

What are College Students' Opinions on Housing as a Human Right?

An Honors Research Thesis Project

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Abstract

More than 500,000 United States (U.S.) residents lack stable housing, and little formal research has been explored whether Americans view housing as a basic right. Thus, this study asked, “What are college students’ opinions on housing as a human right?” To answer the research question, the researcher conducted a mixed-methods study approved by the University of Tennessee (UT) Institutional Review Board. For the qualitative component, the researcher recruited students from her social networks to participate in a focus group ($n=5$). For the quantitative component, the researcher sought to maximize variability and representation by recruiting participants in UT Anthropology, Social Work and French classes, the student union and a dining establishment on the engineering campus. Quantitative data from a total sample of 106 were collected in the form of a QuestionPro survey. Qualitative data were analyzed with basic content analysis; quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS.

Focus group results showed that participants largely believed that housing should be a human right, but it is currently treated as a privilege in America. Participants debated whether guaranteed free housing may disincentivize work. Survey results found that 73.7% of respondents identified housing as a right in the U.S., compared to 89.5% who identified voting as a right and 68.4% who identified healthcare as a right. Participants who identified as White or who were science/engineering majors were more likely to disagree that housing is a right. The higher percentage identifying housing as a right compared to healthcare might suggest that the right to housing is an important issue for young adults.

Introduction

With more than 550,000 people currently living in the United States lacking “a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” housing affordability remains a major issue for the majority of Americans today (Henry et al., 2018). In 2016, roughly 38 million households spent more than 30% of their income on housing expenses, labeling the spaces unaffordable (French, n.d.). By this definition, there is no city in the United States in which a minimum wage salary can pay rent for a two-bedroom apartment (Andone, 2018). Whether housing should be guaranteed for every American remains highly debated in today’s discourse. Current college students will be the next generation of policy makers, but it is not clear how they place housing on the spectrum from basic guaranteed human right to privilege. For that reason, I posed the research question, “What are college students’ opinions on housing as a basic right for Americans?” By researching college students’ opinions through quantitative data in the form of a survey, and qualitative data from a focus group, I hope to assess some of the assumptions and opinions that college age students may have around public housing. Furthermore, by asking questions about other rights like healthcare and education, I can gauge how important the issue of housing is to college age students in comparison to other services which are frequently debated as public goods or not.

The Concept of Basic Human Rights

Rights are generally defined as “entitlements (not) to perform certain actions, or (not) to be in certain states; or entitlements that others (not) perform certain actions or (not) be in certain states” (Wenar, 2020, p. 1). Formed after World War II, the United Nations sought to promote the concept of human rights through the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, so that people all over the world have access to fair treatment and dignity (United Nations, 1948). Then in 1966, the UN drafted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that included the right to labor, health, education, and for the purposes of this study, the right to an adequate standard of living (ICESCR, 1966). The covenant states that:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent. (Article 11.1)

While the UN's covenants have served as a useful tool for mitigating human rights abuses internationally, the documents are not legally binding until ratified by individual countries, and the US has signed but not ratified the ICESCR (Davis, 2015). The U.S. Constitution includes its own Bill of Rights which grants U.S. citizens their civil and political liberties. This includes: freedom of speech, press, assembly and religion; the right to bear arms; rules for due process of law; delegation of the powers not granted to the federal government to the people or the States (Lewis, 2002). However, it excludes the economic, social and cultural rights recognized by the UN. Furthermore, the history of housing policy in the U.S. has shown that housing is not treated as a right. Some people agree with the notion that housing should be guaranteed for Americans but many others argue in favor of policies that liberate private markets and promote self-preservation. In *Evicted*, Matthew Desmond (2016) poses a simple question: "Do we believe the right to a decent home is part of what it means to be an American?" (2016). With this study, I aim to answer that question by learning if college students agree with the ideology that housing is a human right.

Literature Review

Historical Context

After the Great Depression, many Americans were in need of stable housing. In response, Roosevelt's New Deal enacted many policies that strengthened the role of the government in housing, including the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934. This act made low down payments and long-term mortgages more accessible to Americans (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2015). The Housing Act of 1937 furthered the policies by creating public housing for low income people and forming the United States Housing Administration (USHA) (HUD, 2014). It authorized federal loans to local housing agencies to ensure low rent public housing. Throughout the 1940s, other small adjustments were made such as the 1942 Emergency Price Control Act to authorize rent control and other emergency measures, and the war time amendments in 1944 that guaranteed housing assistance to veterans (HUD, 2014). While the creation of public housing was benefiting white working-class Americans, it did not have the same effect for low-income communities of color. Redlining was common in minority and specifically black neighborhoods, meaning that those communities could be denied mortgages and loans based on racial notions that they would decrease property value in white neighborhoods (Gross, 2017).

Mid Century (1940-1960s)

The Truman administration enacted the next major housing amendment in 1949, a housing act that greatly expanded the capacities of federal mortgage insurance and construction of public housing units. Federal loans and grants were provided to assist with slum clearance in favor of urban renewal and the creation of 810,000 units of housing over six years (HUD, 2014). However, slum clearance came with criticism as it directly impacted minorities that were most commonly living in these slums (Schwab, 2018). The Housing Act of 1954 continued the process

through the Urban Renewal Program, that aimed to rehabilitate blighted and deteriorated areas. It created new federal mortgage insurance programs to benefit displaced families, like several other policies throughout the 1950s. However, as a result of continued racialized policies, many families were not compensated for their losses and federal funding instead favored industrial and commercial development (Schwab, 2018).

With the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, rent subsidies were introduced for the first time that encouraged privately constructed low-income housing. It also created the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a cabinet level agency to oversee housing in the states. With this act, the government would insure mortgages for non-profits and private companies to build public housing, and HUD could then provide subsidies to make up for what tenants' incomes could not cover in building and maintenance costs (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2015). Then in 1969, the Brooke Amendment to the Housing and Urban Development Act capped the amount of income that a tenant could spend on rent at 25% (and in 1981, it was raised to today's standard of 30%). While designed to help poor families afford rent, it deprived private owners of the funds needed to maintain and upkeep their buildings, which caused families with stable income to move out of the deteriorating public housing. With new concerns over the suitability of public housing for families, the 1968 Housing and Urban Development Act banned the construction of high-rise developments for families with children, and the focus of private builders shifted to single-family homes (Husock, 2015).

Housing through 1970s-1990s

After lifting its year-long moratorium on public housing funding, the federal government passed the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 that created the Section 8 program. Under this program, HUD provides vouchers that low-income renters could use in

privately constructed housing that covered the gap between 25% of a tenant's income that was used for rent and the fair market rent of those complexes (HUD, 2014). However the waitlists for Section 8 vouchers often included thousands of applicants and landlords could choose whether or not they wanted to accept these types of vouchers in their complexes (Khouri, 2019). To incentivize landlords, tax credits were given to local housing authorities to provide landlords who would accept Section 8 as part of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program in 1986 (Rostenkowski, 1986). During these years, other socialist reforms passed such as Civil Rights era anti-discrimination policies, as well as an easing on credit requirements for mortgages. Additionally, in 1974, Community Development Block Grants were created to assist states in aiding low income families and improving local housing conditions. Policies like these were helpful in moving towards larger amounts of affordable housing, but over time, they became harder to maintain.

Under the presidential administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, the policies that were enacted followed the neoliberalist ideology that had become popularized in the states. Neoliberalism depends on free markets and private industry to bolster the economy, and that led to a turn towards self-reliance and independence from government services (Johnson, 2011). As a result, President Reagan significantly cut budgets for HUD and all other kinds of public programs while simultaneously denouncing the hypothetical "welfare queen" who would receive more government money than necessary using different aliases and social security cards (Dreier, 2019). George H.W. Bush led the same neoliberal initiatives by cutting funding to things like Hope VI, which aimed to replace poor quality public housing with mixed income and lower density developments (although this act got critiqued on its own for allegedly helping gentrify urban areas) (McCrary, 1999). Under President Clinton who served until 2001, progress was

made like the HOME program that sought to provide HUD with \$1 billion a year to build affordable housing for low income people (Clinton, 1999). However, government deregulation also continued under the Clinton administration and policies were enacted that pushed banks to lend to low-income neighborhoods which some claim was a catalyst for the housing crash of 2008 (Thoma, 2017).

Housing in the 2000s

Continuing President Clinton's efforts, there was a record high amount of home ownership under President Bush. However, despite efforts to provide more equitable chances at home ownership to minority and low-income communities, those groups were most greatly affected during the housing crash of 2008. Around 8% of black homeowners were foreclosed on after accepting risky subprime loans; That's almost double the amount of white homeowners (McMullen, 2019). In response, President Obama, who came into office in 2008, enacted the Make Home Affordable program that aimed to stabilize home ownership through fixed and lowered interest rates or granting temporary forbearance for recently unemployed homeowners (U.S. Department, 2017). Critics claim that this policy helped large banks out of the financial crisis, but did little to stabilize the declining wealth of African American homeowners (Jilani, 2017).

The presidential administration under Trump has attempted to cut funding for HUD even further, including underfunding Section 8 which would raise rents on poor tenants and decreasing investment in affordable homes while enforcing work requirements for recipients of public housing (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2019). Additionally, the Trump executive branch has reinforced the neoliberal ideas of self-preservation and a discouragement of

public services. For housing, Trump proposed a \$9.6 billion reduction to the budget of HUD for the 2020 fiscal year (Weiss, 2019).

Current Studies

Though people in the US have very different opinions on how the affordable housing shortage should be handled, little formal research has been done to see if U.S. residents think that housing should be a guaranteed human right. Public opinion can be incredibly influential in enacting or abating policy change. I believe that changing public opinion on housing as a right is the first step in creating structural policy change that ensures a decent standard of living for all Americans, but in order to enact those changes, we must first analyze what the public opinions are.

Methods

Online Survey Procedures

This study used a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2011), relying on both qualitative and quantitative data, in the form of a survey and a focus group. It is a cross sectional study using a convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK). This study and its materials were approved by the UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the study was completed for the College of Arts and Sciences and University Honors. To gather quantitative data, I created an anonymous survey using QuestionPro software provided by the university about students' opinions on housing and other human rights, which included a consent form that participants agreed to by continuing with the survey (see Appendix A for Survey and Informed Consent Document). Participants were recruited to complete the survey in person. This included asking classes such as Educational Leadership and Policy Studies 350, Anthropology 489/690, French 353, and two graduate level sociology courses. Additionally, students were recruited at popular places on campus, to

maximize variability of answers, such the Student Union and Ray's Place, a dining facility on the engineering campus. Students took the survey either on their own personal device through a direct link to the survey, or on a tablet that the College of Social Work provided to me.

Furthermore, they were told that the duration of the survey would be no longer than ten minutes.

So that no considerations had to be made for minors, the survey included one yes-or-no question that ensured that participants were over 18 years of age. The survey included five demographic questions to aid in the analysis. Students were asked to identify their student level (undergraduate or graduate), gender identity, race/ethnicity, college and age. There were three questions where students could choose what rights should be guaranteed, what they consider to be decent housing, and if they believe anything should disqualify a person from receiving public housing. Additionally, there were three multiple choice questions asking, in their opinion, who should be guaranteed rights in America, who is responsible for providing housing solutions, and what they consider to be affordable. There was an open-ended question at the end that simply asked if they had other thoughts to share on the topic, as well as a space to leave their email if they wanted to be included in a drawing for a \$10 gift certificate to the fast food restaurant of their choosing. However, the email was not attached to their survey answers, and anyone could enter the drawing, even if they did not participate or fully complete the survey.

Focus Group Procedures

The qualitative data came from a focus group (see Appendix B for Focus Group Questions, Opening Script and Informed Consent). Participants were recruited through my personal social networks, and in total there were five participants. Before it began, they each read and signed a consent waiver that their answers to eight open-ended questions could be used in this study and that they would not be identified in the research. I could not guarantee complete

confidentiality, as I do not have control over the members of the group, but the participants read this in their waivers and gave consent. Participants were told that the focus group would take no longer than an hour. The study asked them, “What are rights? Why do we have them?”, “What’s the difference between civil and political rights (like voting or fair trial) and social and economic rights (like housing and healthcare)? Is one set of rights more important than the other?”, “Should decent and affordable housing be a guaranteed right for every American citizen? Why or why not?”, “What do you define as affordable housing? How about decent housing?”, “Why do you think many Americans are opposed to government funded housing?”, “Who is most responsible for ensuring Americans have decent and affordable housing?”, “Do you feel your opinions on this subject are different than your parents’ opinions would be? Your grandparents? How are they different?”, and finally, “Are there any last thoughts or comments to share?” The answers to these questions were recorded on my personal device and stored in a UTK provided OneDrive account. There are no obvious risks or benefits to students participating in the survey or focus group, except the drawing for a gift card and pizza that was provided for focus group participants.

Data Analysis Plan

Once demographic information was analyzed at the univariate level, some variables were recoded to exclude some groups in the survey analysis due to small sample sizes that were not comparable to other larger groups. Bivariate analyses based on gender were limited to male and female, and race/ethnicity differences were based on white, African American and Latinx groups. The demographic question of college was excluded in the bivariate analysis, as there were too many groups that each had small frequencies. After recoding, my advisor and I used SPSS statistics software to analyze univariate and bivariate statistics. We found univariate

descriptive statistics that showed percentage results of answers to the survey questions. Then using bivariate analysis, we found answer differences among demographics with chi-square tests and assessed the significance with p-values. To analyze the focus group, I transcribed the focus group discussion and further stored it in my UTK provided OneDrive account. Then, basic content analysis was applied.

Results

Demographics

For this study, I surveyed both undergraduate and graduate students at UTK. After approval from the UT Institutional Review Board, a convenience sample of 106 students were surveyed using QuestionPro software, and an additional 5 students participated in a focus group. In analyzing the survey data, sample sizes for gender included 39.3% ($n=42$) respondents that were male, 54.2% ($n=58$) respondents who were female, 1.9% ($n=2$) who were transgender, 1.9% ($n=2$) who fell under the category of “other” and 0.9% ($n=1$) who preferred not to respond. For race and ethnicity, there were 56.1% ($n=60$) survey respondents who were white, 12.1% ($n=13$) who were African American, 13.1% ($n=14$) who were Latinx, 7.5% ($n=8$) who were Asian American, and 3.7% ($N=4$) that described themselves as “other”. For student level, 68.4% ($n=78$) were undergraduate students and 23.7% ($n=27$) were graduate students. For the area of study, no college had >30.0% of the total participants. The largest group was College of Arts & Sciences, with 27.1% ($n=29$), followed by the College of Social Work, with 17.8% ($n=19$). However many colleges were represented, including Agriculture, Architecture and Design, Haslam College of Business, Communication and Information, Tickle College of Engineering, Nursing, and Education, Health and Human Sciences.

Survey Responses

The first two tables consider multiple choice questions that were not broken down for analysis based on demographic group. Then the answers to other survey questions are broken down into student level differences, gender differences, and race/ethnicity differences, with significant p-values determined in the descriptions.

Table 1.

Who has rights?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
All people	81	75.70%
Residents with no criminal history	21	19.60%
No one is entitled to goods and services	2	1.90%

The majority of participants said that all people residing in the U.S. should be guaranteed basic rights. However, more than 20 students stipulated that American residents without a criminal background are the only ones who should be guaranteed rights. Two respondents claimed that no one is entitled to goods and services in America.

Table 2.

Who is responsible for providing housing for Americans?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Federal government	39	36.40%
State and city	54	50.50%
The individual	12	11.20%

Slightly more than half of survey respondents said that state and city governments should be responsible for ensuring their residents have affordable housing. The next largest group said that it is the responsibility of the federal government. Twelve participants said that the individual is responsible for affording it themselves.

By Student Level

This section determines the difference in answers between graduate students and undergraduates.

Table 3.

Which are rights?

Options	Undergraduates	Graduates	χ^2	<i>p</i> -value
Voting	98.6% (<i>n</i> =73)	92.3% (<i>n</i> =24)	2.658	0.103
Housing	75.7% (<i>n</i> =56)	88.5% (<i>n</i> =23)	1.896	0.169
Healthcare	67.6% (<i>n</i> =50)	88.5% (<i>n</i> =23)	4.261	0.039
Education	50.0% (<i>n</i> =37)	84.6% (<i>n</i> =22)	9.53	0.002
Bear Arms	97.3% (<i>n</i> =72)	61.5% (<i>n</i> =16)	23.297	0.001
Fair Trial	98.6% (<i>n</i> =73)	92.3% (<i>n</i> =24)	2.658	0.103

The *p*-values that were significant were under healthcare, education and the right to bear arms. A greater percentage of graduate students, 88.5% (*n*=23), found that healthcare was a right, as opposed to 67.6% (*n*=50) of undergraduate students. Similarly, 84.6% (*n*=22) of graduate students believed education to be a right, as opposed to 50.0% (*n*=37) of undergraduate students.

However, a greater percentage of undergraduates, 97.3% ($n=72$) believed the right to bear arms as a guaranteed right, while only 61.5% ($n=16$) of graduate students said the same.

Table 4.

Which are necessary for decent housing?

Options	Undergraduates	Graduates	χ^2	p -value
Food and water	90.5% ($n=67$)	92.3% ($n=24$)	0.073	0.787
Basic utilities	60.8% ($n=45$)	84.6% ($n=22$)	4.931	0.026
Diverse neighborhoods	47.3% ($n=35$)	84.6% ($n=22$)	10.932	0.001
Disability Access	77.0% ($n=57$)	100.0% ($n=26$)	7.196	0.007
Appropriately Sized	70.3% ($n=52$)	84.6% ($n=22$)	2.058	0.151
Hazard Free	94.6% ($n=70$)	100.0% ($n=26$)	1.464	0.226
Clean Environment	73.0% ($n=54$)	88.5% ($n=23$)	2.606	0.106

The p -values that were significant were under basic utilities, diverse neighborhoods and disability access. More graduate students, 84.6% ($n=22$), said that basic utility inclusion was necessary for decent housing than undergraduates, 60.8% ($n=45$). The same trend occurred for diverse neighborhoods (84.6% ($n=22$) of graduates vs 47.3% ($n=35$) of undergraduates) and disability access (100.0% ($n=26$) of graduates vs 77.0% ($n=57$) of undergraduates).

Table 5.

What should prevent someone from receiving public housing?

Options	Undergraduates	Graduates	χ^2	<i>p</i> -value
Criminal history	23.0% (<i>n</i> =17)	7.7% (<i>n</i> =2)	2.919	0.088
Not paying taxes	45.9% (<i>n</i> =34)	15.4% (<i>n</i> =4)	7.627	0.006
Unemployment	25.7% (<i>n</i> =19)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	8.242	0.004
Receiving other subsidies	5.4% (<i>n</i> =4)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	1.464	0.226
Non-violent criminal history	4.1% (<i>n</i> =3)	0.0% (<i>n</i> =0)	1.087	0.297
Failed drug test	23.0% (<i>n</i> =17)	19.2% (<i>n</i> =5)	0.157	0.692
Late on rent in the past	13.5% (<i>n</i> =10)	7.7% (<i>n</i> =2)	0.617	0.432

The *p*-values that were statistically significant were under “not paying taxes” and “unemployment”. A higher percentage of undergraduates thought that these two things should be disqualifiers. Specifically, 45.9% (*n*=34) of undergraduates believe that not paying taxes should be a disqualifier, as opposed to 15.4% (*n*=4) of graduate students. 25.7% (*n*=19) undergraduates believe current unemployment should be a disqualifier, as opposed to none of the graduate students.

By Gender

This section looks at the difference in responses between male and female participants.

Table 6.

Which are rights?

Options	Male	Female	χ^2	<i>p</i> -value
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Voting	97.6% ($n=41$)	96.6% ($n=56$)	0.095	0.757
Housing	61.9% ($n=26$)	91.4% ($n=53$)	12.756	0
Healthcare	50.0% ($n=21$)	89.7% ($n=52$)	19.435	0
Education	40.5% ($n=17$)	72.4% ($n=42$)	10.272	0.001
Bear Arms	100% ($n=42$)	79.3% ($n=46$)	9.875	0.002
Fair Trial	100% ($n=42$)	94.8% ($n=55$)	2.24	0.135

Males and females produced four statistically significant differences when answering what rights they believe should be guaranteed. For housing, a higher percentage of females, 91.4% ($n=53$), thought that housing should be a right as compared to the 61.9% ($n=26$) of males. Healthcare and education reflect similar numbers, with 89.7% ($n=52$) of females claiming that healthcare is a right, compared to 50.0% ($n=21$) of males. 72.4% ($n=42$) of females believe education to be a right, while only 40.5% ($n=17$) of males believe the same. However, males overwhelmingly agreed that the right to bear arms should be guaranteed. 100.0% ($n=42$) chose this option, while 79.3% ($n=46$) of females selected the same.

Table 7.

Which are necessary for decent housing?

Options	Males	Females	χ^2	p -value
Food and water	83.3% ($n=35$)	96.6% ($n=56$)	5.197	0.023
Basic utilities	47.6% ($n=20$)	81.0% ($n=47$)	12.302	0.001

Diverse neighborhoods	35.7% (n=15)	72.4% (n=42)	13.386	0.001
Disability access	66.7% (n=28)	94.8% (n=55)	13.691	0.001
Appropriate size	59.5% (n=25)	84.5% (n=49)	7.887	0.005
Hazard free	92.9% (n=39)	98.3% (n=57)	1.863	0.172
Clean environment	66.7% (n=28)	84.5% (n=49)	4.366	0.037

For decent housing, all answer differences except one between males and females were statistically significant. More females cited food and water as needed (96.6% (n=56) as opposed to 83.3% (n=35) of males), as well as basic utilities (81.0% (n=47) of females and 47.6% (n=20) of males). 72.4% (n=42) of females reported that a decent house needs to be in a diverse neighborhood, and 94.8% (n=55) agreed that it should be accessible to disabilities. Only 35.7% (n=15) of males said the same about diverse neighborhoods and 66.7% (n=28) of males agreed that disability access was important. Finally, females more often agreed that appropriate sizing (84.5% (n=49)) and a clean environment (84.5% (n=49)) are needed for decent housing, whereas 59.5% (n=25) of males agreed that decent housing should be appropriately sized and 66.7% (n=28) said that a clean environment was necessary.

Table 8.

What should prevent someone from receiving public housing?

Options	Males	Females	χ^2	p-value
Criminal history	28.6% (n=12)	12.1% (n=7)	4.311	0.038

Not paying taxes	54.8% ($n=23$)	25.9% ($n=15$)	8.636	0.003
Late on rent in the past	14.3% ($n=6$)	10.3% ($n=6$)	0.358	0.549
Unemployment	31.0% ($n=13$)	10.3% ($n=6$)	6.722	0.100
Receiving other subsidies	4.8% ($n=2$)	3.4% ($n=2$)	0.109	0.741
Non-violent history	4.8% ($n=2$)	1.7% ($n=1$)	0.772	0.379
Failed drug test	28.6% ($n=12$)	17.2% ($n=10$)	1.822	0.177

Regarding “reasons for denying housing”, there are two significant p -values. 28.6% ($n=12$) of males said that a criminal history should be a disqualifier and 12.1% ($n=7$) said the same thing. More males, 54.8% ($n=23$), said that not paying taxes should be a disqualifier, as opposed to 25.9% ($n=15$) of females.

By Race/Ethnicity

This section compares the answers of survey questions between white, African American and Latinx students.

Table 9.

Which are rights?

Options	African Americans	White	Latinx	χ^2	p -value
Voting	92.3% ($n=12$)	98.3% ($n=59$)	100% ($n=14$)	2.12	0.346
Housing	76.9% ($n=10$)	76.7% ($n=46$)	92.9% ($n=13$)	1.866	0.393
Healthcare	69.2% ($n=9$)	70.0% ($n=42$)	92.9%	3.197	0.202

			(n=13)		
Education	53.8% (n=7)	56.7% (n=34)	92.9% (n=13)	6.754	0.034
Bear Arms	92.3% (n=12)	88.3% (n=53)	85.7% (n=12)	0.294	0.863
Fair Trial	92.3% (n=12)	100% (n=60)	100% (n=14)	5.758	0.056

In regards to which of the options should be guaranteed rights, the only significant difference was in education. The group with the highest number of participants that agreed was Latinx, with 92.9% (N=13). Next was white, with 56.7% (N=34) believing that education should be a right, and 53.8% (N=7) of African Americans believed it should be a guaranteed right.

Table 10.

Which are necessary for decent housing?

Options	African American	White	Latinx	χ^2	p-value
Food and water	84.6% (n=11)	90.0% (n=54)	100% (n=14)	2.061	0.357
Basic utilities	69.2% (n=9)	61.7% (n=37)	100% (n=14)	7.794	0.02
Diverse Neighborhoods	61.5% (n=8)	51.7% (n=31)	78.6% (n=11)	3.465	0.177
Disability access	76.9% (n=10)	80.0% (n=48)	100% (n=14)	3.547	0.17
Appropriate size	76.9% (n=10)	68.3% (n=41)	92.9% (n=13)	3.599	0.165

Hazard free	92.3% (n=12)	96.7% (n=58)	100% (n=14)	1.206	0.547
Clean environment	92.3% (n=12)	73.3% (n=44)	78.6% (n=11)	2.196	0.334

When determining which of the options was necessary in order to be considered decent, including basic utilities was the only option with significant answer differences among race/ethnicity. 100.0% (n=14) of Latinx said that they need to be included, 69.2% (n=9) of African Americans said they needed to be included, and 61.7% (n=37) of white participants said they needed to be included in order to be considered decent.

Table 11.

Which should prevent someone from receiving public housing?

Options	African American	White	Latinx	χ^2	p-value
Criminal history	7.7% (n=1)	20.0% (n=12)	7.1% (n=1)	2.188	0.335
Not paying taxes	23.1% (n=3)	46.7% (n=28)	0.0% (n=0)	11.829	0.003
Late on rent in the past	7.7% (n=1)	15.0% (n=9)	0.0% (n=0)	2.728	0.256
Unemployment	7.7% (n=1)	25.0% (n=15)	0.0% (n=0)	5.893	0.053
Receiving other subsidies	0.0% (n=0)	5.0% (n=3)	0.0% (n=0)	1.398	0.497
Non-violent history	0.0% (n=0)	3.3% (n=2)	0.0% (n=0)	0.921	0.631
Failed drug test	7.7% (n=1)	26.7% (n=16)	7.1% (n=1)	4.21	0.122

Like the other tables on race/ethnicity differences, only one *p*-value was significant- whether not paying taxes should be a disqualifier from public housing. 46.7% (*n*=28) of white participants claimed that not paying taxes should disqualify someone. 23.1% (*n*=3) of African Americans reported the same thing, but 0.0% of Latinx thought that it should be a disqualifier.

Focus Group Results

In total, five students attended the focus group. They agreed that housing should be a right for everyone but it is difficult to find solutions in the way that our society is currently set up. For instance, most participants said that while they do not see a difference between civil rights like voting and social rights like housing, they recognize that our society is structured to treat them differently. Furthermore, the participants agreed that in theory, housing, voting, healthcare, etc. should all be guaranteed rights, but we do not treat them as such, like in cases of voter suppression or funding cuts to housing programs.

When participants were asked if they think housing should be a guaranteed right for every person in America, they said yes. One participant noted that guaranteed housing gives people the proper place to live, eat and socialize so that they can work to the best of their ability and participate in the economy. However, there was discussion of free housing disincentivizing work. One participant used an anecdotal example of her friend's mom who has been on unemployment benefits for nine years and says, "Why bother getting a job if they are paying me not to?" For this participant, that attitude is an "abuse of the system" and they worry that more people would share the same sentiment if guaranteed free housing. However another participant rebutted by saying that while that might be the case for some, the benefits of public housing outweigh the risks. Overall, the thoughts of everyone were encompassed when one participant

said, “with the US being one of the wealthiest countries in the world, it is something that we could guarantee to our citizens that we just do not prioritize.”

When asked how they define affordable housing, some agreed that it should be based on your level of income and that there is not a “one-size-fits-all” cost. One participant brought up the 30% rule that many people are familiar with, and expressed that it may be too high. “If it is a house that you have purchased instead of renting, it seems standard because for most U.S. residents, the home is their main source of investment,” another participant stated. Additionally, I asked them why they think many Americans are opposed to government funded housing. One claimed, “They worked hard for what they have, so they don’t want others to get off easy.” Another cited her hometown as an example, claiming that, “there is a big fight against project housing because... they think it increases crime and will bring “bad” people into the neighborhood and they do not want those kids in their nice schools. They assume that anyone that is living in the government housing is a bad person and will bring down the value of their homes and quality of their schools. There is an idea that ‘they can have government housing as long as it is not near me.’” The participants overwhelmingly agreed on who should be responsible for providing housing. They said that housing and issues with homelessness vary greatly between rural areas and cities and between different states, so it should be up to local governments to assess needs of the community and address them in their own ways. Through this strategy, one of the participants claimed, there might be more success in creating public support for affordable housing than overarching federal laws would create.

Discussion

With this study, I aimed to learn if college students believe that housing should be a guaranteed human right. I found that a large portion of students do agree with this sentiment. The majority did agree, but there was variability between undergraduates and graduate students, and

among gender and race/ethnicity groups. Furthermore, there were discrepancies between demographic groups when determining what is necessary for decent housing and if anything should disqualify a person from receiving public housing. Additionally, I believe that topics that were discussed in the focus group may give insight as to why people responded the way that they did in the survey. Lastly, limitations are discussed as well as implications for policy and future research.

Variability by Student Level

Graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to believe that housing is a human right. Similarly, they were more likely to believe that healthcare and education are rights. Undergraduates more often chose voting, ability to bear arms and fair and speedy trial as rights. This could mean that a higher level of education leads to more progressive ideas. By that logic, making higher education more accessible might lead to a generation that is more liberal in their views. When asked what was necessary for decent housing, there were two statistically significant findings. Graduate students said that having a home be accessible to disabilities and being placed in diverse neighborhoods were necessary to be decent, while a good portion of undergraduates did not select the same options. Perhaps graduate students with higher education are more aware of how common disabilities are, or believe that diverse neighborhoods are a way to make neighborhoods more inclusive. Like the question on decent housing, there were two significant differences when asked if there should be any reason to deny public housing to a person. More undergraduates selected that if someone does not pay taxes, or they are unemployed, they should not receive government subsidized housing. I believe that this has to do with the concept of “free handouts” for people who are not contributing as much as others to the economy and workforce. This idea is discussed more in depth in the focus group analysis.

Gender

Between the two genders that were analyzed, females were more likely than males to agree that housing should be a human right. Additionally, females chose more of the options that related to the needs for decent housing, such as: basic utilities are included, homes need to be in diverse neighborhoods, it needs to be accessible for disabilities, food and water need to be guaranteed, it should be appropriately sized and in a clean environment. Lastly, females less often chose that a criminal history or not paying taxes should be a disqualifier for public housing. I hypothesize that these gender differences can be explained by feminist theory as it relates to housing. Throughout history, women have been commonly associated with the home and the duties of cooking, cleaning and child rearing (Austerberry & Watson, 1981). While today's workforce and access to property ownership are much more equal, women are more likely to have experienced gender-based discrimination and denial of basic rights. Therefore, they could be more likely to embrace the idea of a more liberal and holistic perspective on rights- and the idea that there should be a basic social contract between the state and its people, wherefore the state provides a certain standard of living. For these reasons, women are also likely to recognize the importance of the things that should be included in a decent house, such as utilities and a clean environment.

Race/Ethnicity

Three race/ethnicities were analyzed for the purposes of this paper: African American, white and Latinx. Latinx were the most likely to say that housing should be a human right, followed by African Americans and then white students. When selecting what is needed for decent housing, only "basic utilities are included" produced significant results. All of Latinx respondents selected this option, while less than 70.0% of African Americans or white students

selected the same thing. In fact, all of the Latinx participants selected food and water, utilities, disability access, and a hazard free environment as necessary for decent housing. Lastly, there was a significant difference in the race/ethnicity of students who chose “not paying taxes” as a disqualifier for public housing. Almost half of white students chose this option, but none of the Latinx respondents did. I hypothesize that among white students, there are misconceptions about who pays taxes in the United States. For instance, conservatives echo the belief that immigrants pay no taxes which is not usually the case. In fact, the U.S. Congressional Budget Office estimates that 50-70% of unauthorized migrants pay taxes (2007). Latinx students are aware of this, so they did not select this choice as a disqualifier. Overall, white students were most likely to believe that social rights should *not* be guaranteed (meanwhile, all of the white students selected “the ability to bear arms” as a right). This is perhaps because white students are not as aware, or otherwise choose to ignore the systematic barriers that prevent people of color from receiving the same opportunities and equitable access that they do. White privilege is pervasive in America, so much so that white students might not even realize that they benefit from it every day (Simms & Waxman, 2016). If white citizens in America are given opportunities to acquire wealth and work higher-paying jobs, should people of color be able to do the same? I hypothesize that white Americans often want to forget about the racialized history of this country, and in doing so they ignore the systematic racism that is far from being solved. If white students had more awareness and education about structural racism in the United States, they might be more sympathetic to these kinds of issues and therefore might have been more likely to select “housing” as a human right.

Housing Compared to Other Rights

It was unsurprising to find that students were more likely to agree that rights like the ability to bear arms and vote should be guaranteed over rights like housing or healthcare, especially considering that the survey was completed by a university in a state that traditionally supports Republican political representatives at the local and national-level. The right to bear arms, to have a speedy and fair trial, and to vote are ingrained in our ideas of what it means to be American. However, cultural and social rights are infrequently talked about in schools, likely because they are not guaranteed freedoms like the former. For these reasons, students grow up without an understanding of the benefits of stable housing or guaranteed healthcare. The United Nations has passed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that outright supports human rights like housing, healthcare and education. However countries are not obligated to sign onto UN covenants, and the US has yet to ratify the ICESCR. In contrast, the U.S. ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that protects voting, bearing arms and fair trial in 1992 (Carter, 1992).

However, it was unexpected to find that in all demographic groups, more students agreed that housing is a right than healthcare or education. Perhaps it is because it is quite literally harder to ignore a population of people without homes when they are on our popular streets and we see them every day. Or maybe because housing is needed every single night of a person's life, while healthcare or education could be seen as something that is not needed all the time. In any case, perhaps housing, which is not often thought of as America's most pressing issue, is more of an important topic to be explored for college age students than other rights at this moment in time.

Discussion of Focus Group

The participants in my focus group agreed for the most part that housing should be a guaranteed right for Americans. However, one of the participants wondered if guaranteed housing might disincentivize work. In my experience living in Tennessee, this is a common thought to be had. Why would people work if they are guaranteed government “handouts” like housing or healthcare? Many Americans echo the idea that if citizens want the best quality of life, they must “pull themselves up by the bootstraps” (Bologna, 2018). Expressions like this are common in American discourse, and I believe it comes from neoliberalist policies that came out of the late 20th century. As discussed in the literature review, neoliberalism promotes private corporations and free market forces over government controlled subsidies and provisions (Johnson, 2011). This was a major ideology that came in the midst of the Cold War, so many Americans were made to believe it was a more open approach to practicing economics and would lead to greater economic growth, and ultimately, through trickle-down effects, greater prosperity across a population. Only 30-40 years later, members of the generation that grew up with this mindset are now raising their own children and repeating their ideas to them. I hypothesize this might be why there was discussion of people “abusing the system” by not working if they are guaranteed free housing. Guaranteed social provisions and the people that receive them are still things largely looked down on in U.S. discourse. Furthermore, there is an idea in the US that the support that we receive from the government and our quality of life should be based on our ability to work, and those who are unemployed are somehow less worthy. However, someone who may be receiving unemployment insurance still has to look for work to be eligible, and the amount that they receive doesn't equate to a luxurious lifestyle (McGahey & Ghilarducci, 2012). Not to mention, most people want to work for personal fulfillment, economic gain, to participate in social spheres and more. The ability to work and gain a livable wage are

rights too. Though in my opinion, housing should be guaranteed regardless of someone's ability to work. There are many reasons why someone may not have a job- disability, full time school, previous convictions- that does not mean that they are inherently "lazy" or that they just want things "handed to them for free", as some more conservative opinions might believe. I

hypothesize that this concept ties back into a larger societal problem in America, which is the fact that lower classes are continually pitted against each other. As a result, a low-paid group of workers might wonder why people who receive unemployment insurance make more money than them, rather than question why we have such drastic wealth inequality between the highest and lowest classes. Under the Trump presidential administration, Republican ideals are perpetuated by drastic cuts to welfare and social benefits. In terms of housing, President Trump proposed a \$9.6 billion reduction to the budget of HUD for the 2020 fiscal year (Weiss, 2019). While congress has not approved of these requests, it gives a stronger voice to the traditionally conservative opinions that reject all forms of socialist programs. Despite some of these worries that were echoed throughout the focus group, participants agreed that housing is a human right. This may be an indication that current day college students hold more progressive ideas than past generations.

Implications for Policy and Future Research

I believe that this study gathered a lot of useful information for future policy and research. Graduate students seem to recognize important things like housing and healthcare as rights, so maybe undergraduates should be required take more humanities courses to learn about race or feminist theory that might give them more progressive views. To take it a step further, maybe even bring some of those lessons into middle and high schools, where students are often forming their ideas on the world around them. Both the survey and the focus group agree that

state and city governments should be responsible for finding local solutions to a lack of affordable housing, however, voter turnout is historically low in local elections. To ensure that we have local government officials that reflect our wants and beliefs, we need more citizens to show up for these elections. As mentioned in the literature review, HUD currently uses Community Development Block Grants to assist states financially with their local housing needs. It seems the participants in this study would agree with this method, but we need to ensure that our elected officials in all branches of government do not cut budgets and otherwise discourage these types of programs.

Moreover, I found that white males are less likely to cite housing and other public goods as “rights”, and in our current and historical U.S. governments, the majority are white males. If we vote more women and people of color into office, perhaps more solutions for issues like housing would be available and easier to pass as law. However, outside of the scope of this paper, voter suppression (which came up in the focus group) is a very real issue that residents face in many different forms. Educating students on this issue would create more public awareness and outrage, and it would be harder for voter suppression to occur. Nonetheless, this study supported the idea that college students believe that housing is a human right. If this is the case, in the future we may see more progressive policy shifts that move toward ensuring everyone in America has stable housing. While this study was useful on a small scale to gain insight into college students’ beliefs, it would be helpful to expand the scope of this research. More students of different genders and race/ethnicities could create opportunity for analyzing differences across more racial/ethnic and gender identities. Beyond that, gathering opinions from people outside of academia and people of all ages would truly allow us to see where individuals in the US fall on the issue of housing.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, there was a relatively small sample size compared to the size of the school. Almost 30,000 undergraduates and graduates attend the UT, and only 106 of them were surveyed for this study. While a few students were represented by genders other than male and female, and a few fell outside the categories of African Americans, Latinx and white students, there were not enough of those students to be analyzed in the data. The study could benefit from wider representation in these areas. Additionally, as mentioned previously, this survey was completed at one school in a state that traditionally votes for Republican candidates. Perhaps responses would be different if more students from UTK or students from other universities participated. Furthermore, participation relied on self-selection of participants and the focus group was comprised of friends and close contacts, who may hold some of the same opinions as me. A large portion of the survey was taken by students in majors such as social work or anthropology, in which many of the students may have more liberal ideas on human rights. Lastly, participants were made to self-define many of the concepts in the survey, and therefore may have had differing ideas when responding to questions about rights.

Conclusion

Existing literature has shown that movement towards affordable housing has been a struggle in the United States since the Great Depression. It also shows that no presidential administration has yet to find the perfect solutions for this pervasive social justice issue. As the government has gone back and forth on its housing policies over the years, Americans' opinions are too unclear. For this reason, I set out to ask the research question “What are college students’ opinions on housing as a human right?” What I found was that students largely support public housing, but there are still some reservations about how to provide it and what the effects will be.

For instance, will citizens be less incentivized to work if they are guaranteed free housing?

However, most students agreed that it should be up to local state and city governments to identify the needs of their communities and address them in unique ways. Based on the survey, white students were less likely to believe in housing as a human right. I believe that this stems from an ignorance of the systematic oppressions that have kept African Americans and other minorities from homeownership since the Great Depression, coupled with the lasting effects of neoliberal policy from the late 20th century. With that being said, increasing education and awareness for these topics would create a deeper understanding of the barriers that poor renters and families face in the United States, and therefore create new generations that have a more progressive mindset and might be more sympathetic to the cause of affordable housing. As wealth inequality increases and new threats to health and the environment pop up every day, ensuring that Americans have stable and affordable housing is more important than ever. I hope that this study contributes to a larger discussion on people's perceptions of public housing, so that the next generation of policy makers consider housing as a priority.

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Appendix A- Online Survey

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: What are college students' opinions on housing as a basic right for Americans?

Researchers: Maria Valerio, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dr. Courtney Cronley, the College of Social Work at University of Tennessee, Knoxville

We are asking you to be in this research study because you are a student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You must be age 18 or older to participate in the study. The information in this consent form is to help you decide if you want to be in this research study. Please take your time reading this form and contact the researcher(s) to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of the research study is to learn about college student's opinions on housing as a basic right for Americans. This research is being conducted as part of an undergraduate honors research project.

What will I do in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, you will complete an online survey. The survey includes questions about your opinions concerning affordable housing for Americans and should take you about 10-15 minutes to complete. You can skip questions that you do not want to answer.

Can I say “No”?

Being in this study is up to you. You can stop up until you submit the survey. After you submit the survey, we cannot remove your responses because we will not know which responses came from you.

- Either way, your decision won't affect your grades, your relationship with your instructors, or standing with the University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Are there any risks to me?

We don't know of any risks to you from being in the study.

Are there any benefits to me?

We do not expect you to benefit from being in this study. Your participation may help us to learn more about college students' opinions on housing. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

What will happen with the information collected for this study?

The survey is anonymous, and no one will be able to link your responses back to you. Your responses to the survey will not be linked to your computer, email address or other electronic identifiers. Please do not include your name or other information that could be used to identify you in your survey responses. Information provided in this survey can only be kept as secure as any other online communication.

Information collected for this study will be published and possibly presented at scientific meetings.

Will I be paid for being in this research study?

Participants in this research study will be entered into a drawing to win a gift card with a value of \$10 to the fast food restaurant of their choice. Winners will be contacted via email after the survey closes. Chances of winning are one in fifty. Anyone over the age of 18 may enter the drawing even if they do not participate in the survey. To do so, contact the principal investigator, Maria Valerio.

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researchers, Maria Valerio (principal investigator) at mks964@vols.utk.edu or (931) 319-7986 or Courtney Cronley (faculty advisor) at ccronle1@utk.edu or (865) 974-6698.

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

1534 White Avenue

Blount Hall, Room 408

Knoxville, TN 37996-1529

Phone: 865-974-7697

Email: utkirb@utk.edu

Statement of Consent

I have read this form, been given the chance to ask questions and have my questions answered.

If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By clicking the “I Agree” button below, I am agreeing to be in this study. I can print or save a copy of this consent information for future reference. If I do not want to be in this study, I can close my internet browser.

Survey Questions

1. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student at the University of Tennessee and at least 18 years of age? **If not, please do not continue further with this survey.**
 - Yes
 - No
2. Please select which student level describes you
 - Undergraduate student
 - Graduate student
3. Please select which college your primary major or area of study is under
 - Herbert College of Agriculture
 - Architecture and Design
 - Arts and Sciences
 - Haslam College of Business
 - Communication and Information
 - Education, Health and Human Sciences
 - Tickle College of Engineering
 - College of Law
 - Nursing

- Social Work
- Veterinary Medicine

4. Please select your gender identity

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

5. Please select your race/ethnicity

- African American
- White, non hispanic
- Latinx/Hispanic
- Asian American
- Asian
- American Indian
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

6. What is your age in years?

(Fill in answer)

7. Having rights means that you are entitled to certain freedoms and liberties, as well as the protection of those freedoms, based on existing legal systems and moral theory.

Who should be guaranteed basic rights in America?

- All people residing in the United States

- American residents with no criminal background
- Adults (over 18) are not inherently entitled to goods or services for simply existing
- Other

8. Select which statement(s) you agree with from the list below. (Select all that apply)

- ☐ The ability to vote is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Healthcare is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Housing is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Free education is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Ability to bear arms is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Access to a speedy and fair trial is a right in the U.S.
- ☐ Access to food and clean water is a right in the U.S.

9. Select which items you think are absolutely necessary for public housing in order for it to be considered decent. (Select all that apply)

- ☐ It is accessible to persons with disabilities
- ☐ Basic utilities are included like running water, electricity and heat
- ☐ It is appropriately sized for your family's needs
- ☐ Inside is free from hazards and reasonably up-to-date
- ☐ Housing is placed in a variety of economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods
- ☐ Outside environment is clean and safe
- ☐ Other

10. In your opinion, what is considered to be affordable housing?

- Spending no more than 15% of annual income on rent or mortgage
- Spending no more than 30% of annual income on rent or mortgage
- Spending no more than 45% of annual income on rent or mortgage
- No limit, each household determines what is affordable for them

11. In your opinion, what (if anything) should disqualify a person from receiving federally subsidized or public housing? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ They don't pay taxes
- ☐ They are currently unemployed
- ☐ They are already receiving government subsidies like food stamps
- ☐ They have a non-violent criminal history
- ☐ They have a violent criminal history
- ☐ They cannot pass a drug test
- ☐ They have been chronically late on rent payments in the past
- ☐ Other

12. In your opinion, who is the MOST responsible for ensuring American citizens have affordable housing?

- The federal government through housing subsidies or tax incentives
- State and city governments through policies specific to the local region
- Each individual is responsible for their own finances and securing housing for themselves

13. Do you have any other thoughts to share on the topic? The point of this study is to hear YOUR opinions!

Appendix B- Focus Group

Consent for Research Participation

Research Study Title: What are college student's opinions on housing as a basic right?

Researcher(s): Maria Valerio, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Courtney Cronley PhD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are asking you to be in this research study because you are at least 18 years of age and are currently an undergraduate or graduate student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville

What is this research study about?

The purpose of the research study is to gain insight into how college students feel about housing as a basic right in America.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to be in the study, your participation will last for 1 hour.

What will happen if I say "Yes, I want to be in this research study"?

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to be part of a focus group that discusses opinions on housing as a basic right for Americans. This focus group discussion should take no longer than one hour to complete, and will be the only requirement for participating in this

research study. The focus group will be a led discussion and responses will be audio recorded for use in the research project.

What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later.

- Either way, your decision won't affect your grades, your relationship with your instructors, or standing with the University of Tennessee

What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time. If you decide to stop before the study is completed, your anonymous responses may still be used in the research study unless you explicitly ask the principal investigator not to use your responses upon leaving the focus group (or by contacting the principal investigator at a later date).

Are there any possible risks to me?

It is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but we believe this risk is small because of the procedures we use to protect your information. These procedures are described later in this form. Responses will be recorded for use solely by the principal investigator, and any data or quotes that may be in the final research project will not be linked to the participant(s). However, the researchers cannot control the actions of other members of the focus group.

Are there any benefits to being in this research study?

We do not expect you to benefit from being in the study. However, your participation may help us to learn more about college students' opinions on housing as a basic right. We hope the knowledge gained from this study will benefit others in the future.

Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?

We will protect the confidentiality of your information by not using any names or identifiers in the final research project. The only information that will have your name attached to it is this consent document, which will show only that you participated in the focus group.

If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

What will happen to my information after this study is over?

We will not keep your information to use for future research or other purpose.

Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from your research data collected as part of the study.

We will not share your research data with other researchers..

What else do I need to know?

About 10 people will take part in this study. Because of the small number of participants, it is possible that someone from the focus group could identify you outside of the study. There is minimal risk however that data collected in this study would cause harm to the participant

Who can answer my questions about this research study?

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researchers:

Maria Valerio at (931) 319-7986 or mks964@vols.utk.edu

Courtney Cronley at ccronle1@utk.edu

For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

1534 White Avenue

Blount Hall, Room 408

Knoxville, TN 37996-1529

Phone: 865-974-7697

Email: utkirb@utk.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

Name of Adult Participant

Signature of Adult Participant

Date

Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the study to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to be in the study.

Name of Research Team Member

Signature of Research Team Member

Date

Focus Group Opening Script

“Hello, my name is Maria Valerio, and I am an honor’s student at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Thank you for coming to today’s focus group. The focus group is part of a study I’m doing with my honor’s project to explore student perspectives on housing in the United States. I’ll be recording the focus group so that I can analyze the data. Any results will be reported in a way that protects everyone’s identity and everything that is said in the focus group will be kept completely confidential.

First, I'd like to hand out these informed consent documents and ask you to read over them. If you are comfortable participating in the focus group, then please sign the form on the back page."

[Pause for reading and signing and collecting forms.]

"Thank you everyone. Are we ready to begin?"

Focus Group Questions

1. What are rights? Why do we have them?
2. What's the difference between civil and political rights (like voting or fair trial) and social and economic rights (like housing and healthcare)? Is one set of rights more important than the other?
3. Should decent and affordable housing be a guaranteed right for every American citizen?
Why or why not
4. What do you define as affordable housing? How about decent housing?
5. Why do you think many Americans are opposed to government funded housing?
6. Who is most responsible for ensuring Americans have decent and affordable housing? Why do think so?
7. Do you feel your opinions on this subject are different than your parents' opinions would be? Your grandparents? How are they different? Can you explain?
8. Are there any last thoughts or comments to share?