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Systems thinking for social change

Mary Michaud
VisuaLeverage

www.visualeverage.com

*An initiative of Health & Social
Impact Strategies, LLC*



WHAT?

SO
WHAT?

NOW
WHAT?

1

**What social
change do you
work on?**

2

Name 2 groups or
organizations

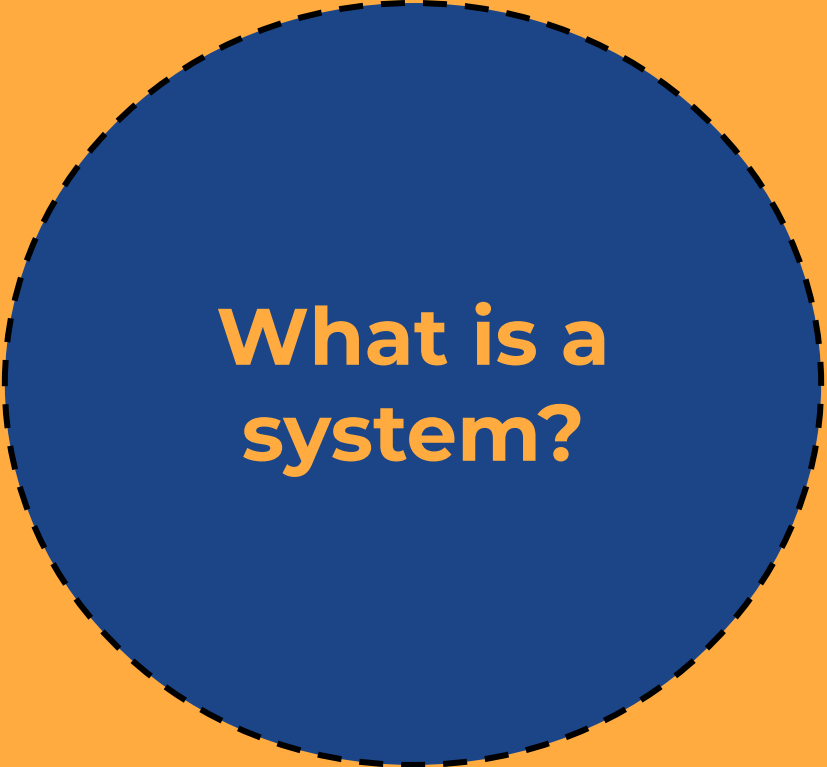
+

What is
working?

Why it is
working?

i

ONE ROOT CAUSE



**What is a
system?**

“A system is a set of related components that work together in a particular environment to perform whatever functions are required to achieve the system's objective.”

~Donella Meadows

Boundary

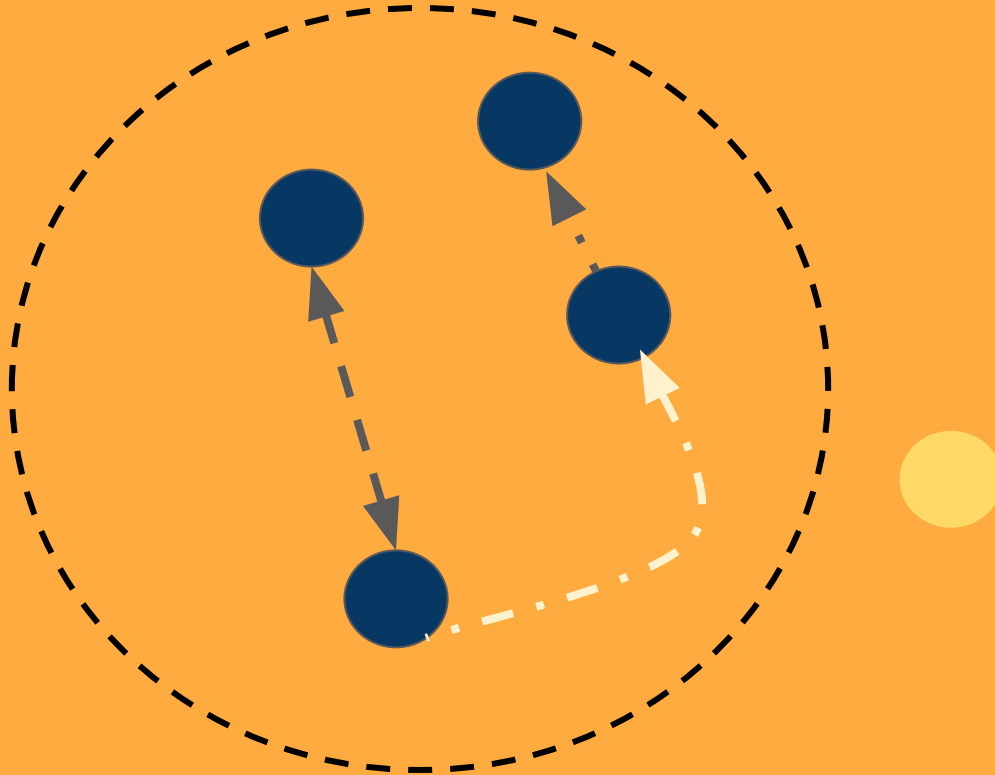
Components

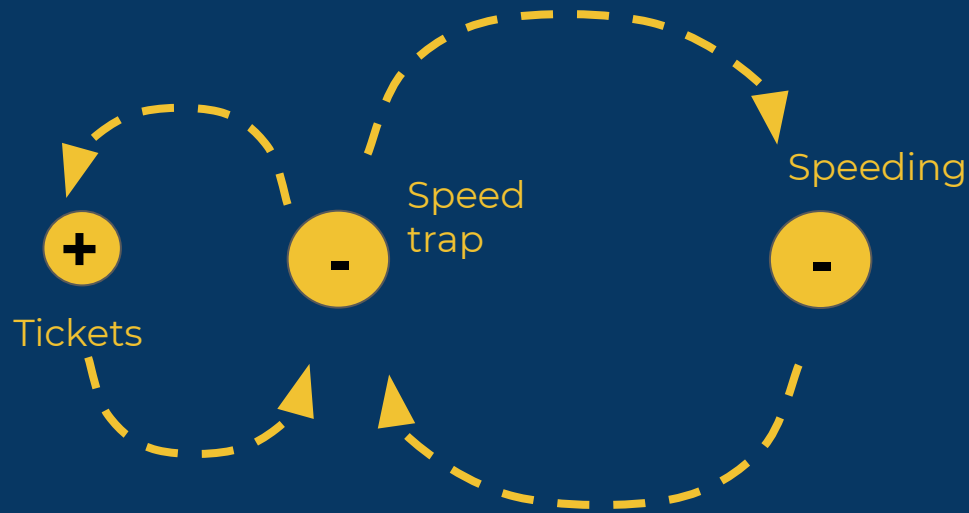
Relationships

Perspectives

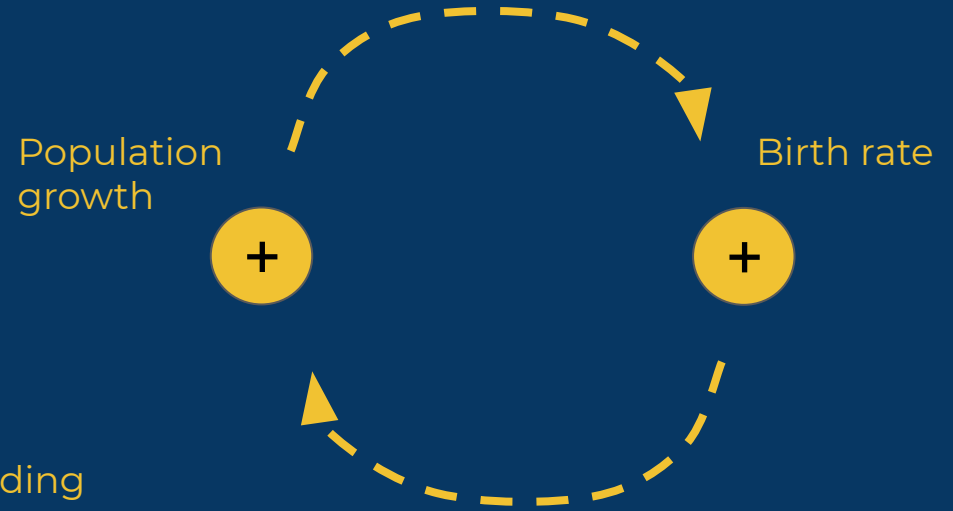
**Rules serve a
purpose**

Dynamic





Negative feedback loop
(moves system back to equilibrium)



**Positive, or reinforcing,
feedback loop**
("multiplier effect")

Recidivism in criminal justice system

Arrest
Detention
Trauma
Unemployment
Housing instability
Poor behavioral health
Recidivism



Positive, or reinforcing, feedback loop
("multiplier effect")



SO
WHAT?

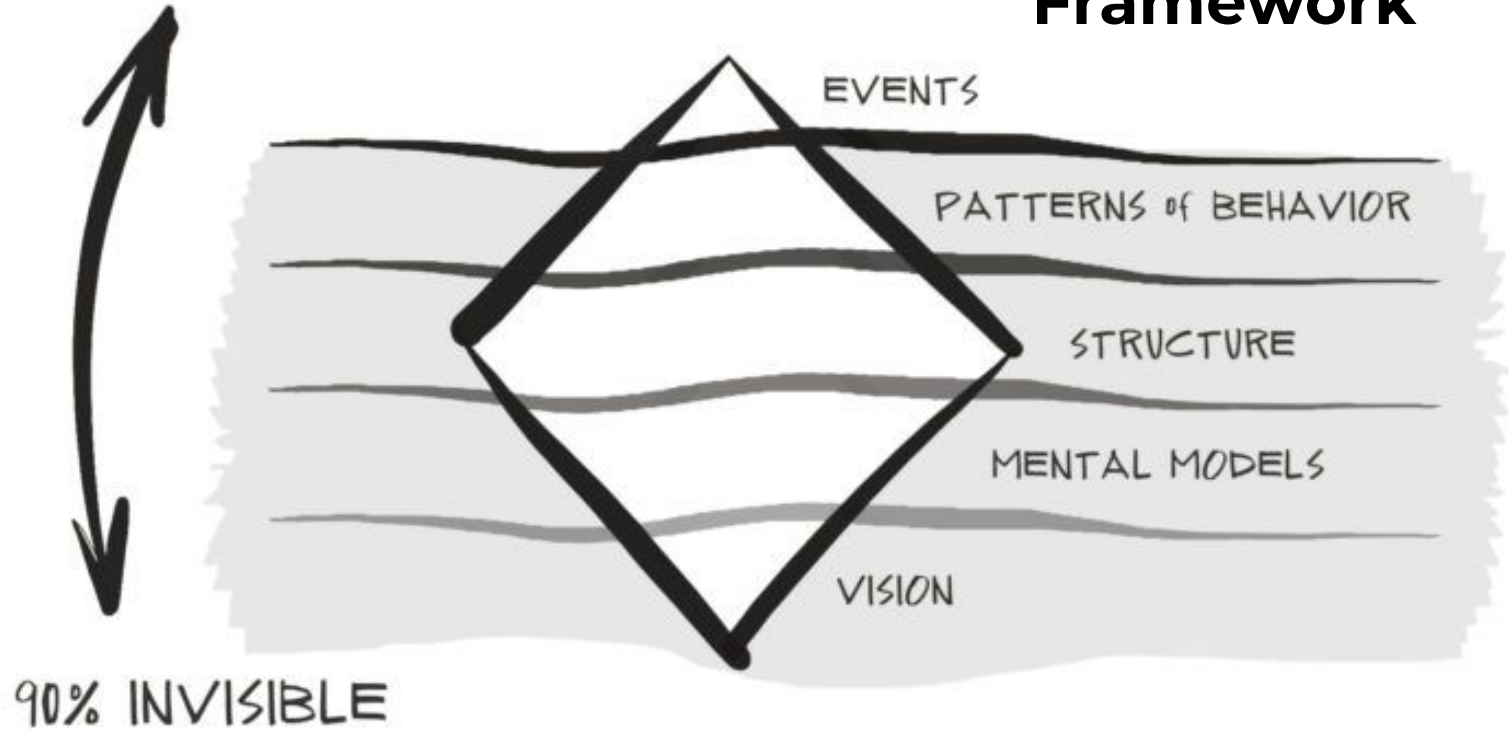
In 2015, nearly a third of all Dane County residents lived in **housing they could not afford.**

Paulsen K. Housing Needs Assessment, Dane County and Municipalities. Report to Dane County Health and Human Needs Committee, Dane County Department of Human Services and Dane County Planning and Development Department. January 2015.



10% VISIBLE

Iceberg Framework



Rental Housing

Homelessness

Mental distress, eviction

Landlord behavior

Law enforcement

Social service &
health organizations

State agencies

Quality job

Criminal justice
involvement

Behavioral health

Developers

Municipal agencies

Federal agencies

Rental supply &
local labor market

Profit motive



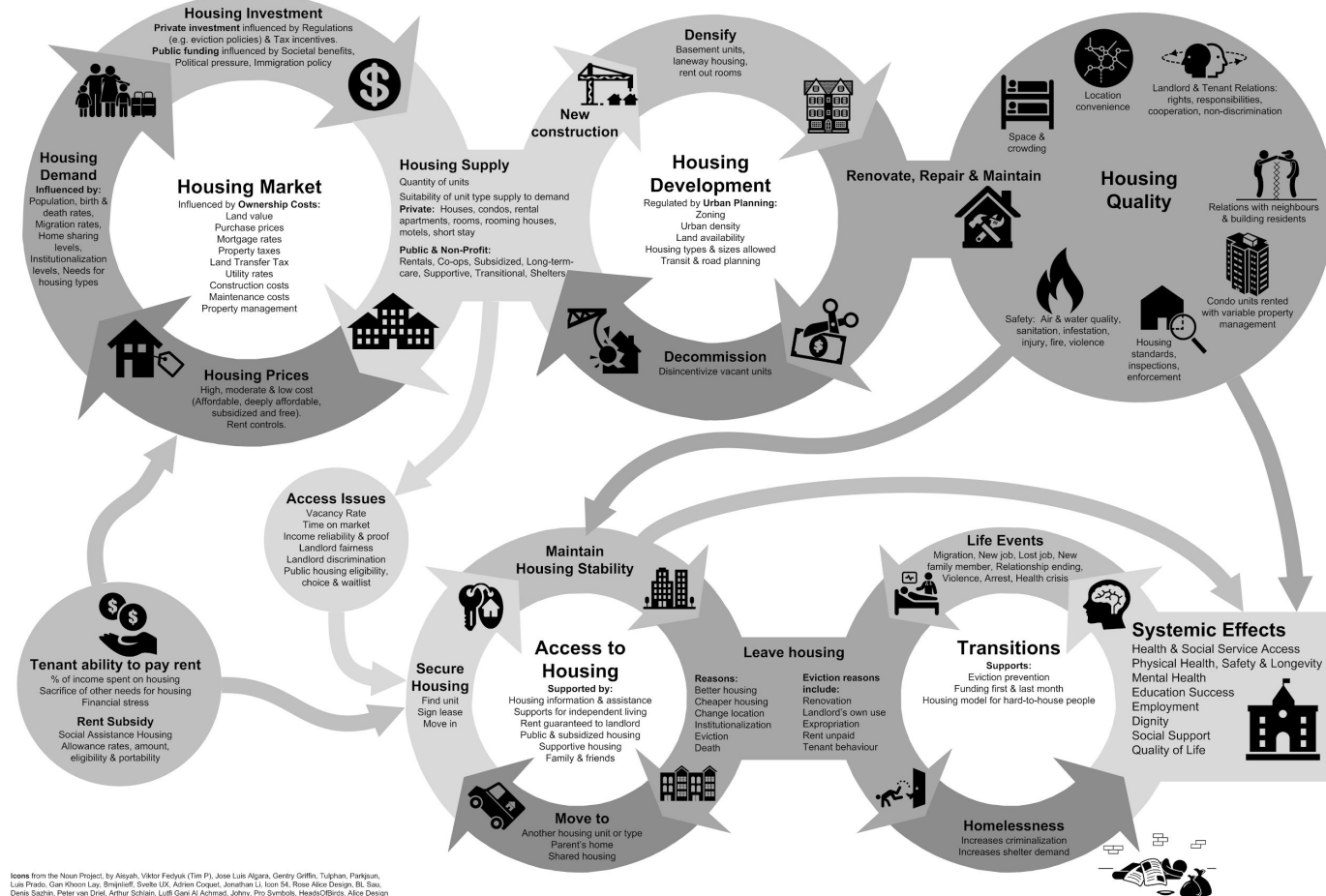
Deeper impact

“Deserving” vs. “undeserving”

Stigma, bias, racism, classism, individualism, fear

System Map of Housing Stability

Simplified Draft, copyright City of Toronto, 2019



Health Affairs

CULTURE OF HEALTH

By Heidi L. Allen, Erica Eliason, Naomi Zewde, and Tal Gross

Can Medicaid Expansion Prevent Housing Evictions?

DOI: 10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05071
HEALTH AFFAIRS 38,
NO. 9 (2019): 1451-1457
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“Health insurance coverage is associated with improved housing stability.”

ABSTRACT Evictions are increasingly recognized as a public health problem facing low-income households. This study evaluated whether expansion of Medicaid can prevent evictions from occurring. We used data from a privately licensed database of eviction records in California (286 counties) and used a difference-in-differences regression to compare rates of eviction before and after California's early Medicaid expansion (51 counties). Early Medicaid expansion in California was associated with a reduction in the number of evictions, with 24.5 fewer evictions per month in each county from a pre-expansion average of 224.7. These results imply that for every thousand new Medicaid enrollees in California, Medicaid expansion was associated with roughly twenty-two fewer evictions per year. Additionally, we found a 2.9-percentage-point reduction in evictions per capita associated with early expansion. The effects were concentrated among counties with the highest pre-expansion rates of uninsurance. We conclude that health insurance coverage is associated with improved housing stability.

Heidi L. Allen (ha2332@
columbia.edu) is an associate
professor in the School of
Social Work, Columbia
University, New York City.

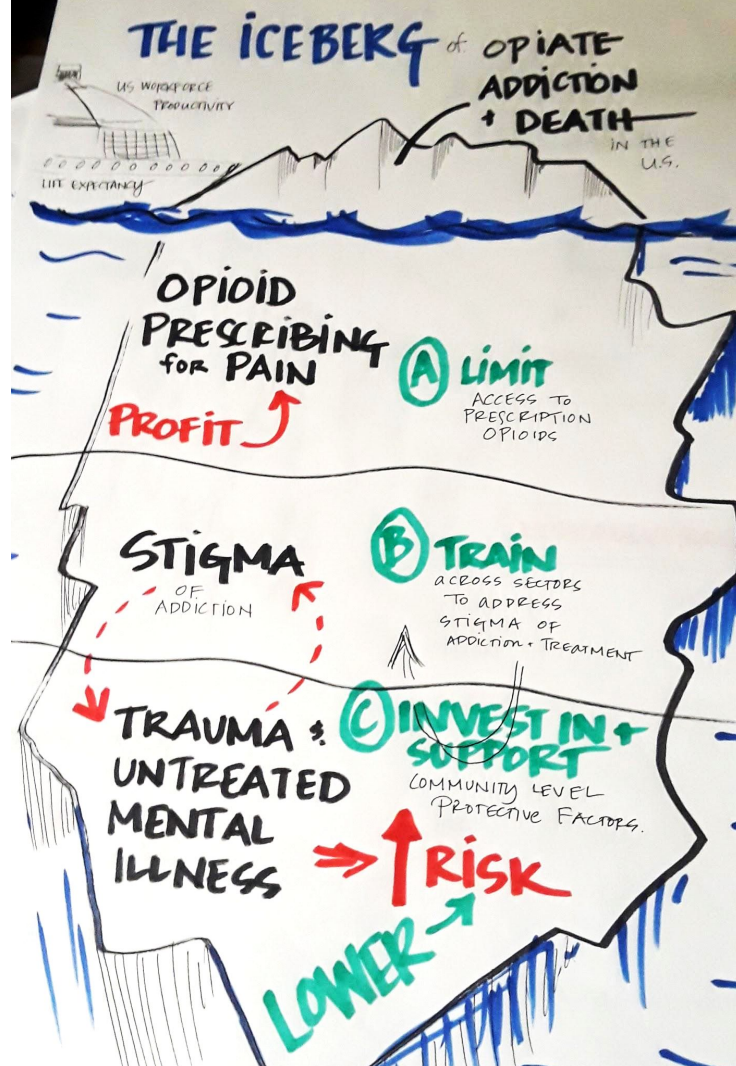
Erica Eliason is a doctoral
candidate in the School of
Social Work, Columbia
University.

Naomi Zewde is a
postdoctoral research
scientist at the Center on
Poverty and Social Policy,
School of Social Work,
Columbia University.

Tal Gross is an associate
professor in the Department
of Markets, Public Policy, and
Law, Questrom School of
Business, Boston University,
in Massachusetts.



THE ICEBERG of OPIATE ADDICTION + DEATH





NOW
WHAT?



1

**Partner to
learn about
the issue from
multiple
perspectives.**

THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE: Evictions and Profit in North Minneapolis

Author: Principal Investigator, Dr. Brittany Lewis, Senior Research Associate
Contributing Authors: Molly Calhoun, Cynthia Matthias, Kya Conception, Thalys Reyes,
Carolyn Szczepanski, Gabriela Norton, Eleanor Noble, and Giselle Tisdale
Artist-in-Residence: Nikki McComb, Art Is My Weapon



"I think that it definitely has to be made a law that a UD should not go on a person's name until after you have been found guilty in court. It is horrific that you would sit up here and have a UD on my name that prevents me from moving...You would rather a person be homeless than to give them a day in court to be heard first...You shouldn't have to be homeless to be heard."

- Biracial, female, 36 years old

"I've heard bad things. He's known as a slumlord...But against my better judgment, to not wanting to be out a place and homeless and between moving, I took the first thing. It was like a desperate situation."

- Biracial, female, 45 years old

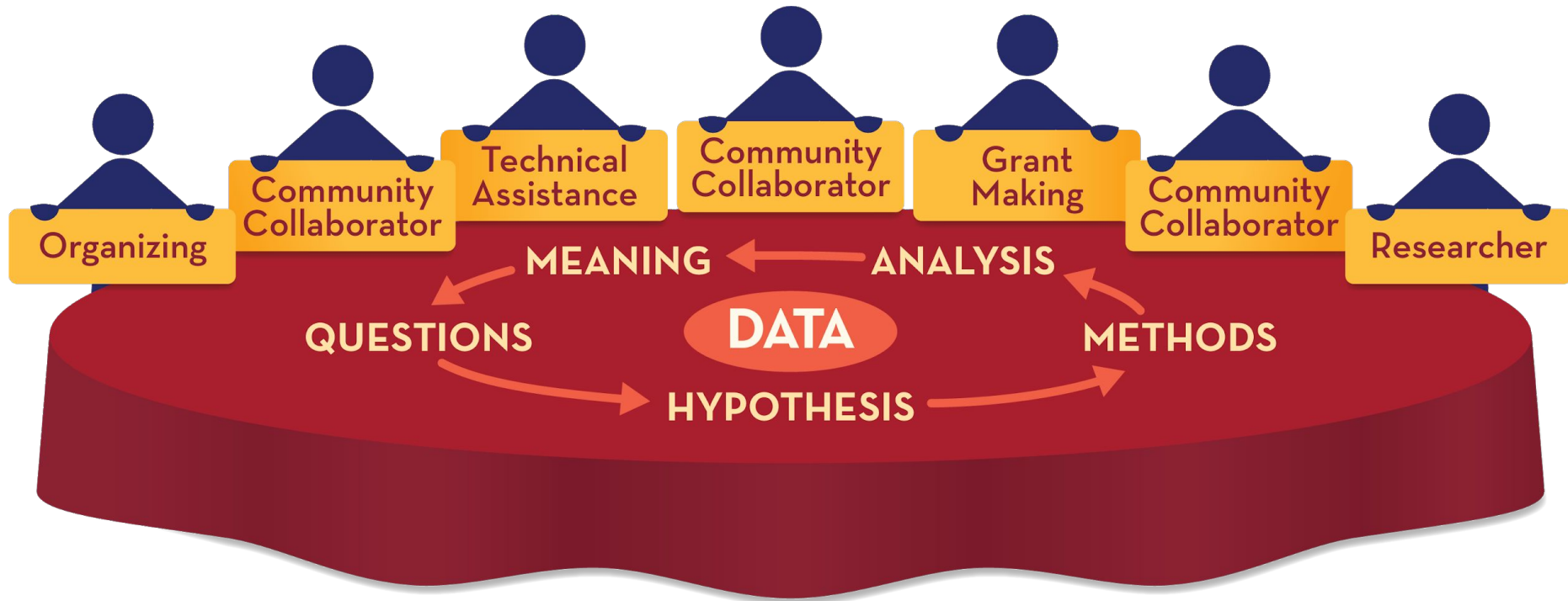


"There is a fear premium attached to North Minneapolis. Because what's the stereotypical image people have of North Minneapolis? I could tell you. Bang, bang. People are afraid of it. If you tell people, I bought a property in North Minneapolis. What they say is, 'Why would you do that?'"

- White, male, 58 year old, property manager and owner



For more visit z.umn.edu/evictions

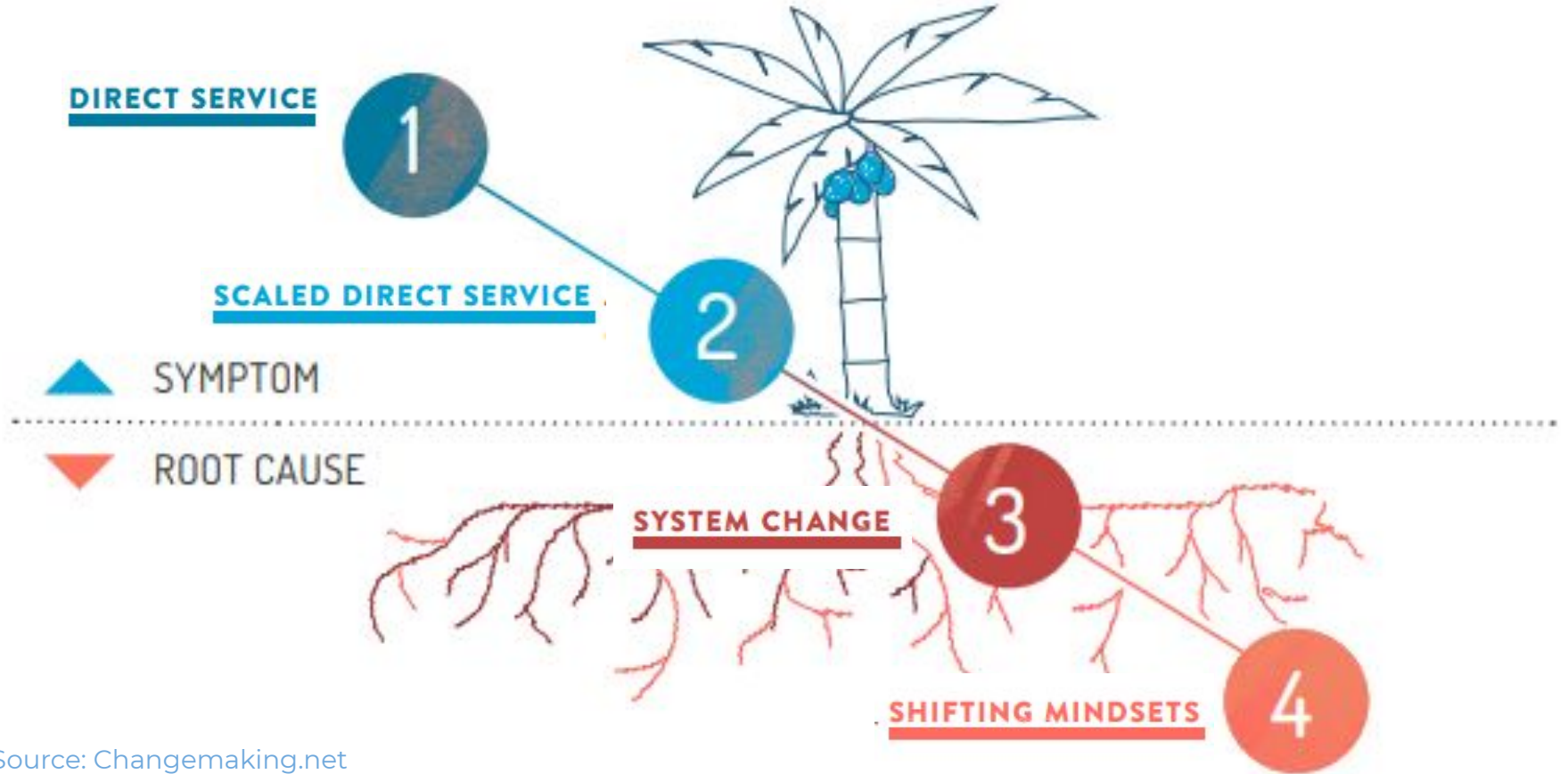


The Illusion of Choice: Evictions and Profit in North Minneapolis. 2016. Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota.



2

**Use data to
identify
“leverage
points” for
system
change.**



Interviewed tenants said the home they were evicted from was:

57% NOT first choice of housing

37% ONLY choice of housing

At the time of their interview:

29%
were still in
place



71%
of families were
no longer living
where they were
evicted from

Of the tenants who had moved out:



40%
found a new place



2%
responded other



58%
were homeless

 = 2 interviewees

68%

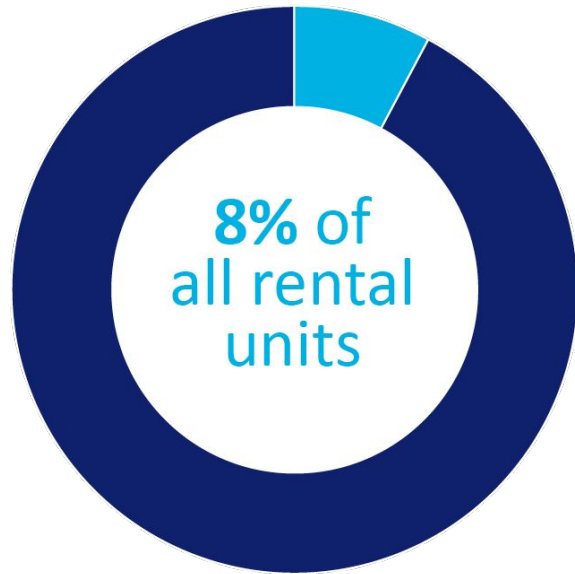


VS



said they often had to decide between paying the rent and another financial obligation

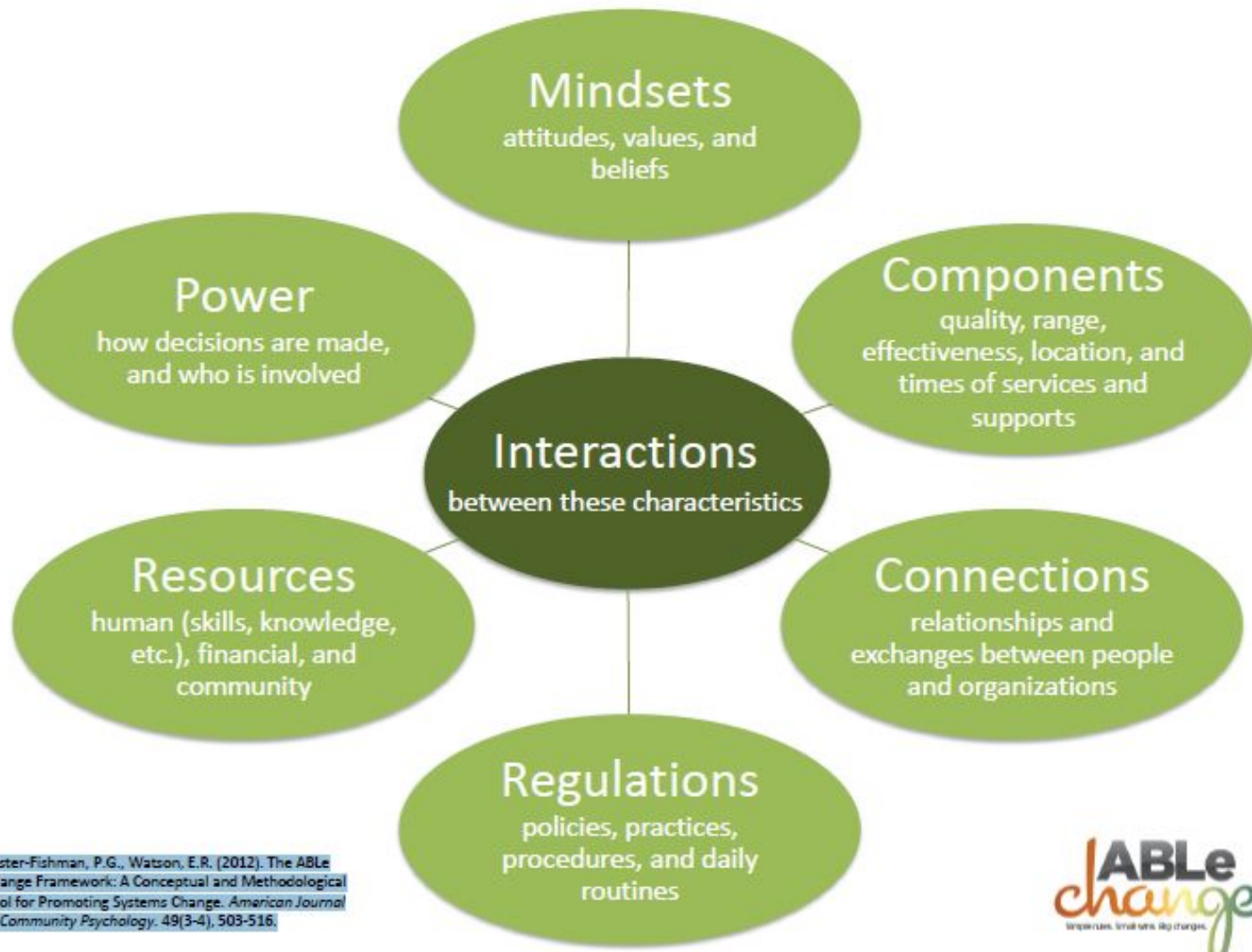
The focus zipcodes of 55411 and 55412 contain a dramatically disproportionate share of the city's eviction filings.





3

**Match
intervention
to the type of
system
problem.**



Foster-Fishman, P.G., Watson, E.R. (2012). The ABLe Change Framework: A Conceptual and Methodological Tool for Promoting Systems Change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 49(3-4), 503-516.

Outcomes of Court Cases



50 cases had court filings for analysis

41 cases were filed by landlords for
nonpayment of rent

Average amount
of rent owed:
\$2,160

32 of those cases resulted
in a **payment plan**

Average payment
plan amount:
\$2,890

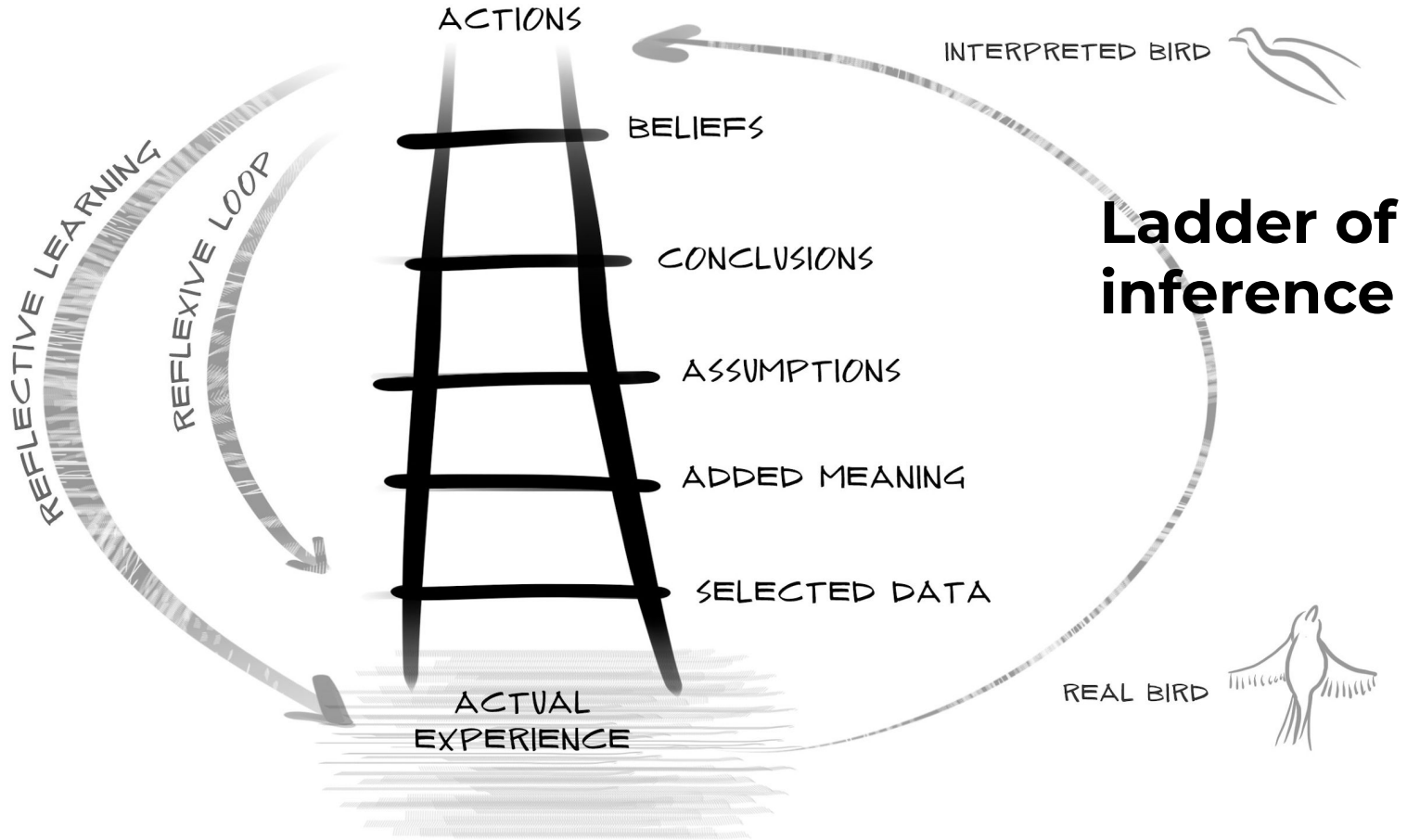
16 writ was
executed

Sheriff removed
the tenants

Source: Analysis of Hennepin County Housing Court cases pertaining to evictions discussed in qualitative interviews

4

**Question your
assumptions.
Make it safe
for others to
question
theirs.**





5

**Go hard on
systems.
Go soft on
people.**

Linear Thinkers	Systems Thinkers
Are concerned with assigning blame	Try to identify patterns
Try to control chaos to create order	Try to find patterns amid the chaos
Care only about the content of communication	Care about content but are more attentive to interactions and patterns of communication
Believe organizations are predictable and orderly	Believe organizations are unpredictable in a chaotic environment

Linear Thinkers	Systems Thinkers
Break things into component pieces	Are concerned with the whole
Are concerned with content	Are concerned with process
Try to fix symptoms	Are concerned with the underlying dynamics

Instead of . . .	Try . . .
Instead of blaming someone, ask . . .	“What are the influences on that person?”
Instead of saying, “I know the answer,” say . . .	“I have another perspective on the issue.”
Instead of thinking you know the answer . . .	Always be looking for evidence to confirm your theory, in addition to evidence to disconfirm it.
Instead of focusing on one item . . .	Look at all the variables that affect that item.

Instead of . . .	Try . . .
Instead of looking at the content of what people say . . .	Look for the process of what they say. How are they saying it? What are they not saying? What are the common themes in the content?
Instead of focusing on negative behaviors . . .	Look at what is motivating these behaviors or if they are masking a deeper problem.
Instead of just looking at what individuals are doing . . .	Also look at the dynamics of the system—what forces are pushing individuals toward one thing or another?

Name 2 groups or organizations

1

**What social
change do you
work on?**

2

+

What is
working?

Why it is
working?

i

ONE ROOT CAUSE

Resources

Changemaking.net

FSG

TheSystemsThinker.com

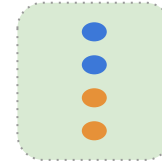
Unschools.co

DonellaMeadows.org

● ● distinctions

Any idea or thing can be distinguished from other ideas or things it is with

systems

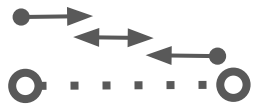


Any idea or thing can relate to other things or ideas

simple rules

Any idea or thing can relate to other things or ideas

Any thing or idea can be the point or the view of a perspective



relationships

perspectives



distinctions

thing/idea | not thing/idea



Cabrera & Cabrera. **Systems thinking made simple**



Employee



Not
employed

distinctions

thing/idea | not thing/idea



41

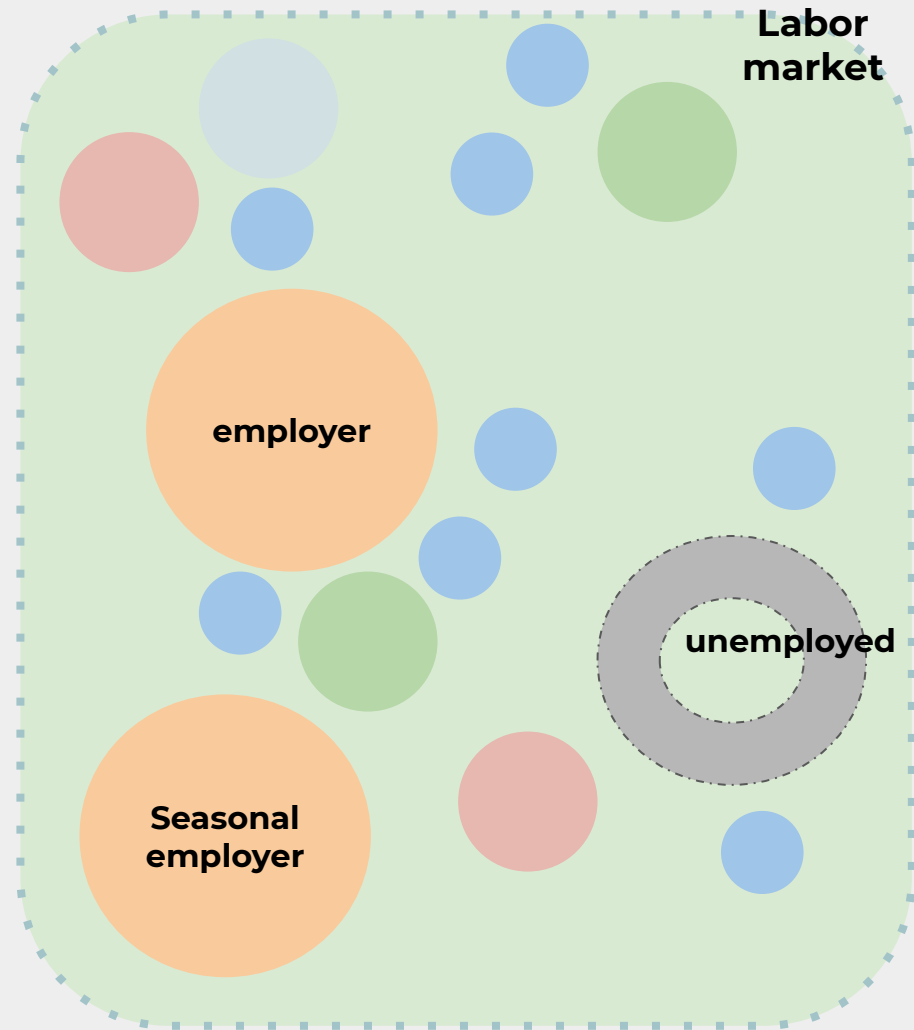
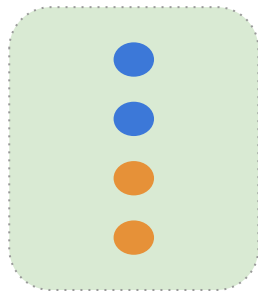
Was this person –

Mark (X) ONE box.

- ☐ an employee of a PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT company or business, or of an individual, for wages, salary, or commissions?
- ☐ an employee of a PRIVATE NOT-FOR-PROFIT, tax-exempt, or charitable organization?
- ☐ a local GOVERNMENT employee (city, county, etc.)?
- ☐ a state GOVERNMENT employee?
- ☐ a Federal GOVERNMENT employee?
- ☐ SELF-EMPLOYED in own NOT INCORPORATED business, professional practice, or farm?
- ☐ SELF-EMPLOYED in own INCORPORATED business, professional practice, or farm?
- ☐ working WITHOUT PAY in family business or farm?

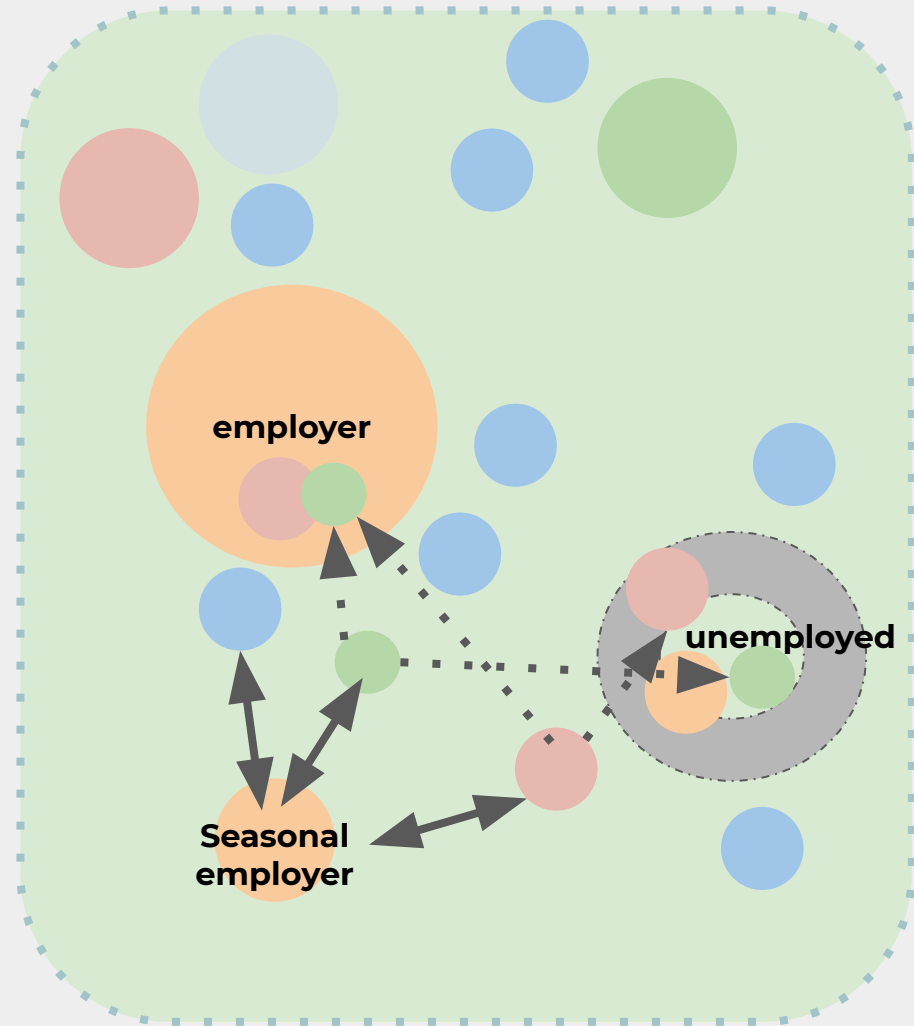
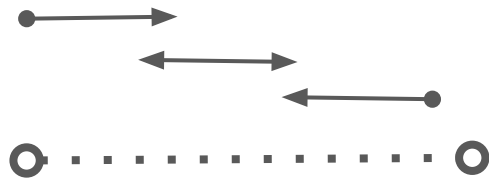
systems

part | whole



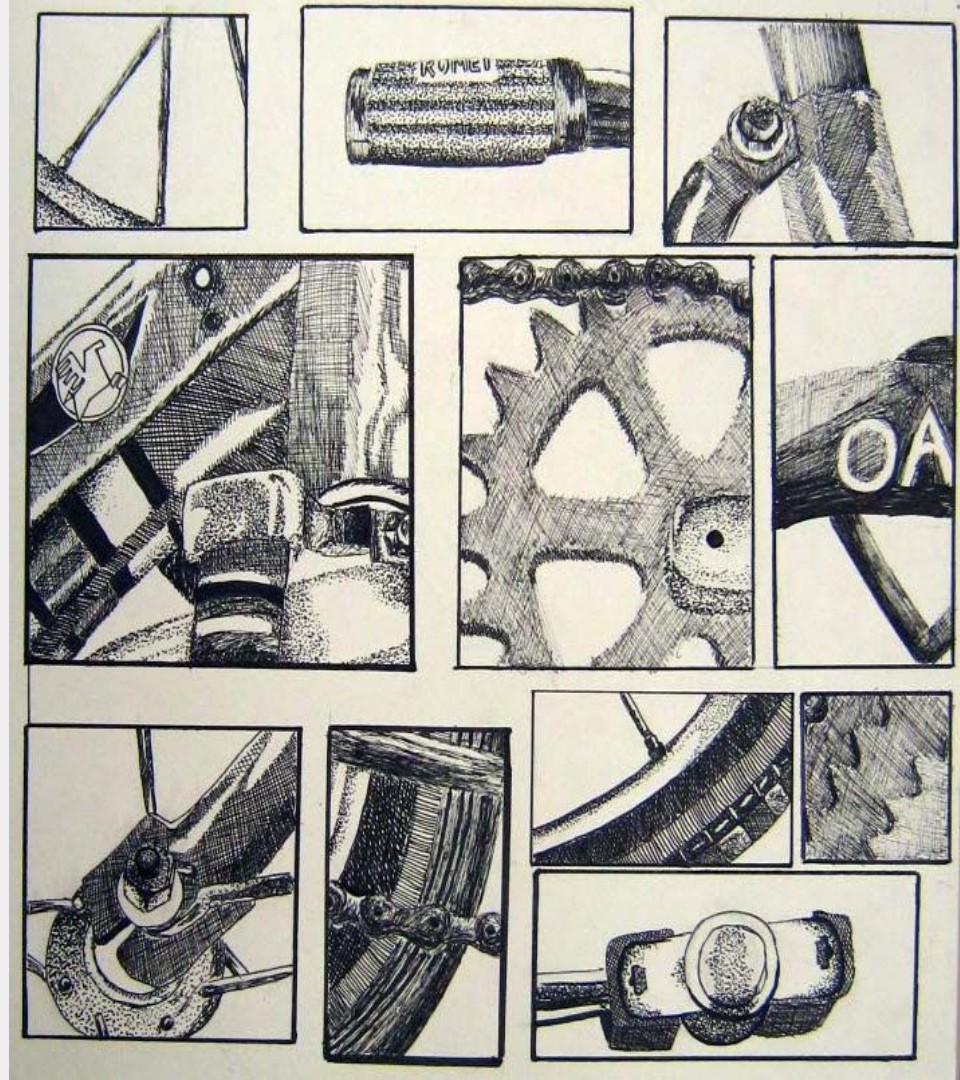
relationships

action | reaction



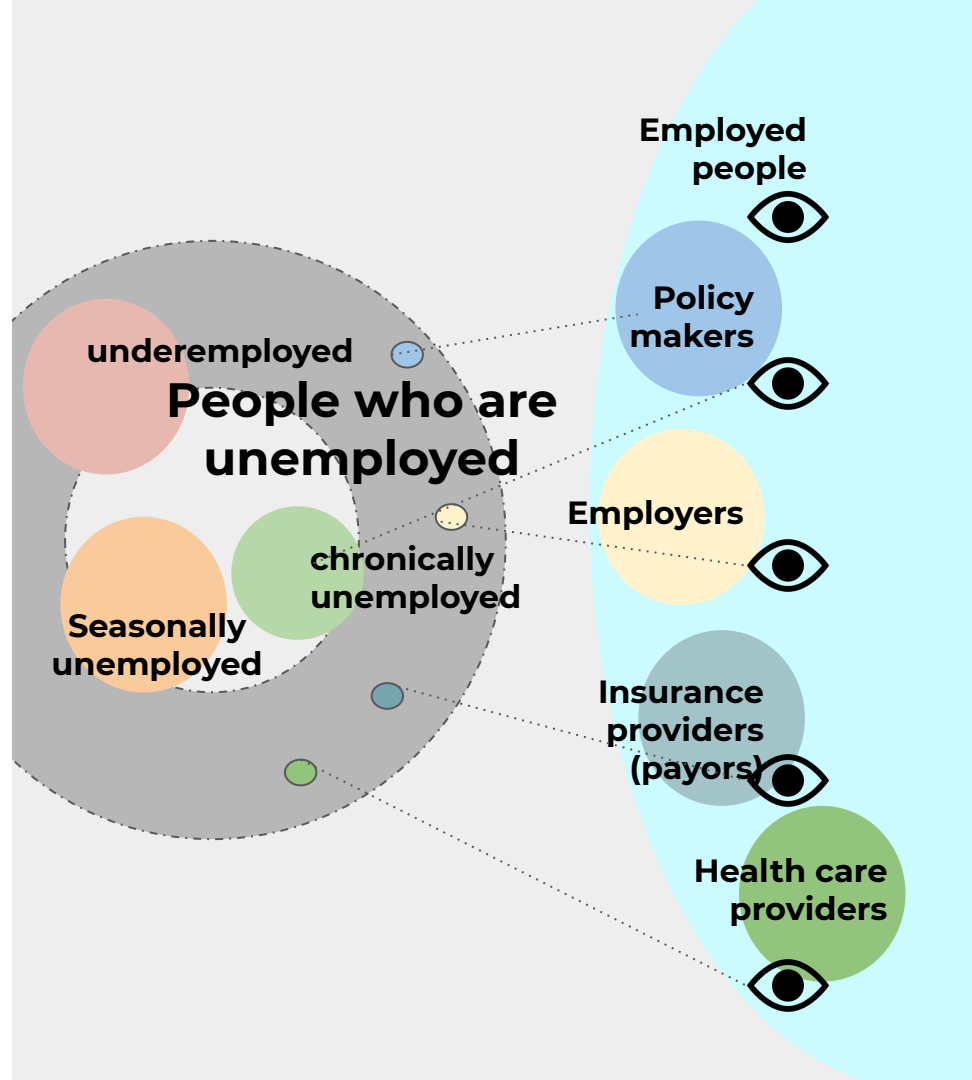
perspectives

point | view



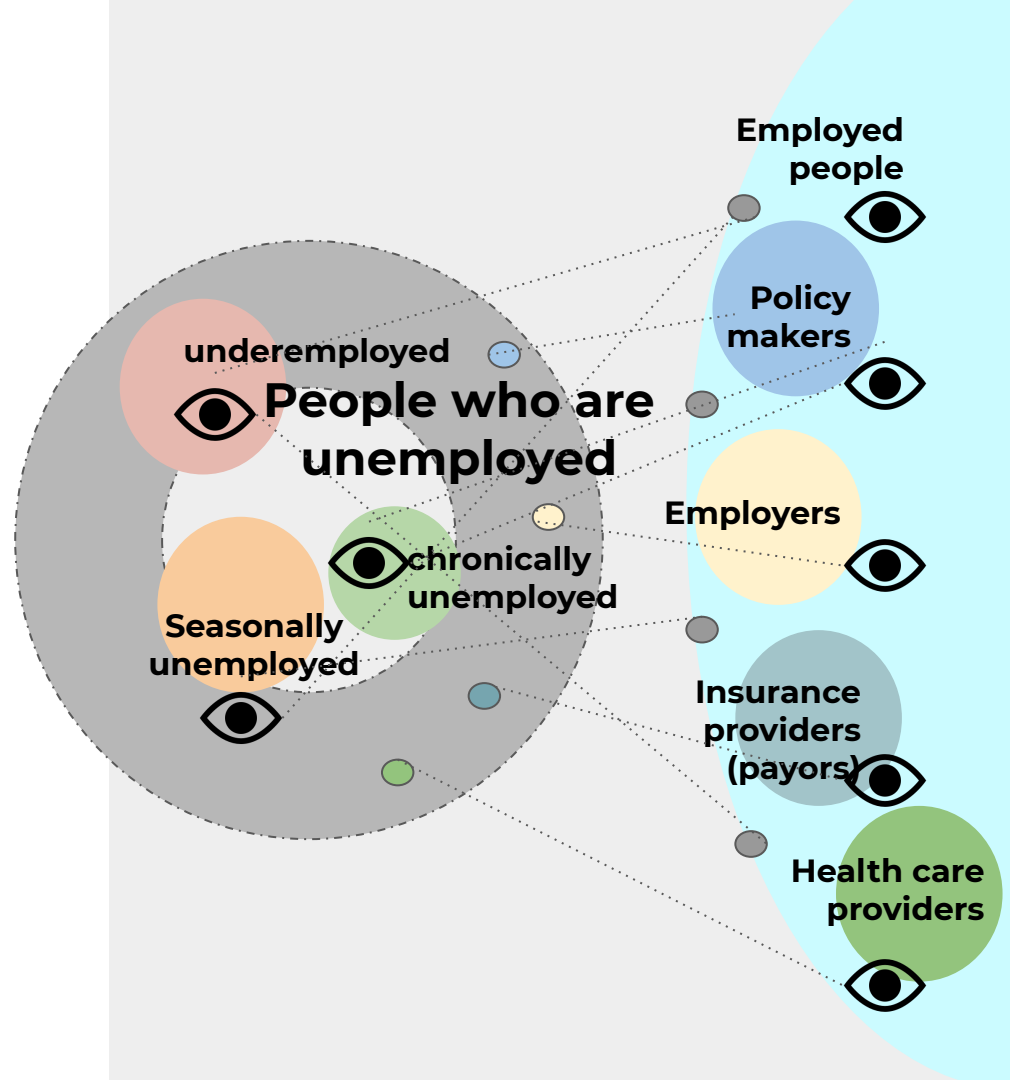
perspectives

point | view



perspectives

point | view



Ask different questions

Notice catchphrases: “We just need more _____”

Notice typical “archetypes,” like balancing or reinforcing loops

Help surface, expose mental models

Identify leverage points

