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Developing Civility and Connection in Midland, Michigan

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Abstract

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Keywords

belonging, high quality connections, incivility, loneliness, mattering, positive interventions, positive psychology, social capital, well-being

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement | Cognitive Psychology | Community Psychology | Interpersonal and Small Group Communication | Leadership Studies | Other Communication | Other Psychology | Peace and Conflict Studies | Political Science | Politics and Social Change | Psychology | Social Influence and Political Communication | Social Psychology | Social Psychology and Interaction | Sociology

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Midland Project: Situation Analysis

Introduction

Four Midland, Michigan leaders partnered with our team to identify ways to engage and integrate positive psychology in a positive citizenship model. They include Sharon Mortensen, President and CEO, Midland Area Community Foundation (MACF); Holly Miller, Executive Director, United Way of Midland County; Maureen Donker, Mayor 5of Midland; and Bridgette Gransden, Midland County Administrator/Controller. These leaders are well-connected in the community and share knowledge about positive psychology not only in their organizations, but also with the Michigan Municipal League and the Council of Michigan Foundations.

Midland has infused positive psychology into its leadership across multiple sectors: education, healthcare, manufacturing, government, non-profit, charitable foundations, and community service organizations. Five prior University of Pennsylvania Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) cohorts have supported Midland, implementing positive interventions in the community. For this service-learning experience, our partners requested we focus efforts on adults (who in turn influence youth), and help systematically increase civility in community conversations, connectedness and inclusiveness with positive psychology. As a result, we will first review the related positive psychology literature, then propose two interventions aimed at building civility and connection and conclude by explaining how to measure them.

Sector Overview

Midland County is home to 83,209 residents, with 41,800 residing in Midland City (US Census Bureau, 2018). Demographically, 21% of the citizens are under 18 years old and 18% are over 65. Forbes recognized Midland as one of the best small cities in which to raise a family (Levy, 2010). Midland has nonprofits that assist its flourishing. Community foundations, like the

Midland Area Community Foundation, are grant-making public charities that work to improve the lives of people in a defined area ("Community Foundations," 2020). These foundations help communities implement valuable projects. For example, Midland's United Way has collaborated with the Harwood Institute to build civil discourse in its community meetings.

Positive citizenship can be thought of as being in the service of advancing the greater good of all who are in the community (Rifkin, 2016). Midland is not alone in its quest for positive citizenship, civil discourse, and connection in its community. Polarization and aggressive, disagreeable communication blight many community dialogues, both online and off-line, across the US (Block, 2008; Haidt, 2012; Kruse, Norris, & Flinchum, 2018; Putnam, 1995; 2000), which can lead to loneliness (Murthy, 2020). Loneliness, the feeling of social isolation, is on the rise, and presents a looming public health problem: loneliness affects one third of people in industrialized countries, one in 12 severely, and is associated with a 26% increase in premature mortality (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). These proportions are increasing (Murthy, 2020). Loneliness is often stigmatized, trivialized, or ignored, but afflicts a rapidly growing number of older adults in industrialized countries.

Midland would like to build civil discourse while strengthening connection between its citizens. Similar to other communities in the US, civic leaders have observed a breakdown in Midland citizens' ability to constructively discuss controversial topics, as well as a greater tendency to criticize, become aggressive at "town hall" meetings, and argue online (H. Miller, personal communication, January 17, 2020). Poor civic behavior impacts Midland not only today but also in the future, as research indicates that the way parents model civic behavior influences the behavior of youth. Poor civic behavior by parents contributes to poor communication and participation by youth, while positive civic behavior by parents contributes to a higher level of

positive civil communication and engagement among youth (Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008).

Several initiatives have emerged in recent years to address these issues of civil communication and connection. In 2011, the University of Arizona founded the non-partisan National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD). The NICD is dedicated to addressing incivility and political dysfunction in American democracy by promoting structural and behavioral change. NICD's programs focus on creating opportunities for elected officials, the media, and the public to engage different voices respectfully and take responsibility for the quality of public discourse and effectiveness of democratic institutions ("About," 2020).

The NICD also launched the National Civility Network (NCN) to bring together institutions to collaborate on civility and civil discourse, as well as "Revive Civility" to bring people together ("Revive Civility," 2020). These institutions represent states (e.g. Arizona, Idaho, California, Michigan), NGOs (e.g. The Golden Rule, Council of Foundations, Cultural Awareness Coalition, United Way), and many public and private universities across the United States. The Arizona NICD provides a benchmark, while other efforts like the Civic Health Project in California, or CommonSense America in Idaho, provide examples at the state level, along with proliferate efforts in universities such as the University of Massachusetts Boston's Center for Civil Discourse, Washington State University's Foley Institute, and Loyola University's New Orleans Society of Civil Discourse.

Available on the internet, OpenMind (2017) is an example of a psychology-based educational platform that helps people foster intellectual humility and mutual understanding, while equipping them with skills to engage constructively across differences. The platform involves five interactive steps that weave in related positive psychological content.

Midland's Current Positive Psychology Applications

Midland has several positive psychology applications underway, and in 2020 began a three-year process to be recognized by the US Congress as a "Community of Excellence" by implementing the Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework. This recognition is given to communities that improve the performance of their government ("Frequent Questions," 2020). To qualify, Midland must demonstrate aligned, cohesive, integrated processes, evaluated and continuously improved, that support their goal to foster a connected, collaborative, highly performing, thriving community.

Midland County has created a Community Success Panel to enhance prosperity by gathering key stakeholders to share ideas, build productive relationships, and align economic development efforts. The panel helps Midland citizens envision, enact, and enhance the best possible future for their community (Downtown Midland, 2014). Midland's Community Success Panel includes our four partners and other Midland leaders. Several years ago, 100 Midland leaders began gathering semiannually for two days to engage in an "Exploring Our Future" activity, brainstorming and envisioning how to enable the Midland community to flourish. Multiple constructive projects resulted (S. Mortenson, personal communication, January 16, 2020). The annual Riverdays event brings thousands of Midland residents together to enjoy a farmer's market, multicultural entertainment, speakers, and children's activities. Soon, Midland Plays will position brightly painted pianos across Midland to further engage the community.

Midland's leaders have also invested their time to study positive psychology. Close to 40 leaders have completed a Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP, which is now called Certificate of Well-Being), and another 48 will complete it in 2020. Several CAPP graduates have joined Midland's Community Success Panel, launching positive interventions in each of

their sub-communities. Further, Mayor Donker and her team recently committed to creating a series of monthly articles highlighting successful community well-being stories and sharing research on well-being in the Midland Daily newspaper. Similar promotions are underway online through Catalyst Midland, an online service which shares stories of talent, investment, innovation, and emerging assets that are shaping the region's future ("About Us," n.d.).

Beyond these efforts, and pursuing the Communities of Excellence award, our partners have launched two core training efforts to strengthen civil civic communication in Midland: Our Community Listens (OCL) and the Harwood Institute. Our Community Listens has trained more than 1,600 Midland community leaders in constructive communication, connection, and civil confrontation. In a three-day training workshop, leaders learn strategies and techniques to more constructively engage in dialogue, especially on contentious topics. The Harwood Institute is a core resource that teaches and coaches people from all walks of life on how to move society forward by building stronger communities, bridging divides, and creating a culture of shared responsibility ("Mission," 2019). Harwood informs Midland's United Way participants to "do things *with* people, not *to* them ... by starting a dialogue with a question that doesn't polarize ... to find points of connection" (H. Miller, personal communication, January 17, 2020).

Literature Review

Since our partners asked us to focus on civil communication and connection, our literature review focused on the related positive psychology research. Specifically, our team researched civility, belonging and mattering, high-quality connections and development of social capital, positive leadership and social norms. These topics helped to inform our proposed interventions.

Civility

Civility means respectfully communicating and engaging, so that one can fulfill one's duty *to* civilize, and by doing so, protect the community of human belonging (Haque, 2018). However, incivility in public discourse is a problem facing many communities (Bernstein, 2019; Block, 2008; Boyd, 2006; Dahnke, Spath & Bowling, 2007; Kalen-Sukra, 2019; Kelsey, 2019; York, 2013), corroding community cohesiveness and weakening relationships between residents (Beauregard et al., 2019).

Different reasons for incivility exist. Cognitive biases predispose people to hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and moralistic conflict that allow us to see others' faults and ignore our own (Haidt, 2006). When considering questions of fact, and in moral situations, people use heuristics, or mental shortcuts, that can lead to systematic errors (Sunstein, 2005). Reasoning is designed to support better arguments for persuasion, not truth finding, and can distort information and lead to poor decisions (Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Holding ideologically extreme views is driven by the false belief that people know more than they do (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013). This leads to the creation of moral empathy gaps, where people with opposing views are seen as having malevolent intentions (Ditto & Koleva, 2011). This explains why people are reluctant to revise their beliefs, even when presented with contrary evidence (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010).

Incivility uses labels to demean, divide, and dehumanize others, causing discourse to become combative (Kelsey, 2019). Incivility is shutting down municipal councils, stifling democratic debate, and paralyzing the effective functioning of government (Kalen-Sukra, 2019). At stake is democracy, which requires a citizenry that is informed, active, and engaged. To begin to address incivility, communities must ensure their citizens feel a sense of belonging and mattering.

Belonging and Mattering

   The need to belong is a fundamental human need, motivating us to create and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need to belong has two main qualities: frequent personal interactions, and relationships marked by stability, concern, and continuation. Being accepted and included leads to positive emotions, while rejection leads to negative feelings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Inclusive belonging "promotes mutual support to the advantage of all" (Roffey, 2013, p. 41). Roffey (2013) defines communities as places where people have emotional connection, shared values, and interdependence. A sense of belonging predicts the extent to which a person finds their life meaningful (Lambert et al., 2013). Belonging to a community is associated with self-perceived health even when controlling for socioeconomic status, chronic disease, health behaviors, and stress (Ross, 2002). In addition, a sense of belonging in a community has been shown to be positively associated with social capital measures (Carpiano & Hystad, 2011).

   "Mattering" consists of attention, importance, ego-extension, and dependence, and is a belief that others are interested in, concerned with, and dependent on us (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Schlossberg (1989) added appreciation as an aspect of mattering. Mattering can also be thought of as the extent we make a difference to the world (Elliot, Kao, & Grant, 2004). In Elliot et al.'s (2004) context, mattering focuses on connections with others defined by two categories, awareness and relationships. Awareness is that we matter because people acknowledge that we exist. Relationships have two parts: importance and reliance. Importance is about being the object of someone's interest or concern; reliance has to do with meeting needs or wants. Prilleltensky (2014) synthesized mattering as a continuum of recognition and impact and argued that "the struggle for mattering and thriving is what makes life worth living" (p. 151).

Mattering is a fundamental psychological need that consists of feeling valued and adding value (Prilleltensky, 2019). Prilleltensky (2019) theorized the need to feel valued has three motives: survival, the desire to belong (social), and dignity (existential).

To feel valued and add value, having a voice is essential (Prilleltensky, 2019). If people identify with and feel as though they belong to a community, they will work to support it (Akerlof & Kranton, 2011). If people feel as though they belong and that they matter, this will lead to the development of High-Quality Connections and social capital.

High-Quality Connections and Development of Social Capital

Christopher Peterson (2006) stated the essence of positive psychology was "other people matter (p. 249)," as relationships are fundamental to flourishing. Positive emotions lead to well-being. Upward spirals of positive emotions created through positive connections with others "broadens and builds" our mindset, allowing us to open our hearts, grow, become more energized, wise, resilient, generative, effective, attuned to ourselves and our interconnectedness with others (Fredrickson, 2003; 2004; 2013). These effects can spread through social networks (Christakis & Fowler, 2008). Social relationships are predictive of levels of happiness, longevity, strengthen the immune system, and reduce the risk of depression and anxiety (Haidt, 2006).

Humans have an evolutionary drive to belong and contribute altruistically to a group (Wilson & Wilson, 2007; Haidt, Seder, & Kesbeir, 2008). Connections forged through relationships and in belonging to communities allow for thriving and well-being. For this reason, positive interventions in communities that help forge enhanced connections between residents, such as High-Quality Connections (HQCs), are vitally important. According to Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton (2011), HQCs are dyadic, generative of positive subjective experiences, and contain structural features in the connection (that is, they generate a beneficial outcome). There

are three key mechanisms in HQC interactions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Cognitive

mechanisms create an impression, develop other-awareness, and facilitate perspective taking.

Emotional mechanisms generate positive emotions, drive emotional contagion, and create

empathy. Behavioral mechanisms facilitate respectful engagement, are task enabling, and

sometimes invoke a sense of play (Stephens et al., 2011). Simply by seeing that outgroup

members share basic characteristics and human desires can lead to enhanced intergroup relations

(Motyl et al., 2011). The more positive intergroup contact that occurs, the less intergroup

prejudice exists (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

HQCs benefit organizations and individuals. They generate positive impacts on

physiological health (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008), psychological safety and improved learning

behaviors, facilitate respectful engagement, relational information processing, enhance creative

behavior (Carmeli, Dutton, & Hardin, 2015), and enhance emotional carrying capacity

experienced in work interactions, building resilience and trust in team environments (Stephens,

Heaphy, Carmeli, Spreitzer, & Dutton, 2013).

Communities bring together a diverse range of people with different backgrounds. HQCs

offer individuals opportunities to build connections within everyday interactions (Dutton, 2003).

These initial connections can promote connectedness and belonging. HQCs can empower

residents to reach out beyond their social circles, enhancing well-being (Dutton, 2003).

The *hive hypothesis* shows groups become more than the sum of their parts in their

capacity to generate positive emotion and increase social capital (Haidt et al., 2008). Hanifan

(1916) first defined social capital, stating it included goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and

social intercourse among people in a social unit. Social capital leads to trusting, connected,

engaged, tolerant, prospering, democratic communities (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004), and positive

civic action (Larsen et al., 2004; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Social capital thereby leads to

reciprocity, collective action, and inclusiveness. An example of the importance of social capital

is the Constitutional Convention of 1787, where "civic friendship" created by frequent

interaction, daily dinners with attendees from different groups, and parliamentary procedures

designed to encourage open-mindedness and rational deliberation, allowed differences to be

resolved (Webb, 2012).

Bridging social capital, or bringing people together from different networks, can lead to

better mental health (Prilleltensky, 2016; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). Social capital can

be developed in a variety of ways, like involvement in civic and political organizations, parent–

teacher associations, sports and interest clubs, educational and religious groups (Small, 2010).

Some governments have created "area-based initiatives" (ABIs) to facilitate contact between

networks. These ABIs develop social capital by building trust and relationships as well as by

bridging different groups through bringing people together to discuss areas of mutual concern in

communities (Agger & Jensen, 2015). By holding general social activities like parades, fairs, and

block parties, as well as moderator-led discussions of important community topics, trust and

social cohesion can be enhanced (Aldrich, 2010). Steps can be taken at these meetings to develop

social capital; trust and reciprocity can be developed at meetings where small acts of trust and

reciprocity allow for greater sharing and risks to be taken (Swärd, 2016). Examples include the

Neighborhood Empowerment Network in San Francisco, which brings people together to plan

for natural disasters or crises, so building community resilience (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015).

There are other ways to build social capital, such as engagement in physical activity

(Faulkner, Hefferon, & Mutrie, 2015). A time-banking program where people volunteered in

their community showed both physical and mental health improvement for participants and drew

out people who otherwise would not have volunteered. This linked them to the community and

created a virtuous cycle of social capital creation (Lasker et al., 2011). More broadly, expressions

of gratitude can promote relationship formation and maintenance (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008).

People who engage in acts of kindness create a cycle of happiness and kindness, and these

people are better equipped for more prosocial engagement (Layous, Nelson, Kurtz, &

Lyubomirsky, 2017). Doing for others based on a greater ideal propels people in a positive way

(Grant, 2013). Grant (2013) wrote that by "paying it forward," people create a ripple effect,

inspiring better, more giving behaviors in those around them.

The development of social capital requires high-quality connections, and both are critical

for enhancing civility and civic dialogue. To enable HQCs, community leaders must utilize

actions that create and enhance positive social norms. Leadership is a critical component of

healthy discourse.

Positive Leadership and Social Norms

Eudaimonia is a general sense of well-being (Melchert, 2002). Positive organizational

scholarship (POS) is based on Aristotle's (1924) eudaimonic assumption that there is an

inclination in all human systems toward virtue and goodness for its intrinsic value (Cameron,

Bright, & Caza, 2004; Dutton & Sonenshein, 2007; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For a

community to build cohesion, a sense of belonging and inclusion, and greater well-being, it

needs to have positive leadership. Positive leadership practices improve individual physiological

and emotional health, well-being, interpersonal relationships, learning and brain function, and

significantly impact all types of organizations, including manufacturing, healthcare, military,

government, financial services, retail, and education (Cameron, 2013).

An effective leader needs to be a source of positive energy that brings well-being

practices to life (Cameron, 2013). Being a positive leader in a community that desires prosocial

change is essential because positivity in the form of gratitude or interpersonal kindness

engenders positive energy (Cameron, 2013). Cameron stated that people are drawn toward

positive energy; just as other living systems are drawn to light. This can be described as the

heliotropic effect. Positive leaders do this by adopting a positive lens, focusing on positive

elements in performance, looking for the best in humans, and taking a positive bias (Cameron &

McNaughtan, 2014). This helps leaders unlock and elevate the resources within organizations,

groups, and individuals. These resources allow them to broaden their awareness and build

strengths (Fredrickson, 2009).

Positive leadership and POS suggest that people can "do well" by "doing good"

(Cameron, Quinn, & Caldwell, 2017). Doing well focuses on being productive and profitable.

Doing good is concerned with fostering well-being and sustainability (Cameron et al., 2017).

Positive leaders need to focus on both and can do so by focusing on improving positive practices

in their organizations, including increasing integrity, kindness, optimism, compassion, and

forgiveness (Cameron et al., 2017).

Leaders set the organization tone, training others on what it means to be civil (Porath,

2018), building a culture with norms that does not tolerate incivility (Porath, 2016). Social norms

are the expectations regarding what is appropriate behavior in a group and create the foundation

of group interaction (McDonald & Crandall, 2015). Social norms also include social codes that

tell people how they are supposed to think of themselves and interact with each other, and how

people think and feel about themselves is critical to the decisions that they make (Akerlof &

Kranton, 2011). Norms are formed in group situations and serve as standards of behavior,

detailing appropriate behavior and defining what the group is and does (Sherif & Sherif, 1953).

Individuals learn about the norms of their reference groups over time, updating their impressions

as they interact with their group or learn about their group through other sources (Miller &

Prentice, 2012; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). Social referents, individuals who are seen and

emulated by many people in a group, play a critical role in shaping and shifting norms (Paluck &

Shepherd, 2012). Many people behave as engaged followers, looking for cues from leaders and

social referents because of their social identification (Reicher, Haslam, & Smith, 2012).

Identity is formed in part by conforming to group norms. Individuals care about norms of

the groups they belong to and care about, known as reference groups. Straying from these

reference group norms leads to loss of social status or exclusion (McDonald & Crandall, 2015).

Adapting and adhering to social norms can lead to the suppression of prejudice (Crandall,

Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002) and ethnic tension (Paluck, 2009) by modeling positive behavior

desired by the group. In attempting to shift norms of behavior, subjective perception of the norm

is critical, as these perceptions can guide individuals' opinion and behaviors (Tankard & Paluck,

2016). The perceived values and activities of a reference group are displayed and updated by the

behavior of individuals in that group, by general information circulated about group opinion and

behavior, and by the practices and policies of the group's institutional systems (Tankard &

Paluck, 2016).

Because norm perception is a dynamic process, there are many opportunities to shape its

course. Interventions can change behaviors, present new overarching information about the

group, and issue new signals from institutions that are important to the group (Tankard & Paluck,

2016). By adopting and engaging in structured programs, leaders can shape and shift behavior.

Application Plan

Midland's leaders are highly motivated to implement our suggestions and interventions to improve civility in public discourse, and already have several positive psychology[1] applications underway. After assessing Midland's existing programs and pertinent literature, we propose two interventions which may improve civil discourse and increase positive connections in Midland:

- Hold community discussions using the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide ("the Discussion Guide," Appendix A). The Discussion Guide aims to help build skills for encouraging respect and for the expression of diverse points of view and may increase a sense of belonging and mattering in Midland.

- Train community leaders how to facilitate a discussion using the Discussion Guide with various groups of any type and size in Midland. The training will include considerations for facilitators when holding community discussions.

We believe these interventions are appropriate because Midland's residents are a highly WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, Democratic) (Azar, 2010) population, with 93% being Caucasian and over 94% having a high school diploma (US Census Bureau, 2018). Dow Chemical is the largest employer, drawing on an educated workforce (M. Donker, personal communication, January 17, 2020). Studies in our literature review mainly reflect other industrialized, educated locations and populations in the United States and Europe. Our literature review also noted that the decline in social capital and the rise in incivility has been negatively impacting democracies in societies like Midland (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003).

To their credit, Midland's leaders requested these interventions when recognizing the

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[1] Per Midland's request, we frequently use the term "well-being" instead of positive psychology to better reflect the application of positive psychology in their community.

diverse opinions in their community and the unfortunate incivility that has developed. We hope

they bridge those ideological divides. By engaging individuals who are already trained in

Midland's well-being program and having them begin discussions within their own

organizations, we hope to build positive momentum that will not only allow more difficult

conversations to take place, but will also enable the Discussion Guide to be used in settings with

participants who hold more diverse views.

Like Midland's leaders, the members of our team are also educated, Caucasian-

Americans with complementary worldviews. In crafting these interventions, our team recognizes

our bias in believing that many individuals are willing to critically self-examine their viewpoints,

have a desire to find an objective truth driven by data, and possess the intellectual humility to

admit when they are wrong or lack knowledge about a topic. Consequently, by opening the

facilitator training with the "This I Believe" activity (which will be described later in this

section), we aim to emphasize the need for an open mind and intellectual humility.

Communication and Connections Discussion Guide

We created a Communication and Connections Discussion Guide (see Appendix B) to

facilitate discussions of any size and in any sector of the community. We based the format of the

Discussion Guide on research by the Harwood Institute (n.d.), while the National Institute for

Civil Discourse ("Small Group Dialogue," n.d.) has used a similar guide in communities like

Midland. The Discussion Guide addresses the incivility that impacts many communities. The

Discussion Guide's principles are rooted in research on belonging, mattering, and social capital.

The dialogue the Discussion Guide is designed to build social capital and relationships between

participants.

Although our interviews of the Midland representatives and our subsequent research focused on "civility," when creating this Discussion Guide, we specifically and overtly did not use the word "civility" in its title or body. This is because we felt that the word "civility" immediately conjures up "incivility" and we wanted to avoid the negativity associated with that word. We wanted to keep the focus on the positive and on "what we want" rather than on "what we don't want" (Cameron, 2012). We intentionally chose the word "communication" because we felt it had a warmer connotation and supported the desired result – positive communication between the participants throughout all of Midland.

The Discussion Guide begins with a focus on what the participants value about Midland, and the positive elements of communication and connection that currently exist. This is followed by sharing then delving into the aspirations of our Midland service partners. This approach is based on the eudaimonic assumption that there is an inclination in all human systems toward virtue and goodness (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004; Dutton & Sonenshein, 2007; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Each point of discussion includes a process for generating ideas on how to achieve the participants' aspirations. The group concludes by reviewing the action steps needed to implement their ideas and, ideally, commitments to fulfill the action steps (Cameron, Quinn, & Caldwell, 2017).

In addition, the Discussion Guide includes a Community-Building Activity, which is a positive introduction exercise designed to increase rapport, understanding, empathy, and collegiality. This Community-Building Activity draws on the positive psychology intervention of positive introductions (Peterson, 2006). For simplicity of implementation, the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide can be used with a simple flip chart or white board and marker, meaning this intervention involves no technology requirements and minimal cost.

Communication and Connections Discussion Facilitator Training Workshop

The Communication and Connections Discussion Facilitator Training Workshop ("the Facilitator Training") prepares facilitators to lead discussions in the Midland community that aim to build civil communication and strong connections. The Facilitator Training shares the three objectives of the Discussion Guide: bringing Midland together, building social capital, and creating trust for more difficult conversations around controversial topics. The Facilitator Training (see Appendix C) is designed to give facilitators a deeper understanding of how to build relationships in community meetings, so that discussions involving conflict occur constructively.

The initial facilitators trained will be community leaders who have demonstrated their commitment to the Midland community, completed Midland's well-being training, and bring a background in positive psychology. The Facilitator Training is intentionally designed so that other leaders in the community can participate, even if they are not previously trained in positive psychology. A glossary (see Appendix B) of positive psychology terms complementing Facilitator Training slides (see Appendix E) are included to support this intent. The Facilitator Training's purposefully inclusive design reflects the aim of our Midland partners to build broad connections. The Facilitator Training can be run by just one trainer.

The Facilitator Training is divided into several components. A prework assignment, the "This I Believe" writing exercise ("Original Invitation," 2020; see Appendix D), asks participants to write about their core beliefs and then share them with the other participants. This will help participants articulate some of their deeply held beliefs and learn those of others, and also demonstrate how important these beliefs are to each individual.

After the writing and sharing exercise, participants discuss the potential benefits of conflict (Carter, 2008) to illustrate that constructively managed conflict can be a source of

productive conversation and resolving differences. Participants then engage in an activity that

demonstrates how people can have widely divergent opinions on even simple concepts

(Skendall, Ostick, Komives, & Wagner, 2017). This segment of the training concludes with a

video showing the problems of trying to put people into "boxes" (Newhope Church, 2017), or

predefined stereotypical categories. These activities combine to help participants learn what

values they hold, the difficulty that arises when values are challenged, and the benefits of

conflict. The training reviews core positive psychology concepts found in the Discussion Guide,

including belonging and mattering, high-quality connections and social capital, and the dangers

of incivility.

After participants are shown how well-being is incorporated into the Discussion Guide,

they participate in a complete demonstration of how the Discussion Guide works and how it can

be used to lead group discussions in the community. This participation and practice enable them

to lead discussions on their own in the community. This includes community member self-

introductions through a Community-Building Activity, followed by their writing the answers to

four questions that will be discussed during the meeting, then discussing as a group the answers

to those questions. These core questions are found in the Discussion Guide. The questions focus

on identifying common aspirations for the community between community members, and the

actions needed to attain those aspirations.

The last activity is on bonding and bridging social capital (Wagner, Ostick, & Komives,

n.d.). It asks participants to map communities to which they belong, and discusses the difference

between *bonding* social capital, which brings people in the same group closer together, and

bridging social capital, which establishes connections between people of different groups. This

activity encourages the participants to use this Discussion Guide in different settings in order to

bridge gaps between groups, not just make existing groups closer. Alternative ways to develop

social capital are also provided (see Appendix G). The Facilitator Training concludes by giving

participants an opportunity to ask questions and consider where they will use the Discussion

Guide.

There may be negativity expressed during some of the group discussions. However, the

Facilitator Training includes instructions on how to help diffuse this. Additionally, training will

help facilitators organize and conduct successful group discussions. The Facilitator Training

workshop will take approximately three hours. As training can be scaled to reach many

facilitators at once using a train-the-trainer approach (Leventhal et al., 2018), Midland will be

able to eventually train many facilitators within their community. Further, once trained, the

intervention relies on community volunteers to implement it in multiple settings. Thus, the

training relies on possible social referents, individuals who have demonstrated an ability to

spread information and influence their respective social networks, to spread well-being

(Christakis & Fowler, 2008; Paluck, Shepherd, & Aronow, 2016).

Our Midland stakeholders will work closely with our cohort to determine the optimal

implementation schedule for this project. The Orange Cohort will deliver the facilitator training

virtually to provide maximum flexibility for us, and for the Midland trainees. As health policies

shift over the next several months, our respective teams will stay in touch to plan this training

event. We further address the limitation of COVID-19 on implementation in Appendix F.

Potential Community Applications

We also make suggestions for Midland on convening community gatherings to hold

discussions. Communication, connections, and social capital can be developed in many groups,

including the PTA, churches, library discussion groups, and civic organizations like the Rotary

Club, Chamber of Commerce, and similar organizations (Small, 2010). By creating opportunities in the community to bring people together, Midland can actively build communication, connections, and bridging social capital that increase well-being (Prilleltensky, 2016; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). Through sponsoring events such as the Midland Riverdays Festival, the Greater Midland Races, the Midland Area Farmers' Market, and numerous performances and events at the Midland Center for the Arts, Midland already builds social capital and social cohesion in its community (Aldrich, 2010). Midland's leaders can find and create additional opportunities to build bridges of understanding, especially by bringing people together to discuss areas of mutual concern (Agger & Jensen, 2015).

Several years ago, Midland experienced a flood. Midland leaders saw how community members spontaneously rallied to help one another, demonstrating generous collaboration and consideration to support disaster relief. Other areas of the country act similarly and proactively. For example, in San Francisco, the Neighborhood Empowerment Network brings people together to plan for natural disasters, building community resilience (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). By participating in social engagement for the community good, Midland can develop social capital, specifically bridging social capital (Small, 2010). Discussing a topic of mutual concern, such as disaster preparedness (Larsen et al., 2004), builds trust and goodwill (Swärd, 2016). Purposefully convening these groups could lay the groundwork for future meetings where more difficult topics are discussed. In addition, this could create a pathway to an eventual Appreciative Inquiry summit (Stavros, Godwin, & Cooperrider, 2016). Some other ideas of ways to increase social capital beyond the interventions in this paper are in Appendix G.

Measurement

The term "positive psychology interventions" suggests an action associated with change. The two interventions we are suggesting, the Facilitator Training and the Discussion Guide, aim to create positive changes. Measurement helps effectively evaluate these changes. The context in which positive interventions are conducted is paramount to determining their effectiveness. To best utilize tools of measurement, we aim to focus on both the *process* of the interventions and the *outcome*. The measurement process is iterative and imperfect. The ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, make changes if necessary, and continue implementing will allow for maximum positive impact in the Midland community. In general, we suggest utilizing existing platforms, such as SurveyMonkey, to capture data, or other platforms already in use in the community. These could be leveraged to include indicators of well-being or items adapted from the assessments and scales listed below. We recommend web-based platforms to capture data as smart phone usage continues to permeate all ages and socio-economic classes.

The ultimate outcome of the interventions we hope to achieve is better civil discourse, warmer connections, and greater social capital within the Midland community. Because the outcome measures are conceptual constructs, we suggest the following process and outcome metrics. These suggestions should be used to inform, inspire, and aid the development of the measurements the Midland community wants to implement given their experience, familiarity, and excitement about measurement. We suggest considering the time, talent, technology, and cost required to implement measurement.

Process metrics are indicators available to gauge the usefulness of the process, for example:

- Number of people trained to use the Discussion Guide

- The effectiveness of the Facilitator Training using surveys with either free-form response, scales, or a combination of both; suggestions for questions include:

  1. Did you find the presentation engaging?

  2. Did you find the information presented useful?

  3. Do you feel prepared to use the Discussion Guide in your community?

  4. Do you plan to use the Discussion Guide in your community?

  5. Where do you plan to use the Discussion Guide in your community?

  6. What was the most valuable skill or knowledge you gained in the Facilitator Training?

  7. What was the most valuable activity in the Facilitator Training?

  8. Did the Facilitator Training increase your sense of well-being?

  9. Is there anything else you think would be relevant to include in the Facilitator Training or the Discussion Guide?

- Number of meetings facilitated with the Discussion Guide

- Number of times the Discussion Guide is downloaded, printed, or distributed (this assumes the Discussion Guide is digitally available in a way that metrics can be traced; this could mean through a website host or through number of times someone emails it directly to organizations; for example, utilizing Google analytics on https://www.midlandfoundation.org/)

- Number of people attending meetings within the community

- Qualitative feedback from those using the Discussion Guide like ideas generated and actions agreed upon.

We recommend going back to the four stakeholders, those that received the Facilitator Training, and other people utilizing the Discussion Guide to ask about the (1) effectiveness of distribution into the community, and (2) ease of understanding the information presented in the Discussion Guide. Although the information gathered is informal, it could provide anecdotal information to help iterate the intervention, making it more effective for the Midland community. When considering what process metrics to measure, we recommend separating the measurements of the Facilitator Training from the Discussion Guide to best understand what is working and where there is opportunity for improvement.

Outcome metrics are indicators available to measure the outcome. There are scales that have been developed, for example the Civility Norms Questionnaire-Brief (CNQ-B) (Walsh et al., 2012) and the Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workforce (CREW) (Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth & Belton, 2009). In addition, there are online scales that can be adapted, for example the Social Capital Quiz (2020). These scales and quizzes were developed with questions that could be adapted or that could inspire new questions to be utilized within the Midland community.

- Some examples of items include:
    - Respectful treatment is the norm in my workplace/home/group/community.
    - I treat people with respect.
    - When I feel lonely, there are several people that I can talk to in my workplace/home/group/community.
    - I interact with people who make me feel like part of a larger community.

There are also relevant assessments on www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu; some are listed

below. Items from these can be adapted to be shortened, changed, or made more contextually

appropriate for the group that would utilize them.

- o Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment

  (PERMA)

  - 23 questions, Scale: 0-not at all/never, 10-completely/always

  - authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/perma

- o PERMA-meter

  - 5 questions, Scale: 1-not at all, 5-almost all the time

  - authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/perma%E2%84%A2-

    meter

- o Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) (Thompson, 2007)

  - 20 questions, Scale: very slightly or not at all, extremely or never

  - authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/panas-questionnaire

- o Well-Being

  - 43 questions, Scale: 0/strongly disagree, 10/strongly agree

  - authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/well-being-survey

There is an opportunity for an assessment or set of questions to be created by the group(s) that

received training to determine increased civil discourse and social capital within the Midland

community. Things that should be considered when developing a measurement tool:

- o Subjective state (for example, have you sensed a change in well-being?)

- o Observable behaviors (for example, is there less shouting at meetings?)

- o   Before intervention, identify specific meetings with raised voices, exclusion,

     hurtful language, or any behavior that suggests incivility

- o   After interventions, identify meetings where people are referencing the

     Discussion Guide or the Facilitator Training, or are utilizing civil discourse or

     more inclusive language

After considering the information gathered by these measures, the Midland team

facilitating the training should determine if the answers reveal a pattern that needs to be

addressed in order to make the Facilitator Training or Discussion Guide more effective. Is there

content that should be added or removed? The context in which these interventions are applied

should always be considered when making changes. For example, one question to ask could be,

"Is there a new event, locally or nationally, that brings new meaning to the language we are

using?" In addition to the context, the cadence in which these measurements are taken should be

considered. If the Discussion Guide is going to be readily available online or in print form for

Midland's *Neighborhood Week,* it would be beneficial for a group, team, board, or organization

to take an assessment prior to and then at a contextually appropriate time after the Discussion

Guide is in use with the community.

Conclusion

Midland, Michigan has several well-being applications underway, many of which have

come from prior MAPP interventions. We believe that promoting productive and respectful

conversations in Midland will create a seedbed for increased civility and help Midland enlarge

and expand the positive psychology foundation that they already have built. We must relate to

others with respect (Prilleltensky, 2016), and by taking these steps, hope to increase intellectual

humility and openness during disagreement (Porter & Schumann, 2018). Collectively and

individually, the Midland leaders have the time, talent, technology, and funds to organize

discussion groups and implement the Facilitator Training we have designed. We see much

potential for this project and believe it will positively impact Midland. We trust that the citizens

of Midland can and will learn to constructively engage with their fellow citizens for enhanced

communities and a better future. We have every confidence that Midland leaders will persist

until every sector throughout the extended community has been illuminated with the message of

hope, warm communication, and strong connections offered by the principles and practices of

well-being. As political discord continues, positive psychology can improve civic engagement in

our nation by providing people with a sense that they belong, that they matter, and that they can

constructively engage with their fellow citizens for more prosperous communities and a better

future.

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Appendix A

Midland, Michigan
Communication and Connections Discussion Guide

Instructions for leading discussions to improve communication and build community connections. The activities are supported by evidence-based well-being concepts such as "belonging, high-quality connections, social capital, and appreciative inquiry." (See Resources and Glossary below.)

- You'll conduct a community-building exercise and group discussion to explore ways to enhance the quality of conversations in the community and build positive connections. Allow 30 minutes to complete these discussion questions.
- Pass out a copy of the Communication and Connections Worksheet.
- Invite participants to read the worksheet and write down responses to the questions.
- Discuss participants' answers, taking care to capture all responses in the discussion periods. This helps create a sense of openness, inclusion, respect, and belonging.
- If time allows, conduct the Community-Building Activity first. Go through each question, invite participants to share their responses, and record answers on a flip chart or note pad. Look for trends and key themes in the responses.

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(1) What do we value most about our community, and about the level of communication and connection we have with one another?
Capture answers on a flip chart or white board. Ask the group to look for trends or patterns. Circle or place a check mark to distinguish trends or patterns.

(2) What do we wish for our community regarding improved communication? How can we get there?
Capture answers on a flip chart or white board to display for the group.

(3) What do we wish for our community regarding increased connections? How can we get there?
Capture answers on a flip chart or white board to display for the group.

(4) What actions can we take to bring us closer to our desired future state?
Capture answers on a flip chart or white board to display for the group.

(5) Meeting Wrap-Up.
Summarize key discussion points. Say: "During our conversation on Communication and Connections, we started by talking about what we value most. We identified what we wish for and how we might get there. Finally, we came up with action steps to take that will bring us closer to our desired future. Thank you for working together to make our community better and stronger." Confirm any agreed-upon action steps and establish a follow up plan.

Communication and Connections Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Use this worksheet to capture your thoughts and ideas regarding the following questions. This worksheet is for your personal use.

① What do you value most about our community, and about the level of communication and connection we have with one another?

_____

_____

② What do you wish for our community regarding improved communication? How can we get there?

_____

_____

③ What do you wish for our community regarding increased connections? How can we get there?

_____

_____

④ What actions can we take today to bring us closer to our desired future state?

_____

_____

Midland Michigan
Communication and Connections Discussion Guide
Community-Building Activity

(If time allows, do this activity first.)

How to open the group discussion:

Allow <u>15 minutes</u> for this activity. Use it to develop a sense of belonging, discover common interests and experiences, and create stronger connections among participants.

① Pair up with a person with whom you may not be familiar with.

② Allow <u>10 minutes</u> for this pairing activity. Take turns introducing yourselves to each other – when and how you became part of the community, what you value most about the community, and why. Each of you will have <u>5 minutes</u> to share your story. At the 5-minute mark, we will ask participants to switch roles, ensuring that both partners share their story. Each partner will listen and be attentive when the other partner shares his/her story.

③ Debrief the activity for 5 minutes by asking for volunteers to share what the experience felt like to share their story with someone else in the community.

How to make the discussions most impactful for the community:

① Summarize the key themes from the meeting and share them with the community. Create posters. Write up a summary email. Share goals and action plans with participants. Encourage people to work together on ideas and action steps. Share meeting summary with designated community leaders.

② Share this activity with others in the community to build connections, improve communication, foster a sense of belonging, and inspire action to make the community a better place.

Resources

To learn more about the concepts of well-being, we recommend the following resources:

- Authentic Happiness: https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/

- Appreciative Inquiry:
  - Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry:
    https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/

- Belonging: Create a Sense of Belonging. Psychology Today.
  - https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201403/create-sense-belonging

- High Quality Connections: Fostering High-Quality Connections
  - https://ssir.org/articles/entry/fostering_high_quality_connections#
  - https://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/articles/high-quality-connections/

- Positivity-https://www.forbes.com/sites/travisbradberry/2016/08/23/3-powerful-ways-to-stay-positive/#6878e7f419c9

- Social Capital:
  - https://www.nebcommfound.org/news/build-your-social-capital-and-build-your-community/

Appendix B

Glossary for Communication and Connections Discussion Guide and Facilitator Training

Appreciative Inquiry is a theory and practice of change that shifts the perspective of organization development methods by suggesting that the very act of asking generative questions has profound impact in organizational systems. Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we be aware of the negativity bias that pervades our investigations into organizational life and instead shift our focus to the good, the better, and the possibilities that often go under-noticed in our systems. David Cooperrider and Godwin (2012) posit that human systems move in the direction of the questions they most frequently and authentically ask. "What we know and how we study it has a direct impact on where we end up" (p. 740).

Belonging is when individuals experience a sense of emotional connection, shared values, and interdependence between the members of the community (Roffey, 2013).

Bridging social capital is the process of developing social networks and activities across diverse communities. See social capital below.

Bonding social capital is the process of developing social networks and activities within a similar community. See social capital below.

Broaden and Build theory proposes that positive emotions **broaden** people's awareness and can encourage new, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. This increases innovative ideas and improves problem-solving skills. These in turn can **build** long-lasting personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 218). These resources can be drawn upon later, such as during emotional difficulties, to maintain well-being. The theory also suggests that negative emotions produce the opposite effect of positive ones. When threatened with negative emotions, such as anxiety, fear, frustration or anger, the mind constricts and focuses on the imposing threat (real or imagined). This diminishes the ability to be open to new ideas and to find creative solutions to problems, and it reduces personal resources and relationships. Fredrickson draws on the imagery of the water lily to illustrate her theory: "Just as water lilies retract when sunlight fades, so do our minds when positivity fades" (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 55).

Character Strengths are positive traits which exist within all individuals in varying degrees, and are reflected in people's thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and predispositions (Niemiec, 2019). A study by van Woerkom, Oerlemans, and Bakker (2016) found that weekly use of strengths can predict increased self-efficacy, engagement and occupational achievement.

Supportive **Communication** involves what we say, how we say it, and how our communication is understood by other people. Through joint openness and presence, supportive communication creates a fluidity and responsiveness that contributes to a High-Quality Connection (HQC, see below). This form of communication does not imply that the speaker knows all the answers;

instead, it suggests humility, and invites a dialogue. Supportive communication means expressing ourselves in a way that can help the other person to hear us. It means being careful to express views and opinions in ways that minimize defensiveness on the part of others and maximizes their clarity about where we stand and how they can constructively respond (Dutton, 2003).

Flourishing is a concept of happiness and well-being that began thousands of years ago with early philosophers and was formally proposed by Dr. Martin Seligman in the early years of positive psychology. Seligman initially believed that happiness was composed of Positive emotions, Engagement and Meaning. He later expanded this to include Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement (PERMA) (Seligman, 2011). Seligman developed the PERMA model to explain what contributes to a sense of flourishing or well-being.

High Quality Connections (Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2011) are defined as positive interactions between at least two people which produce a beneficial outcome for everyone involved. The focus of HQC is on connections rather than mere relationships, emphasizing the positive and organizing possibilities of interpersonal interactions (Stephens et al., 2011). Being aware of and consciously building these connections can strengthen organizations to be more positive and effective.

Incivility demeans, divides, and dehumanizes. Using inhuman labels – calling someone an animal, a racial slur, a low life – creates mental permission to treat them in inhumane ways. (Kelsey, 2019). Discourse becomes combative, and words become weapons. "To speak is to act. Once words are uttered, they remain, despite all denials, apologies, and disclaimers. The world and we are changed thereafter." (Kelsey, 2019).

When **Listening**, people can comprehend 600 spoken words per minute, but speech usually flows at 100 to 150 words per minute, so the mind of the listener is usually searching for other things to keep itself busy. Good listening is empathetic and active. It is our job to learn as much as we can about the other's perspective by actively attending to all the cues conveyed by their words and actions. We can listen empathetically by acknowledging the feelings conveyed explicitly and implicitly, trying to fully understand the particular and concrete details of what is being communicated. We can listen actively by paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, and soliciting feedback on how effectively we are doing this (Dutton, 2003).

Mattering is defined as "the extent to which we make a difference in the world around us," (Elliot, Kao, & Grant, 2004, p.339). In this context, mattering is referred to as interpersonal mattering, which focuses on connections with others as defined by two categories: awareness and relationships. Awareness is that we matter in the context realizing that people acknowledge that we exist. Relationships include two components: importance and reliance. Importance is about being the object of someone's interest or concern; reliance has to do with meeting needs or wants (Elliot et al., 2004). In these contexts, mattering is seen as an end, not the means to accomplish an end.

Positive psychology is the scientific study of the good life, or the positive aspects of the human experience that make life worth living. Positive psychology studies the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play (Seligman, 1990).

Positivity is the practice of being, or having the tendency to be, positive in attitude. Positivity can help us bounce back from setbacks, make meaningful connections with others, improve our health, and become the best versions of ourselves. Fredrickson lists the 10 most common positive emotions as love, joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, and awe. Her research showed an approximate 3 to 1 ratio of positivity as being ideal in terms of high functioning teams, relationships, and marriages (this is sometimes referred to as the Losada Ratio, which, although later discredited for lacking technical accuracy, still has conceptual merit). Fredrickson explains how experiencing positive emotions to negative emotions in this approximate ratio leads people to achieve optimal levels of well-being and resilience.

Social capital refers to the connections among individuals, the collective value of all "social networks" (who people know), and the inclinations that arise within these networks to do things for each other ("norms of reciprocity"), thereby moving the whole community forward. Benefits that flow from social capital include trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected, and occasionally, for bystanders as well (United States Joint Economic Committee, 2017). **Bridging** social capital is the process of developing social networks and activities across diverse communities, while **Bonding** social capital is the process of developing social networks and activities within a similar community.

Social norms create an expectation about what is appropriate behavior within any given group. Norms not only detail what is appropriate behavior, but define what the group does, and who the group is. Individual identity is shaped by conforming to group norms. Individuals care about the norms of groups they belong to and are concerned about, which are known as reference groups. Deviation of these reference group norms leads to loss of social status or exclusion (McDonald & Crandall, 2015).

Strengths: see **Character Strengths** above.

Thriving: see **Flourishing** above.

Well-being: see **Flourishing** above.

Appendix C

Facilitator's Training

Time	Timing	Topic	Instructions	Slides
Prework	30 min	*This I Believe* writing exercise	Modified from https://thisibelieve.org/history/invitation/ *and* https://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/ Prior to the training, participants will be asked to examine their own thoughts and draft a statement about a personal belief. They will be given a copy of the "This I Believe Essay Writing Suggestions" from the "This I Believe" website and asked to bring their statement with them to the training. Participants will also be given the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide to review as well.	
Prior to training	**Prior to training**	**Prep for Activity 2**	**Trainer should place a sign in each of the corners of the room which read "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree" prior to beginning, in preparation for Activity 2.**	
00:00-05:00	5 min	Welcome	**Say:** On behalf of Midland, we would like to welcome you all here today, and thank you for your desire to help improve Communication and Connections in our region! At this time, we would like to introduce ourselves to you. (Introduce trainers) Now, we would like you to introduce yourself, with your name, reason for being here, and goals for this training. (Allow participants to introduce themselves) We appreciate your being here! We wanted to ensure you understood the purpose of our training today, which is centered around three goals: • Bringing people together • Building Social Capital • Creating trust in order to have more difficult conversations around controversial topics	1-4
05:00-15:00	10 min	Thoughts on Conflict	**Say:** At this time, we would like to ask you some questions, just to get you thinking a little more about why it is important we bring people together. As we ask you	5-6

			each question, I am going to capture some of your responses.	
			1. What are your views on conflict? (Write down views on white board or flip chart) 2. How have your past experiences influenced your views on conflict? (Write down experiences) 3. How can conflict be used for good? (Write down thoughts) **Say:** Often when we think of conflict, we think of it as being something that is bad, or negative, and that should be avoided. However, Dr. Christine Carter, a Senior Fellow at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, reminds us of the following about conflict: • Conflict fuels change • Conflict is entirely necessary for intellectual, emotional, and even moral growth. • Even if we'd do everything to avoid it, conflict will always exist • To have happy and meaningful lives, people require lots of positive relationships. To foster these connections, the best thing we can do is to learn how to deal with conflict rather than just avoiding it. • Effective conflict resolution requires empathy: Taking into account others' points of view and considering other people's feelings. If managed constructively, conflict can be a source of productive conversation and resolving differences. The key is ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and respected, and facilitating this discussion is critical. That really is what we are here for today, to help you learn how to build relationships that allow these discussions to occur. NOTE: Full article can be accessed at https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/conflict_its_a_good_thing	
15:00-35:00	20 min	Review of "This I Believe" activity	**Say:** Building these relationships, however, is easier said than done. This is especially so when people are challenging our most closely held beliefs. To help you better understand what some of your beliefs are, we are going to go over your "This I Believe" reflections. Please	7-8

			pull yours out, and in groups of three to four, share your reflections. (Give the time frame allotted, and give verbal cues so they know when to let the next person share) **Ask the following questions after sharing is complete:** 1. How did you choose which belief to write about? 2. How does your belief affect your interactions in group settings? 3. How would you feel if your belief were challenged? If someone in your group did not share your belief? 4. How do you think someone might feel if you challenged their belief? If you were in their group and did not share their belief? **Say:** Thank you all so much for your openness and honesty. Understanding our beliefs is a critical part of being able to begin to resolve differences productively. Often however, we are aware of our own beliefs, and unaware of the beliefs of others. This next activity will help us to see how even supposedly simplistic statements can lead to major differences between us and can begin to help us develop intellectual humility.	
35:00-1:00:00	25 Min	Activity 2	This activity is adapted from the Social Change Model Facilitators Guide (Skendall, Ostick, Komives & Wagner, 2017). **Say:** If you look around the room, you will see that I placed a sign in each corner. They are "strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree. I am now going to read you some statements that people hold to be true in their lives. As I do, please move to the corner that best represents your viewpoint: *(give participants sufficient time to thoughtfully move from corner to corner between each question)* 1. Life's fair 2. I am only responsible for myself 3. How you act in a crisis shows who you really are 4. Money can't buy happiness 5. What goes around comes around 6. The needs of the larger society are more important than the needs of the individual 7. The purpose of schooling is to prepare youth to be good citizens 8. People learn from their mistakes	9-10

			9. You can't depend on anyone else; you can only depend on yourself 10. Individuals can choose their own destiny; their choices are not dictated or limited by the constraints of society 11. Doing what is right means obeying the law 12. One should always resist unfair laws, no matter the consequences 13. Groups make better decisions than individuals **Say:** Hopefully, after this activity, you can see that even what you might consider to be basic questions can show sharp divisions between people, based on their values, life experience, perspective, and many other factors. We are not claiming that you will be able to solve these issues, especially not in the 30-minute time frame you'll have for the group discussions out in the community! However, we hope that with the training you receive here today, you feel more confident and comfortable to help others engage in being able to better understand one another. We would also like to remind you that, as much as we might have opinions that oppose one another, we also share many common values, hopes, and goals with others as well. Sometimes, these are not apparent until you ask people these questions. To illustrate this, we would like you to watch this short video about the importance of seeing what we all have in common. Watch the video "Don't Put People in Boxes" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRwt25M5nGw **Say:** We hope this video reminds you that, even as ideas might divide us, we also have a lot in common as well. It's trying to find commonalities and bring people together that is driving this training.	
1:00:00- 1:05:00	5 Min	Review of Facilitator 's Guide	**Say:** At this time, we would ask to please get out the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide you were given and asked to review prior to this meeting. We are going to briefly look at it, and then give you a break before going into more detail. The Communication and Connections Discussion Guide is a tool that you can use to begin to facilitate conversations with groups of people, especially	11

			those who do not already have a strong connection to one another. We created this Discussion Guide and are providing this training to you in the hopes that you will use it to bring members of our community closer together, and so that we can have more productive, civil conversations across Midland. We believe this Discussion Guide could be useful for any group or gathering and encourage you to try it out with different audiences to see if it helps them break down some barriers and begin discussing topics to find common ground. Integrated into this Discussion Guide are several important positive psychology theories, practices, and interventions, which we will share with you after our break!	
1:05:00-1:15:00	10 Min	Break		
1:15:00 – 1:25:00	10 Min	Overview of PP embedded in the Guide	**Say:** Welcome back! At this time, we are going to show you how to use the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide, but first, we would like to give you a little background about how Positive Psychology is included in this Guide. This information is more background knowledge for you and is meant to help you feel more comfortable with how this Guide works. Specifically, this Guide is designed to boost positive emotions, engagement, and relationships in our community, three of the five areas in the PERMA framework. As you recall, PERMA is the acronym for the set of well-being concepts created by Dr. Martin Seligman. It stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. Incivility We are going to begin by looking at the reasons for and the outcomes of incivility. We know that people are often reluctant to revise their beliefs, even when presented with contrary evidence (Nyhan & Reifler, 2010). There are several reasons for this. Cognitive biases predispose people to hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and moralistic conflict that allows them to see others' faults and ignore their own (Haidt, 2006). When considering questions of fact, and in moral situations, people use heuristics, or "mental shortcuts," that can lead to systematic errors (Sunstein, 2005). Reasoning is designed to support better arguments for persuasion, not truth finding, and can distort information and lead to poor decisions (Mercier &	12-15

			Sperber, 2011). Holding ideologically extreme views is driven by the false belief that people know more than they do (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013). Finally, moral empathy gaps are where people with opposing views see each other as having malevolent intentions (Ditto & Koleva, 2011). Collectively, these all lead to uncivil conversations. As you know, there is no one "cure" for this. However, if people feel as though they are an important part of the community, and that they matter, we can begin to reduce some of this incivility. Belonging and Mattering It's important for us to remember that the need to belong is a fundamental human need, and it motivates us to create and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The need to belong has two main qualities: frequent personal interactions, and relationships marked by stability, concern, and continuation. Being accepted and included leads to positive emotions, while rejection leads to negative feelings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Inclusive belonging "promotes mutual support to the advantage of all," and a sense of belonging predicts the extent to which a person finds their life meaningful (Lambert et al., 2013). There are important physical, as well as psychological, benefits to belonging. Belonging to a community is associated with self-perceived health even when controlling for socioeconomic status, chronic disease, health behaviors, and stress (Ross, 2002). Mattering can also be thought of as the extent to which we make a difference to the world. It is a fundamental psychological need that consists of feeling valued and adding value (Prilleltensky, 2019), and about recognition and impact (Prilleltensky, 2016). Lastly, we would like to discuss High-Quality Connections (HQCs) and Social Capital. HQC's and Social Capital: As you can see, if people identify with and feel as though they belong to a community, they will usually work to support it. Humans have an evolutionary drive to belong and contribute altruistically to a group (Haidt, Seder, & Kesbeir, 2008; Wilson & Wilson, 2007). Further,	

			connections forged through relationships and in belonging to communities allow for thriving and well-being. HQCs benefit organizations and individuals. They generate positive impacts on physiological health (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008), psychological safety and improved learning behaviors, and they facilitate respectful engagement, relational information processing, and enhanced creative behavior (Carmeli, Dutton, & Hardin, 2015). HQCs expand our emotional carrying capacity experienced in work interactions, building resilience and trust in team environments. These HQCs can empower residents to reach out beyond their social circles, strengthening well-being. They can also facilitate the development of Social Capital. Social Capital includes such concepts as goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and interactions among people in a social unit (Hanifan, 1916). Social capital leads to trusting, connected, engaged, tolerant, prospering, and democratic communities (Stolle & Hooghe, 2004), and spurs positive civic action (Larsen et al., 2004; Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). This can lead to reciprocity, collective action, and inclusiveness. A great example of how consciously developing social capital can lead to positive outcomes is the Constitutional Convention of 1787 (Webb, 2012). Now that you have seen some of the rationale for what is in the Discussion Guide, we would like to go through it with you and model how it would work in a session you are facilitating.	
1:25:00 – 1:35:00	10 Min	Overview of Guide	**Say:** First, there are a few key points you should keep in mind when using this Discussion Guide. This is a community-building exercise to explore ways to enhance the quality of conversations in the community and build positive connections. You will need 30 – 45 minutes to complete this session; however, this might vary depending on the size of your group. When you are facilitating, you will have a Communication and Connections Worksheet to assist you. With your participants, you will first have them introduce themselves in small groups doing the Community-Building Activity. If necessary, because of time constraints, you can eliminate this part; however, we suggest, if at all possible, that you do not. Even with already-formed groups, members	16-17

might not know one another as well as they think they do.

After this Community-Building Activity, they will complete the Communication and Connections Worksheet. Afterwards, you will go through each question, invite participants to share their responses, and record their answers on a flip chart, whiteboard, or note pad. It is important that you capture all responses to create a sense of openness, inclusion, respect, and belonging. As you are doing this, make sure you are looking for trends and key themes in the responses in order to elicit a better discussion.

There are four questions that will guide your discussion.

1. What do we value most about our community, and the level of communication and connection we have with one another?
2. What do we wish for our community regarding improved communication? How can we get there?
3. What do we wish for our community regarding increased connections? How can we get there?
4. What actions can we take to bring us closer to our desired future state?

As you go through each question, you want to ensure that you are capturing responses on your flip chart, whiteboard, or notepad. Again, ask the group to look for trends or patterns. Circle or place a check mark to distinguish trends or patterns that you can refer to later for your discussion.

At the conclusion, you will wrap up by discussing key points.
Say: "During our conversation on communication and connections, we started by talking about what we value most. We identified what we wish for and how we might get there. Finally, we came up with action steps to take that will bring us closer to our desired future." It is also important that you review with them any agreed-upon action items and begin to get commitments on those items.

			Thank the participants for coming and participating in the discussion group.	

1:35:00-2:05:00	30 Min	Facilitation Practice	**Say:** Now, we would like to model for you how a session using this Guide will work. To do so, we are going to ask you to play the role of people coming to a meeting. The first part of this activity will take us 15 minutes. It is called the Community-Building Activity. The purpose of this activity is to develop a sense of belonging, discover common interests and experiences, and create stronger connections among participants. At this time, please pair up with a person with whom you may not be familiar with. Take turns introducing yourselves to one another, when and how you became part of the community, what you value most about the community, and why. You will each have five minutes to share your story. If you are listening, please be attentive as the other person shares his or her story. We will debrief afterwards.
			
			SET THE TIMER FOR FIVE MINUTES. WHEN IT RINGS, HAVE THEM SWITCH, RESET THE TIMER FOR FIVE MINUTES, AND LET THE OTHER PERSON SHARE, FOR A TOTAL OF TEN MINUTES.
			
			At this time, I would like to ask for some volunteers to express what the experience felt like to share their story with someone else in the community.
			
			After reflections, say: At this time, I am going to pass out the Communication and Connections Worksheet. There are four questions on it, and I would like you to spend about five minutes writing down some thoughts to these questions.
			
			AFTER FIVE MINUTES
			
			Say: Now, I would like to go through with you and discuss your responses. As we discuss, I am going to record your answers on a flip chart, so everything is captured.
			
			    • Four Questions:
			        1. What do we value most about our community, and about the level of
				18-20

			communication and connection we have with one another?	
			2. What do we wish for our community regarding improved communication? How can we get there?	
			3. What do we wish for our community regarding increased connections? How can we get there?	
			4. What actions can we take to bring us closer to our desired future state?	
			Now that we have gone through the responses, let's see what key themes have emerged.	
			I would like to thank all of you for participating, and I will follow up with everyone on the action items and next steps we have agreed upon.	
2:05:00 – 2:35:00	30 Min	Bonding and Bridging	This activity was adapted from https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/blogs.umb.edu/dist/b/1275/files/2014/11/leadership_for_a_better_world-q4hvb1.pdf

Say: We are almost done. However, we have one final activity for you. This next activity will allow us to think about the various communities to which we belong, and how these communities engage in Social Capital bridging and bonding activities.

There is a difference between "bonding" social capital and "bridging" social capital. Bonding social capital helps develop social networks and activities <u>within</u> a similar community. Bridging social capital helps develop social networks and activities <u>across and between</u> diverse communities. While bonding social capital is valuable and important, bridging social capital is the real goal of this Discussion Guide and training, as it brings together people who otherwise might not have a connection.

I am going to distribute some paper to each of you, and I am going to ask each of you to take a moment to create a map of all of the communities to which you belong. Please try to think beyond place-based communities.

AFTER FIVE MINUTES | 21 |

| | | | Please select two or three of your communities and make a list of ways those communities engage in bridging and bonding.

AFTER FIVE MINUTES

Please share your maps and lists with the large group.

Thank you all for sharing. I do have some follow-up questions for you:
    1. How easy/difficult is it to promote bonding social capital? Bridging social capital?
    2. Is it easier for some groups to promote bonding or bridging more than other groups? Why?
    3. How might you act in your communities to better promote bonding and/or bridging? | |
| 2:35:00 – 3:00:00 | 25 Min | Conclusion | **Say:** We are now at the end of our training! As we begin to leave, we have a few final questions for you to consider. Let's go through them and discuss them as a group.
    1. What questions do you have?
    2. In what contexts do you plan on using this Guide?
    3. What are some concerns you have as you leave?

On behalf of Midland, we would like to thank you for your participation and desire to assist us. We know that with your efforts, we can help add more civility and connectedness to our area, and we appreciate your desire to help us accomplish this! | 22-23 |

Appendix D

The Original Invitation from *This I Believe*

For your Midland, Michigan Communication and Connections Discussion Guide Facilitator Training, we are asking you to complete the below assignment.

*This assignment is inspired by the original This I Believe series and the **producers' invitation** to those who wrote essays in the 1950s, which is printed below. Their advice holds up well. Please consider it carefully in writing your piece.*

In introducing the original series, host Edward R. Murrow said, "Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent." We would argue that the need is as great now as it was then.

This invites you to make a very great contribution: nothing less than a statement of your personal beliefs, of the values which rule your thought and action. Your essay should be about three minutes in length when read loud, written in a style as you yourself speak, and total no more than 500 words.

We know this is a tough job. What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. We ask you to write in your own words and then record in your own voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this for you to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down, they may become of untold meaning to others.

We would like you to tell not only what you believe, but how you reached your beliefs, and if they have grown, what made them grow. This necessarily must be highly personal. That is what we anticipate and want.

It may help you in formulating your credo if we tell you also what we do not want. We do not want a sermon, religious or lay; we do not want editorializing or sectarianism or 'finger-pointing.' We do not even want your views on the American way of life, or democracy or free enterprise. These are important but for another occasion. We want to know what you live by. And we want it in terms of 'I,' not the editorial 'We.'

Although this program is designed to express beliefs, it is not a religious program and is not concerned with any religious form whatever. Most of our guests express belief in a Supreme Being and set forth the importance to them of that belief. However, that is your decision, since it is your belief which we solicit.

But we do ask you to confine yourself to affirmatives: This means refraining from saying what you do not believe. Your beliefs may well have grown in clarity to you by a process of elimination and rejection, but for our part, we must avoid negative statements lest we become a medium for the criticism of beliefs, which is the very opposite of our purpose.

We are sure the statement we ask from you can have wide and lasting influence. Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent. Your belief, simply and sincerely spoken, is sure to stimulate and help those who hear it. We are confident it will enrich them. May we have your contribution?

Adapted from the invitation sent to essayists featured in the original 'This I Believe' series. Excerpted from 'This I Believe 2,' copyright © 1954 by Help, Inc. Accessed at https://thisibelieve.org/history/invitation/

This I Believe Essay Writing Suggestions

Writing your own statement of personal belief can be a powerful tool for self-reflection. It can also be a wonderful thing to share with family, friends, and colleagues. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

Tell a story about you: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 500 and 600 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.

Be positive: Write about what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

Be personal: Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Accessed at https://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/

Appendix E

Facilitator Training Slides

THIS I BELIEVE

- Please get out your "This I Believe" prework.
- Please get into groups of 3-4 and share your belief statement.

***This I Believe* Essay Writing Suggestions**

Writing your own statement of personal belief can be a powerful tool for self-reflection. It can also be a wonderful thing to share with family, friends, and colleagues. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

Tell a story about you: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be real. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 500 and 600 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief.

Be positive: Write about what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

Be personal: Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Accessed at https://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/

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THIS I BELIEVE

- How did you decide to write about the belief you did?
- How does your belief affect your interactions in group settings?
- How would you feel if your belief was challenged? If someone in your group did not share your belief?
- How do you think someone might feel if you challenged their belief? If you were in their group and did not share their belief?

this i believe℠
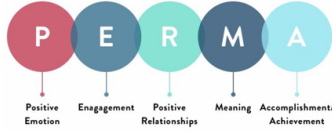
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FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

- What is the Communication and Connections Discussion Guide?
- Why has it been created?
- Who would this discussion guide be useful for?
- What are the positive psychology theories, practices, and interventions that are integrated into this guide?

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

- The activities are supported by evidence-based positive psychology interventions of belonging, high-quality connections, and building social capital.
- By helping to facilitate civil discussions, we hope to boost positive emotions, engagement, and relationships in our community.
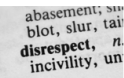
P	E	R	M	A
Positive Emotion	Engagement	Positive Relationships	Meaning	Accomplishment/ Achievement

10

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REASONS FOR INCIVILITY

Even when presented with contrary evidence, people are reluctant to revise their beliefs.

- Cognitive biases predispose people to hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and moralistic conflict that allows us to see others' faults and ignore our own.
- When considering questions of fact, and in moral situations, people use heuristics that can lead to systematic errors.
- Reasoning is designed to support better arguments for persuasion, not truth finding, and can distort information and lead to poor decisions.
- Holding ideologically extreme views is driven by the false belief that people know more than they do.
- Moral empathy gaps are when people with opposing views are seen as having malevolent intentions.

abasement; sh
blot, slur, tai
disrespect, *n.*
incivility, un

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BELONGING AND MATTERING

- The need to belong is a fundamental human need, motivating us to create and maintain lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships.
- The need to belong has two main qualities: frequent personal interactions, and relationships marked by stability, concern, and continuation.
- Being accepted and included leads to positive emotions, while rejection leads to negative feelings.
- Inclusive belonging "promotes mutual support to the advantage of all."
- A sense of belonging predicts the extent to which a person finds their life meaningful.
- Belonging to a community is associated with self-perceived health even when controlling for socioeconomic status, chronic disease, health behaviors, and stress.
- Mattering is a fundamental psychological need that consists of feeling valued and adding value. It is about recognition and impact; the extent we make a difference to the world.

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HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

- If people identify with and feel as though they belong to a community, they will work to support it.
- Humans have an evolutionary drive to belong and contribute altruistically to a group.
- Connections forged through relationships and in belonging to communities allow for thriving and well-being.
- High-Quality Connections (HQCs) generate positive impacts on physiological health, psychological safety and improved learning behaviors, facilitate respectful engagement, relational information processing, enhance creative behavior, and enhance emotional carrying capacity experienced in work interactions, building resilience and trust in team environments
- HQCs can empower residents to reach out beyond their social circles, enhancing well-being
- Social capital includes goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy, and social intercourse among people in a social unit.
- Social capital leads to trusting, connected, engaged, tolerant, prospering, democratic communities, and positive civic action, leading to reciprocity, collective action, and inclusiveness.
- One example of how HQCs and deliberate Social Capital development led to positive outcomes in US History is the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

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GUIDE OVERVIEW

- You'll conduct a community-building exercise and group discussions to explore ways to enhance the quality of conversations in the community and build positive connections.
- You will need 30 minutes to complete this session.
- You will have a "Communication and Connections Worksheet" to assist you.
- With your participants, you will go through each question, invite participants to share their responses, and record answers on a flip chart or note pad.
- Be sure to capture all responses to create a sense of openness, inclusion, respect, and belonging. Look for trends and key themes in the responses.

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GUIDE OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Communication and Connections Worksheet
- Meeting Wrap-Up.
  - Summarize key discussion points.
- Thank you for working together to make our community better and stronger.
- Share any agreed upon action steps.

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FACILITATION PRACTICE

- This will take us 15 minutes. The purpose of this activity is to develop a sense of belonging, discover common interests and experiences, and create stronger connections among participants.
  - Pair up with a person with whom you may not be familiar with.
- Take turns introducing yourself, when and how you became part of the community, what you value most about the community, and why.
  - Each of you will have five minutes to share your story.
  - Partners will listen and be attentive as the other person shares their story.
- We will debrief afterwards.

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FOUR QUESTIONS

- There are four main questions that guide the "Communication and Connections Discussion Guide" and that should begin to build connections:
  1. What do you value most about our community, and about the level of communication and connection we have with one another?
  2. What do you wish for our community regarding improved communication? How can we get there?
  3. What do you wish for our community regarding increased connections? How can we get there?
  4. What actions can we take today to bring us closer to our desired future state?

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FACILITATION PRACTICE

Summarize the key themes from the meeting and share them with the community.
- Create posters.
- Write up a summary email.
- Share goals and action plans with participants.
- Encourage people to work together on ideas and action steps.

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BONDING AND BRIDGING

- Please create a map of all of the communities to which you belong.
- Think beyond place-based communities.

19

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CONCLUSION

- What questions do you have?
- In what contexts do you plan on using this guide?
- What are some concerns you have as you leave?

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THANK YOU

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Appendix F

Addressing Limitations of COVID-19

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic that is impacting our lives in a personal and global way, we acknowledge the limitations associated with our suggested interventions, given the social distancing (staying at least six feet apart from each other in shared spaces) or shelter in place protocols (remaining at home with the exception to go to the grocery store, pharmacy, doctor, and outdoor exercise) that currently exist (in April 2020). We understand that physically gathering together for the Facilitator Training or the dissemination of the Discussion Guide will be unlikely in the near future. However, given how resourceful the Midland community can be, we imagine that these interventions may be adopted virtually in a way that meets Midland's needs and aligns with current technology practices. We intentionally did not weave suggestions related to the pandemic into our interventions as we hope this document will remain evergreen. Additionally, as positive psychology practitioners, we remain optimistic that one day we will be able to resume our lives within our communities and will be allowed to be physically close to other people. The leaders of Midland should consider how the current global state could provide an opportunity to engage and unite the community in a meaningful way.

Appendix G

Additional Ways to Develop Social Capital

Building social capital is critical for any community. The development of social capital

facilitates positive citizenship and effective meetings, and effective meetings facilitates positive

citizenship and building social capital. Thus, while productive meetings are a step towards

enhanced social capital, it also will be augmented by additional interventions outside of just

meeting behavior. To have the most effectiveness, Midland should promote social capital outside

of meetings as well as at them. While conducting our research, our team identified several other

avenues that Midland might wish to consider in building social capital, which would create

additional opportunities to build bridges of understanding. For example, Midland libraries could

organize a county-wide "Midland Reads" program, encouraging everyone to read and discuss the

same book on civility. This would help create a common language of communication and

connections, and may positively influence social norm behaviors (Paluck, Shepherd & Aronow,

2016) around civility. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) specifically recommend using libraries as a

way to build social capital. The Midland Area Community Foundation could sponsor a Well-

being Booth at the Riverdays Festival where positive psychology concepts such as belonging and

flourishing (Peterson, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2014) would be taught in short micro-interventions.

This may very well foster a willingness in people to come together to discuss additional areas of

mutual concern (Agger & Jensen, 2015). Physical activity programs that bring people together

(Faulkner, Hefferon, & Mutrie, 2015) like running or biking groups, time-banking volunteering

programs (Lasker et al., 2011), and area-based initiatives (ABI) (Agger & Jensen, 2015) are

other potential ideas Midland could explore to develop social capital in their community.