






Research & Readings – Community & Anti-Stigma

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 Tags	

Purpose

Provide research evidence and readings that support the "community over labels" framework and dismantle the "us vs them" narrative.

Core Research Foundation

This module is built on evidence from social capital research, peer leadership studies, and shame/stigma research—showing that community connection (not individual perfection) drives lasting change.

Community & Social Capital (Breaking "Us vs Them")

 Chetty, R., Jackson, M., Kuchler, T., Stroebe, J., et al. (2022)

"Social Capital I: Measurement and Associations with Economic Mobility."

Nature, 608, 108-121.

Key finding: Social networks are one of the strongest predictors of economic mobility across *all* populations—this is a universal truth, not just for marginalized groups.

Why it matters: Community connections drive success for everyone. Access to opportunity-rich networks is critical.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973)

"The strength of weak ties." *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.

Key finding: Bridges to new networks create opportunity. Weak ties (acquaintances, not close friends) often provide the most valuable connections.

Why it matters: Your extended network matters as much as your close circle. Every connection is potential legacy.

Putnam, R. D. (2000)

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. Simon & Schuster.

Key finding: Declining social capital in America has serious consequences for individual and community well-being.

Why it matters: Rebuilding community isn't soft—it's essential infrastructure for opportunity.

Brookings Institution (2021)

"How We Rise: How social networks impact economic mobility in Racine, WI, San Francisco, CA, and Washington, DC."

Key finding: Place-based research shows social capital varies dramatically by geography and creates lasting economic outcomes.

Peer Leadership & Mentorship (Dismantling Hierarchy)

Baluku, M. M., Matagi, L., & Otto, K. (2020)

"Exploring the Link Between Mentoring and Intangible Outcomes of Entrepreneurship: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy and Moderating Effects of Gender." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 1556.

Key finding: Peer mentorship drives entrepreneurial success and self-efficacy—especially for marginalized entrepreneurs.

Why it matters: Near-peer mentors (people slightly ahead on the journey) are often more effective than expert-only models.

Boat, A. A., Miranda, A., & Syvertsen, A. K. (2022)

"Enhancing Education and Career Pathways Through Peer and Near-Peer Social Capital." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 51, 1287-1304.

Key finding: Near-peer mentorship activates opportunity pathways for students and young adults.

Why it matters: "If they did it, I can too" is a powerful motivator.

Stanford Social Innovation Review (2020)

"When Peers Work Together to Drive Social Change."

Key finding: Peer-led models accelerate change and break down "helper/helped" barriers.

Why it matters: When peers lead, trust is built-in, and networks multiply organically.

PMC/NIH (2023)

"Peer Facilitation: Accelerating Individual, Community, and Societal Change."

Key finding: Peer facilitation benefits both facilitators and participants—the helper-therapy principle.

Beals, R., et al. (2021)

"Activating Social Capital: How Peer and Socio-Emotional Mentoring Facilitate Resilience and Success for Community College Students." *Frontiers in Education*, 6.

Key finding: Socio-emotional support from peers drives resilience and academic success.

Shame, Stigma & Dignity (Breaking Labels)

Brown, B. (2012)

Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. Gotham Books.

Key quote: "Shame is the most corrosive emotion—it disconnects us from change."

Why it matters: Dignity-first approaches (not shame-based interventions) drive lasting transformation.

 **Maté, G. (2008)**

In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction. Knopf Canada.

Key finding: Shame and labels increase relapse and dropout. Dignity and connection drive recovery.

Why it matters: Treating people as problems creates problems. Treating people with dignity creates solutions.

 **Hari, J. (2015)**

Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs. Bloomsbury.

Key quote: "The opposite of addiction is not sobriety—it's connection."

Why it matters: Community heals what isolation broke.

 **Porges, S. W. (2011)**

The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation. W. W. Norton.

Key finding: Safety—not surveillance—unlocks engagement and learning.

Why it matters: You can't build in an environment where you're constantly defending yourself.

Legacy & Purpose

 **Frankl, V. E. (1984)**

Man's Search for Meaning. Beacon Press.

Key finding: Existential meaning strengthens resilience, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Why it matters: Legacy thinking creates meaning that outlasts immediate hardship.

 **Brown, B. (2015)**

Rising Strong: How the Ability to Reset Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. Random House.

Key finding: The reckoning, rumble, and revolution process helps people rise after failure.

 **Sherraden, M. (2013)**

"Assets and the Pursuit of Well-Being." In *Asset Building and Community Development* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Key finding: Asset accumulation (financial, social, human capital) drives long-term well-being and mobility.

Recovery Community Examples (Optional)

These organizations model peer-led, dignity-first community building:

- **The Phoenix** - Free fitness for recovery community (thephoenix.org)
 - **Recovery Café** - Community healing through connection (recoverycafe.org)
 - **Alcoholics Anonymous** - Peer-led mutual support (aa.org)
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Discussion Questions

1. How does the research on social capital challenge the "rugged individualism" narrative?
2. What does the peer leadership research tell us about who's best positioned to lead change?
3. How do shame and stigma function as barriers to economic mobility and community building?

4. What would it look like to design programs and systems based on this research instead of deficit-based models?
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For Further Exploration

- Search "social capital and economic mobility" for regional studies
- Explore peer mentorship models in entrepreneurship accelerators
- Read first-person accounts from recovery community organizations
- Study community organizing models that center lived experience