

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, including light lime green, medium green, and dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the slide, framing the central white area.

Michelle Wyndham-West, PhD

Graduate Program Director, Design for Health, MDes Program
& Assistant Professor (Tenure Track), Faculty of Design, OCAD University

Co-Design With An Equity Lens: From Theory to Practice

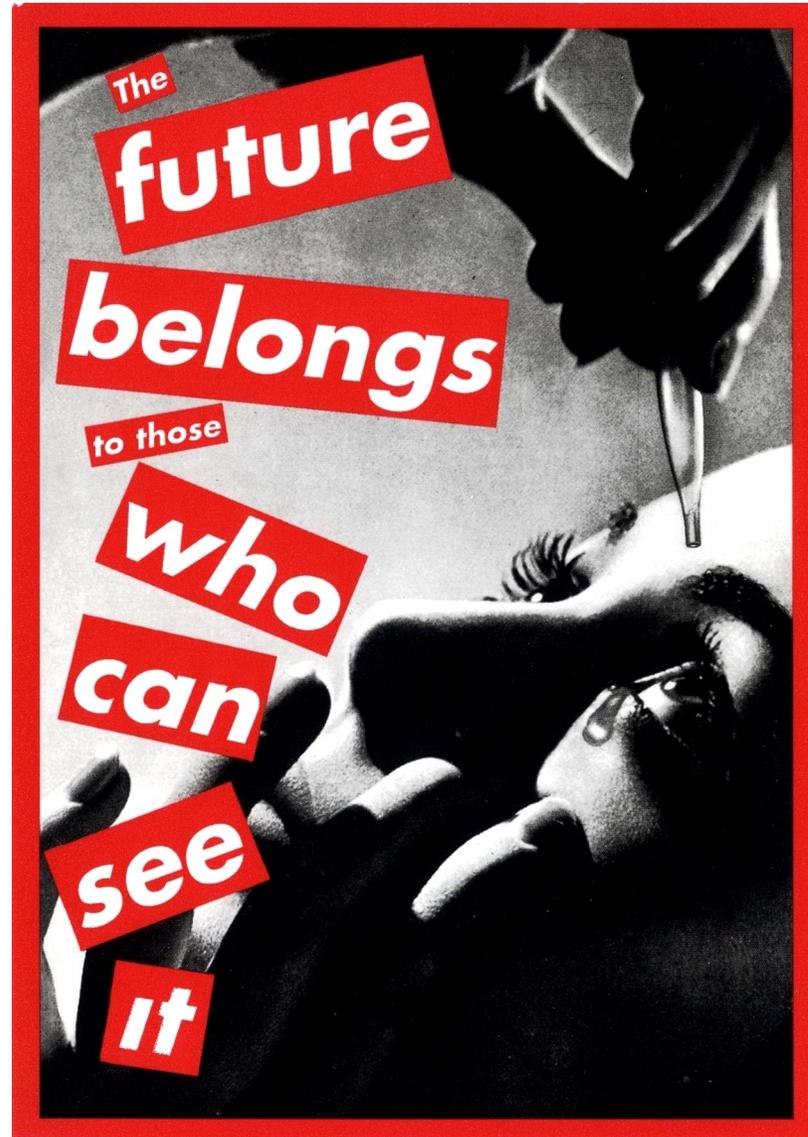
Structure for today's talk:

- u Decolonization
- u Criticality
- u Uncertainty
- u Current research with low-income older adults experiencing housing instability, which puts the three tenets into practice.
- u Conclusion and Q & A

Equity/Inclusion

“Power is not an institution, and not a structure, neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”

-Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*



Barbara Kruger, “Untitled (The future belongs to those who can see it)”, 1997

Equity/Inclusion

- u “An ethical value grounded in the ethical principle of distributive justice and consonant with human rights principles. Equity in health can be defined as the absence of disparities in health (and in its key social determinants) that are systematically associated with social advantage or disadvantage. Health inequities systematically put populations who are already socially disadvantaged by virtue of being poor, female, or members of a disenfranchised racial, ethnic, or religious group at further disadvantage with respect to their health” (Braveman and Gruskin, 2003, quoted in Raphael 2019:164).
- u Paul Farmer’s concept of structural violence, which he refers to as “structured and structuring” (2004:315).
- u When one is experiencing structural violence one becomes what Kristeva deems an abject body -- which are “ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.” (1982:1).

Decolonization

“You have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told.”

— Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*



An Act to give effect to a request by the Senate and House of Commons of Canada.... WHEREAS CANADA has requested and consented to the enactment of an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom to give effect to the provisions hereinafter set forth and the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada in Parliament assembled have s... Her Majesty requesting that H... sly be pleased to cause a Bill t... Parliament of the United Kingdom... the *Constitution Act, 1982* set out... it is hereby enacted for and shall H... anada and shall come into force as provided in that Act....2. No Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed after the *Constitution Act, 1982* comes into force shall extend to Canada as part of its law.... This Act may be cited as the *Canada Act 1982*.... PART I. CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS....25. The guarantee in this Charter of certain rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada including (a) any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and (b) any rights or freedoms that may be acquired

Robert Houle, “Premises of Self Rule”, 1994

Decolonizing/Participatory Research Methodologies

- u Participatory action research (PAR).
- u Research methodologies geared towards decolonization are not structured to “give voice” (Mutua & Swadener, 2004:13).
- u Rather, provide opportunities for individuals and collectivities to express “informal, often covert” forms of “everyday resistance” (Scott, 1985:33 & 27).
- u However, Gledhill urges scholars to resist “the notion of a unitary ‘resisting subject’” (2000:69). Not all colonial “subjects” act/react in the same manner due to contextual differences in colonial encounters (Gledhill, 2000:71-77).
- u Colonial situations are complex and power moves along a fluid continuum.
- u As per Foucault, “power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power (1980:98).
- u However, Foucault does not wish to instill the premise that this net of power provides the conditions to eradicate injustice. Foucault states “when I say that power establishes a network through which it freely circulates, this is true only up to a certain point” (1980:99).

Decolonizing/Participatory Research Methodologies Continued

- u PAR guidelines:
 - u joint development of research design;
 - u long term engagement with field contacts;
 - u fluency in local vernacular and cultural mores;
 - u joint attribution of disseminated research;
 - u “compensating” research partners in ways which are deemed useful by research partners;
 - u sharing research results with the full spectrum of research participants; and
 - u maintaining relationships with research partners beyond the lifecycle of research activities (Mutua & Swadener, 2004:6-7).
- u Individuals/groups are not meant to be inanimate “objects” of study, but full participants in the research process from conception, implementation and distribution of results (Smith, 1997:178).

Decolonizing/Participatory Research Methodologies Continued

- u Thus, we must be careful to stay clear of universalizing and seek to follow Abu-Lughod's "particularism" (1991:149).
- u Kaupapa Maori tenets:
 - u "a respect for people";
 - u "look,...listen...speak";
 - u "share and host people, be generous";
 - u "be cautious";
 - u "do not trample over the *mama* [power] of people"; and
 - u "don't flaunt your knowledge" (Smith, 1999:120, emphasis in original).

Decolonizing/Participatory Research Methodologies Continued

- u Design anthropology has historically been defined as “ethnographically informed designs of new products, services and systems for consumers and businesses” (Gray 2010).
- u However, design anthropology is increasingly being applied to non-business realms, including health (Baecker et al 2014, Hallam 2013), cultural institutions (Smith 2013, Tunstall 2013) and the architecture/built environmental sector (Ewart 2013, Gunn and Clausen 2013), all of which can exhibit equity-based foci.
- u Tunstall posits that, “design anthropology has great potential to become a decolonized methodology for engaging with social issues” (2013:238). And, Pink et al maintains that design anthropology encourages, “impact, applied, public and engaged scholarship” (2016:2).

Decolonizing/Participatory Research Methodologies Continued

- u Design anthropology focuses upon experience-based design principles, by, “rigorously understanding everyday use and experience, and to connect that understanding” (Cain 1998:11) to objectives relating to the making of products and services.
- u Design anthropology, “draws from a core set of theoretical perspectives - the critical anthropology...indigenous and Scandinavian traditions of cooperative/participatory design, and indigenous, critical, feminist, ontological, and phenomenological knowledge traditions” (Tunstall 2013:239).
- u Current research is motivated by decolonizing the experiences of poverty, social exclusion and aging through the case study of low-income seniors, housing instability and homelessness in the rapidly changing urban housing market in Hamilton.
- u Participants include older adults who are Indigenous, as well as those of Latin American and Afro-Caribbean descent, all of whom live in the downtown core.

Criticality

“Responsibility to yourself means refusing to let others do your thinking, talking, and naming for you; it means learning to respect and use your own brains and instincts; hence, grappling with hard work.”

-Adrienne Rich, convocation speech, "Claiming an Education"



Kent Monkman, "The Scream", 2016

Criticality

- u Examining power is fundamental to decolonizing design, design anthropology, and its accompanying co-design processes.
- u Criticality guards against re-producing existing power structures and dynamics in the co-design process. Criticality can also safeguard against re-enforcing existing power structures in a way that they appear in different guises - so, somewhat, invisible.
- u Bringing a critical lens serves to make the machinations of power visible.
- u By examining Foucault's work on its continuum, I acknowledge the construction of subjects within the frameworks of power relations and, second, the possibility that such subjects can level their own "critique" while enmeshed in power networks (Allen 2008:21).

Criticality Continued

- u How can one trace these power machinations while enmeshed in fieldwork with vulnerable individuals or communities, like the low-income older adults in my current research who are experiencing housing instability and homelessness?
- u Power travels through the *dispositif* (Foucault 1980), whereby an “ensemble’ of practices, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical propositions and morality” (Shore and Wright 2011:23) structure our everyday environments.
- u Tracing how power flows through the *dispositif* is an endeavour in systems mapping for it involves identifying, documenting and monitoring the continual movements within and of the apparatuses of power in given contexts.
- u The *dispositif* is dynamic, complex and fraught with tension. When a participant navigates the *dispositif*, continual negotiation is required.

Criticality Continued

- u As Allen, who brings a feminist perspective to the conversation, explains “power works at the intrasubjective level to shape and constitute our very subjectivity, *and* an account of autonomy that captures the constituted subject’s capacity for critical reflection and self-transformation, its capacity to be self-constituting” (2008:2-3).
- u This process involves continually engaging in acts of self-reflexivity or “practices of the self” to achieve one’s goals of the good or moral (Butler 2008:27-28).
- u Scripting one’s telos “is nevertheless not something the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and by his culture, his society and his social group” (Foucault 1987:11). In scripting one’s own telos, one is engaging in “ethical agency” (Butler 2008:28). Butler expands:
 - u “Ethical agency is neither fully determined nor radically free but is one whose struggle or primary dilemma is to be produced by a world even as one must produce oneself in some way. This struggle with the unchosen conditions of one’s life. A struggle - an agency - is made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of unfreedom” [2008:28].

Criticality Continued

- u Thus, engaging with decolonizing design, design anthropology and co-design in a critical manner requires two steps - or two engagements with power:
 - u 1) tracing how power travel through the *dispositif* to affect those I am conducting research with; and
 - u 2) tracing how participants maneuver these power relations through their daily lived experiences, keeping in mind their restricted capacities to craft their daily *telos* and work towards their versions of ethical agency.

Uncertainty

“Everything has been figured out, except how to live.”

-Jean-Paul Sartre, “The Humanities and Human Dignity”

“Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

-Rainer Maria Rilke



Rene Magritte, “Birthday”, 1959

Uncertainty Continued

- u Akama, Pink and Sumartjo (2018), posit that “uncertainty...brings with it possibilities” (3).
- u Risk, as an epistemological project, dominated much of the social sciences in the late 1990s and the turn of the century, but traces of these discourses are still rife today.
- u According to Beck (2004), risk is ubiquitous in the modernization period, affecting all in equal probability, regardless of socio-economic standing.
- u Giddens offers a similar theory whereby the risks of “high modernity” are considered to be globalized, treacherous and on a scale not seen in pre-modern times (1991:4).
- u These theories translate into risk “ha[ving] been co-opted as a term reserved for a negative or undesirable outcome, and as such, is synonymous with the terms *danger* or *hazard*” (Fox 1997:12).
- u Recognizing risk as a category of understanding that is socially, culturally and politically situated allows us to “*re-conceptualize uncertainty as generative and inevitable, rather than as threatening*” (emphasis in the original, Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:25).

Uncertainty Continued

- u Re-examining uncertainty within the frames of “emergence, intervention and futures” (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:4) can be a productive experience.
- u To choose to live and immerse oneself in uncertainty is to acknowledge that our environments are continually emerging and “configurations of things and processes” (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018: 5) are always changing.
- u As Akama, Pink and Sumartjo state:
 - u “when we recognize that we are a part of such a world, our only option is to participate more attentively in its changing. We can think of ourselves as moving forward with it, in ways that are open, responsive and with care” (2018:5).

Uncertainty Continued

- u Aren't specific formulas for change-making, but ways of thinking about how uncertainty can be a transformative means or "technology" through which to, "produce new and open ways of understanding, making and imagining the world" (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:5).
- u This involves "moving beyond", which is an outlook that:
 - u "refers to a willingness to fall into and engage with a possibility beyond our tangible knowing and feeling. Possibilities are not closed products or templates - they are instead open concepts, leaky and porous that have, and lead to, many starting points. Such emergent phenomena cannot be analysed or predicted, because they are not objects, but they can be attuned to and even welcomed" (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:5).
- u

Uncertainty Continued

- u The concept that the researcher is, “transforming while being transformed by their intervention and surrounding conditions is a significant ontological shift in co-design” to highlight that “external and observable dynamics of inter-relations” are not the only moments to trace (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:6).
- u Instead, in co-design, “we re-situate ourselves in interrelatedness” (Akama, Pink and Sumartjo 2018:6).
- u As per Akama and Prendiville taking part in co-design signals, “an openness to embrace the influence, interventions, disruptions, tensions and uncertainties brought to bear by other things and people. It requires the designer to step into the ‘in-between’ space that is dynamic, emergent and relational” (2013:32).
- u

Housing Futures: Designing an Equitable Path for Successful Aging in Place



Courtesy of the City of Hamilton

Current Research

Aging population, rapidly changing urban markets & housing instability

- Number of older adults in Canada growing under constrained governmental care spending.
- Housing experiences of low-income older adults & their effects on successful aging will be crucial in the coming decades.
- Involuntary or incentivized mobility displacement is a critical threat to low-income older adults renting in the private sector. Between 2016 & October 2017 rent increased across Hamilton by an average of 5%, but lower-income areas, such as East Hamilton, experienced an increase of 42% (Mathieu 2018).
- Must emphasize that despite the challenges that low-income older adults are experiencing, they are conceptualized as active agents in the research, both in terms of self-actualization and the ability to negotiate and maneuver difficult structural constraints with agility and resiliency.

Research & Design Objectives

- 1) To understand the lived housing experiences of low-income older adults in Hamilton's rapidly changing urban housing environment and the effects of this housing environment on their health, wellbeing and ability to age in place;
- 2) To engage and maintain the engagement of low-income older adults, a traditionally hard-to-reach grouping, through digital arts-based data collection techniques, including photographic, video and textual diaries taken on tablets by participants themselves; and
- 3) Drawing upon the data collected in phases 1 and 2, the third goal is to co-design two tools: 1) a policy document, which outlines recommendations for housing policy systems re-design; and 2) a digital tool, which allows older adults to navigate housing systems in order to cut down on "red tape" they encounter in finding suitable housing for aging successfully.

Researching Objectives 1 & 2

Participant Activities

Participants are documenting their lived experiences of:

- 1) involuntary or incentivized housing displacement;
- 2) 'health discounting' in the face of high/rising shelter costs;
- 3) inappropriate (given physical/cognitive functioning) housing;
- 4) involuntary housing immobility (unable to move to more appropriate accommodation);
- 5) the strategies of resilience invoked in constrained housing circumstances.
- As low-income seniors are a traditionally hard to reach research grouping, the digital arts-based approaches is being used to attract and maintain the engagement of participants.

Methodology

Design Anthropology

- Sample: 20 individuals aged 65 or older who are classified as low-income through individual or family income. Open to all genders, races and ethnicities. Must be fluent in English.
- Recruited participants through assistance of Hamilton City Housing and the Hamilton Public Library
- The digital arts-based approach allows older adults to take control of what they record and when in the research process, providing an avenue for participants to frame their representation in research processes and not have representation shaped by researchers alone.
- This is an attempt to even out the unequal power relations between the researcher and those they research and will bring participatory research findings to assist in the co-design of the two tools outlined in objective number 3.

Preliminary Results: Research Objectives 1 & 2

Lived Experiences of Housing

- Will discuss two participants (names are pseudonyms):
 - 1) Matthew, 70, Indigenous - recently housed in social housing unit (was homeless) and single
 - 2) Bill, 72, immigrant from the Caribbean - living in social housing with spouse.
 - Sole source of income comes from government pensions, which average \$1,600 month. Average market rent in Hamilton for an apartment is \$1,100 (CMHC 2018)
- Matthew had stroke 2 years ago while homeless, put off rehabilitation until was able to “couch surf”, which he did for 8 months. During our interview received call from social housing that he had received a place in a new municipal seniors’ residence - emotional interview.
- Bill has diabetes, which is being managed well since move to municipal social housing, although has difficulty buying the nutritious food needed to maintain good health with diabetes.

Preliminary Results Continued

Emerging Narrative Themes

Emerging themes from narratives:

- Place-based attachment: “How I dwell”
- Experiencing housing instability & displacement
- Pathways to secure housing
- Housing & successful aging

Place-Based Attachment: “How I Dwell”

Matthew’s Narrative

- When speaking of his newly acquired spot in social housing, Matthew explains that his life is coming “full circle” (please note street names have been changed):
 - “But this brings me to an astounding fact that I’ve managed to—I was born in the downtown area, this 20-block radius of Central Library all my life. I started out at Park Avenue School grades 1-6 on Park Avenue. I’m not living my final chapter at Park Street t where I started, completely back around from the beginning of my time to the very end.”

Place-Based Attachment: “How I Dwell”

Bill’s Narrative

- Bill enjoyed using the tablet and took many photos and videos. He explained his process:
 - “So I decide on what I record from the things you [asked about]- what I normally do or what I observe or I think or something like that, what I feel and the way I dwell. And so the where I dwell and what I do could mean”
 - As such, Bill took photos which illuminated what he termed his “hyphenated identity” – “a Canadian and from the Caribbean”, originally a journalist in his home country and a security guard in Canada
 - This narrative was illuminated through place-based photographs and videos he juxtaposed of his working life in Canada with a setting associated with his “old” occupation, where he continues to write in his retirement
 - In a similar fashion to Matthew, his narrative was solely based in the downtown core of Hamilton.

“How I dwell”

Security guard work



‘How I dwell’

Library and journalism



Experiencing Housing Instability & Displacement

Matthew's Narrative

- “I had been in my own apartment, going nicely and settled in a small bachelor, one room complete bath and a kitchen, self-contained for 10 years.”
- “It was the safe and it was quite nice but the same owner. And then it was sold to outside I say Toronto buyers and then that's when the renoviction started in regards to repairing, replacing and removing tenants so that they could increase, if not double the rent. And I was paying \$600.”
- “I'm at a fixed income of old age pension, CPP and guaranteed income certificate, which brings me up to a total of about \$1,600. So \$600 was quite affordable. Hydro was included, so that was not a big deal and I don't have a car. I live in the downtown core.”
- “It was a nice set up.”

Experiencing Housing Instability & Displacement Continued

Matthew's Narrative

- “Well, the renoviction was predominant in the building because the owner was going to take advantage and repair everything that needed it that was outdated and worn. But primarily, bed bugs were involved and the landlord was using the tribunal's through what I would consider calling it a non-compliance even though after six sprays, I had bagged and purged all my personal stuff. The landlord still insisted that I hadn't got rid of enough bedbugs.”
- At this point, Matthew agreed to leave as he says, “I was naïve in thinking that I could go out and replace a \$600 apartment.”

Pathways to Secure Housing

Matthew's journey to becoming re-housing took eight months:

- u “At age 65, you lose your case worker, you lose your prescription, you lose any association whatsoever with the facilities that were available under ODSP.”
- u “There is no safety net. You're done, you're a number, you're put out the past and you're forget about unless you need to and then you have to call upon those persons that be. So I had to acquire a case worker.”
- u “There was so many circumstances along the way primarily the biggest hurdles to overcome were the verification of both my stroke and verification of my homelessness. I had to prove that I was in dire straits before they could apply the paperwork.”
- u “But every time that I approached one of these community players [non-profit social service agencies], they all said, “You're high priority, sir. But you're on a waiting list.” He added, “That was it, you never saw the list. You never physically saw the list.”

Housing & Successful Aging

Matthew's and Bill's narratives

Matthew:

- “I see nothing but good things once the stress and anxiety is removed from the housing situation, then I can look at progressing my physical health.”
- “ One-third of your \$1,600 [his pension] and that is the gross debt service ratio that should be applied to living experience of a human being at this time. Take a third of my money and apply it to housing.”

Bill:

- “Housing, you know, you see the whole process of retirement, I visualize retirement, more you can come to retirement without any major debts, you know, the lighter retirement living shall be.”
- Securing affordable housing allows you to, “focus upon these chronic conditions when they come along, so you will get a chance to focus more on that.”

Design-Based Interventions

- Matthew:
 - “Well, this is part of the research I was hoping to end up getting because I also brought it to the attention -- my suggestion time was to have a centralized system where I could go to a place, submit application under whatever and they would funnel you to the right places.”
 - Matthew found that the only direction he would receive when seeking re-housing was to shelters.
- Design-based interventions:
 - 1) a policy document focusing on housing policy systems re-design
 - 2) digital housing systems navigation tool for low-income older adults, which allows older adults to navigate municipal housing systems in order to cut down on “red tape” they encounter in finding suitable housing for aging successfully and to provide coordinated information from various housing stakeholders, including city housing, non-profit organizations involved in housing and private renters geared toward low-income older adults.

Housing Systems Re-Design

- Policy document, which outlines recommendations for housing policy systems re-design, will include:
 - structural prevention;
 - systems prevention;
 - early intervention;
 - eviction prevention;
 - housing stabilization;
 - as well as tangible policy recommendations drawn from a cross-jurisdictional and international comparative policy analysis.

Conclusion

- u In constructing imaginative horizons, we must move towards what Solnit calls opening ourselves up to the future in a way that, “makes the present inhabitable” (2016:4).
- u Co-design allows us to imagine and think through how “multiple futures...[that can] be aired, shared and critiqued” (Light 2015:85) as the interrelationships between people, systems and things are conceived of concomitantly through the productive creation of idea, systems and prototypes.
- u Design interventions and future-making require us to trust as Jackson, Akama, Pink and Sumartjo note:
 - u ‘By embracing uncertainty, and especially being careful and attentive of how disruption and surrender can be structured, it means as researchers or practitioners engaged with future-making, we can build a sensitivity towards a plural, wider range of feelings, experiences and states of being rather than always ensuring pleasurable, convenient, efficient, useful or productive outcomes’ (2018:100).
- u

Questions & Answers

- u Happy to take any questions you may have.
- u Can be reached at mwyndhamwest@faculty.ocadu.ca or @MWyndhamWestPhD (Twitter) should questions arise after today.
- u Thanks for having me!