Bridges Out of Poverty

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The mission of aha! Process, Inc. is to positively impact the education and lives of individuals in poverty around the world.

Mental Model for Poverty

It’s Due to Social Coherence

“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?”

“Can a person perceive society’s messages as information, rather than as noise? In this regard, the poor education that typically accompanies poverty biases toward the latter.”

“... has a person been able to develop an ideal set of coping responses for dealing with society’s challenges?”

“... does a person have the resources to carry out plans?”

“... does a person get meaningful feedback from society—do their messages make a difference?”

—Robert Sapolsky, Aaron Antonovsky
Tyranny of the Moment

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

Source: The Art of the Long View by Peter Schwartz

“The healthier you are psychologically, or the less you may seem to need to change, the more you can change.”


Mental Model of Generational Poverty

- It is a description of the concrete experience.
- It is an abstract representation of poverty.
- It depicts vulnerability.
- It depicts the relative importance and interlocking nature of the elements.
- It is a depiction of the trap: no future story, no choice, no power.
Community Sustainability Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Behavior</th>
<th>Human and Social Capital</th>
<th>Exploitation</th>
<th>Political/Economic Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Key Points

1. This workshop focuses on economic environments.
2. Economic class is relative.
3. Economic class is a continuous line, not a clear-cut distinction.
4. Generational poverty and situational poverty are different.
5. This work is based on patterns within the environments of economic class. All patterns have exceptions.
6. An individual brings with him/her the hidden rules of the class in which he/she was raised.
7. Schools and businesses operate from middle class norms and use the hidden rules of middle class.
8. In order to build relationships of mutual respect between economic classes, we need to be aware of more than one set of hidden rules.
9. The more we understand how class affects us and are open to hear how it affects others, the more effective we can be.
10. In order to achieve, one may have to give up relationships (at least for a time).

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 intersections of poverty with other social disparities (racial, gender, physical ability, age, 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).
10. Build economically sustainable communities in which everyone can live well.

POVERTY
Power linked to personal respect
Ability to fight
Can’t stop bad things from happening

MIDDLE CLASS
Power/respect separated
Responds to position
Power in information and institutions

WEALTH
Power in expertise, connections
Power in stability
Influences policy and direction
POVERTY
Survival, relationships, entertainment

MIDDLE CLASS
Work, achievement, material security

WEALTH
Financial, political, social connections

Registers of Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGISTER</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FROZEN</td>
<td>Language that is always the same. For example: Lord’s Prayer, wedding vows, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL</td>
<td>The standard sentence syntax and word choice of work and school. Has complete sentences and specific word choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSULTATIVE</td>
<td>Formal register when used in conversation. Discourse pattern not quite as direct as formal register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASUAL</td>
<td>Language between friends and is characterized by a 400- to 800-word vocabulary. Word choice general and not specific. Conversation dependent upon non-verbal assists. Sentence syntax often incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTIMATE</td>
<td>Language between lovers or twins. Language of sexual harassment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from the work of Martin Joos

Research About Language in Children, Ages 1 to 4, in Stable Households by Economic Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of words exposed to</th>
<th>Economic group</th>
<th>Affirmations (strokes)</th>
<th>Prohibitions (discounts)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 million words</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>1 for every</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 million words</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>2 for every</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 million words</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>6 for every</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


believes that one is fated or destined

the behavior

not get caught

deny

punished forgiven
Resources

Working definition of poverty:
"The extent to which an individual does without resources."

FINANCIAL
Being able to purchase the goods and services of that class and sustain it.

EMOTIONAL
Being able to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. Shows itself through choices.

MENTAL
Having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life.

SPIRITUAL
Believing in (divine) purpose and guidance.

PHYSICAL
Having physical health and mobility.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS
Having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need. These are external resources.

RELATIONSHIPS/ROLE MODELS
Having frequent access to adult(s) who are appropriate, nurturing, and who do not engage in destructive behavior.

KNOWLEDGE OF HIDDEN RULES
Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group.

Questions to Ask About Resources

NOTE: These questions are not designed to be used in an ask/answer format with a customer. They are a powerful tool for your team to use to find the areas in which an individual is rich.

FINANCIAL
- Is $574 per month per person available? *
- Is there enough income to cover all expenses?
- Is your credit/debt ratio above 37%?
- Do you spend more than 30% of your income on rent/mortgage?
- Do you have enough savings to cover six months of expenses?

* Based on 125% of 2010 Poverty Guidelines for Family of Four: $27,563 per year/$2,297 per month

EMOTIONAL
- Is there evidence that the individual has persistence?
- Does the individual have the words to express feelings in a way others can receive?
- Does the individual have coping strategies (for adverse situations) that are not destructive to self or others?

MENTAL
- Can the individual read, write, and compute?
- Can the individual plan?
- Can the individual problem-solve?
- Can the individual understand cause and effect, then identify consequence?

SPIRITUAL
- Does the individual believe in divine guidance and assistance?
- Does the individual have belief in something larger than self?
- Does the individual perceive an abstract and larger perspective that provides depth and meaning to life (culture, science, higher power, etc.)?

PHYSICAL
- Can the individual take care of him-/herself without help?
- Does the physical body allow the person to work and to learn?
- Does the individual have transportation resources to get from one place to another?
- Does the individual have health and wellness?

SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL
- Who is the individual’s bonding social capital? Is it positive?
- Who is the individual’s bridging social capital? Is it positive?

KNOWLEDGE OF MIDDLE CLASS HIDDEN RULES
- Does this individual know the hidden rules of work and school?
- How important are achievement and work?
- Will this individual give up relationships for achievement (at least for some period of time)?

Definition of Resources

- Connections, social networks, norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness

- Private and public aspects
  - Bonding
  - Bridging
  - Thick and thin

Social Capital

- Neighbors and Family
- Clubs
- Religious Organization
- Work
- School
- Formal Organization

Bonding Capital

Bridging Capital
Mental Model for Resources

Principles of Change

- People in poverty are problem solvers.
- Stabilize the environment.
- Provide support during transition.
- Build future stories, practice choice, and develop power and influence.
- Communities, families, and individuals build resources.
- Bring members of all 3 economic classes to the table.
- Develop strategies across all 4 areas of research.
- Plan, monitor, and evaluate using the Social Health Index.
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