

# Open Table White Paper



## Theory of Change and Evidence Base Summary



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# Definition of Theory of Change

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A Theory of Change (TOC) defines the fundamental underpinnings of a movement by stating the non-negotiables, without which the goals of the movement will not be achieved. A TOC is important because it serves as a basis for the development of standardized measures of fidelity, and most importantly, standardizes a crucial messaging point for Open Table. A TOC for Open Table helps differentiate it from other poverty interventions and defines implementer expectations for what they can accomplish with Open Table.

## The TOC for Open Table

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The following are the five core non-negotiable elements of Open Table, without which outcomes are unlikely to be achieved:

### 1. Relationship.

Open Table is about members of a community being in direct relationship with individuals, referred in the Open Table model as Friend, experiencing economic and/or relationship poverty. Open Table refers to an individual(s) being served by the Open Table model as Friend however, communities are free to use a term that is culturally relevant to the community where the individual(s) is being served. Open Table recommends not using terms that project a provider-client relationship such as customer, client, patient or recipient. The term used to identify the individual(s) being served should convey a mutual and personal relationship. The relationships between Table members and the Friend are at the heart of the effectiveness of the model, and the ability of the Friend to establish long lasting relationships with their Table members, and with other members of the community, is crucial to the Table achieving positive outcomes.

### 2. A Shared Purpose.

Through a shared purpose, members of a community have accountability and responsibility for the relationship with the Friend, and build a powerful understanding of the human potential of individuals. Through the expression and deepening of their individual perspectives, Table members and the Friend affirm and deepen their own sense of wholeness, and of their connected humanity and shared purpose on the Table.

### **3. A Safe Place.**

A community creates Tables as a way of understanding that community and personal judgment may have contributed to economic or relationship poverty. We have to create a safe place for members of a community and Tables to recognize that economic and/or relationship poverty is not about character, but rather about experience. We have to create a safe place to support a Friend as they move out of economic and/or relationship poverty. The safe place is free from blame and shame, moves at the pace of the Friend, and is based on the Friend's own definition of success, culture, and support.

### **4. Transformation and Reconciliation.**

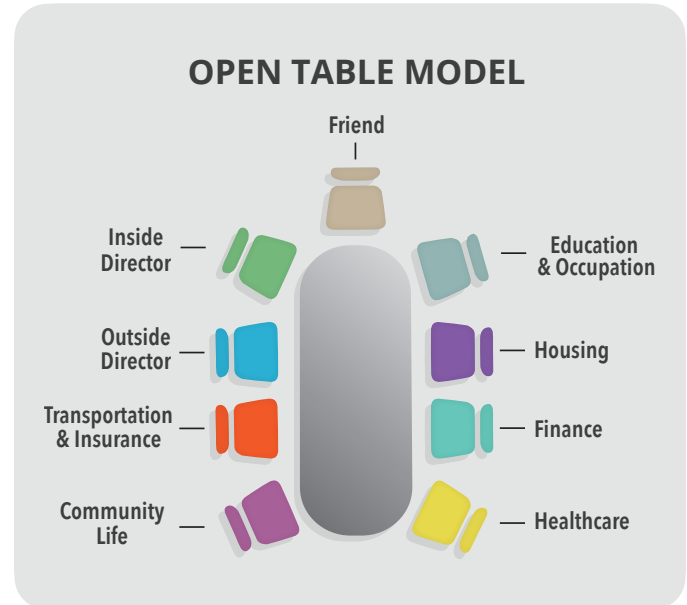
Transformation occurs when a community is released from preconceived notions of poverty, people experiencing economic and/or relationship poverty, and poverty solutions, including transaction-based interventions. We understand the mutuality which is built through being in direct, face to face, and long-term relationship with those experiencing economic and/or relationship poverty. As members of a community move into mutual, direct relationship with individuals who are experiencing economic and/or relationship poverty, reconciliation between ethnic and social groups, and families begins to occur. This transformation builds a mutual community of sharing of heart, spirit, and of relational and social capital. This shift forever abandons the paternalistic, dependent model of change and reveals the opportunity to be healed by each other.

### **5. Local Determination and Ownership.**

The Open Table model provides a foundational, consistent, tested, and proven process for addressing poverty, and provides training for communities. However, exactly how the community of business, non-profit, government and faith sectors form into a local movement, how expansion, focus on populations, and how the effort and scope proceeds are all locally determined and managed as part of a community's vision of their network of support under a shared purpose. Communities are the implementers of Open Table at the Friend level and make final determinations at the model level.

# Achieving Open Table Goals

Determining the success of the Open Table model requires looking at the outcomes at four levels: the Friend level, the Table member level, the community level, and at the national/global organizational level:



**Open Table goals have been met at the Friend level, if the following are achieved by the Friend upon conclusion of the Table:**

- They have confidence, optimism about their future.
- They are able to build strong mutual relationships.
- They have access to a group of people to assist in problem solving.
- They have access to a network of natural supports to support them during crisis situations.
- They are interested in helping others move out of economic and/or relationship poverty.
- They indicate that their experience of the Table process was equitable, supportive and positive.

**Open Table goals have been met at the Table member level, if the following goals are achieved by the Table members upon conclusion of the Table:**

- The Table members create a safe place for all to learn about provision of mutual support and healing.
- The Table members truly understand and appreciate the life experience of the Friend, and move beyond judgment.
- The Table members understand that relationship poverty occurs when we do not believe our Friend experiencing poverty have anything of value to offer us.
- Each Table member's understanding of the causes of poverty are challenged and they develop an appreciation for the resilience and strengths of those experiencing poverty.

**Open Table goals have been met at the community level, if the following goals are achieved:**

- All sectors, including faith, government, business, and not-for-profits begin learning how to operate in authentic partnerships focused on a shared purpose based on trust and recognition of autonomy and mutual dependency.
- Reconciliation of racial, ethnic and socio-economic divides is replaced by understanding, shared purpose and genuine community.
- The community adopts poverty transformation as a scalable purpose that can serve large numbers of the population in need. relational and social capital are freely shared.

**Open Table goals have been met at the national/global organizational level, if the following goals are achieved:**

- The Open Table process is led by people through an open source, volunteer led, powerful movement where the process continually evolves and improves, as an evidence base is established through implementation results and research.
- The Open Table movement continues to maintain a bottom-up, grassroots level growth model.
- The Open Table evolves its training as communities adopt it as a scalable model through rigorous and continuous improvement, accessing the relational and social capital of national and international communities and individuals. Training provides the community and its members with evidence that this approach is an effective teaching platform for continuing a transformational journey of relationship with individuals experiencing poverty.
- The Open Table movement is transforming the lives of individuals and the communities within which they live, one person at a time.

# Research Report

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## Wraparound and Open Table

Open Table processes draw from the extensive research base of Wraparound, an established evidence-based practice. The steps and procedures for both models are highly similar. Thus, the extensive research base for the Wraparound Process, which comes from 25 years of development and high levels of Federal funding for research, is directly applicable to The Open Table. These studies show that support, when tailored to the individual needs of consumers, with high levels of consumer voice and choice and backed by specific plans to address unmet needs, is effective in addressing complex long term needs central to living in the community, and to movement out of poverty.

## The Growing Evidence Base of Open Table.

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Evaluations of the Open Table Model Include:

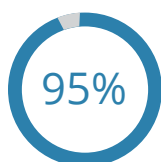
### 2013 - RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The City of Phoenix developed a Return on Investment (ROI) model to measure the economic impact of Tables on individuals and families being served. The City calculated that for every dollar spent on training staff and serving families, a 744 percent increase in family financial well-being was realized.

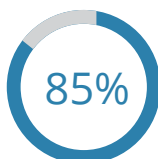
### 2015 – OUTCOME STUDY OF 2013 GRADUATES

Dr. John VanDenBerg, a pioneer of the Wraparound model and consultant to Open Table, developed and implemented a study of outcomes associated with 20 Friends that completed the Table process.

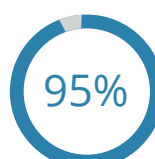
Key findings include:



of young adults/families remained in relationship with their Table members.



of the graduates had a better job and/or were in a college or technical school after their Table experiences ended.



of respondents reported that they were optimistic about their future ability to be self-supported.

## 2016 – A STUDY OF ESSENTIAL OPEN TABLE MODEL FEATURES

This study, designed by and carried out by researcher Dr. Michael Marks, validated the earlier study by VanDenBerg. It revealed the importance of the Friend and Table member relationship building, the changed views of Table members of people in poverty, and key elements of character building occurring for Table members as core intervention features. In addition, the study showed that the social capital of most participants was deepened and the majority of both Table members and Friend's were able to develop a shared purpose. 11 Friends and 16 Table members were interviewed for the study.

### Key findings include:

**Table members bring relational and social capital as well as personal experiences.** 63% of Table members noted that they utilized their community and social capital to help the Friend meet his/her goals; 50% used skills from work or educational training; 44% shared personal experiences. Sharing experiences such as how they coped with their own poverty can be powerful for Friends to witness, and helped build mutuality.

**Friends are receiving intensive individualized supports.** Findings corroborated the intensive and individualized nature of supports and services provided. 85% of participants identified examples of tangible aid/service (e.g., free or no cost auto maintenance; legal assistance) followed closely by examples of emotional social support (e.g., participation in family celebrations, sharing of meals, responding to crises) at 82%. At the same time, many Friends could offer reciprocal support back to Table members—the true basis of relationship.

**Table members change views about poverty.** Table members gained valuable knowledge about the nature of poverty and its consequences. All but one Table member participant told of a change in their preconceived notions of poverty resulting from Table member involvement. This enhanced and more culturally competent view can spread to others in the community.

**Table members are transformed.** 12 of the 16 Table members (75%) articulated their own personal transformation including cultivating or enhancing character qualities. For some Table members, their sense of purpose was honed. Other traits noted included building or enhancing feelings of gratitude, increasing patience and compassion, developing curiosity about others and cultivating a sense of awe that people far less advantaged than



themselves can thrive, be resilient, and in fact, have something to offer Friends as well as Table members. Table members shared information back and forth with each other, increasing a sense of community for all concerned.

**Table members and Friends are in relationships which endure.** Many Friends and Table members used descriptors such as “family” and “friends,” some noting “lifelong” in describing relationships. 100% of Friends and virtually all Table members noted that they are either in contact or hope to be in contact after the Table ends with most Friends identifying face to face contact.

### 2016 – POST OPEN TABLE PARTICIPANT SURVEY

This study, developed with Open Table leadership and delivered by a D.C. area research firm, looked at crucial questions about the effects of Table involvement on participants.



of Participants felt that the experience of serving on a Table had a large to moderate effect on their understanding of poverty in their community.



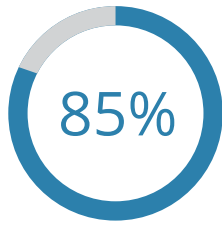
of Participants planned to stay in regular contact with the Friend from their Table, and with other Table members.



of participants felt that their site should expand Open Table.

# The Ripple Effect Of Open Table:

Have you spoken with others about your Open Table experience?



of Table members talked about the experience to friends as well as a wide range of other community members.

