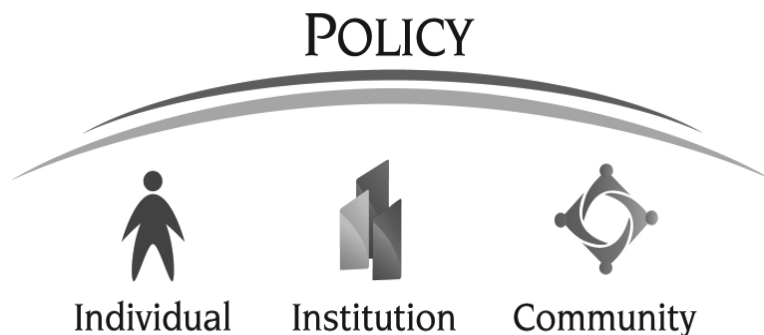


## 1. Triple Lens

**How things are now:** Individuals learn about poverty through personal experience, stories in the news, reading, and general debate—but rarely through an intention to fully understand this complex problem. Without a structure for processing the complexities of poverty, without a way to organize our thinking, our responses to poverty will continue to be ineffective.



Adapted from J. Pfarr Consulting

**Context:** The triple lens is a structure by which poverty can be assessed and processed thoroughly. Looking at poverty through a single lens—be it individual, organizational, or community—will not provide the depth of understanding that comes from viewing poverty through all three lenses.

**Core ideas:** Poverty elicits strong opinions; it's easy to take sides or to blame the other person or institution. This thinking tool helps replace judgments with understanding. The first place that conflicts usually occur is the interaction between people in poverty and people in institutions, such as caseworkers, supervisors, and healthcare workers.

A woman in poverty saw a sign on a caseworker's door that read, "Your failure to plan does not constitute an emergency for me." The triple lens has us first analyze the dynamics between the client and caseworker, helping to explore and decode class interactions from both sides of the desk. It would deepen the understanding by analyzing the driving forces of the institution and the role of the institution in the community.

By using the triple lens, we develop new ideas, discover how to apply new concepts, and make necessary changes. This tool helps us do thorough work.

As for clients who are late, it's possible that they might need to make some changes, but this tool reminds us that they don't need to change any more than those who are in the institutions and community.

### **How to use the tool**

- Use the triple lens to deepen understanding of the core elements of a Bridges workshop: the mental models of class, the causes of poverty, hidden rules, resources, and language.
- When embedding the concepts in our organization or designing a new community program, the question becomes: "What would we learn by applying the triple lens?"

**Learn more:** Read *Tactical Communication: Mastering effective interactions with citizens from diverse economic backgrounds*, Jodi R. Pfarr, 2013.