

## TABLE OF CONTENTS ANNOTATED

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1 Using the Hidden Rules of Class to Create Sustainable Communities</b> .....	11
This paper brings together core aha! Process concepts with new information and tools that have been developed in the last 10 years. It provides an overview of Bridges constructs with a focus on community-level action.	
<b>2 Getting Ahead Philosophy and Process</b> .....	59
Here we cover the theory and design of <i>Getting Ahead</i> , the workbook that helps people investigate the impact that poverty has had on them and their communities. It brings people in poverty into the planning and decision-making process at the community level.	
<b>3 Additive Model:</b>	
<b>aha! Process’s Approach to Building Sustainable Communities</b> .....	93
This paper describes how problems get named and the mindsets behind different approaches to change. It introduces the positive, but realistic, approach that aha! Process takes to poverty issues, contrasting it with the deficit model.	
<b>4 aha! Process Disaster Recovery Plan</b> .....	117
Disasters often happen quickly and dramatically, but sometimes they creep up on a community. This paper is a quick guide to how aha! Process can help in both cases.	
<b>5 Building Bridges Communities</b> .....	125
<b>Part I</b> of this paper is a quick read – a summary of foundational books, processes and features of the Bridges Model.	
<b>Part II</b> is for communities that have made a decision to organise themselves around Bridges constructs. Learning from communities that lead the way, it lays out guiding and organising principles, as well as step-by-step instructions.	
<b>6 Whole System Planning</b> .....	151
This paper challenges Bridges Steering Committees to play a larger role in their communities. It introduces the Bridges Continuum, a tool for the development of comprehensive cradle-to-grave strategies that can be used to attract people from all sectors to the work of creating prosperous communities. Bridges Steering Committees are encouraged to do whole system planning, to operate above the ‘silos’, and to focus on metrics that really matter.	
<b>Index</b> .....	189



## INTRODUCTION

**I**f ever there was a time that people needed new ways to talk with each other about poverty, prosperity and community sustainability, this is it. In the wake of the 'Great Economic Meltdown of 2008', communities are being challenged to remain or, in some cases, become socially and economically viable.

This six-part book provides a new way of talking and doing based on a foundation of terms, constructs, models and strategies that a number of communities are using to address poverty and prosperity in comprehensive ways. This collection of papers arises from *Bridges Out of Poverty*, which was written by Dr Ruby K. Payne, Terie Dreussi Smith and me in 1999. People who had read *Bridges* and attended workshops by that name began to self-organise to create communities that worked on poverty issues in new and creative ways. Since 2001, 'Bridges Communities' have sprung up in the United States, Canada, Australia and Slovakia. These papers chart the changes and development in Bridges work since 2001.

My primary purpose in publishing this compilation of papers is to help struggling communities pass on a high quality of life to the next generation. I also want to encourage existing Bridges Communities to respond to the challenges posed by the Great Economic Meltdown. These papers can be taken selectively to fill in gaps – or as a whole to inform people who are new to our work. I think of these papers as an overview of ideas that are foundational to individual,

organisational and community change. Creative people have taken our ideas, added them to their own best practices and developed programs and applications that already have delivered amazing results. Some of these stories appear on our website ([www.bridgesoutofpoverty.com](http://www.bridgesoutofpoverty.com)). Readers should know that Bridges Communities are active; we do, we learn and we pass it on. Our community of practice is growing.

Bridges Communities have a working knowledge of poverty that can help those who have been impacted problems like the economic crisis. With a recent job-loss rate of 600,000 a month in the United States, many people will be driven into the “tyranny of the moment”, a feature of poverty that people who were already living in the rubble at the bottom of the economy are familiar with. Finding a place to stay, petrol for the car and food for the kids demands immediate, concrete solutions. In a shaky world, whether it’s due to a recent foreclosure or to persistent poverty, it’s tougher and takes longer to solve daily living problems. Instability robs people of their future orientation, their ability to resist predators (who provide concrete solutions at inflated costs), and the time they need to investigate solutions that will get them into a stable environment.

But it isn’t just people in poverty who experience the tyranny of the moment, it’s civilian populations in war, it’s victims of natural disasters, it’s organisations whose budgets have been slashed, and it’s cities and municipalities that have lost their tax base. The National League of Cities survey showed that 84% of US cities recently report facing fiscal difficulties. Some 92% expected to have trouble meeting their city’s needs the remainder of this year, 69% have instituted hiring freezes or layoffs, 42% were delaying or canceling infrastructure projects and 22% have instituted across-the-board cuts. Cities’ tax revenues are declining as property values drop, shopping slows, and unemployment rises. While Australia doesn’t have exactly the same problems as the United States, we do face our own fiscal difficulties and much within this book can be adapted.

The sudden economic collapse masks the already existing downward trend that underlies the problem. US cities have been in decline since 1970. Using three objective indices of urban life – poverty rates, unemployment rates and real per capita incomes changes – just three cities in 1970 were in trouble with a normalised index more than 30% higher than the national average. In 1980, fully 20 cities were having difficulty by the same measure. In a study that captured data prior to the financial upheaval in September 2008, Moody's Economy reported that two-thirds of the United States' 381 metropolitan areas were in recession, and another one in five was at risk.

The point is that the problems our communities are facing today have been building for a long time. Families in poverty and those of us doing Bridges work knew that many communities were in trouble. The problems only came to light in a significant way in September 2008. In fact, our communities are in as much difficulty as the families who live in them. Now many US cities are in poverty. The toll that poverty takes on individuals and families is increasingly being felt by community leaders and our communities in general.

We cannot allow the old and dead ideas that brought our communities to this point to be the answers for the future. We can't get through this recession by trying to get back to the way we were. "The way we were" contributed to these problems. There are forces afoot that are deeper than the present crisis – factors that transcend the current difficulties. For example, globalisation as we know it isn't working very well for those of us in the West. While globalisation narrowed the income and wealth gap between the rich nations and the poor nations, the income and wealth gap between the rich and the poor in Australia was widening. Of the 30 nations in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Australia was already the ninth highest in income disparity, behind Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey.

The old and dead ideas on how to build prosperous communities won't work either. America used to create wealth by manufacturing products like steel and cars. Then we convinced ourselves that we could let go of making physical products and, instead, create wealth by devising financial products around loans, mortgages and fees. These factors, among others, resulted in a downward pressure on wages that is very likely to extend beyond the recovery period for this recession and into the future. Well-paying jobs are at the heart of establishing economic stability. In Bridges Communities we know that to talk about poverty we also must talk about wealth-creating mechanisms.

The federal, state and local strategies for getting people out of poverty before the economic downturn weren't working; in fact, the number of people in persistent and concentrated poverty was on the rise. Those piecemeal approaches to alleviating and preventing poverty didn't even have an intention of getting people out of poverty – only of getting people off welfare. And now, due to the Great Economic Meltdown, there are even more people in poverty and more people out of work – plus it's becoming that much harder for people at the bottom to make the transition out of poverty. The old and dead ideas for getting people out of poverty won't do.

The Great Economic Meltdown did one good thing: It blew away the myths that all was well, that things were working, that with a little more hard work and “pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps” people would get out of poverty, that every entity doing its part would lead to the good life, that a little tweaking of the system would set everything right again.

Keeping in mind that each crisis brings with it opportunities for new approaches and positive changes, Bridges Communities have the knowledge base, principles, strategies, tools and partners to develop innovative solutions. With our lengthening Bridges track record, we know how to avoid getting stuck in the tyranny of the moment and how to build a future story in the midst of chaos.

We would like to help other communities lay the foundation for high-impact and comprehensive strategies of their own. Through the Texas-based aha! Process organisation (Dr Ruby Payne's company, which provides products and training for those working with people in poverty), we developed a partnership with Move the Mountain for the Circles™ Campaign to help fuel and accelerate the work of Bridges Communities. We worked with the business community and found that the private sector could use the foundation we laid to quickly get good results with new hires from poverty. And we found a way to engage people in poverty, bringing them to the planning table to help solve community problems.

The papers compiled in this book tell the story of the development of the Bridges methodology and process. They point to how the Bridges Communities model can help neighbourhoods and communities build a future where everyone can do well. This collection of papers includes a synopsis of the book *Bridges Out of Poverty*, explains how to engage people from all classes and sectors, expands on core concepts, describes how aha! Process and the community can respond to natural disasters and persistent poverty, illustrates how Bridges Communities are formed, and provides tools for Bridges Steering Committees.

These papers can help the reader in three ways: (1) They serve as "CliffsNotes" for the foundational ideas that come from *Bridges Out of Poverty*; (2) they describe new models, ideas, applications and tools that we have developed as communities took ownership of the work; and (3) they present guidelines and action steps for the future.

The *first paper, "Using the Hidden Rules of Class to Create Sustainable Communities,"* describes and expands on the core constructs found in *Bridges Out of Poverty*. It offers accurate descriptions (mental models) of the living environments of poverty, middle class and wealth. It holds up the lens of economic class as a way of analysing the complexities of poverty. It also provides the community with a shared

language with which to address both poverty and prosperity issues. This lexicon includes a:

- Definition of poverty that is much more than a simple income guideline.
- Description of the hidden rules of class to help us develop relationships of mutual respect.
- Review of the research on the causes of poverty so that we can become proficient at addressing all the causes, not just one or two.

The paper defines a community that is at risk – and suggests an accountability tool for communities, as well as principles for change.

We have learned much from people, communities and organisations that already have applied Bridges concepts. Our work has been used by numerous neighbourhoods and communities, including those that are largely African American, Native American, Appalachian, Caucasian, Hispanic/Latino, urban and rural. People in poverty have informed and helped develop our books and strategies. They have used the workbook *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* to examine the impact that poverty has on them and their communities. Getting Ahead engages people in poverty as problem solvers, as vital members of planning and decision-making groups. The **second paper**, “*Getting Ahead Philosophy and Process*”, describes the philosophy and process for the Getting Ahead work-group experience.

The **third paper**, “*Additive Model: aha! Process’s Approach to Building Sustainable Communities*”, outlines the additive model used by aha! Process. In it we challenge the “chicken inspector” mindset of the deficit model and discuss the danger of not taking a comprehensive approach and, as a result, ending up blaming the individual. The additive model recognises what people from all classes bring to the table and advocates for shared decision making. Community members are encouraged to see themselves as “barn raisers” rather than “consumers at vending machines”.

The paper on disaster recovery is particularly pertinent given the economic crisis of 2008 and 2009. When circumstances force us into survival mode, we can get trapped in the tyranny of the moment where we can't see beyond next week – or even tomorrow – because we're busy solving immediate, concrete problems. So it is that the very strategies and skills needed to survive during wars, natural disasters and persistent poverty are the very things that make us vulnerable to predators. Exploiting the vulnerable is easy if the service or product meets a tangible need and is delivered by those who feign concern and respect. Communities also can get stuck in the tyranny of the moment just as individuals can. The **fourth paper, "Disaster Recovery Plan"**, is a quick read on how to respond to disasters.

The **fifth paper, "Building Bridges Communities"**, describes how Bridges Communities were formed. It is a description, not a prescription. Every community has its unique history, population, leadership, circumstances and approaches. Taking ownership of the Bridges constructs is the first step. This leads to self-organising and taking action. The paper offers lessons learned from other communities; it also describes the role of the Bridges Steering Committee, guiding principles, start-up steps, strategies and supports that are available.

The **sixth paper, "Whole System Planning"**, introduces the Bridges Continuum, a tool for BSCs. The continuum can assist in bringing all sectors and demographics to the table:

- The service and health sectors to help stabilise an unstable environment
- Education to prepare individuals to pursue their dreams
- The business sector to help people acquire income, assets and wealth



The continuum covers poverty from cradle to grave and also provides for a balanced life and prosperous community. Poverty is typically addressed from the heart, from the moral and social justice perspective. This paper addresses poverty from the head as well, by providing metrics and fallout costs – and showing the benefits that each sector of the community derives from the work of the others. The business sector, for example, can see that early-childhood interventions can have a return of 15 to 17% on dollars spent by helping prepare children to learn. The sixth paper advocates for whole system planning and describes the role of Bridges partners and champions.

Readers unfamiliar with Bridges will want to read the first paper to learn Bridges core concepts before moving on. People already familiar with Bridges constructs, such as those who have attended our workshops or are serving on a Bridges Steering Committee (of a Bridges Community) or Guiding Coalitions of Circles, may choose to move directly to the paper that most interests them.

Finally, a cautionary note. At the beginning of this piece I quoted Earl Miller of M.I.T.: “An insight is a restructuring of information; it’s seeing the same old thing in a completely new way. Once that restructuring occurs, you never go back.” Somewhere in these papers you might have had an insight or two. If that has occurred, I want you to know – you can never go back!





*The way children experience life is determined by the families and communities in which they are raised; it falls to families and communities to create a way of life that is healthy, prosperous and sustainable.*

*In her seminal 1996 work A Framework for Understanding Poverty (fourth revised edition, 2005), Dr Ruby K. Payne introduces the concept of hidden rules of economic class – and in future works she addresses sustainability, the next major challenge all communities must face. With Payne’s ideas as a springboard, this paper seeks to contribute to the dialogue.*

*Economic and social trends going back to the 1970s show a decline in the quality of life in western countries. The middle class is shrinking (Lind 2004, pp. 120-128), social connectedness is declining in all social classes (Putnam 2000, pp. 9, 63), some rural areas are losing population and the sense of community they once had (Lind 2003, pp. 86-88), some urban areas are collapsing as middle-class families move to the suburbs looking for good schools (Warren 2003, p. 8), and working a second job is required to make ends meet (Miringoff 2000, p. 9). For low-wage workers, vulnerability is becoming a concrete experience; for people in generational poverty, vulnerability has always been a concrete experience.*

*This paper addresses the impact of generational poverty on families and communities, why we must respond, and how to use an understanding of economic diversity to build sustainable communities.*

#### **THE SEQUENCE INCLUDES:**

- *Creating a mental model of poverty and middle class.*
- *Exploring the hidden rules of economic class that arise from those experiences.*
- *Examining the resources that define quality of life.*
- *Creating a mental model of communities at risk.*
- *Reviewing poverty research to uncover strategies for change.*
- *Naming the barriers to change for people in poverty.*
- *Defining strategies for change based on the research.*
- *Exploring evaluations and reports used to monitor progress.*
- *Defining the principles for change.*
- *Outlining community roles for creating sustainable communities.*
- *Offering a mental model for prosperity.*

**–Philip E. DeVol**