

Causes of Poverty—Research Continuum

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS AND CIRCUMSTANCES	COMMUNITY CONDITIONS	EXPLOITATION	POLITICAL/ECONOMIC STRUCTURES
<p><i>Definition:</i> Research on the choices, behaviors, and circumstances of people in poverty</p>	<p><i>Definition:</i> Research on resources and human and social capital in the city or county</p>	<p><i>Definition:</i> Research on the impact of exploitation on individuals and communities</p>	<p><i>Definition:</i> Research on political, economic, and social policies and systems at the organizational, city/county, state, national, and international levels</p>
<p><i>Sample topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Racism ~ Discrimination by age, gender, disability, race, sexual identity ~ Bad loans ~ Credit-card debt ~ Lack of savings ~ Skill sets ~ Dropping out ~ Lack of education ~ Alcoholism ~ Disabilities ~ Job loss ~ Teen pregnancies ~ Early language experience ~ Child-rearing strategies ~ Bankruptcy due to health problems ~ Street crime ~ White-collar crime ~ Dependency ~ Work ethic ~ Lack of organizational skills ~ Lack of amenities 	<p><i>Sample topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Racism ~ Discrimination by age, gender, disability, race, sexual identity ~ Layoffs ~ Middle-class flight ~ Plant closings ~ Underfunded schools ~ Weak safety net ~ Criminalizing poverty ~ Employer insurance premiums rising in order to drop companies with record of poor health ~ Charity that leads to dependency ~ High rates of illness leading to high absenteeism and low productivity ~ <i>Brain drain</i>* ~ City and regional planning ~ Mix of employment/wage opportunities ~ Loss of access to high-quality schools, childcare, and preschool ~ Downward pressure on wages 	<p><i>Sample topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Racism ~ Discrimination by age, gender, disability, race, sexual identity ~ Payday lenders ~ Lease/purchase outlets ~ Subprime mortgages ~ Sweatshops ~ <i>Human trafficking</i>* ~ Employment and labor law violations* ~ Wage and benefits theft ~ Some landlords ~ Sex trade ~ Internet scams ~ Drug trade ~ Poverty premium (the poor pay more for goods and services) ~ Day labor 	<p><i>Sample topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Racism ~ Discrimination by age, gender, disability, race, sexual identity ~ Financial oligarchy—the military, industrial, congressional complex ~ <i>Return on political investment</i>* (ROPI) ~ Corporate lobbyists ~ <i>Bursting “bubbles”</i>* ~ Free Trade Agreements ~ <i>Recessions</i>* ~ Lack of wealth-creating mechanisms ~ <i>Stagnant wages</i>* ~ Insecure pensions ~ Healthcare costs ~ Lack of insurance ~ De-industrialization ~ Globalization ~ Increased productivity ~ Minimum wage, living wage, self-sufficient wage ~ Declining middle class ~ Decline in unions ~ Taxation patterns ~ Wealth-creating mechanisms

2. A sustainable community where everyone can live well must be created. The sustainability grid is a tool that can be used to engage people from all classes, organizations (agencies, schools, healthcare providers, courts, etc.), sectors (elected leaders, business sector, faith-based entities, and cultural groups), and political positions (liberals, conservatives, and independents). The grid includes the thinking of all groups.
3. Everyone can take action. The first column calls for action by individuals, organizations, and communities, as well as changes in policy.
4. GA graduates play an important part when using this tool. They need to be at the table with other community leaders.

Community Sustainability Grid				
	Individual Choices, Behaviors, and Circumstances	Community Conditions	Exploitation	Political/Economic Structures
Individual Action				
Organizational Action				
Community Action				
Policy Changes				



Investigate This!

Community Approach to Poverty

Most GA graduates are busy stabilizing their situations and building resources—and don't have time to become deeply involved in working on policy issues right away.

Those who are interested can investigate what their own communities are doing to address poverty in a comprehensive way. You might start by asking the sponsor of the Getting Ahead classes for information.

In Appendix D you can learn how the Community Sustainability Grid is being used in other communities.