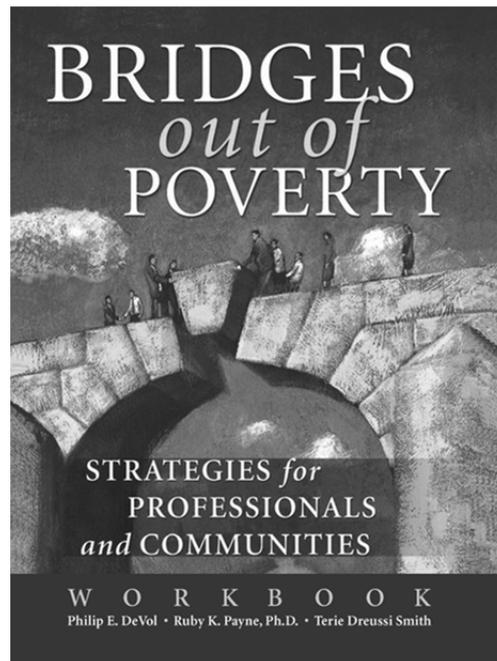


Bridges Out of Poverty

Study Guide

Based on *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities*

by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D., Philip E. DeVol,
and Terie Dreussi Smith



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PREFACE

Thank you for becoming part of the Bridges Out of Poverty movement. The part you play as an individual, as a professional, and/or as a community catalyst is the core of the initiative.

Our principal contribution to addressing poverty is to offer a common understanding of poverty and a shared language for all the topics that will arise when we come together to solve community problems.

This Bridges study guide has been developed for people who work for organizations or business that work with or employ individuals in poverty. It also is designed for those serving on community and sector committees, Bridges Out of Poverty Steering Committees, and Guiding Coalitions within the Circles® initiative. Finally, it is intended for individuals building relationships with others from diverse economic class settings, such as mentors or allies.

This guide is to be used as a companion piece to the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, as well as the Bridges Out of Poverty DVD series, should that be available to you. Ideally, the study guide would be used in a group setting with an experienced Bridges-certified trainer, but it also can be used as an individualized learning experience. In some areas the Bridges content is provided by aha! Process consultants or Bridges-certified trainers. Where it isn't feasible to bring in national trainers or send local trainers to be certified, this training solution was necessary.

The information you receive in this format is similar to what individuals who may be in situational or generational poverty receive when completing 20 sessions of the workshop *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* (created initially by Philip DeVol and later enhanced by workshop participants). *Getting Ahead™* is offered in facilitated groups of 5–12 people. Within this setting, people investigate the impact of poverty on themselves and their community. If you are working with individuals who have completed *Getting Ahead*, such as a Circle Leader, the *Getting Ahead* graduates will have:

- Explored everything you will find in this study guide
- Complete a detailed self-assessment of their internal and external resources
- Done an assessment of their community
- Developed a plan to build resources
- Prepared themselves to assist their community in ending poverty

When people from diverse economic settings work together to problem-solve the issue of poverty or other community concerns, individuals from different economic environments will be speaking a common language and using familiar terms. Everyone also will be aware of his or her own hidden rules of class, along with the hidden rules that others use.

We anticipate that this learning experience will deepen the relationships that you develop with one another and make us all more effective at creating prosperous, healthy, sustainable communities.

MODULE #1

Introduction and Mental Models

Introduction

Economic realities of poverty, middle class, and wealth impact individuals, communities, systems, and structures. In order to positively impact the education and lives of individuals in poverty, we must explore the way we think and behave. This module offers a structure to help us assess the mindsets and world views we hold as individuals, institutions, and communities. It helps us define and visualize the experiences in economic-class environments in order to increase our understanding.

Social Class vs. Economic Class

When we judge ourselves against how others are doing, we are positioning ourselves on the ladder of social class. Economic class is different; it's about how stable our life is. Looking at economic class in a nonjudgmental framework allows us to respect one another and evaluate the resources and choices available to us that may not be available to others. This work is based on the premise that *everyone* should have the resources to envision and develop a positive future story.

People living in poverty throughout the world, including the United States, are typically wrapped in the immediacy of trying to solve problems for today. It is the nature of life in poverty; tomorrow may not be a “given.” In fact, even having a sustainable today may not be possible. This experience has been described as living in the “tyranny of the moment.” The longer and deeper this moment-driven experience, the less likely it is that individuals will have access to or think in terms of “future story.” Many people live without the opportunity to make a difference in their communities. The community is often reluctant to value the experience and contributions of those in poverty. For the individual in poverty, that sense of powerlessness often makes it hard to get much traction to make necessary personal changes.

This work focuses on how a person can get to the point of having a future story through creating choices and developing his or her own power. Just as importantly, this module assists institutions and communities in avoiding the mindset that poverty is both inevitable and perpetual—and helps individuals, institutions, and communities move toward ending the powerlessness of the mindset that says “poverty will always be with us.” It is our contention that this change is impossible with the development of relationships of mutual respect, which also can be called “social coherence.” This is one of the key driving forces of Bridges Out of Poverty.

**“No significant learning occurs without
a significant relationship.”**

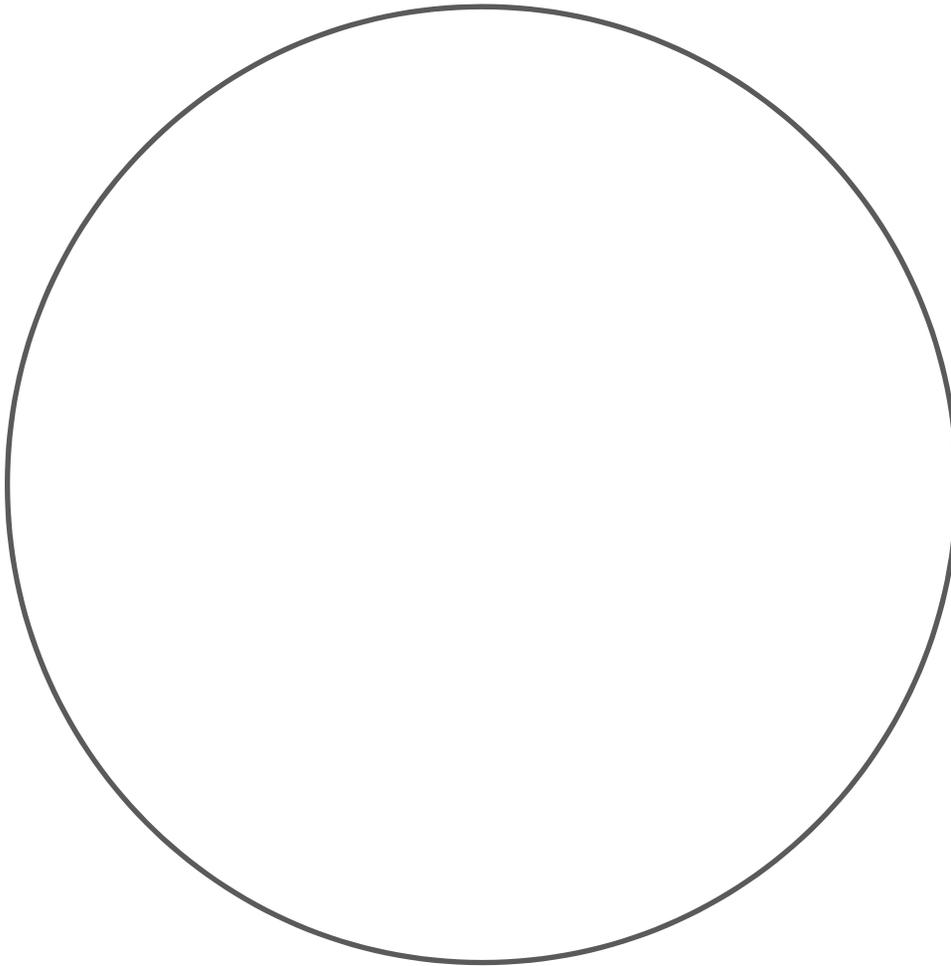
–Dr. James Comer

Mental Models

A mental model is an internal picture, two-dimensional drawing, or representation of information that aids us in taking abstract information to a concrete level. Mental models are helpful when exploring the concrete experiences of people in generational poverty. Such models and images tend to exist below our awareness and can influence the way we think and act unless we consciously think about them.

Mental Model for Poverty

Create a mental model as a group by using the blank circle below. Think of someone you know who has lived in poverty two or more generations. Write or draw in the circle what the person worries about and how he or she usually spends time. Then, think of a “pocket of poverty” in your community and list the businesses present in that part of your city or town. When you are finished, compare your mental model with the mental models that follow.

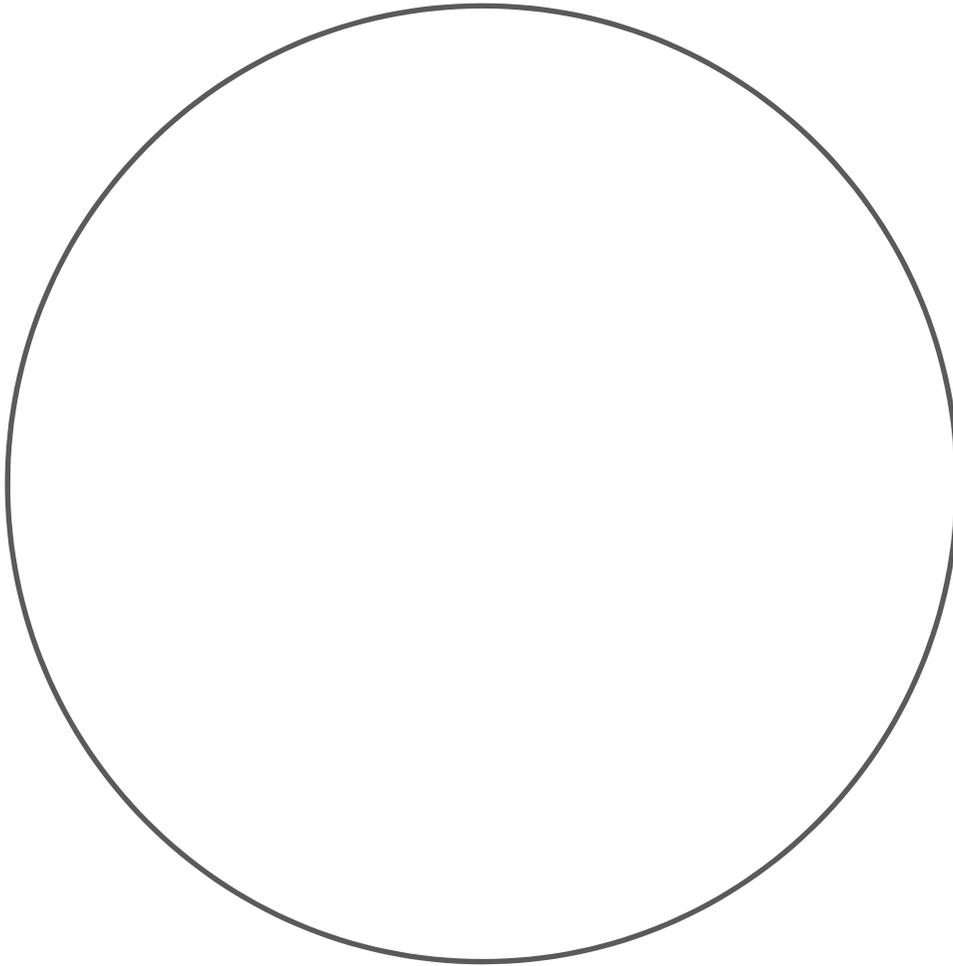


Businesses

List businesses you may see in a poverty neighborhood ...

Mental Model for Middle Class

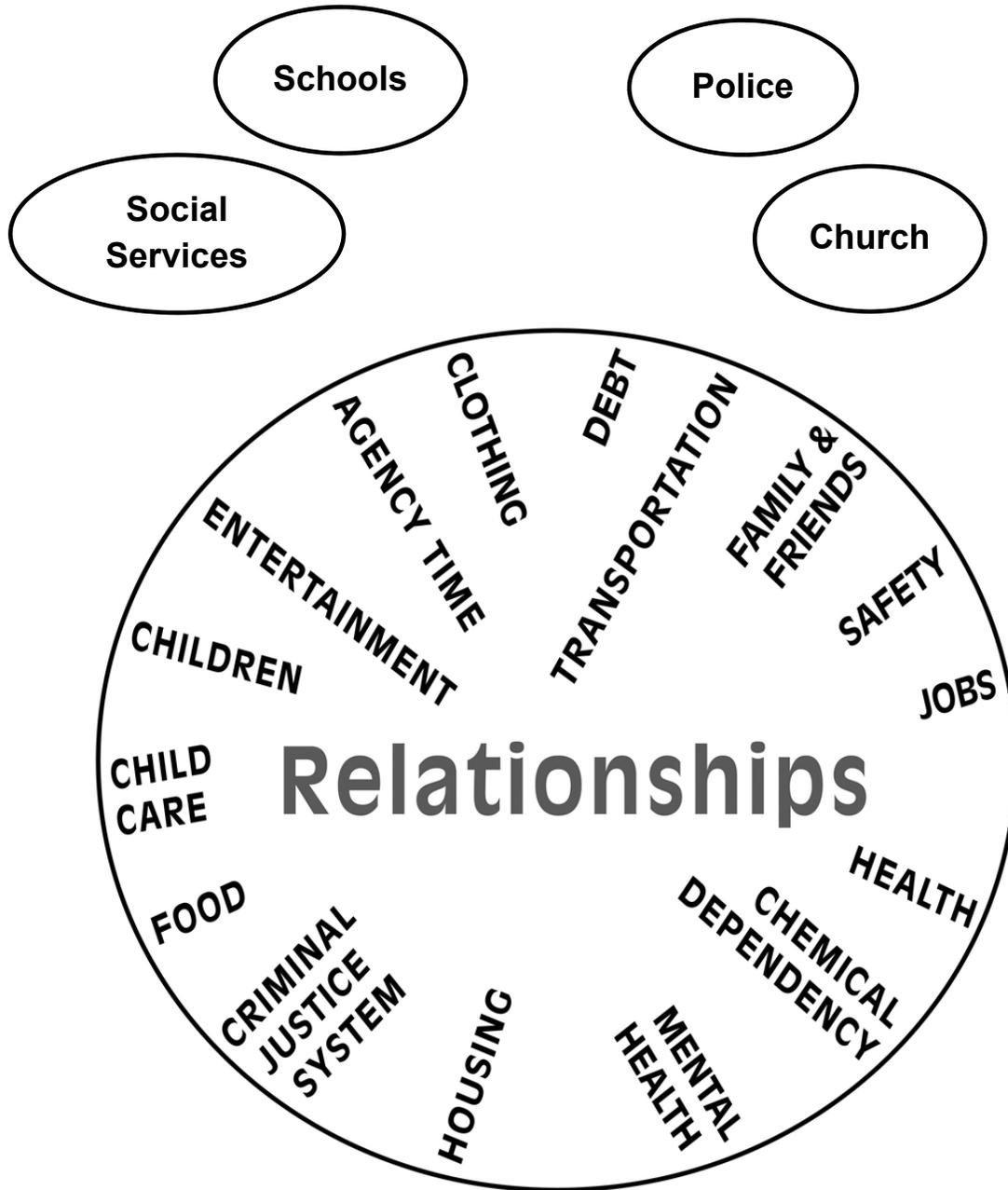
Create a mental model for middle class by writing or drawing in the circle below how a person in middle class may spend his or her time in a typical day. Then, think of a “pocket of middle class” in your community and list the businesses present in that part of your city or town. When you are finished, compare your mental model with the mental models that follow.



Businesses

List businesses you may see in a middle-class neighborhood ...

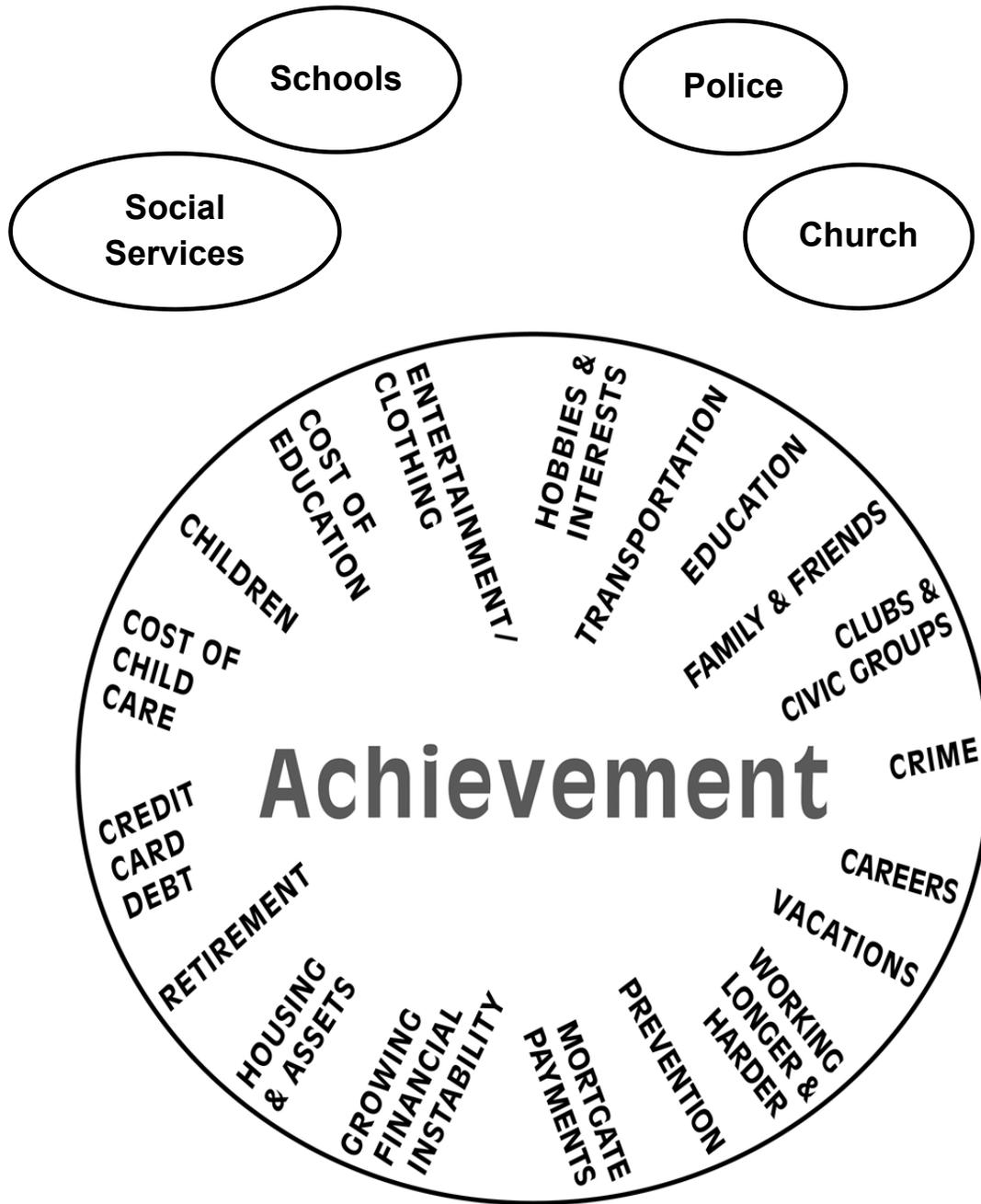
Compare and contrast your mental models with the following:



Businesses

- Pawn shop
- Liquor store
- Corner store
- Rent to own
- Laundromat
- Fast food
- Check cashing
- Temp services
- Used-car lots
- Dollar store

Compare and contrast your mental models with the following:



Schools

Police

Social Services

Church

Businesses

- Shopping/strip malls
- Bookstores
- Banks
- Fitness centers
- Vet clinics
- Office complexes
- Coffee shops
- Restaurants/bars
- Golf courses

Tyranny of the Moment

Does a person have a sense of being linked to the mainstream of society, of being in the dominant subculture, of being in accord with society's values?"

–Robert Sapolsky

The experience of poverty has been described (by Paulo Freire) as living in the “tyranny of the moment.”

“The need to act overwhelms any willingness people have to learn.”

–Peter Schwartz

To explore the mental models at a community level, check the level of concern in the left-hand column (1 = not a concern; 5 = significant concern). In the right-hand column, check the level of effectiveness your community has in addressing each area (1 = not effective; 5 = very effective).

Level of Concern

1	2	3	4	5

- Housing**
- Transportation**
- Food**
- Job**
- Crime and Safety**
- Health**

Effectiveness in Addressing Area

1	2	3	4	5

1. In your community, what areas of the mental models (or “pieces of the pie”) are the biggest concerns?
2. Discuss the differences in amount spent on housing in poverty versus middle class. Compare and contrast differences in the housing experience between these two environments.
3. What are the biggest barriers to building resources with people in poverty in your community? Assess the barriers brought to the table by individuals, institutions, and the community itself.
4. How might the “tyranny of the moment” affect the interactions between those who identify with the middle-class circle and those who identify with the poverty circle?
5. How might growing up with fewer available resources and limited opportunities to build future story affect what people in generational poverty know about problem solving and making changes?
6. How might growing up with abundant access to resources and future story affect what people know about problem solving and making changes?

Most of the literature identifies poverty as a significant risk factor. When we co-investigate the resources and resiliency modules (7 and 8), we will learn that there are protective factors that can be used to offset risk factors. Our goal is to build those internal and external protective factors together. Included in this approach is stabilizing the environment and working toward economic stability for individuals and families.

MODULE #2

Research

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the article titled “Additive Model” in the back of the *Bridges Out of Poverty* (2006) book (pages 263–286).

The research in this module covers the causes of poverty, as well as sustainable communities. Please begin by answering the following questions:

1. What do people say causes poverty?
2. What do you say causes poverty?

It is generally believed that four principal factors cause poverty.

Behaviors of the Individual	Human and Social Capital	Exploitation	Political/Economic Structures
Dependency Single parenting Work ethic Breakup of families Addiction Mental illness Language	Lack of employment Education Inadequate skill sets Declining neighborhoods Middle-class flight	Dominated groups for profit Raw resources or materials	De-industrialization Globalization Race to the bottom Increased productivity Shrinking middle class Corporate influence Economic disparity

Community Sustainability Grid

	Behaviors of the Individual	Human and Social Capital	Exploitation	Political/Economic Structures
Individual				
Agency				
Community				
Policy				

The Community Sustainability Grid is:

- 1) A tool used to engage everyone in dialogue about community and future story
- 2) Used to address all causes of poverty, to broaden our efforts to end poverty, and to build sustainable communities
- 3) A concrete, measurable way to track efforts and make plans

The four areas of research all contribute to poverty: It is not “either/or.”

After reviewing the areas of research, ask the following questions:

1. At the beginning of this module, which category of research did you focus on the most in answering the question about what causes poverty?
2. In your experience, how does the prevailing focus on behaviors of the individual align with most anti-poverty efforts?
3. Describe the benefits of having all three classes—poverty, middle class, and wealth—represented when discussing causes of poverty in the community.

Application Exercise

Discuss causes of poverty in your community that fall under each area of research.

- 1) Behaviors of the Individual
- 2) Human and Social Capital
- 3) Exploitation
- 4) Political/Economic Structures

The following institutions are present in most communities. Check the area on which the following agencies focus the most:

	Behaviors of the Individual	Human and Social Capital	Exploitation	Political/Economic Structures
Head Start				
Health Department				
Court System				
Human Services Department				
Housing Authority				
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)				
Birth-to-5 Initiatives				
K-12 Schools				
Higher Education				

1. Which area do local agencies tend to focus on the most?
2. How and why is it helpful to know which area agencies focus on the most?
3. What are some possible implications of not addressing all four areas?
4. What impact might there be on those in poverty when exploitive businesses are reduced or eliminated in your community?
5. What community strategies would create an environment that helps someone build resources that would help him or her get out of poverty? Is stabilizing the environment enough? Why or why not?
6. What happens if a community focuses almost totally on an individual's efforts, and does not also help stabilize the environment of people in poverty?
7. What strategies might help stabilize the environment so that people in poverty have a better chance to make the transition out of poverty? Write the strategies into the following grid.

	Behaviors of the Individual	Human and Social Capital	Exploitation	Political/Economic Structures
Individual				
Agency				
Community				
Policy				

8. Why are current strategies—frequently used by service-delivery agencies—not making much of a dent in poverty?
9. How does a community help people create wealth?
10. What wealth-creating mechanisms are in place in your community?
11. When referring to the Community Sustainability Grid, which boxes need to be completed by your community in order to have a wide array of strategies for dealing with poverty?

NOTE: You can learn more by reading Alice O'Connor (2001), *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

MODULE #3

Key Points and Bridges Constructs

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the Introduction of the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book.

Here are some of the key points:

Key Point: The Bridges approach is about economic diversity, not racial or cultural diversity.

- Race, ethnicity, and gender inequities are major contributors to poverty.
- Bridges, coupled with your expertise on local racial and ethnic diversity, will improve our effectiveness.
- This work offers a new analytical category for economic class—that is, a lens to help us define and examine economic diversity.
- Bridges provides a new lens for seeing old problems—and offers new solutions. Our principal contribution to the discourse on poverty is the lens of economic class.

Key Point: Poverty is relative.”

- If everyone around you has similar circumstances, the notion of poverty and wealth is vague.
- Poverty or wealth exists only in relationship to known quantities or expectations. For example, poverty in less developed countries is a chronic lack of food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation, and the most basic healthcare. This is sometimes referred to as “absolute poverty.” It should be noted that poverty in developed countries may be perceived as wealth from the perspective of absolute poverty.

Key Point: Generational and situational poverty are different.

- Generational poverty is defined as being in poverty for two generations or longer.
- Situational poverty involves a shorter time and is usually caused by circumstance (i.e., death, illness, divorce).
- Sometimes generational poverty began with situational poverty. There may have been a series of life events that created a spiral-down effect.

Key Point: This work is based on patterns, and all patterns have exceptions.

- We cannot assume that individuals from a certain environment, such as generational poverty or generational wealth, will know and use the hidden rules of that environment. Each person’s story, internal resources, and experiences are different. However, we can say that, within that environment, there may be certain hidden rules that present themselves and “make sense.” These hidden rules may be accepted and effective in that environment but not in other settings.

Key Point: Most schools, organizations, and businesses operate from middle-class hidden rules and norms.

- These rules are seldom directly taught by schools or businesses.
- In order to move from one class to another, one must often give up relationships for achievement for a period of time. To clarify: Although one may need to give up time spent with others, usually one doesn't necessarily lose the relationships themselves.

Application Discussion

1. Which key point means the most to you? Why?
2. What are the consequences of using only the lens of cultural diversity in solving poverty issues in your community? What are the consequences of considering only economic diversity when solving poverty issues in your community?
3. What are the noticeable differences between living in generational poverty and situational poverty?
4. What are potential problems for those in poverty who receive services from agencies that use the hidden rules of middle class?
5. What role do relationships play when moving from one class to another?
6. What type of relationships would be most powerful for people making the transition out of poverty?

Ten Bridges Concepts have been developed that sharpen the Bridges Out of Poverty practice as seen through the individual, institutional, and community lenses. Of these, one of the most important is Bridges Construct #5.

Bridges Construct #5. Base plans on the premise that people of all classes, sectors, and political persuasions are problem solvers and need to be at the decision-making table.

1. What evidence do you have that your organization and/or community use the mental model or mindset that individuals in poverty are problem solvers?
2. List three ways that your initiative or organization includes people in poverty as decision makers in designing programs and processes.
3. How do processes and outcomes differ when people in poverty are identified as “problem solvers,” rather than the all-too-common mindset that people in poverty are “needy, ill, deficient and not to be trusted”?

10 Bridges Constructs

1. Use the lens of economic class to understand and take responsibility for your own societal experience while being open to the experiences of others.
2. At the intersection of poverty with other social disparities (racial, gender, physical disability, etc.), address inequalities in access to resources.
3. Define poverty as the extent to which a person, institution, or community does without resources.
4. Build relationships of mutual respect.
5. Base plans on the premise that people in all classes, sectors, and political persuasions are problem solvers and need to be at the decision making table.
6. Base plans on accurate mental models of poverty, middle class, and wealth.
7. At the individual, institutional, and community/policy levels, stabilize the environment, remove barriers to transition, and build resources.
8. Address all causes of poverty (Four Areas of Research).
9. Build long-term support for individual, institutional, and community/policy transition.
10. Build sustainable communities in which everyone can live well.

MODULE #4

Hidden Rules

NOTE: Most of the following information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapter 3.

Hidden rules are the unspoken cues or habits of a group that let you know if you do or do not belong. Here are some examples.

- 1) Hidden rules are about how well we navigate different situations and how we understand economic environments different from our own.
- 2) It is helpful to learn hidden rules in order to improve relationships, resolve conflicts, and design programs more skillfully.
- 3) Hidden rules come directly from the environment in which one lives. If one grows up in poverty, he or she will learn the hidden rules of poverty in order to survive.

	Poverty	Middle Class	Wealth
FOOD	Did you have enough? (quantity)	Did you like it? (quality)	Was it presented well? (presentation)
DRIVING FORCES	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work and achievement	Financial, political, and social connections
MONEY	To be used or spent	To be managed	To be invested
TIME	Present most important	Future most important	History and traditions most important
DESTINY	Belief in fate; cannot do much to mitigate change	Belief in choice	<i>Noblesse oblige</i>
POWER	Linked to personal respect; ability to fight	Self-sufficiency; self-governance; linked to information and institutions	Linked to expertise, connections, and stability; influences policy and direction

- 4) Our work is not about making everyone middle class but about giving people choices so they can widen their responses if they so choose.
- 5) Most agencies base their work on the premise that people can plan, but it can be difficult for many individuals in poverty to plan because the plans are constantly being revised based on how quickly things change in the “tyranny of the moment.” Using mental models for planning, building relationships of mutual respect, and understanding the nature of how things work or don’t work in poverty are a few of the tools organizations and individuals in poverty can use to create a real-time, authentic planning process. You can find more information how the Getting Ahead™ process utilizes comprehensive and self-driven plans by logging on to www.gettingaheadnetwork.com.

Observations About Hidden Rules

- Don’t criticize another person’s hidden rules; instead, talk about additional hidden rules that might be effective in certain settings.
- All of us bring with us the hidden rules of the class in which we were raised.
- One set of rules is not necessarily better or worse than another.
- We use hidden rules to thrive in the environment in which we find ourselves.
- Everyone, regardless of economic class, can benefit from knowing the hidden rules of the other two socioeconomic classes.
 - People in poverty can benefit by knowing the hidden rules of school, work, and community planning groups—which usually are based on middle-class hidden rules.
 - People in middle class can design programs more skillfully if they understand the environments of people from the other two classes.
 - People in wealth who want to participate in building sustainable communities can benefit by knowing hidden rules of the others coming to the planning table.

Application Discussion

1. Give examples of how schools, businesses, and organizations use the driving forces and hidden rules of middle class. What expectations of one another are generated by this middle-class environment?
2. What happens if you work with an organization that uses middle-class hidden rules, whereas you personally are accustomed to using the hidden rules of a different economic class?
3. *Noblesse oblige* is literally translated as “obligation of the nobility.” It is the mission of those who are better off to promote certain causes or assist those who may not be as well off. How could community sustainability be enhanced if people who have a *noblesse oblige* sensibility are part of the coalition team?
4. How might relationships be more important than achievement for individuals in poverty? For individuals in other economic classes?

5. Considering that hidden rules are about belonging (who belongs and who does not) ...
 - List and discuss situations where people in poverty may feel as if they don't belong.
 - List and discuss situations where middle-class people may feel as if they don't belong.
 - Where might people from wealth feel as if they don't belong?

6. Which hidden rules do you feel most strongly about? Have you ever found yourself expecting others to use these same hidden rules?

7. Which hidden rules of other classes might you have the most trouble accepting? Are you at risk of being judgmental when someone uses one of these hidden rules?

8. What are ways in which hidden rules are most likely to be broken in groups when a diverse gathering of economic classes is present?

Discuss how the following hidden rules impact problem-solving strategies when all three classes are present in developing community sustainability. How can we expect that there will be divergent perspectives, and how can we learn from one another?

Hidden Rule	Effect on Problem-Solving Strategies
FOOD	
DRIVING FORCES	
MONEY	
TIME	
DESTINY	
POWER	

MODULE #5

Family Structure

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapter 4.

Family dysfunction occurs in families from all economic levels. When discussing diverse family structures, there is often an unfortunate tendency to become judgmental.

Middle-class contracts may consist of marriages, divorces, wills, etc. There is an underlying trust of organization in the middle class because the middle class is well-equipped to use and negotiate the middle-class systems.

Divorces often cost more than marriages. When some people don't have money to get divorced, they may stay married, but they separate. The relationship between middle-class organizations and those in poverty is often strained. Therefore, from the perspective of poverty, there is often a distrust of organizations.

The family structures discussed are something you may encounter, but they aren't something you should assume will be present.

Male Gender Roles

Middle class—provider (because of the opportunities to achieve)

Poverty—fighter/lover (a protector is needed because pockets of poverty are typically the most unsafe areas of town; being a good lover is valued in most segments of society, but it may not be discussed openly in all settings)

Female Gender Roles

Middle class—caretaker or provider (most middle-class females take on both roles, at least for a time)

Poverty—“keeper of the soul,” keeps family together, often emotionally and financially (a female may do everything possible in the role of rescuer/martyr; you have to be strong and may use every resource available, but there are missing resources, which means you are in a sense a martyr to the cause)

NOTE: Middle-class people with middle-class resources use these strong resources to work the system and are labeled “good negotiators.” Unfortunately, people in poverty using the limited resources available to navigate the system are sometimes labeled “manipulative.”

Hidden Rules About Family Structure

Poverty—tends to be matriarchal

Middle class—tends to be patriarchal

Wealth—tends to depend on who has the money

The matriarchal family structure may actually be more efficient for some families living in poverty.

The reason family patterns are different in diverse environments is linked to the four areas of research.

- 1) Individual choices may have contributed (for generations) to stability or instability,
- 2) Social and human capital (community resources) may or may not offer the external resources needed to thrive,
- 3) Whether the individual or group has experienced the struggle of exploitation—inclusive but not limited to the predatory businesses present in pockets of poverty—will affect family structure differently from those who have experienced the benefits of identification with the dominant race/culture (Caucasian) or class (middle class).
- 4) How the group may have benefited from policies and political/economic structures will affect future story or being stuck in the tyranny of the moment.

Four Patterns of Family Structure in Poverty: These are listed only because we need to understand that families can be very different, yet still viable. Never assume that families in poverty will necessarily use these patterns, but be aware that there are different ways that families “work.” You may have to suspend your mental model or mindset of “family” in order to build relationships of mutual respect with people who engage within a family structure different from yours. There could be different priorities, different hidden rules, and a different focus. Different does not mean “bad.”

- 1) Multiple relationships that may or may not be linked to the formal contract of marriage
- 2) Favoritism: This may be present in all classes but is typically not as openly displayed or discussed in middle class or wealth
- 3) Changing allegiances: Because financial resources are decreased, even the members of the household present in the home may change frequently due to economic factors and other demands
- 4) Male identity: The research suggests that our gender roles are largely established by fourth grade; the environment and relationships we experience influence gender roles at an early age

Hidden Rules for Destiny

- Poverty—belief in fate or not seeing choices as viable; “we just have bad luck”; this may be present where choices have been ineffective for long periods of time
- Middle class—belief in choice and having the economic and other potential to “make your own luck.”
- Wealth—*noblesse oblige*, which is basically another form of “fatedness”: “We are who we are; we did nothing to earn our status ... we were born into it; we just have good luck.”

Penance/Forgiveness Cycle

The penance/forgiveness cycle does not use the past, present, and future to build future story. The penance/forgiveness cycle is involved only when “fatedness” is the *prevailing* driving force, and choices are not considered viable.

Let's say you truly perceive you are fated or destined to be who you are. We all do things we should not do, but in this case, should you get caught, it makes sense to simply deny it to avoid punishment. If you do get punished, you are strong and can take it. But you must do penance and get forgiven, since you were fated to be who you are and do the things you do. Since choice and change are not acknowledged when one is "fated," no changes are necessary. You may continue as before.

Application Discussion

1. How can you avoid stereotyping individuals while reviewing these patterns?
2. How will you use the information on the penance/forgiveness cycle and patterns of family structure and dynamics?
3. How can intentional friendships across class lines (sometimes called "bridging social capital") create opportunities for individuals in poverty to stabilize environments and build resources?
4. How might economically stable people figure out the most powerful ways to join in friendship with a low-income family? Who would benefit from these friendships? And in what ways?
5. Given what we know about the rules of class, what ways might middle-income people try to "help" that might not actually be helpful?
6. What kinds of relationships would be necessary and effective for families who have been in generational poverty? How might some of these relationships assist in building future story?
7. How do we know if our ideas are just "middle-class solutions"?
8. Discuss ways to support families during transition. Will you look for the "richness" of each family?
9. Why might it be easier to leave a relationship in middle class than it would be in poverty?
10. How might the hidden rules of family structure help a person in poverty survive?

MODULE #6

The Role of Language and Story

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapter 2.

- Significant learning and change require a relationship of mutual respect.
- Relationships begin and end with language; that is why registers of language and discourse patterns are beneficial to know.
- Language development birth to age 3 is associated with cognitive development, school readiness, and school and workplace success.

Hidden Rules of Language

- Middle class—use of formal register for negotiation; verbal, abstract, and proactive skills are necessary
- Poverty—use of casual register for survival
- Wealth—use of formal register for networking

Eighty percent of our communication in any register is nonverbal.

Language and Power

- Casual is more accurate.
- Formal has more power.
- Communication problems can be a balance-of-power problem.
- When the balance of power is relatively equal, candid communication can take place.
- Listening is an attitude more than a skill.

“When cultures break down, and parents can’t mediate the world for their kids, then it’s a broken culture.”

–Reuven Feuerstein

People in poverty are problem solvers. The Bridges work is based on this construct.

Application Discussion

1. What is the importance of being “bilingual” or “bi-dialectical,” that is, having the ability to go between casual and formal registers?
2. What is the role of verbal and nonverbal communication, and what impact could each have when solving community problems?
3. What are effective ways to teach formal register to those who generally have access only to casual register?
4. What are the possible benefits and costs of learning and using formal register? Conversely, how can we help people from middle class realize the importance of relaying information in casual register?
5. Discuss language and social advantage/disadvantage. How might casual register be advantageous in poverty?
6. When communicating about mutual expectations, how might language-use differences help and hinder the process?
7. If someone who is making the transition from poverty to middle class has and uses the formal register, how will this impact that person’s journey?
8. How do you prepare middle-class agencies to communicate effectively (regarding nonverbal communication and language registers) with those in poverty?
9. What role might language registers and story structure play during organizational and community meetings (such as a Bridges Steering Committee meeting) which include individuals from all economic classes?
10. What impact would overuse of formal register have at organizational or community meetings where not everyone uses formal register and its story structure?

MODULE #7

Resources

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapters 1, 5, and 6.

Resources

- Financial—having the money to purchase goods and services
- Emotional—being able to choose and control responses in negative situations without engaging in self-destructive behavior
- Mental—having the cognitive abilities and acquired skills to deal with daily life
- Spiritual—believing in divine purpose and guidance, having hope; our cultural base may also be a part of what we consider “sacred”
- Physical—having physical health and mobility
- Support Systems
- Knowledge of Hidden Rules
- Relationships/Role Models
- Formal Register
- Motivation and Persistence
- Integrity and Trust

Definition of poverty: the extent to which an individual does without resources

Communities can help families build resources, families can help their children build resources, and individuals can build their own resources.

Resources can be built by learning hidden rules and through connections.

Social Capital

- Social capital involves networking, norms of reciprocity, and trustworthiness
- According to Robert Putnam (1995), social capital has been decreasing since the 1960s
- Bonding capital—cultivated from personal and peer relationships: *people who help me “get by”*
- Bridging capital—developed from relationships of mutual respect established across different economic groups: *people who help me “get ahead”*

NOTE: In Getting Ahead™ the investigators do an extensive self-assessment of their resources and decide which resources are needed. Next, the investigators make a 10-step SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-specific) plan regarding how to build the chosen resources.

Middle-class systems often diagnose situations, express motivation for change, and make a plan. In this model, however, individuals decide which resources they want to build for themselves and are encouraged to start with their strengths.

Principles for Change

- Recognize that people in poverty are problem solvers. Listen. You will hear what someone in poverty knows that others may not know.
- Bridge distrust between classes: Teach the Bridges concepts.
- Reduce communication “noise” by using mental models.
- Provide social support at the workplace with economic opportunities and benefits.

Points to Remember

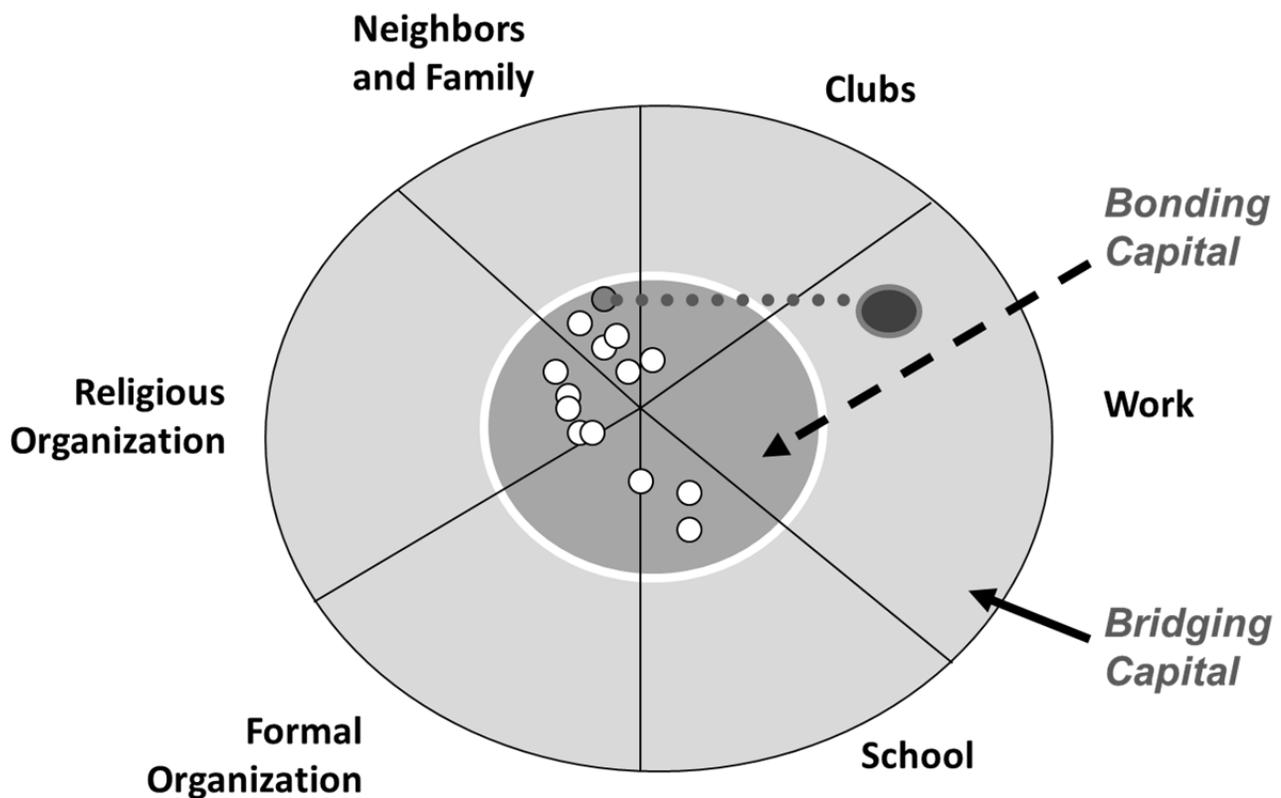
- Resources define a large measure of the quality of life for an individual.
- Bring all three classes to the table to create the community’s future story.
- Create strategies for dealing with all causes of poverty.
- Stabilize the environment of those who are at the bottom of the economic ladder.
- Build resources.

Application Discussion

1. Why might an economically stable life be difficult without a significant number of resources?
2. Why is knowledge of the hidden rules a resource?
3. Who built *your* resources? Stated differently, how were *your* resources built?
4. What is the community’s role in helping people build resources?
5. What is the difference between stabilizing daily life and building resources?
6. In some initiatives, a great deal of work is done to stabilize the environment. If that is all that was done, would a person get out of poverty? Why or why not? What if you added in the creation of bonding and bridging social capital to the process?
7. Why is it largely ineffective for agencies to make plans for those in poverty?
8. Why might there be distrust between economic classes?
9. Why is systemic change necessary to address poverty?

10. What is your community's plan for building resources so that more people can access economic stability? How do you involve people in poverty in designing this community-level plan?
11. Can all individuals in your community count on your community to deliver a fair shot at a well-paying job, a fair shot at a good education, a fair shot at healthcare, and a fair shot at credit?
12. Discuss bonding and bridging social capital in your personal life and in your community. Below, use the mental model of social capital.

Social Capital



MODULE #8

Relationships—Part I

Social Capital and Mentoring

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapters 5–7.

There is not one generally accepted definition adopted by researchers for the concept of social capital. A working definition, however, is that social capital pertains to the value of social networks—bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people (Dekker & Uslaner 2001; Uslaner 2001). Inglehart’s definition is aligned with the focus of the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book. Inglehart defines social capital as “a culture of trust and tolerance, in which extensive networks of voluntary associations emerge” (Inglehart 1997, p. 188). For more information, please see socialcapitalresearch.com.

Chapters 5–7 focus on individual change, rather than organizational or community change, although the benefits of building social capital at the individual level also may result in more social cohesiveness and trust within our organizations and communities (Putnam, 1995).

At first glance, the assumption is that a middle-class or better-off person with economic stability will be involved in mentoring someone in poverty who may not have had the opportunity to build social capital and the emotional resources necessary for “toughing” through the academic and professional environments of middle-class institutions, such as court, work, and postsecondary education. In Chapter 7 of the book, however, there’s a strong emphasis on peer mentoring and the use of a “middle person” who has “been there” to promote meaningful support. The reality is that individuals in poverty have more than enough ability to take on the role of assisting themselves and others in the co-investigative process. This is more applicable to the Bridges process, and it is inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, among others. This is one of the basic tenets of the successful Getting Ahead™ program.

As you read these chapters, surround yourself with these concepts:

Bridges is an exploration of relationships designed to bring people in poverty into an environment where social capital is diverse and abundant.

The reciprocal concept is that the community at large needs people in poverty to give individuals who are economically better off an opportunity to develop relationships with those outside their comfort zones and groups—and that mutual understanding and relationships in the community are enhanced when this occurs.

One striking difference between the terms *mentor* and *ally* is the idea that when I mentor, I am the expert and the one being mentored is positioned to learn from the person with greater experience. What does the term ally suggest? How might an ally relationship differ from a mentoring relationship?

Application Discussion

1. Individuals in generational poverty may have increased internal assets, despite living in the “tyranny of the moment.” How might an individual in generational poverty be an expert on emotional resources? How could this be so?
2. Acknowledging the insights and strengths of some individuals, what is the nature of the environment of poverty—specifically generational poverty—that might diminish one’s opportunity to work on and build emotional resources, such as positive self-talk?
3. What might be present in the middle-class environment to increase the likelihood of developing emotional resources, such as positive self-talk?

Finally, do a review and analysis of social capital or social support, including mentoring, in your individual relationships, in your institution or organization, and your community.

1. How are we doing in building cohesive relationships between individuals and groups?
2. To what extent are our mentoring or ally programs formal or informal?
3. List some mentoring support programs in place for building social support for young people? What about those in place for adults? Are we doing enough?
4. Programs that build cohesiveness and social capital can be time-intensive and expensive. But what might be the outcome of not taking the time and finding the funding to build social capital?
5. To what extent does your organization and/or community value the expertise and knowledge of individuals in situational and generational poverty?

MODULE #8

Building Relationships—Part II

Resources and Resiliency: Looking for the Richness of the Individual

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapter 9.

The core of this module is the power of the individual to forge ahead and grow within and beyond stress and difficulty. This discipline is well-researched and is a study of those who have lived through great adversity—perhaps involving neglect, crime, war, addiction, abuse—who then choose not to perpetrate upon others what had been done to them. This is the mark of resiliency. It is the process of identifying that what has been done is just that. It’s what happened; it doesn’t define who I am. There’s an adage that says, “It isn’t so much what happens to us, it’s how we respond to it.” Attitude is the key.

Resiliency research allows us to approach others with a similar mindset. For example, working in the addictions field, counselors learn to separate the addiction from the person they are helping in order to build relationships of mutual respect. As the person grows in his or her recovery, this separation of who I am and who I am as an addict becomes the impetus for personal growth and sobriety. I may refer to myself as an addict in recovery, but that is no longer the sum total of who I am.

In terms of economic class, we are all far more than our economic class. The purpose of the Bridges work is not to reduce us to just the playing field of economic class. In fact, the reason we need to better understand economic class is so we can have ways to break it down for what it is and isn’t in our lives. We can then move beyond dancing blindly through class issues and be creative in our approaches at all levels.

We have access to a great store of internal resources, as well as a multitude of hidden rules from which to choose. Hidden rules are present wherever we belong—in our economic class, as well as in our spirituality, culture, ethnicity, and gender—and can define our experience. People in poverty are no exception to this. The resiliency research is a touchstone in the Bridges work because it reminds us of our identity as individuals, an identity that transcends our economic class.

For example, when we face the loss of a loved one, we can choose to be grateful for that person and the time spent with him or her. Alternatively, we can choose to respond by hardening our heart and becoming unwilling to trust or love again. When in the grief process, having someone list a series of stages or patterns that you will likely go through may be comforting because it provides a structure for both experiencing grief and for moving on. On the other hand, being “held” to these grief stages could be frustrating to the person whose ways of coping with loss are different from the norm. All of us have the potential to be outliers and to break molds. At times, we move away from researched patterns—by design or default—and manifest our individual uniqueness.

What lies within us and perhaps beyond us are innate or developed internal assets. Paradoxically, most of our strengths are closely tied to our deficiencies. For instance, we may be stubborn, and that may sometimes hinder our progress. But that same stubbornness will serve us well as persistence in the face of difficulties. The resiliency research reminds us that we are never entirely bound to a set of circumstances, an environment, a characteristic, a pattern, or even a set of hidden rules. Resiliency is the wellspring of our humanity—and for many of us, a significant aspect of how we move beyond ourselves into places that are sacred within us.

Application Discussion

1. How do the examples of the resiliency research relate to the resource definitions in Chapter 1 of the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book?
2. How can we develop resiliency in ourselves and others?
3. How can relationships that use this resiliency framework contribute to the ability to “move mountains”?
4. The resiliency strategies focus on taking care of oneself in seeking positive social support and using positive self-talk. The human mind holds power and, at times, can choose despair or gratitude, bitterness or forgiveness.

You can learn more about resiliency research at www.resiliency.com.

MODULE #9

Mediation and Tools for Building Future Story

NOTE: Most of the information in this module can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapters 10–12.

Mediation is described as an intervention by a caring and nurturing individual who offers the *what* (points out the stimulus), the *why* (gives it meaning), and the *how* (provides a strategy) of the learning or change process. This is a tool that gives us everything we need to accurately see and assess the present situation, the meaning of what is happening, and how we might approach things effectively.

If individuals depend on a random, episodic story structure for memory patterns, live in an unpredictable environment, and *have not developed the ability to plan*, then ...

If individuals cannot plan, they *cannot predict*.

If individuals cannot predict, they *cannot identify cause and effect*.

If individuals cannot identify cause and effect, they *cannot identify consequence*.

If individuals cannot identify consequence, they *cannot control impulsivity*.

If individuals cannot control impulsivity, they *have an inclination toward criminal behavior*.

–Reuven Feuerstein

Application Exercise

Create a mediation based on this example:

You are the office manager who walks by and hears the new receptionist answer the phone by saying “Yo!” instead of “Good Morning, Family Services.” Create a mediation using just one or two sentences. Write your mediation below:

- The *what*: Reflect (or point out) the stimulus _____
- The *why*: Give it meaning _____
- The *how*: Provide a strategy _____

There may be pitfalls in our learning curve with mediation. For example, compare and contrast these two responses to the mediation learning task.

Example 1:

- The *what*: I know you are trying to remember a lot of new information, but you are answering the phone in a manner that is inappropriate.
- The *why*: By saying “Yo” you are making our organization appear to be unbusinesslike and unprofessional.
- The *how*: Next time, please answer by saying “Good morning, Family Services.”

Example 2:

- The *what*: When I was walking by I happened to hear you answering the phone by saying “Yo.”
- The *why*: When callers hear “Yo,” they may think they’re calling someone’s personal phone, and they don’t know they’ve reached our agency. That person might need our help quickly, and we need to be there for them from right from the start.
- The *how*: So we can be more helpful, we all answer the phone by saying who we are—Family Services.

The problem with the first example is that even though it is layered with mostly respectful phrases, it is a mishmash of middle-class hidden rules, formal register, and assumed expectations. It misses the point of the real reason the caller needs to hear the organization identified. Agency representatives need to let people know who the agency is so there’s no confusion for clients or community associates. It’s amazing how often we in middle class rely on our jargon or buzzwords without truly understanding the meaning, or the larger perspective, behind these elements in the institutional setting.

The second example recognizes that there are times when we may answer our personal phones by saying “Yo!” *Yo* can be “appropriate” at times, but the workplace is not one of those settings. The language of the second example reinforces the concept that there is more than one set of hidden rules, and we can know many of them and use them in the right setting.

Finally, middle-class environments might reconsider the power and intent of middle-class buzzwords, such as *unprofessional*, *unbusinesslike*, *inappropriate* when working with individuals from other economic class

environments. These words may trigger power struggles, which is a lose/lose for both the individuals and the organization.

Application Discussion

1. Consider your own change processes. Describe how you approach change when you understand the meaning of the change or learning, compared with when you focus only on the *how* or the strategies available to change.

The most important aspect of using mediation is that it maintains respect between individuals and supports changes. It is recommended that when using this tool, you share the tool with the individual who is in the change process. The best place, however, for using the mediation tool is inside our minds. It is important that we have access to this tool and come to the point in this process where we can use it when we are alone. We can direct our own mediation process. We can then use mediation ourselves when we encounter problems, asking ourselves what is the *what*, the *why*, and the *how* to problem-solving.

Review the chart on page 148 of the *Bridges* book that interfaces the Stephen Covey model of relationships being a bank account with our knowledge of economic-class environments. Also, review your personal skills and the skills of those who work in your organization. Then reflect on these questions:

1. Typically, are there more deposits or withdrawals occurring in the interactions between clients/customers and the staff?
2. How about between staff members who identify with different hidden rules of economic class?
3. How might we address any differences in hidden rules so that our organizational structures are supportive of everyone in the workplace, as well as clients, with the objective of enhancing both relationships and organizational goals?

Use the strategy checklists in Chapter 12 of the *Bridges* book to assess your skills working with individuals who identify with the hidden rules of poverty in an environment that focuses on the hidden rules of middle class.

- If you are in an administrative or management role, assess your strengths in using these tools with those you supervise, as well as with clients/customers.
- Then assess your staff's capacity to use these tools effectively.

NEXT STEPS

I. Design/Redesign: Growing Sustainable Organizations and Communities

NOTE: Most of the information in this section can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapters 13–14.

This is a good time to check in on the principal purpose, goal, or mission of your organization—and what occurs to achieve success toward this purpose. An effective manager will seek to embed this purpose every day. It should flow naturally through all individual and group encounters. Yet many of us have not thought very much about our organization’s theory of business. This is the purpose of your business or organization, including your ideas about what is happening or what is needed, why it is important, and how change will occur.

Application Exercise

Fill in the blanks to identify your theory of business.

If our organization changes/builds/provides _____ ...

Possible responses:

- external resources
- asset-building tools
- a quality education
- skill building
- increased neighborhood safety and support
- social capital
- a larger framework of understanding
- affordable housing
- relationships of mutual respect
- quality patient care
- the opportunity to co-investigate economic class
- etc.

... then our clients/customers will gain/have/achieve _____.

Possible responses:

- quality of life
- economic stability
- increased mental health
- sobriety
- increased nutritional skills

- safety
- sustainable income
- health and wellness
- a seat at the community decision-making table
- etc.

Is your organization building or bringing resources? The bringing-resources model is needs-based. The building of resources is an initiative-based model (such as Getting Ahead™)—a process in which individuals are making their own arguments for change under their own power for their transition out of poverty.

Application Discussion

1. What do you think about the excerpt on page 162 in the *Bridges* book that tells of the agency administrator who could not identify the theory of business (how his agency went about helping troubled teens) without first checking with the program director?
2. How does this address communication, as well as our understanding of our multiple roles within the institution?
3. Could the opposite be also true? If the administration has the vision, but front-line staff persons have no idea about the theory of business and their important role in that process, how will that affect the institution's outcomes (health, sobriety, education, job skill development, sustainable income, etc.)?
4. How does the driving force of an organization impact the theory of business/change?

Application Exercise

THE CLIENT LIFE CYCLE

Draw the client/customer life cycle of your organization from the client or customer point of view—from the initial contact he or she has with the organization. If possible, do this with another person who works at your organization. Be sure to include each step, including each person in the organization who is part of the journey.

1. Assess the points where your organization excels at building relationships of mutual respect.
2. Identify those points of contact where it's possible that relationships of mutual respect are possibly or even likely broken.
3. What can be done to redesign the client/customer life cycle to make it more effective in aligning with the theory of business/change?

Once organizations have assessed and redesigned their policies and procedures to align with Bridges Out of Poverty constructs, an assessment of community collaboration is provided in Chapter 14 of the *Bridges* book.

Review the five features of the community plan on page 179 of the *Bridges* book. Assess your community in light of these practices.

1. How does your collaborative group utilize these structures?
2. Describe how you engage all sectors—public, private, not-for-profits, etc.—as you target specific outcomes.
3. How does your collaborative group use shared goals, shared strategies, and shared measurements of success?
4. Assess the benefits derived from this type of collaborative process.

In recent years, the concepts in Chapter 14 of the *Bridges* book have been utilized to define the scope of a Bridges Steering Committee, which is the governing body used by Bridges Communities to reduce poverty and increase community sustainability. You can find more information in the book *Bridges to Sustainable Communities* (DeVol, 2010).

II. The Alcoholics Anonymous Model: An Effective Best Practice for Providing Support for Change

NOTE: Most of the information in this section can be found in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* book, Chapter 15.

The information in this segment does not imply that poverty is characteristic of addiction or vice versa. However, we do draw on the fact that poverty and addiction are both considered to be significant risk factors.

The Getting Ahead™ workgroup was designed from principles of effective change present in the AA model and also draws from the concepts of Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). You can learn more at GettingAheadNetwork.com.

Both poverty and addiction can “upset the applecart.” These are risk factors that impede future story. We have learned to separate the risk factor from the individual, who may well have internal and external protective factors that can be used to offset the risk factors or help the individual overcome them.

Application Discussion

Review the chart, “A Comparison of What It Takes to Get Out of Poverty with the Process of Recovery for Addiction” In the *Bridges* book (pages 204–207).

1. The addiction and poverty chart co-investigates elements of poverty and addiction as risk factors. How are these similar? How are these different?
2. Identify at least five areas where you believe the strategies to achieve sobriety also would be effective in helping individuals achieve economic stability.
3. When you review the strategies and supports that assist someone to achieve sobriety, how does this comprehensive process shed light on current policies and procedures being used to reduce poverty?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

It is our hope that this Bridges Out of Poverty study guide has helped to prepare you for your efforts to build social cohesion between economic classes and create relationships of mutual respect in your organization and community.

While you have been using this study guide to prepare yourself, there may be individuals in poverty in your community who have been engaged in the Getting Ahead™ program. It may be that soon you will be working together to end poverty in your community. The work will start with relationships of mutual respect as the foundation and grow from there to bring about systemic change to create a sustainable community.

We trust that the process itself will be transformative for you and that your initiative will help to transform your community.

Thank you in advance for all the time and effort you are putting into this endeavor.

Best wishes!

*Monica Bein and Terie Dreussi Smith
December 2011*

