

Critical Thinking for Praxis Workshops

Amaqhawe Learning Collective

Workshop length

Two hours each =
Total of 8 hours over 4 sessions

Recommended max. group size = 10

AV and rooming

Open room with moveable furniture

Projector ideal

Wallspace for chart paper

Flipchart and board

Facilitator

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Overview

A series of workshops on power and change

This is a series of four workshops designed for non-academics, to give a language for talking about power and how it affects our everyday lives.

Change and power are intertwined. We cannot change our world until we understand our own power, or those who wield power over us, and how this power is produced, and sustained.

Through the workshops, participants will get an idea of:

- Some of the different ways in which power can be exercised
- How power is often not visible or obvious
- How to identify different forms of power in their everyday lives
- What power **participants** have and how they might use it
- Examples of how power has been challenged and shifted in other places and moments
- How power can work through us disciplining ourselves, limiting what we say, think or do.

Each of these ideas will be embedded in the participants everyday life experiences, keeping theory and practice in dialogue.

Aim

After participating in these workshops, the attendees should

- Be able to articulate their own social position, and how it interacts with power (sociological imagination)
 - Appreciate the interaction of different types of power
 - Have a sense of how agency, meaning and structures interact
 - Be able to consider how power and change are related
 - Have some tools for thinking about their own role in disrupting, or reproducing, power relations and be able to interrogate this more explicitly.
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This is with the intention of enabling strategic approaches to change, increasing social awareness and cultivating solidarity across difference.

Key ideas

Power
 Change
 Agency
 Structure
 Meaning-making
 Hegemony
 Discourse
 Embodiment
 Capital
 The State
 Collectivity
 Reflexivity
 Intersectionality
 Race
 Class
 Gender
 Sexuality
 Materiality
 Culture
 Language
 Vulnerability
 Solidarity
 Complexity

Structure

Workshop One opens the conversation with an open discussion of ‘**What is Power?**’. By exploring participants existing understanding of power, appropriate scenarios and activities will manifest for the subsequent sessions.

Workshop Two presents some critical theory in layman’s terms, to give participants some words to talk about power. Rather than being a crash course in theory, the idea is to ‘name the beast’ and in doing so, also explore the way that *language* itself offers power just by naming. Ideas are not discovered but created. **This workshop constructs a toolbox of ideas for use in thinking about change.**

Workshop Three is a continuation of Workshop Two, but with more praxis built in. Through scenarios and group work, the participants can begin to problematize the deployment of power in various guises, and discuss alternatives and potential forms of change. This workshop will also **explore creativity and imagination as sources of change and disruption**, as well as the fundamental distinctions between backward looking (regressive) vs. forward looking (progressive) ideas of change. We foreground the importance of history in understanding how power has come about.

Workshop Four then starts to use these new languages of description for participants to analyse their own situations, how they might imagine change, and why they think the new power arrangements might be preferable to the existing ones. This workshop will also foreground—and problematize!—**our own agency and how we too can wield power, for good or for harm**. The ideal of critical reflexivity is brought to bear to hold up a mirror to power.

The intention of these workshops and the discussions they inspire is to enable people to use theory productively without being academics.

The point is not to tell people what to change, or how they should go about changing their lives, but to give them tools for making these decisions themselves.

*“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.
 I am changing the things I can no longer accept.”*

Dr. Angela Davis

