Understanding the culture of poverty

Objectives

• Discuss strategies to increase our skills and knowledge

• Raise our individual and group awareness about biases

• Enhance the understanding of children and families from poverty to assist in strengthening interactions.

Types of poverty

• Generational: Living in poverty for two generations or more, long term poverty necessitates a cultural norm and skills which differ from the norms and skills of middle class.

• Situational: Clearly connected to a major life event such as divorce, death, illness, or a natural disaster that eliminates resources.

• Situational poverty is temporary, and individuals in situational poverty probably have more resources to draw on than those in generational poverty.
Definition of poverty

According to the dictionary:
The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions,

According to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive:
The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, they are considered in poverty.

Guideline & statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/Household</th>
<th>Poverty Guideline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$12,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$15,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$18,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$21,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$24,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$27,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$30,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$33,580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add $2,840 for each additional person.

20,000 people homeless in NE. every night
2,000 people in Omaha

3.5 million people nationally
1.25 million are children
31.1 million in poverty

30% of homeless families have open case
for child abuse or neglect.

Nationally 50% of homeless women & children are fleeing domestic violence

18% suffer mental illness
30% suffer substance abuse & addiction

Dr. Ruby Payne’s definition

Understanding poverty as the varying degrees to which a person lacks any one of following nine resources: To make permanent, positive change in people’s lives.

These resources (or the lack of them) have an impact on a person’s ability to handle stressful situations.

Ex. lottery winners who lack other resources and spend all of their winnings rather quickly.
Keep in mind

- Be aware of your own prejudices/bias...
- Many of the attitudes clients, patients and employees bring with them are an integral part of their culture and belief system. Just as ours are!
- An understanding of poverty may lessen anger and frustration some people feel when working with those in poverty.
- Flexible thinking is the ability to remain constructive and positive.
- We all need spontaneity to cope with things like; the car won’t start; day care quits with no notice, sanction letter from public assistance; This usually creates a crisis mode.
- Grasping abstract concepts, doing future planning, thinking ahead, and anticipating what has not happened yet is a complex brain function which requires time, quiet, and concentration.
- Life in poverty is unpredictable, and help is not just a phone call away.

Case study

Childhood:
- Unstable environment/pets/belongings
- Domestic Violence between parents
- Marital conflict with parenting practices
- Physical abuse/discipline/yelling
- Parents divorced
- Working poor while parents married and then into further poverty
- No children had IEP's in school
- Drugs (brother)
- Lack of basic needs
- Dropped out of 15

Adulthood:
- Met husband and moved in at 16
- Married at 17' moved into own place
- Domestic Violence every aspect of power & control
- Unstable environment
- First child (18) second child(19)
- Separated about 9 months (children 3 & 4)
- Both children have IEP's
- Get back together (about a year)
- Divorced

We will revisit Lucy later...

Complexity of the situation: Poverty is usually not the only thing happening:

- Unemployment
- Transportation
- Substance abuse
- Learning problems
- Unstable/no housing
- Lack of parenting
- Domestic violence
- Mental health history
- Trauma History
- No family/social supports
- Educational status
- Prior history with CPS
- Abuse History
Characteristics Of Poverty

These statements are patterns not absolutes.

• Survival orientation: Little room for abstract, academic topics, you talk about people and relationships.
• Polarized thinking: Black or white - very little room for gray
• Living space is smaller
• More conflict; more active protection of turf & belongings
• Unexpected additional financial resources (income) need to be shared & spent quickly
• Belief in fate: Destiny & fate make or break you: not choices
• Background noise: TV always on, people talk over one another in conversations
• Importance of personality: You bring your personality, because it is what you have (if good & entertaining - you are valued)
• Significance of entertainment: Important to get away for survival and entertainment is for escape.
• Importance of relationship

Impacts of Living in Poverty: adults

• Depression & Anxiety
• Reduced literacy – problems reading/writing
• Increased mobility = decreased stability
• Ongoing stress
• Unable to meet basic needs
• Difficulty maintaining relationships
• Physical health challenges

Poverty’s Impact on Child Well-Being

These factors are usually present in abuse/neglect cases as well...

• Infant deaths
• Low-birth weight
• Birth complications
• Poor nutrition
• Chronic health conditions
• Stunted growth
• Environmental toxins
• Poor quality education
• High drop-out rates
• Teen pregnancy
• Criminal activity
• Brain development
Poverty can place children at risk for:

- Cognitive difficulties: poor academic performance, higher drop out rates
- Social and emotional problems: anxiety, difficulty getting along with others, boundaries in relationships, and low self-esteem
- Behavioral problems: engagement in high risk activities like, smoking, drinking, and early sexual activity
- Challenges in adulthood: poor health, lower earnings, criminal behavior

Different is just different

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Family relationships & relatives
- Owning property & priorities of ownership
- Parenting

Parenting: looks & sounds very different

Low-income parents are more likely to use “negative” parenting strategies.

- Limited parental responsiveness
- Harsh / coercive parenting
- Less vocal with infants
- Lax supervision
Psychological Realities
Limited time and emotional availability to offer children
• Work
• Interaction with public and private agencies
• General time requirements of doing laundry outside the home or taking public transportation to simply buy groceries
• Concentration on relationship

Challenges to protecting children from harm: Parents are also keenly aware that money buys greater protection for children
• Protection from bad neighborhoods
• Protection from sub-standard housing
• Protection from poor quality day care
• Protection from poor quality schools

Psychological Realities of Parenting
• Cumulative effects of poverty can influence children’s behavior, development, and health issues, which leads to parent not understanding or handling behaviors/development appropriately
• The impact of facing serious difficulties in providing the necessities of life for their children
  Example: Parents may worry about paying the rent (and not get evicted) or won’t have enough money for diapers or milk for their baby at the end of the month.
  A limited or foreshortened sense of children’s futures
  Ex. Some parents may be concerned less with child going to college and more about whether or not their child will survive childhood.

5 Registers of language: Knowing the research on language by economic class can allow us to better understand the importance of language.
• Frozen/fixed: Always the same- Wedding Vows/bible, anthem (requires no feedback) "all visitors must report to the office"
  • Middle Class
    • Consultative: Seeking assistance, between supervisor/worker, most cases one is deemed more experienced. (lawyer vs client, doctor vs patient)
  • Casual: friends, general and not specific, dependent upon non-verbal assists/ syntax is often incomplete (relaxed and focused on just getting information out. Slang usually present.
  • Intimate Language: close relationship (lovers, twins) "inside jokess", terms of endearment, mother’s pet names to children, lovers and smooches.
Registers of language

Transition from one language register to an adjacent is usually acceptable but skipping one or more levels is usually considered inappropriate and even offensive. Exist no matter where you are. Hold power in different settings.

Ex. Asking for a loan in casual register - he/she will respond best to formal register. Yet formal register spoken in poverty almost certainly won’t bring the same power.

Honor the language people bring with them while building a bridge to formal. Middle-class structures tend to use formal register; it’s beneficial for that register to be nurtured. (mirror language)

Hidden rules of the class

• The unspoken cues & habits of a group
• Generally we recognize this for racial & ethnic groups but not economic groups
• These rules become part of your belief system and guide how you behave.
• Relationships can be broken when you do not know the hidden rules.
• Hidden rules can limit your interaction with people who are different from you.
• Individuals bring the hidden rules of the class in which they were raised.

What to learn about communication...

Relationship is the number one priority for people living in poverty – so a lot of decisions are based upon relationship; respect; authenticity

Express appreciation for the story: may not have a beginning, middle and end, Ask a lot of clarifying questions

Generational poverty: typically use the “casual register” – 800 words and a lot of facial and body language

Behaviors/characteristics in poverty:
- Laugh inappropriately
- Complete things partially
- Physically fight
- Sequencing is not valued or used
- Argue Loudly

- Disorganized
- Polarized thinking
- Unable to follow direction
- Use vulgar language/comments
- Appear angry/hostile
Priorities

• Poverty: survival, relationships, entertainment
• Middle Class: work, achievement, material security
• Wealth: political, financial, social connections

Comparisons

Generational poverty:
• Decisions based on needs of entertainment & relationships
• Ability to fight or have someone fight for you
• Money is entertainment and relationships
• The world is what is locally around you

Middle Class:
• Decisions are made related to work and achievement
• Ability to use words as tools to negotiate conflict
• Money is for security
• The world is your own nation

Wealth:
• Ramifications of financial, social, and political connections
• Money is for security
• The world is international

Barrier’s to getting out of poverty

• Gaining employment: criminal history, lack employment history, experience, lack of education/qualifications
• Ability to manage money—money is to be used for relationships and entertainment
• Not reporting domestic violence: partner not identified when applying for aid
• Fear of being denied services
• Previous encounters
• Fear of being judged
• Ex. reluctant to seek public assistance or disclose they receive it due to repeated suggestions they are lazy and just need to get a job, or poverty is caused by poor spending decisions, bad behavior or lack of moral character.
Moving out of poverty: what does it take?

- Provide structure and choice to govern themselves from dependence to independence
- To move from poverty to middle class, one must give up relationships for achievement.
- Keep in mind what you are asking: change in belief system, culture, way of life, habits, etc. (stages of change)
- Poverty – more than financial resources; Other resources are important in a person’s success and the ability to leave poverty and its habits behind.
- Education and relationships is needed to move from poverty. Education provides emotional support, relationships and role models, appropriate adults – teaching and goal setting.
- Patience, time, desire

Cont.

- Plant seeds to grow
- Take baby steps
- Hope changes everything

Final thoughts?

- In order to effectively work with those in poverty, it is important to develop an awareness and acceptance of their differences.
- Accept people as they are and where they are; genuinely communicate and show your desire to help and assist them.
- What we see as a workable suggestion, may be seen as virtually impossible to those in poverty.
- Use empathy not sympathy
- There is hope but it takes time & resiliency!!
- Choose to be nice!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Evaluation & Thank you
Quotes from people living in poverty

1. “It’s feeling that normal daily challenges are magnified one hundred times more because I am that many more times powerless.”

2. “It’s things that you want you can’t have, places you want to live and can’t. We all have needs; being poor, those needs can’t be met.”

3. “Not being able to support my family on my income level. I grew up this way and thought it would be better for my family.”

4. “Being poor means not getting the same chances and needing to fight for everything.”

5. “Being poor means living is harder and quitting is easier.”

6. “It’s being almost invisible to almost everyone.”

7. “Being without what the middle class takes for granted.”

8. “Being poor in America is like going hungry at a banquet. It shouldn’t happen, but it does.”

9. “It feels like you’re looked down on, regardless of the reason for poverty.”

10. “On TV, life is seen as a workable situation. In reality it is a struggle just to put food on the table and pay for the necessities of life.”

11. “People with high paying jobs don’t understand your problems.”

12. “Being poor in America means working till you hurt and always coming up short.”

13. “It’s being scared and afraid not knowing what tomorrow will be like.”
Barriers to change

Making changes is very difficult for those in generational poverty. The following table lists the barriers to change that helping agencies will need to address to improve outcomes with people in poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers Generated by Poverty</th>
<th>Barriers Generated by Family and Social Networks</th>
<th>Barriers Generated by Community Providers</th>
<th>Barriers Generated by Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis/survival/reactive mode lifestyle</td>
<td>Resistance and sabotage by family and friends</td>
<td>Program theory based on middle-class mindsets</td>
<td>Departmental thinking and planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in the moment</td>
<td>Penance/forgiveness discipline patterns</td>
<td>Clients perceived as “needy” recipients</td>
<td>Distrust of people in poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low resources</td>
<td>Low social capital</td>
<td>Middle-class “noise”</td>
<td>Acceptance of those who exploit the weakest members of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarized thinking</td>
<td>The need to earn respect of one’s peers</td>
<td>Talents, skills, and abilities unrecognized</td>
<td>Acceptance of high levels of poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatedness</td>
<td>Not knowing the hidden rules of economic class</td>
<td>Organizational change difficult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing how to plan</td>
<td>Cognitive problems</td>
<td>Departmental thinking and planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-existing problems</td>
<td>Co-existing problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing the hidden rules of other classes</td>
<td>Not knowing the hidden rules of other classes</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of losing others</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of giving up identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Distrust of institutions</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Hidden Rules of Economic Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POVERTY</th>
<th>MIDDLE CLASS</th>
<th>WEALTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSESSIONS</strong></td>
<td>People.</td>
<td>Things.</td>
<td>One-of-a-kind objects, legacies, pedigrees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MONEY</strong></td>
<td>To be used, spent.</td>
<td>To be managed.</td>
<td>To be conserved, invested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONALITY</strong></td>
<td>Is for entertainment.</td>
<td>Is for acquisition and stability.</td>
<td>Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of humor is highly valued.</td>
<td>Achievement is highly valued.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL EMPHASIS</strong></td>
<td>Social inclusion of the people they like.</td>
<td>Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency.</td>
<td>Emphasis is on social exclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD</strong></td>
<td>Key question: Did you have enough? Quantity important.</td>
<td>Key question: Did you like it? Quality important.</td>
<td>Key question: Was it presented well? Presentation important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLOTHING</strong></td>
<td>Clothing valued for individual style and expression of personality.</td>
<td>Clothing valued for its quality and acceptance into the norms of middle class. Label important.</td>
<td>Clothing valued for its artistic sense and expression. Designer important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TIME</strong></td>
<td>Present most important. Decisions made for moment based on feelings or survival.</td>
<td>Future most important. Decisions made against future ramifications.</td>
<td>Traditions and past history most important. Decisions made partially on basis of tradition decorum.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POVERTY</th>
<th>MIDDLE CLASS</th>
<th>WEALTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td>Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality. Education is about facts.</td>
<td>Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money.</td>
<td>Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LANGUAGE</strong></td>
<td>Casual register. Language is about survival.</td>
<td>Formal register. Language is about negotiation.</td>
<td>Formal register. Language is about connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY STRUCTURE</strong></td>
<td>Tends to be matriarchal.</td>
<td>Tends to be patriarchal.</td>
<td>Depends on who has/controls money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORLD VIEW</strong></td>
<td>Sees world in terms of local setting.</td>
<td>Sees world in terms of national setting.</td>
<td>Sees world in terms of an international view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOVE</strong></td>
<td>Love and acceptance conditional, based on whether individual is liked.</td>
<td>Love and acceptance conditional, based largely on achievement.</td>
<td>Love and acceptance conditional, related to social standing and connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DRIVING FORCES</strong></td>
<td>Survival, relationships, entertainment.</td>
<td>Work and achievement.</td>
<td>Financial, political, social connections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Humor | About people and Sex | About Situations | About Social Faux Pas |
## Mental Model of Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Concrete Knowledge</th>
<th>Abstract Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cars and transportation</td>
<td>Vehicles are not dependable and require constant repair; breakdowns result in lost jobs, missed appointments, and stress. Insufficient public transportation limits mobility.</td>
<td>Cars purchased “as is” from buy-here, pay-here dealers come with interest rates as high as 15.5 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Houses are often in isolated rural areas or unsafe urban and suburban neighborhoods. Houses are crowded, people come and go, there is no private place for children to do their homework, rooms are used for many purposes, people sleep on the couch, repairs can’t be made, landlord can be difficult, people have to move frequently</td>
<td>Fifty-nine percent of people in poverty pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs &amp; Money</td>
<td>Jobs don’t pay enough, temp work doesn’t provide enough hours or benefits, many work two jobs to make ends meet, no Vacation. Money is a constant worry. People are vulnerable to the price of gas going to $2 (or more) a gallon and milk going to $3 a gallon</td>
<td>Proportion of unemployed workers looking for a job for twenty-seven weeks or more: 23 percent, highest proportion in twenty years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>There are concerns about not having enough. Grocery stores have moved out of the neighborhood. Local grocery stores that stayed overcharge, and the quality of produce is poor. Must buy from convenience stores. Fast-food outlets provide relatively cheap but fattening food.</td>
<td>Twenty-three percent of the nation’s lower-income classes are obese, compared with 16 percent of the middle and upper classes. Large supermarket chains (the best bet for affordable, fresh and healthy foods) abandoned less affluent city neighborhoods, focusing instead on the suburbs. A 1997 USDA study found that food prices, including those for produce, are, on average, 10 percent higher in inner-city food markets than they are in the suburbs ... There are three times as many supermarkets in wealthy neighborhoods as in poor ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness &amp; Health Care</td>
<td>Being sick, caring for others who are sick, and trying to get healthcare are time-consuming and exhausting.</td>
<td>Poverty is associated with increased risks of cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, ulcers, rheumatoid disorders, psychiatric diseases, and a number of types of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Model of Poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td>It’s hard to get kids through the day; people have concerns about school, health, clothing, and safety. Childcare arrangements are unreliable, while good childcare either is unavailable or too expensive.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are many more poor children in the US than in most Western European countries. In the United States, one-fifth of all children live below the poverty level. Two in every five children live in poor or near-poor families.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety, Crime</strong></td>
<td>Protecting your people and yourself is a constant concern. The criminal justice system is part of life; members of the family are in jail, on parole, or on probation. The drug culture is threatening.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prison population: one in 143 adults in prison, an all-time high. Sixty to seventy percent of people in prison are from poverty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends &amp; Neighbors</strong></td>
<td>Relationships are important. They are a resource needed for survival.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inner-city social networks are not nearly as dense or effective as those Stack found in the late 1960s, for like the sprawling suburbs and small villages in the heartland, inner cities too have less social capital nowadays then they once did. Individuals who grow up in socially isolated rural and inner-city areas are held back, not merely because they tend to be financially and educationally deprived, but also because they are relatively poor in social ties that can provide a ‘hand up.’”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entertainment</strong></td>
<td>Entertainment takes many forms, including cable television, video games, drugs, alcohol, music, and spending time with friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entertainment is a driving force for people in poverty. It helps them survive a very stressful life.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agency Time</strong></td>
<td>People in poverty typically go to three to nine agencies in the course of a year to get needs addressed. Each agency demands behavioral changes, a plan of action, and time for the activities listed in the plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Much of human life consists of playing roles within specific institutions. Individuals’ chances of interacting with any given kind of institution are not random: Families from elite backgrounds tend to participate in institutions serving the elite, and families in poverty tend to be involved in institutions serving the poor. Children grow up within a broad, highly stratified social system.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Having the money to purchase goods and services, save for emergencies, and to invest. Having an understanding of how money works—being fiscally literate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Being able to choose and control emotional responses, particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior. This is the “state of mind” that determines the way we think, feel, and behave at any given moment. It’s an internal resource and shows its self through stamina, perseverance, and choice. This is about interpersonal skills for teamwork, teaching others, leadership, negotiation, and working with people from many backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental</td>
<td>Having the mental abilities and skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life. This includes how much education and training a person has in order to compete in the workplace for well-paying jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Believing in divine purpose and guidance and/or having a rich culture that offers support and guidance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Having physical health and mobility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Systems</td>
<td>Having social networks of trustworthiness and reciprocity that include people from outside one’s immediate circle. This is an external resource. Communities with rich social capital will improve life for everyone, even those with low personal social capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships, Role Models</td>
<td>Having frequent access to people who are appropriate, who are nurturing to children, and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity, Trust</td>
<td>Trust is linked to two issues: predictability and safety. Can I know with some certainty that this person will do what he/she says? Can I predict with some accuracy that it will occur every time? The second part of the question is safety: Will I be safe with this person? This is an internal asset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation, Persistence</td>
<td>Having the energy and drive to prepare for, plan, and complete projects, jobs, and personal changes. This is another internal asset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the Hidden Rules</td>
<td>Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of both middle class and wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Where Resources Come From

Some resources are internal, coming from within the person. Some are external, coming from or being present in the family, neighborhood, and community. Some are both.

No one builds resources entirely on his/her own. Even physical beauty and high intelligence are genetic gifts from our parents.

As individuals we determine if we will utilize, even enhance, our resources.

Some families are building resources, passing on high internal and external assets to the next generation.

Some families are losing resources through accidents, illness, bad choices, and other circumstances, thus passing lower resources to the next generation.
Resources

Building Resources

There are four common ways that people move out of poverty: an insight, goal, and determination to change; a particular talent or skill; a relationship with someone who guides and supports; and the pain of living in poverty. All of these ways are about utilizing and building resources.

Individuals can choose to build their own resources (for example, daily exercises to stay in shape, attending classes in money management).

Agencies can help people build resources. For example, mental health agencies can help individuals build emotional resources. Communities can help citizens build resources. For example, communities can attract businesses that pay good wages, and communities can provide social capital through organizations that are inclusive of diverse people.

The greater one’s resources, the better the quality of life. It stands to reason that good health is preferable to illness, that financial stability is preferable to lack of basic needs, that having many friends and acquaintances is preferable to being alone and without friends. Poverty is not just about money. For example, it is possible to have very little money and be very high in other resources (for example, spiritual, mental, and emotional).

Likewise, it’s possible to have strong financial resources and be spiritually impoverished. Resources are interlocking. For example, a serious injury will suddenly lower one’s physical resources and could negatively impact a person’s income (financial resources), the ability to think and remember (mental resources), and one’s social life (social support) if the injury stops the person from joining others in activities once enjoyed.

The greater the resources, the easier it is to build other resources. If one has high emotional resources, it’s easier to get and keep a job. Many people have the mental capability to do the job but can’t get along with others, so they lose their jobs.
Physical and sexual assaults, or threats to commit them, are the most apparent forms of domestic violence and are usually the actions that allow others to become aware of the problem. However, regular use of other abusive behaviors by the batterer, when reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, make up a larger system of abuse. Although physical assaults may occur only once or occasionally, they instill threat of future violent attacks and allow the abuser to take control of the woman’s life and circumstances.

The Power & Control diagram is a particularly helpful tool in understanding the overall pattern of abusive and violent behaviors, which are used by a batterer to establish and maintain control over his partner. Very often, one or more violent incidents are accompanied by an array of these other types of abuse. They are less easily identified, yet firmly establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.