

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Message from the Author	vii
Getting Ahead: What It's All About	1
Support for GA Graduates	33
Support for Facilitators and Co-Facilitators	44
Module-by-Module Instructions	57
Module 1: My Life Now	59
Module 2: Theory of Change	65
Module 3: The Rich/Poor Gap and Research on Causes of Poverty	73
Module 4: Hidden Rules of Economic Class	89
Module 5: The Importance of Language	97
Module 6: Eleven Resources	103
Module 7: Self-Assessment of Resources	107
Module 8: Community Assessment	111
Module 9: Building Resources	117
Module 10: Personal and Community Plans	121

Appendix	<i>125</i>
1. Recruiting and Orientation Memo	<i>126</i>
2. Sequence and Reinforcement of Key Concepts Found in Getting Ahead	<i>129</i>
3. Getting Ahead – the Purpose of Each Module	<i>138</i>
4. Model Fidelity Elements for Conducting the Getting Ahead Workshop	<i>142</i>
5. Activity: Newspapers and Magazines – Understanding How Economic Disparity Affects Us Concretely and Abstractly	<i>143</i>
6. Sustainable Communities Where Everyone Can Live Well	<i>144</i>
7. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	<i>146</i>
8. Websites	<i>147</i>
9. CCI document	<i>148</i>
Bibliography	<i>155</i>
Index	<i>163</i>

© Hawker Brownlow Education

Message from the Author

Getting Ahead workshops, which are based on my 2004 edition of this book, seem to be working out pretty well. Getting Ahead (GA) graduates are taking charge of their lives in a variety of ways. Some are focused on stabilising their situations and building resources. Some are working or going to university. Many are building social networks and many are participating in community efforts to address poverty. A number of communities have Bridges websites now where one can learn about the accomplishments and exploits of GA graduates.

Over the years I've had the pleasure of meeting many graduates. Several helped with this edition of *Getting Ahead*. In fact, it's a principle of mine that GA grads be involved in the development of any and all poverty initiatives – everything works better that way.

The philosophy that Getting Ahead is built upon has been confirmed and validated by the investigators themselves. Investigators learn by using life itself as the context for their learning. They have proven to be problem solvers, not only in their own lives but in the community. By conducting their own investigations and talking with co-investigators, they learn without being “taught”. They overcome the “tyranny of the moment” to find new solutions to the problems of poverty. They don't need to be told what to do. They aren't just fitting into the system as compliant workers, students or clients. Instead, they're dealing critically and creatively with poverty-related community issues. What they're doing to build their own resources, or to support others in their group, or to help solve problems in the

community means that they are participating in the transformation of their world. They have claimed their future stories and are finding their voice and power.

I like to think that Getting Ahead helps people make the first and most important step towards the life they want: that is, taking charge of their own lives. I also think the book *Bridges Out of Poverty: Strategies for Professionals and Communities* helps bring about a shift in thinking for those in middle class and wealth. But for them the shift isn't about taking charge of one's own life, it's recognising the value of the gifts, talents, knowledge, insights and leadership that people in poverty can offer, and it is making room for them at the decision-making tables.

It's because of the disparity in income and wealth, I suppose, that people in poverty, middle class and wealth don't tend to be natural allies. The differences in income have led to income segregation in housing, so we see fewer people in our own neighbourhoods who aren't just like us. But with Getting Ahead and Bridges, we can overcome the divide by sharing new mental models of how economic class and poverty really work. These mental models give us a common language and shared constructs that allow us to cross class lines to solve problems.

In 2004, when the workbook *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World: Building Your Resources for a Better Life* first came out, it didn't say much about what communities could do to support people who are making the transition out of poverty or why the middle class might want to get in-

volved in building communities where everyone can live well. One of my few comments on the subject then was to observe that with the loss of manufacturing jobs the middle class was in trouble. I wrote, "Several writers on economic issues suggest that the middle class should wake up; its fate is linked to that of the poor."

The economic crisis of 2008 subsequently destroyed the complacency of many in the middle class and has sent lots of working-class and low-wage workers into situational poverty and near poverty. Individuals, cities, municipalities and states face budget crisis, even bankruptcy. In this environment it's going to be very hard for people in persistent and generational poverty to get out, let alone those in situational and near poverty.

The awareness that the middle class is shrinking is sinking in, and in that realisation there is the distinct possibility that attitudes about those in poverty will become more severe and negative as there's more competition for fewer resources. But in the realisation that our fates are linked, there also is an opportunity for good things to happen. Bridges and Getting Ahead provide the language and the tools that communities can use to address the multiple causes of poverty.

This revised and updated edition did not come from a need to change the core, the philosophy, or the sequence of Getting Ahead. In fact, I've been cautioned not to "fix" things because they aren't broken. That doesn't mean, however, that some things didn't need to be improved. They did, and I hope I've attended to them. The real need for this edition comes from the difficulties GA graduates face when they begin the climb out of poverty. Poverty has changed, the challenges are bigger, and financial resources are even more limited.

Even so, this has been a time of great innovation. Organisations that sponsored Getting Ahead and communities that formed to support GA graduates have developed programs and approaches from which new providers of Getting Ahead can learn.

The biggest change in this update is in the *Facilitator Notes*, where you will find information that

will help you move more quickly from attraction to the Bridges and Getting Ahead concepts to application.

We can learn from those who are using Getting Ahead in most states in the US, in rural and urban settings, in African American, Hispanic/Latino, Appalachian and Native American communities. Getting Ahead also is being used in Canada, Australia and Slovakia.

Some of the most promising innovations are coming from different sectors in our communities. Getting Ahead and Bridges are being used by businesses and employers, courts and others in the criminal justice system, healthcare, early-childhood centres and the postsecondary sector. Higher education is now using the workbook *Investigations into Economic Class in America*, which Karla Krodel and I wrote as a version of *Getting Ahead* for students in universities and technical schools.

As these sectors engage people in poverty through Getting Ahead, transformations are taking place in the thinking and relationships of people from all economic classes. Negative attitudes about people in poverty are lessening, while increasingly people in poverty are seen as problem solvers. Policies and programs are being changed, and the bridge out of poverty is getting broader and easier to cross.

Thank you for using *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* as a means to engage people from all classes in the work of building communities where everyone can live well.

Philip DeVol

Getting Ahead: What It's All About

Overview

People who are struggling to make ends meet, who are living in unstable and stressful situations, and who are in poverty must be included in any program or initiative that involves them in any way. Getting Ahead can help those who typically do not have a voice gain a seat at planning and decision-making tables.

People in unstable environments, such as poverty, are frequently driven by the need to solve concrete, immediate problems. So they have little time left over in their day for the abstract. Therefore, Getting Ahead must be relevant, respectful, challenging, safe and empowering.

Over the years Getting Ahead has proven to be a transformative experience for both participants (known as investigators) and facilitators. At the base of this is the concept of co-investigation – where investigator and facilitator learn together. In Getting Ahead, facilitators do not come at their work as the “sage on the stage” but as the “guide on the side”.

When the concept of co-investigation is extended to sponsors and Bridges groups, they also will become open to the stories, knowledge and insights of the investigators. Graduates and facilitators will tell you that co-investigations create a learning experience like few others.

Further, the topics of poverty, prosperity and community sustainability are so compelling that you as facilitator will likely be challenged to expand your exploration of the topics and add to your reading list. This is not a scripted curriculum; it requires additional and deeper learning on the part of the facilitator.

If we agree on the philosophy – the set of underlying concepts and principles – it will allow us to be flexible yet consistent in how we present the information.

Philosophy of Getting Ahead

Philosophies are often very involved and complex. In a way, ours is too, but it helps to state the case in as few words as possible, to boil it down to its essential ideas. Our philosophy starts with the way we understand the situation.

Poverty and unstable situations can trap people in the “tyranny of the moment”, making it very difficult to attend to abstract information or plan for the future – the very things needed to stabilise one’s environment and build adequate resources and financial assets. There are many causes of poverty, some having to do with the choices of the individual, but most stemming from community conditions, exploitation and political/economic structures. The philosophy must take all of this into account.

We need an accurate perception of how poverty impacts individuals and communities and an understanding of economic realities as a starting point both for reasoning and for developing plans for transition. Using mental models for comprehension and reasoning, people can move from the concrete to the abstract. Analysing research on the causes of poverty prepares us to develop comprehensive solutions at the community level. Using Ruby Payne’s description of the resources necessary for a full life and her insights into the hidden rules of economic class, people can evaluate themselves, choose behaviours, and make plans to stabilise their environments and build resources for a better life. The community also must provide services, support and meaningful opportunities over the long term. In partnership with people from middle class and wealth, individuals in poverty can solve community and systemic problems that contribute to poverty.

We will be sharing this philosophy with the participants so they will understand what is being done in Getting Ahead – and so they can monitor their own progress as we move through the workbook.

What follows is an expanded explanation of the philosophy. What appears in **bold-face** type is also in the *Getting Ahead* workbook in Module 2. The writers named in parentheses contributed to the author’s understanding of the principles. Their works can be found in the Bibliography of the *Getting Ahead* workbook.

- **Living in chronically unstable conditions or in persistent poverty can make it hard for people to change. Poverty traps people in the tyranny of the moment where concrete problems demand immediate concrete solutions.** The investigators will complete “Mental Models of Poverty” and “My Life Now” that describe concrete living experiences that drive people into the tyranny of the moment and can rob them of their future stories.

Principle: Instability in daily life focuses attention on concrete issues, all of which doesn’t leave much time for abstract pursuits (Payne, Freire, Feuerstein, Galeano).

Principle: Mental models help people learn quickly and without over-reliance on language (Payne, Freire, Feuerstein, Sapolsky, Mattaini).

- **People in poverty are problem solvers.** People in poverty solve immediate, concrete problems every day using reactive problem-solving skills and relationships.

Principle: An accurate perception of people in poverty is that they are problem solvers, as opposed to the prevailing perception that defines them as needy and deficient (McKnight, Pransky, Henderson).

- **Abstract thinking can free investigators from the tyranny of the moment and allow them to separate themselves from their problems, to detach and become objective, to analyse their situations, to learn new information, to make their own arguments for change, and to do proactive planning.**

Principle: The Getting Ahead Theory of Change (Farson, Freire, Miller & Rollnick, Taylor-Ide & Taylor, DeVol).

- **When people in poverty investigate the multiple causes of poverty, they learn that poverty is caused by more than the choices of the individual.**

Principle: The research identifies many causes of poverty; therefore, there must be a wide array of strategies to counteract and reduce poverty (O’Connor, Brouwer, Gans).

Principle: The process of change is enhanced if the person can separate the problem from himself/herself (Freedman & Combs).

- **It's important to learn how poverty impacts individuals.** So ... learning about the hidden rules of economic class, resources and language issues is crucial to doing a critical analysis of the situation.

Principle: Payne's hidden rules of economic class are a unique, analytical category regarding economic issues. Other categories include race, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and immigration status. The hidden rules can be used to navigate new environments, resolve conflicts and build relationships of mutual respect and social capital (Payne).

- **Doing a "Self-Assessment of Resources" and an "Assessment of Community Resources" will help individuals make plans for economic stability for themselves and their communities.**

Principle: Ultimately, the work of assessing and planning for all aspects of one's life lies with the individual (Freire, Andreas, Faulkner, Freedman & Combs, Miller & Rollnick).

- **The information in Getting Ahead, the discussions around the table, and the Theory of Change will help investigators break out of the tyranny of the moment and develop a new future story for themselves.**

Principle: People in poverty can be trusted to make good use of accurate information presented in a meaningful way by facilitators who offer a relationship of mutual respect and act as co-investigators (Freire, Sapolsky, McKnight, Pransky, Farson).

Principle: Individuals must generate their own motivation and plans for change (Miller & Rollnick). Getting Ahead is an agenda-free learning experience where no one will tell an individual what to do.

Principle: Mental models can be used to help people living in poverty move from the concrete to the abstract in order to find new, yet concrete, solutions (Freire, Harrison & Huntington, Payne).

- **Using the investigations conducted by the group, individuals will be able to make plans to build resources.**

Principle: When investigators use Payne's definitions of hidden rules and resources, they will be able to develop plans to build their own internal and external assets (Payne).

- **Partnerships with the middle class and those in wealth will build crucial social capital.**

Principle: Bridging social capital is closely linked to success in life. Building a network of diverse people with whom investigators can have relationships of mutual respect is something investigators can do fairly quickly (Fussell, Putnam).

Principle: Individuals who are in the process of developing their own economic security need support to stabilise situations during transitions (Payne).

- **The impact of poverty on institutions and communities is similar to its impact on individuals. Developing strategies that also address poverty at the institutional and community levels will give communities a comprehensive approach.**

Principle: Institutions and communities that experience instability and have low resources are often pressed into the tyranny of the moment, just as individuals are. The responses of the leaders often are to give up abstract thinking in order to solve immediate, concrete problems by using reactive strategies and to give up the long view in exchange for "short-termism" (DeVol).

Principle: A partnership among all three economic classes is needed to bring about economic stability (Phillips).

History

When I was the executive director of an outpatient treatment centre for alcoholics and drug addicts, I read Ruby Payne's groundbreaking *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. I saw immediately that my agency was operating on middle-class norms that weren't working well for our clients. Most of our clients were living in poverty or very near to it. As a result of the *Framework* principles, we changed four things:

- The orientation we provided clients
- The design of our adolescent treatment program
- The referral process with partner organisations
- Our educational approaches

When Ruby learned what we were doing, she asked me and Terie Dreussi Smith (who was the prevention coordinator for our agency) to write a book for communities. *Bridges Out of Poverty* was first published in 1999. Terie and I (and now many others) have been doing workshops on that book ever since.

Individuals and organisations began using our work to rethink the way they were interacting with people in poverty. Some organisations changed policies, procedures and programs in order to alter their culture and outcomes. But we were doing what middle class people do so often: We were talking *about*, *at* and *for* people in poverty, but very seldom were we listening to them.

I wanted to know what people in poverty thought about our book, and I wanted to know if the information in it would help in some way. Gloria Parsison, who worked in Mount Vernon, Ohio, helped recruit people to meet with me. *Getting Ahead* grew out of the meetings I had with three groups of people over two years. While there was no formal process to our work, the conversations and investigations fell into the patterns that I ended up formalising in, first, the workbook *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* – and later the workshop called *Getting Ahead*.

During the development of *Getting Ahead* and since then I've often thought that the middle class in this country generally behaves towards people in poverty in much the same way as the missionaries in India behaved towards the Indian employees of the missionary hospital and schools. I was raised in a mission where my father was a surgeon and my mother a nurse. Despite the stated goal of the mission to do so, the missionaries did not turn over leadership roles to the Indians until they left. Their many debates on the subject are documented in the minutes of their quarterly meetings. The Indian leaders didn't always behave in ways that met their approval, and the missionaries simply couldn't find it within themselves to turn over the power to them.

As a child I was aware that something wasn't right. I grew up running in and out of the homes of my Indian friends whose parents worked at the mission. Because I knew Hindi I understood the adults as they talked about their work. You might say I was hearing their "world view". The Indians' view of mission business and personalities was very different from the missionaries' view.

I realise now that I saw the world view of the Indians as the more accurate of the two. Growing up I processed this as colonialism, white privilege, racism and missionary zeal. But one concept that really captures the similarity between that long-ago mission and the Indians on the one hand and the Australian middle class and people in poverty on the other is rankism. Rankism is when a person or group can tell another person or group to do something and expect them to do it. In the military, rankism appears to come with the territory, but in civilian life it doesn't work as well. It will come as no surprise that rankism includes the belief that the input of the individual or group is seldom necessary.

That belief and rankism in general dismisses people in poverty. It fails to recognise the information that people in poverty have about the conditions and impact of poverty that is needed by planners. It disregards the gifts, talents, skills and wisdom of people who could be part of the solution. And it has led to countless programs whose purpose is to

get people in poverty “to behave”. The message is “be good workers, good students, good parents or good clients”.

The understanding of rankism and its negative impact on our communities didn't come into my consciousness fully formed. I wish it had, but I'm grateful for the experiences and people who have schooled me along the way. Now I see that rankism is one of the key barriers we have to overcome in order to work effectively on the issues of poverty and sustainability. The work of overcoming rankism must be done by people in all classes.

In the foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), Richard Shaull writes:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the inte-

grations of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes “the practice of freedom,” the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p. 16)

One reason typical efforts to reduce poverty have not worked is that they failed to talk about and examine the realities of the impact that poverty has on people. Instead, they went straight to teaching the logic of the present system through classes in literacy, financial knowledge, job-seeking skills, workplace skills and the like. Getting Ahead is unique in that it deals with the realities of a political/economic system that contributes to poverty and trusts the investigators to analyse their situation, to solve problems and to transform their world.

© Hawker Brownlow Education



The CEO Pay Gap Activity

Trainer's Goals

- Dramatise the widening gap between the highest- and the average-paid workers in Australia.
- Explore why the wage gap in Australia is wider than in other nations. This activity is a "human graph" that illustrates the ratio between those who are paid the most – chief executive officers (CEOs) – and average workers. Six volunteers, each carrying an identifying sign, will role play CEOs and average workers from three different countries. The volunteers representing CEOs will move across the room in proportion to the difference between their compensation and their workers' pay.

Props for this learning activity:

Placards that say:

"Japanese Average Worker"
"Japanese CEO"

"German Average Worker"
"German CEO"

"Australian Average Worker"
"Australian CEO"

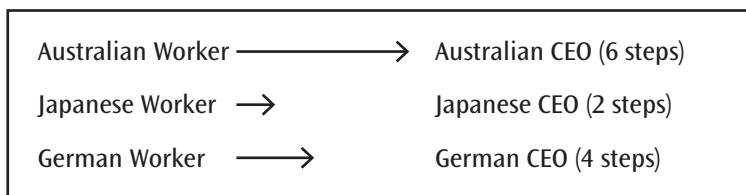
Instructions

- Let's have six volunteers who will represent workers or CEOs from Australia, Japan and Germany line up in two columns facing the audience. One column represents the CEOs and the other column are average workers.* Please hold a sign identifying who you are so all can see.

The Australian, Japanese and German CEOs will move sideways step by step with each step equal to a five times ratio (therefore, if an average worker was paid \$20,000 and the highest paid executive receives ten times that amount – \$200,000 – then they would be two steps apart).

The income ratio between the German CEO and the German worker is about 21 to 1. The German CEO takes four sideways steps. Next, the Japanese CEO – a little less than the German CEO (9 to 1): two sideways steps. In Australia the ratio is 32 to 1: six steps. (See chart on page 52 of the GA workbook.)

* These comparisons are for industrial corporations with sales of approximately \$500 million, surveyed by *BusinessWeek* magazine in 2009.



- The average total remuneration of a chief executive of a top 50 company listed on the Australian Securities Exchange in 2010 is \$6.4 million. The average CEO's total pay packet is now worth almost 100 times that of the average worker (50 steps apart). In 1980 CEO salaries were 10 times that of the average worker (five steps).

