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Transforming Missoula:

Centering Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Solutions and Action
Strategies in Dismantling Systemic Oppression, Structural Inequity and Exclusion

RESEARCH PROPOSAL
BY
LEARN MISSOULA

(Listening, Engaging, Action, Reflection Network)

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Abstract

A mixed method approach nesting quantitative research within a primary qualitative design is proposed. LEARN Missoula will invite Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) residents and stakeholders to narrate and describe stories about their lived experiences noting how they connect their social reality and lived experiences in Missoula to systemic marginalization, disenfranchisement and inequity in irrefutable and measurable ways. A crucial aspect of engagement is inviting BIPOC residents to envision and design a just, safe, inclusive, and equitable Missoula where they can experience an ongoing sense of safety, place, belonging and well-being. From these storied conversations, a data driven comprehensive action plan for local leaders that privileges BIPOC-generated solutions and strategies will be formulated. Narrative and phenomenological traditions informed by the transformative paradigm undergird the qualitative approach. In contrast, the quantitative aspect will include scrutinizing existing/archival municipal departments data and interviewing departmental representatives using a critical paradigm that incorporates a racial justice and equity lens. The fundamental premise of LEARN Missoula's proposed research is that BIPOC residents, groups, and community-based organizations in Missoula are confronted with structural inequalities and exclusion; and, they encounter systemic oppression, injustice and discrimination as they interface with municipalities, community structures, and the business sector. All of which impact their daily lives. Given these experiences, BIPOC residents are supremely eligible, imminently qualified, and in the best position to offer valuable and relevant action strategies for creating a more just, inclusive, unbiased, and equitable Missoula. They know what matters most to their wellbeing. Thus, BIPOC-generated knowledge (gained through rigorous methods) will be instrumental and integral in the process of dismantling oppressive and inequitable community structures/institutions and in bringing about social transformation in municipal systems. Data informed BIPOC-specific solutions and strategies will take precedence which is congruent with participatory action-oriented research.

Key words: BIPOC, structural inequality, injustice discrimination, participatory action-oriented

Research Proposal

TITLE

Transforming Missoula: Centering Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Solutions and Action Strategies in Dismantling Systemic Oppression, Structural Inequity and Exclusion

RESEARCH PROJECT TEAM

The research project team known as LEARN Missoula (Listening, Engaging, Action, Reflection Network) is BIPOC led and directed. Each member comes with a repertoire of knowledge, skills and a professional value base, and with a history of engaging in equity and diversity work. As a collective, they are committed to centering local BIPOC voices, perspectives, and knowledge in the process of transforming community structures, municipal systems, and business institutions in Missoula.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

BIPOC residents, groups and community-based organizations in Missoula encounter systemic oppression, injustice and discrimination as they interface with municipalities and the business sector that impact their daily lives. Additionally, they often are confronted with structural inequalities and exclusion which have deleterious effects on their lived experience and sense of place.

RESEARCH AIM

There are four aims: 1) To actively engage BIPOCs who historically have been forced to the margins of the research process by using a transformative paradigm, which embodies a human rights, social justice and critical approach to research (Mertens, 2009). 2) To cultivate research partnerships with BIPOC community-based organizations, groups and residents. In forming research partnerships with BIPOCs, for whom the research matters on practical levels, this research becomes participatory and action-oriented. The

primary aim is not simply to listen and engage but to serve as a call to justice through social action (Krai & Allen, 2016). 3)) To center BIPOC voices and viewpoints on issues of structural inequity, marginalization and systemic oppression by bringing their lived experiences to the forefront through an ethically well-designed research process that will inform transformative social action strategies. 4) To scrutinize the nature of municipal departments existing and archival data in order to gain a depth of understanding relating to their interactions with and treatment of BIPOC residents. In essence, LEARN Missoula will be conducting anti-racism/discrimination audits.

RESEARCH GOALS & OUTCOMES

The primary goal is to engage BIPOC key informants/stakeholders, residents and collaborators in research conversations where they qualitatively describe and narrate stories about their lived experiences of marginalization, inequity, injustice, and oppression as they navigate public and private spaces in Missoula in irrefutable and measurable ways. Important features of the research conversation are: a) gaining insight into the meaning and impact of these encounters, and b) centering BIPOC-generated solutions and social transformative action strategies in the struggle to dismantle institutionalized injustice and structurally oppressive and biased systems. The choice of this methodology is guided by the fact that it is difficult to argue against personal experience (especially lived experiences of those directly impact by systems of oppression). *People may debate viewpoints on a range of topics or issues but when an individual tells a deeply personal lived experience even skeptics are impacted by the power of the narrative.* Narrating, describing, and substantiating lived experiences (currently seen as anecdotal) through research has the power to elevate these experiences in epistemically credible ways.

Four important outcomes are sought: 1) The generation of data informed practical and applied knowledge directly from BIPOC residents, collaborators, key informants/ stakeholders with whom LEARN Missoula will engage in research conversations. 2) The acquisition of BIPOC-centered solutions and strategic actions steps (gained through rigorous analytic methods) that will inform the transformative process of dismantling structural inequity and systemic oppression in private and public spaces inclusive of

Missoula City and County. 3) The privileging of data informed BIPOC-generated knowledge and strategies so that they play an instrumental role in the process of bringing about social transformation in municipal systems. 4) A deeper understanding of the nature of municipal departments existing and archival data and the ways in which they collect, analyze, and use their data for policy development and improvements in service delivery or quality of life for BIPOC residents. A crucial outcome of the data scrutiny and evaluation (i.e., anti-racism/discrimination audits) is to obtain objective and quantifiable information about Missoula BIPOC residents' social reality as they interface with City and County systems; but more importantly to offer specific data driven transformative recommendations based on these insights.

SIGNIFICANCE AND BENEFITS

LEARN's proposed research is beneficial and significant for three reasons. First, the voices/experiences of BIPOCs often are conspicuously absent or marginalized in research (Marten, 2009) that seeks to address the dismantling of structural inequities and systemic oppression. Instead, the empirical and theoretical literature have tended to represent dominant western cultural perceptions and conceptualizations (Brodsky et. al., 2016; Ungar, 2012). Therefore, a fundamental premise of LEARN Missoula proposed research is that BIPOCs are uniquely qualified to provide germane and significant insights on effective ways to create just and equitable communities and municipal systems because of their lived experiences as ethno-racial minorities.

Moreover, BIPOCs stratified location, position, and social identities which converge and intersect synergistically result in an ongoing cascade of statistically significant disparities that are inherent aspects of their lived experience. This makes them supremely eligible, imminently qualified, and in the best position to offer valuable and relevant action strategies and recommendations on creating more just, inclusive, unbiased, and equitable societies. Thus, LEARN Missoula will actively engage with, invite and center BIPOC thoughts, ideas and action strategies.

Second, a beneficial outcome of LEARN's proposed research will be shaping and influencing current and future policies. Ungar (2012) has noted that the voices and perspectives of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals tend to go unheard when it comes to the development of policies and services that matter most to their wellbeing. Therefore, LEARN will ensure that the lived experiences and recommended action strategies of diverse BIPOC groups that emerged from the data will be integrated in policy development or modification.

Finally, investing in data informed BIPOC-generated knowledge is fiscally responsible. Consequently, this study is significant because it can contribute to improved quality of life and well-being for BIPOCs in Missoula; thereby, reducing the overall cost attached to managing and responding to the deleterious effects of systemic oppression, institutionalized injustice, structural inequality and discrimination.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALE

To accomplish the above stated proposed research aims and goals, a mixed method approach will be used. Mixed methods research (MMR) involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single project, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leavy, 2017). There are several types of mixed methods approaches. The specific type that LEARN will use is quantitative nested in a qualitative design. This involves using a qualitative method as primary and nesting a quantitative component in the design (Anderson, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative Method

The most important rationale for LEARN choosing a qualitative method is that it offers one of the best ways to honor and value diversity as well as facilitate active collaboration between researchers and BIPOC stakeholders, key informants/participants throughout the research process (Jason & Glenwick, 2016; Leavy, 2017). Additionally, LEARN is fully cognizant of the need for researchers to actively resist the hegemony of Eurocentric

dominant culture's universalizing narratives relating to ethno-racial groups and the injustices and inequalities they experience (Brodsky et. al., 2016; Ungar et al., 2008). This active resistance can occur most effectively through engagement in qualitative approaches (Ungar et al., 2008). Brodsky et. al. (2016) have corroborated the fact that qualitative methods can be central in efforts to reframe dominant narratives. In fact, they have further contended that qualitative methods encourage a focus on both the individual and community-level, which can play an active role in responding to and changing systemic, broad-based issues (Brodsky et. al., 2016).

Given LEARN's commitment to actively resist the domination and supremacy of Eurocentric narratives and to center, leverage and privilege BIPOC voices and lived experiences of navigating difficult life realities, the primary qualitative methodology will be participatory and action oriented (Leavy, 2017), grounded in narrative and phenomenological traditions and informed by the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2009). An important rationale for using the transformative research perspective is that it intentionally centers the voices of BIPOCs who are usually kept at the perimeter of the research process (Mertens, 2009). More crucially, two hallmarks of the transformative paradigm are: a) forming partnerships with BIPOCs for whom the research has practical applicability, and b) instituting and implementing transformations. Thus, the research becomes participatory and action oriented (Krai & Allen, 2016; Leavy, 2017).

Narrative Inquiry

As noted, narrative inquiry is one of two qualitative research traditions that will undergird the proposed research. Narrative inquiry has salience because it focuses on stories which are one of the ways people organize human experiences and make them meaningful (Daly, 2007). Furthermore, the emphasis on storytelling is linked to the fact that stories are helpful in understanding how individuals live life and interact with community structures/ systems. Therefore, in collecting a diversity of stories, LEARN Missoula will come to identify common elements that will deepen understanding of the nature of BIPOCs lived experiences and social reality in Missoula as well as their shared, cultural and community experiences (Archibald et.al., 2019; Daly, 2007).

In the process of soliciting this BIPOC-generated knowledge through storytelling, LEARN Missoula will invite BIPOC collaborators, key informants/stakeholders to envision (dream) and design (co-construct) solutions and action strategies for transforming Missoula into a place and space of equality, equity, and inclusion (Boyd, 2016). Envisioning and designing an equitable and just Missoula are crucial elements of the process.

Essentially, narrative inquiry involves engaging with and listening to BIPOC key informants/stakeholders, collaborators as they share stories of their lived experience relating to an area of joint interest; in this case, experiences of discrimination, marginalization, injustice, disenfranchisement, unfair treatment, or displacement when they navigate public spaces, interface with municipal systems, and interact with business institutions. The story-telling process will culminate with an invitation for BIPOCs to envision and design a transformed Missoula that has everything they need to succeed, thrive, and experience a sense of belonging and place in public and private spaces.

It is important to note that the stories told by BIPOC collaborators/key informants/ stakeholders will be afforded all the rights and privileges of privacy and confidentiality. They will be stored in a confidential place without identifying information. In addition, the raw data will be available only to the LEARN Missoula research team associated directly with the project. Furthermore, all finding disseminated will be aggregate responses/themes and no names will be used or attached.

Phenomenological Approach

Similar to narrative inquiry, the phenomenological approach focuses on direct description of experiences through BIPOC participants/collaborators, stakeholders' own lens and perspectives which are key to gaining access to their lived, everyday lifeworld as they intersect with community structures and systems (Daly, 2007). BIPOC research partners and stakeholders will be invited to describe experiences of their everyday world as they see it, which is inclusive of descriptions of what experienced and how they impact and shape each collaborator's reality (Chilisa, 2011). To fully come to understand BIPOCs experiences and perspectives, LEARN will suspend their own personal judgements or

unfounded conclusions about the reality of BIPOC lives in Missoula in order to see it as BIPOC participants/stakeholders, collaborators do (Daly, 2007).

Premature, uniformed, and untimely assessments, judgements and actions have resulted in unfruitful efforts toward improving relationships and interactions between BIPOC and community structures. Therefore, LEARN will center BIPOC experiences as a reflexive lens when it comes to addressing (ultimately transforming) the ways in which systemic oppression, marginalization and inequity have been institutionalized in Missoula (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012).

RESEARCH PROCESS

LEARN plans to engage in a recursive and iterative research process that is multiphasic. These phases are outlined below. As has already been stipulated, the phases are not a true hierarchical sequence; instead, they are mutually influencing, dynamic, and reciprocal. First, the LEARN researchers will focus on evaluating, examining, scrutinizing and "interrogating" existing/archival City and County data through a critical lens informed by racial justice. The scrutiny will include: a) assessing the nature of the existing/archival data, b) examining important information that should be included but is not, c) appraising how data are stored, accessed, and used, e.g., are they suppressed, ignored, misinterpreted, or used as a feedback system for change/modification, d) analyzing ways the data illuminate, substantiate or conflict with the lived realities of BIPOCs in Missoula, and e) evaluating the extent to which data reflect institutionalized biases, injustice and inequity.

In addition to the aforementioned anti-discrimination data audit, LEARN will interview representatives from various municipal departments to gain a deeper understanding of data collection, analysis, storage and usage protocols as well as the data's overall role in departmental functioning and change efforts. In essence, LEARN seeks to determine the level of municipal systems' awareness of implicit and explicit biases and inequities toward BIPOC residents and how they use data to make changes. Embedded and inherent in the first phase is the completion of an anti-racism/discrimination audit. The aforementioned description represents the quantitative component of the mixed method approach nested

within the primary qualitative design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Leavy, 2017).

Second, LEARN will focus on gaining a depth and breadth of understanding of BIPOC social contexts and realities through their story-telling and descriptions that will flow from their own lens and perspectives. When engaging with BIPOC residents, collaborators, key informants/ stakeholders, LEARN Missoula will remain cognizant of the potential for inadvertent or unconscious suppression in the researcher-participant/stakeholder relationship (Charmaz, 2008). Therefore, BIPOC collaborators will be treated as experts of their lived experiences, social realities, and their social contexts. Thus, affording them power over the process and information sharing.

Third, throughout the research process BIPOC viewpoints, experiences, and voices will remain integral, central, and highly valued; and their perspectives will be elicited through planned interactive processes (Charmaz, 2008). The process will involve cyclical and recursive steps that include: a) engagement with and listening to BIPOCs, b) invitation to share and solicitation of stories/descriptions of lived experiences and their reality of navigating through public and private spaces/places, c) envisioning and designing a transformed Missoula informed by Appreciative Inquiry (all of the aforementioned are part of data collection), d) analyses using critical lens, narrative and phenomenological analysis, and e) dissemination and presentation of findings. As noted, this is not a linear, sequential process but one designed to be mutually reciprocal and reinforcing.

Furthermore, the research process will direct LEARN team members to fully incorporate and give privilege to a plurality of voices, perspectives, and viewpoints of Missoula BIPOC collaborators/key informants, stakeholders. This plurality of viewpoints will be sought with intentionality and will occur not only through engagement with BIPOC residents but also through the active engagement with BIPOC community-based organizations, activist groups, and school-based associations or groups. BIPOC community-based organization, activist and school-based groups are a crucial stakeholder/key informant in gaining data driven knowledge and solutions. They are in unique positions to describe how BIPOC social reality and lived experiences in Missoula are connected to systemic discrimination, bias, and inequality in irrefutable and measurable ways. Moreover, LEARN will seek out

and remain open to hearing their vision and design of a just, safe, inclusive, and equitable Missoula where BIPOCs have an ongoing sense of safety, place, belonging and well-being. In addition to BIPOC organizations, school and activists' groups, LEARN also plans to connect with others who are engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work in Missoula as they may have insights into Missoula's historical and contemporaneous issues with oppression, marginalization, and inequity in its community, business, and municipal structures.

Fourth, the qualitative findings will emerge from narrative and phenomenological analyses of BIPOC stakeholders/key informants' stories and descriptions within and among group participants/collaborators, across individual interviewees, and among groups members and individual participants. These descriptions and story narratives will be organized into overarching thematic categories that are representative of and have correspondence with BIPOC stated viewpoints and perspectives.

Fifth, the research process offers a unique and powerful venue to codify a collection of repeated and corroborated BIPOC experiences. As these repeated lived experiences of injustice, marginalization, exclusion, and inequity are combined and codified through the LEARN Missoula well-designed methods, they will become elevated and imbued with epistemic credibility and legitimacy that cannot be refuted, dismissed or ignored easily. More importantly, the collection of storied conversations will facilitate the creation of a data driven comprehensive action plan for local leaders that privileges and centers BIPOC-generated solutions and strategies.

In summary, as LEARN Missoula engages in the multiphasic research process it advances a commitment to remain cognizant of and informed by two central guiding principles: 1) this research seeks to privilege BIPOC voices which enhances access to local knowledge, and 2) the research is place-based. Place is important in the process of storytelling because embedded in certain places and locations are memories as well as physical manifestations connected to maintaining these interactions (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Throughout the process, LEARN Missoula team members will engage in continual reflection and reflexivity on the analytic process and on the dynamic tension between where they reside

on the continuum of insider/outsider poles (Brodsky et.al., 2016; Daly, 2007).

DATA COLLECTION: SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Data collection, sampling and recruitment strategies are designed to leverage LEARN team members relationships with BIPOCs as well as seek out and form additional relationships with other BIPOC residents and stakeholders who have insights into the issues regarding Missoula's history of marginalization, inequity, injustice and oppression in its community and municipal structures. There will be two primary sampling strategies.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling establishes criteria for inclusion in this community participatory action research initiative. First, LEARN will use purposive sampling to delineate specific requirements for data and representatives sought from Missoula City and County departments, which is crucial to the quantitative component of the research. Additionally, purposive sampling will define the people who will be sought out to gain familiarity, understanding, and insight into the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leavy, 2017). The participants/key informants and stakeholders of the proposed qualitative aspect will be Missoula BIPOC individuals, groups, and community-based organizations. Thus, LEARN will engage BIPOCs and invite them to share stories about their lived experiences and social realities of navigating through community, business, and municipal systems in Missoula. Diversity as well as similarities are sought in the stories of BIPOC residents, collaborators, and stakeholders that are part of the sample.

Snowball Sampling

In addition to purposive sampling, snowball will be used in the research. Using snowball sampling as a method to engage BIPOC collaborators and stakeholders will serve to mitigate against some of the inherent barriers or obstacles associated with inviting marginalized and disenfranchised people and communities to become involved in research studies (Heckathorn, 2016; Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010). According to Sadler et al. (2010), snowball sampling is culturally competent, and it engenders trust among potential

participants/collaborators. Being referred by a familiar, trusting individual increases the likelihood that participants, key informants and stakeholders will engage with the researcher and with the research process.

Additionally, snowball sampling will be an effective strategy because. Missoula BIPOC residents, key informants and stakeholders are well-connected/embedded in a matrix of relationships or connections as part of the larger BIPOC community. Thus, they can select and invite other BIPOC participant collaborators or members of stakeholder groups/networks into the project. BIPOC participant collaborators and stakeholders have decision-making power to determine which members of their networks LEARN can gain access to, and subsequently, members of their networks can elect or decline to become involved (Browne, 2005). Thus, it is an empowering process given BIPOC history of disenfranchisement, oppression and marginalization. In essence, LEARN Missoula research will become a joint BIPOC collaborative in the quest for knowledge and transformation.

Finally, through the use of snowball sampling, LEARN Missoula hopes to convey the perspective that BIPOC residents are active, self-governing participant collaborators in the research process rather than passive objects to be studied. Furthermore, LEARN Missoula's snowball recruitment strategy will support the personal agency of BIPOC Missoula residents, and it is hoped that BIPOC participant collaborators will come to value their crucial role and contribution to the sampling process as they have a voice in and a measure of control over the sampling structure (Noy, 2008)

Methods of Data Collection

LEARN Missoula will use three primary data collection methods: 1) anti-racism/discrimination audits of existing/archival departmental data in conjunction with research interviews of departmental representatives, 2) in-depth personal interviews, and 3) small group interviews. Using these proposed methods will ensure a multi-method approach and guarantee that data collected and generated will be rich and well-developed as well as robust and comprehensive (Leavy, 2017). Ultimately, the multi-method approach will

ensure a deeper understanding of BIPOC experiences and social realities of navigating community structures, municipalities, and institutions in Missoula, which a single method cannot truly accomplish.

Additionally, the three-pronged approach (i.e., performing anti-racism/discrimination audits through a scrutiny of existing and archival departmental data combined with interviews of departmental representatives, engaging BIPOC residents in individual research conversations and small group interviews, soliciting viewpoints/perspectives of BIPOC activists, and connecting with others involved in DEI work) will help LEARN meet criteria of trustworthiness, suitability and sufficiency (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, using the three proposed methods will allow LEARN to engage in multidimensional analyses.

Finally, to ensure fidelity and accuracy of transcriptions of BIPOC participant collaborators words, expressions and content, interview conversations will be recorded using voice activated digital recorder; and they will be conducted using open-ended questions and prompts related to the stated research aims and goals.

DATA ANALYSIS

The outcome of analyses will be the generation of data informed BIPOC-centered knowledge and action strategies that will be leveraged and privileged in making transformations in Missoula community and municipal structures. BIPOC transformative solutions and recommended social action gained through rigorous methods will be valuable and integral to efforts directed at dismantling systemic and institutionalized inequality, injustice, and marginalization in Missoula public and private systems, spaces, and places. With the implementation of this data driven BIPOC-generated knowledge inclusive of transformational social action strategies, Missoula BIPOC residents' interactions with community and municipal systems and structures will be qualitatively and quantifiably better. Ultimately, creating a just, inclusive, and equitable society where all Missoula residents thrive, grow, and succeed.

Analysis will begin with the first anti-racism/discrimination audit of existing and archival municipal/County departmental data and after the first qualitative interview. The examination and analysis of existing data will occur within the context of a critical paradigm informed by a racial justice and equity lens. As noted previously, coupled with the data scrutiny will be interviews with departmental representatives to gain an understanding of BIPOC social reality and experiences with municipal systems. In contrast to the straightforward analyses of pre-existing/archival quantitative data, LEARN qualitative data analysis and collection will be a recursive process using two main analytic processes — phenomenological and narrative with limited integration of appreciative inquiry.

Phenomenological analysis will enable LEARN to identify, describe, and classify experiences as they are understood by BIPOC participant collaborators. The outcomes of this analysis will be: 1) to understand individual and collective BIPOC experiences and social realities of living in Missoula and interfacing with public and private systems, and more specifically, 2) to come to understand what was experienced, how it was experienced, and what transformations/changes BIPOC participant collaborators and stakeholders would desire, envision and design (these are components of appreciative inquiry). Important aspects of analyses will include: a) identifying and categorizing relevant themes and meaning structures, b) highlight essential elements of BIPOC experiences, and c) correlating/associating BIPOC specific transformational action strategies to injurious and detrimental interactions within Missoula municipality and business institutions.

Combined with this phenomenological process will be narrative analysis that focuses on the content of stories and the ways they are constructed by BIPOC participant collaborators as they discuss experiences of marginalization, inequity, injustice and oppression in Missoula. Narrative analysis will provide a means of gaining insight into the kinds of events and experiences BIPOC individuals and groups identify as having salience.

Further, through a limited integration of appreciative inquiry, analyses will distill cogent, well-developed and designed BIPOC-centered social action strategies and recommendations that will be disseminated to Missoula City Council and other

stakeholders so they can transform private and municipal structures. The end result will be a significantly improved social reality for BIPOC residents as they live, work, study, and play in Missoula because all the recommendations for change would have been grounded fully in the data-informed findings that emerge directly from the Missoula BIPOC community.

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

Verbal and written consent processes will be necessary due to the choice of using snowball sampling as a primary recruitment strategy. Thus, LEARN will establish similar protocols for verbal and written consent. The informed consent process will include the following process: 1) giving potential BIPOC participant collaborators information about the study, 2) creating a context that affords potential BIPOC participant collaborators the opportunity to consider all options, 3) soliciting and responding to their questions, 4) confirming and verifying that BIPOC potential collaborators have understood the information presented, 5) obtaining their voluntary verbal or written agreement to become involved/participate in the study, and 6) making a commitment to continue to provide information as the participant collaborator or situation requires.

Deception and Debriefing Process

No deception is involved in the study. Nevertheless, LEARN will engage in a process of general debriefing. Toward the end of the interviews, BIPOC participant collaborators will be afforded an opportunity to reflect on and share the impact of participating in the research process. The LEARN team members will acknowledge the possibility of emotional reactions to the questions or discussion and encourage participants to connect with local clinical resources should they decide that they need assistance at any time. BIPOC participant collaborators will also be provided with two national resources, Crisis Test Line and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which offer free, 24/7 confidential support. In addition, participants will be invited to seek clarity about any aspect of their interview experience or the research study, i.e., purpose of study and expected research outcomes.

Furthermore, LEARN team members will invite BIPOC participant collaborators to engage in a meta-question process (Tomm, 2012) where they will reflect on the questions asked of them, e.g., how do you feel about the questions I have asked? Were the questions meaningful or relevant to you or your circumstances? What else might I ask you that could help me more fully understand your situation, perspectives, ideas and solutions? Who else might be able to or may be interested in giving their perspectives? Whom might you recommend to help me gain a deeper or different perspective? Who else might find this experience meaningful or relevant?

Risk and Injury

There are minimal risks and limited potential for injury. LEARN will institute an important step in immunizing or preventing risks which is the careful design and implementation of an ethically-based study. Crucial elements of such a study are having well-thought out sampling and data collection structures as well as implementing ethical protocols for consent, storage, and confidentiality.

CONFIDENTIALITY

BIPOC participant collaborators' identities will be known to LEARN and will be protected from public exposure. LEARN Missoula will make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the project from connecting individual participants with their stories or descriptions. Therefore, a special code, (e.g., 001), will be used at the time of the interview conversation so that no names or other identifying information exist on BIPOC participant collaborators' responses even in the files. The use of study codes is an effective method for protecting the confidentiality of BIPOC key informants, stakeholders, and collaborators. Study codes will be used on data collection instruments, e.g., audio recordings, demographic forms, transcripts, in place of identifying information to protect confidentiality and privacy of responses.

DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

Findings will be disseminated through several avenues. LEARN Missoula will share findings through a variety of options including written reports, formal and informal presentations, video or digital formats, interviews, and its webpage. The dissemination of data-driven findings will be an ongoing process informed by the recursive nature of the research process.

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Timeline and Funding Request
from City of Missoula

LEARN Missoula will be building and maintaining a structured organization capable of doing the work necessary to conduct a rigorous and ethical research project. Our budget is based on a one-year timeline and represents recursive qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, inclusive of anti-racism/discrimination departmental audits and the generation of applied and practical data-informed BIPOC knowledge, which will be instrumental in the creation of a data driven comprehensive action plan that privileges/centers the experiences, perspectives, and solutions of Missoula BIPOC community members.

As this project was formed based on a request for information from the City of Missoula, and because it is directed at helping the City of Missoula make data driven structural changes to create a more equitable Missoula, we are requesting that the City of Missoula provide foundational funding in the amount of $75,000.

If the City requires additional work beyond this one-year term, we will present a new proposal for the next fiscal year.

Appendix

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Appendix B: Mental Health Crisis & Resource Options

Appendix C: Debriefing Process Outline

Appendix D: Proposed Budget

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PURPOSE: There are two purposes. One, to scrutinize City/County departments by examining their data and interviewing departmental representatives to understand how information is used and the ways it may contribute to or reinforce biases and inequity. Second, to have research conversations with BIPOC community residents so they can share stories about living in Missoula giving special attention to how they connect their experiences/daily reality to injustice, inequality, and discrimination as they move about private and public spaces/places. Important parts of these conversations are: 1) understanding what the experiences mean and the impact they have on BIPOC lives, and 2) encouraging BIPOCs to envision and design a just, safe, and unbiased Missoula where they have a true sense of safety, place and belonging.

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS: You will be asked open-ended questions that will help you tell personal stories in your own way and with your own voice. The research conversation should take between 45-60 minutes depending on how much you decide to share. The only requirement is that you be 18 years or older, legally emancipated, or have been granted parental or guardian's permission/consent if a minor.

RESEARCH PERSONNEL: A BIPOC-led team is involved in the research project and may be contacted by email: LEARNMissoula@gmail.org

POTENTIAL RISK AND DISCOMFORT: There are no major risks in this study, but sharing experiences of unfair and biased treatment may be upsetting for some people. You may withdraw at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFIT: Your thoughts, ideas and solutions will be integral in bringing about change and transformation. Your stories are intended to influence and transform explicit and implicit oppressive and unjust spaces, systems, and structures in Missoula.

ANONYMITY/CONFIDENTIALITY: Your personal experiences, thoughts, and ideas are confidential and will be stored in a secure place with no identifying information. In

addition, all information you share is available only to the research team. Any oral or written reports will use combined responses and no names will be used.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. And, you can choose not to respond to questions or prompts if you do not want to answer them.

I am happy to answer any question that may arise about the study during the interview. Any additional questions or comments may be directed to: LEARNMissoula@gmail.org

CONSENT: I have read and/or listened to the above description of the study focusing on BIPOC experiences in Missoula and understand the conditions of my participation. I willingly choose to engage in the research conversation; I agree to participate voluntarily in this study, and confirm that I am 18 years or more, or legally emancipated, or have parental/guardian consent if a minor.

_____ When participating in small group interviews, I agree to maintain the confidentiality of information shared by everyone. If you cannot agree to keeping information private, please see the researcher(s) as you may be unable to participate in group interviews.

_____   _____   _____

PARTICIPANT AND/OR PARENT NAME   **DATE**   **INTERVIEWER**

APPENDIX B: MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS & RESOURCE OPTIONS

Montana

1. PROGRAM: THE HELP CENTER

Help Center, Inc.

24-hour crisis counseling hotline, information & referral. The Help Center is part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network (1-800-273-TALK). And, they are also a member of the Montana 211 coalition which provides referrals for human services throughout the state.

Hot-Line: 406-586-3333

Or Text: "MT" 741-741

2. AGENCY: VOICES OF HOPE

A 24 hour, 7 days a week phone line where Trained Crisis Intervention Specialists provide free, confidential and emotional support to those in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

Business Line: 406-268-1330

Hot-Line: 406-453-4357

3. PROGRAM: CRISIS LINE WESTERN MONTANA MENTAL HEALTH

Agency: Western Montana Mental Health Center

24-hour crisis intervention by mental health professionals. Telephone counseling and emergency therapy for persons in acute distress.

Missoula Crisis Line: 1-406-532-9710

Toll Free Crisis Contact: 888-820-0083

4. MONTANA 2-1-1

Montana 2-1-1 provides information and connects people to resources for non-emergency needs, via an easy-to-remember phone number (2-1-1) and a website (montana211.org).

National

1. CRISIS TEXT LINE

Text trained crisis counselors. It is free, 24/7, confidential, nationwide. It is not just suicide
— any painful emotions that get in the way of your mental well-being are a crisis
Text: "CONNECT" to 741741

2. THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention
and crisis resources for you or your loved ones
Toll free: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

APPENDIX C: OUTLINE OF DEBRIEFING PROCESS

At the end of individual and small group research conversations, the following process will be implemented.

I. BIPOC PARTICIPANT COLLABORATORS WILL BE INVITED TO:

- Share the impact of participating in a personal or group interview

- Seek clarity about any aspects of their experience or the research

- Engage in a meta-question process (Tomm, 2012) and reflect on the questions asked of them:

  » How do you feel about the questions I have asked?

  » Were the questions meaningful or relevant to you or your circumstances?

  » What else might I ask you that could help me more fully understand your situation, perspectives, ideas?

  » Who else might be able to or may be interested in giving their perspectives?

  » Whom might you recommend to help me gain a deeper or different perspective? Who else might find this experience meaningful or relevant?

II. RESEARCHER WILL:

- Wrap up and answer final questions

- Distribute list of mental health resources

- Respond to any final concerns

APPENDIX D: PROPOSED BUDGET

LEARN Missoula is requesting that the City of Missoula provide foundational funding in the amount of $75,000.

LEARN Missoula - Transforming Missoula Proposed Budget

Research Cost	$195,700
Personnel	$130,000
Other Expenses	$61,300
TOTAL	**$387,000**

In Kind Service *(reflects discounted personnel rate and vendors non-financial contribution)*	$255,000

The full scope of work has been described and outlined in the project proposal.