at the moment they could get a certain percentage of their rent covered. We could slowly wean them off the vouchers as they move up the ladder.

At the core of the project is the need for community cooperation—to work together and actually communicate towards a common and lasting solution. Right now, there are so many places that are trying to be everything for everyone, which is simply overextending funding, employees, volunteers, and it strains the services being provided to the homeless individuals. Not

only that, but it makes it harder for individuals in the homeless community to know where to go for what aid.

Nothing ends up getting done.

From what I've found in my research women, because they have been used to fighting hard all their lives for their place in society, are more likely to have a successful reentry into society. This means that women are more likely to break the cycle of homelessness and gain financial and social stability.

I truly believe that working together, we can help individuals experiencing housing instability. I also believe that the first step towards success is acknowledging the gender disparities that have plagued our country for years. Breaking away from a system that ranks bodies on a hierarchy, we can begin to break the cycle of homelessness.

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