

# Breaking the Cycle Of Deprivation in Oxfordshire

Can we learn from the work on  
Bridges out of Poverty?



# Bridges out of Poverty

- Is a framework for understanding poverty
- Developed by Ruby Payne in USA and been used in Australia.
- Reading BC are adopting it and training all of their children and families workforce across their partnerships



# The underpinning themes

- Different groups in society use different registers of language
- Different socio economic groups live their lives using different sets of rules
- That misunderstandings between groups playing by different rules and using different language are a barrier to social mobility and are preventing us from effectively working productively together to build bridges for getting out of poverty
- Its not necessarily what we do but more importantly that we understand what we are trying to achieve and how we approach that.



# What are the resources needed to cross bridges out of poverty?

1. Financial – generally thought to be the most important factor but is not
2. Emotional – ability to choose and control emotional responses to negative situations. The most important – enables people to persist and become resilient - to overcome setbacks and not return to old habits or patterns
3. Mental skills and abilities including literacy and ICT to deal with daily life
4. Spiritual – belief in purpose and guidance – can prevent feelings of hopelessness
5. Physical – health and mobility – important for self sufficiency



# What are the resources needed to cross bridges out of poverty?

6. Support systems – external resources friends family and backup resources in times of need
7. Relationships/role models frequent access to positive role models that do not engage in self destructive behaviour
8. Knowledge of hidden rules – unspoken understandings that cue members of that group to ‘this individual does or doesn’t fit’– important in assisting those who aspire to become socially more mobile.
9. Coping strategies for moving mindset to move issues from the concrete to the abstract. Delayed gratification



# The Importance of Language

- Frozen language
  - Always the same e.g. Lord's Prayer
- Formal Register
  - Language of work and school. Complete sentences and correct syntax.
  - Formal when used in conversation not as formal as formal register
- Consultative
  - Between friends 400-800 word vocabulary; often incomplete syntax
- Casual
  - Language between lovers or twins
- Intimate



# Hidden Rules

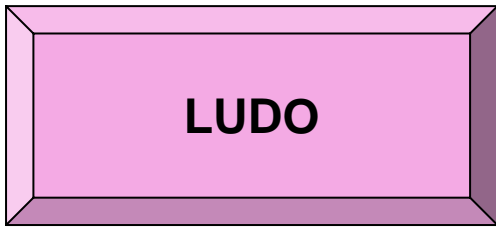
To go down one register in the same conversation is socially accepted. Two or more drops in register would be considered offensive.



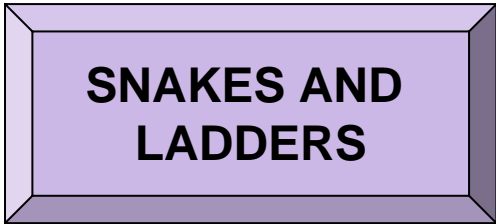
# Quick Quiz

- Self assessment can you survive?
- If you fall mostly into the middle class you probably assume that everyone knows these things
- Likewise people who score highly in the other classes may assume that you understand their rules.

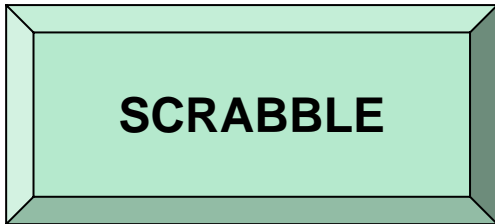




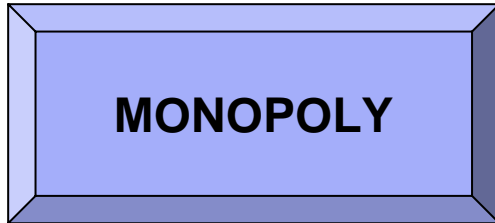
Generational poverty



Situational poverty



Middle classes



New wealth



Generational wealth



# Hidden Rules amongst classes

- Some examples
- Money
- Personality
- Social Emphasis – Introductions
- Language
- Education
- Driving Forces



# Conflict

- Being able to fight or have someone to fight for you is important to surviving poverty - fists are available when words aren't and may be more highly respected.
- In the middle classes using tools of language to negotiate conflict is crucial.



# Money

- One of the biggest difficulties in getting out of poverty is managing money and information around money.
- How can you learn to manage something you have never had?
- In poverty – money is used as an expression of personality and for entertainment and relationships
- The middle and wealthy classes use money for security



# Ruby's research shows that

- Most individuals in poverty don't believe they are poor.
- Most of the wealthy don't believe they are wealthy and always cite people who has more than they do.



# Thoughts on generational and situational poverty

- Having been in poverty for at least two generations
- Society owes one a living
- Fewer resources to draw on
- Rely on informal register
- Lack of resources due to a particular event e.g. divorce, illness.
- Pride and refusal to accept charity
- Often bring resources
- Can use formal register



Do you recognise  
these behaviours in any of the  
families that you work with?



# Characteristics of generational poverty

1. Background noise prevalent – TV always on more than one person talking at a time
2. Ability to entertain and bring humour is prized – brings respite
3. Relationships are possessions and are prized and need to keep people close – fear of children leaving
4. Matriarchal structure most common
5. Casual register used for everything and Non verbal communication important
6. Any job is part of survival not a career



# Characteristics of generational poverty

7. Males must be strong – rules rigid and may involve fighting, being a good lover, physical work; going to prison may be considered evidence of being a real man. Punishment is about penance and forgiveness not change
8. Greater belief in destiny and fate than choice
9. Polarised thinking – options not examined ‘I cant do it.’
10. Time is flexible and often relates to emotional significance
11. Lack of organisation – filing systems don’t exist
12. Living for the moment – Carpe Diem



So what are the implications for services working in areas of deprivation?



# Implications for professionals working with families in areas of deprivation

- Understanding of hidden rules – all of us
- Teaching that there are different sets of rules to be used in different circumstances
- Seek workable solutions not always middle class solutions
- Working ‘with’ to build internal resources within individuals and families that can be sustained

