

Critical Thinking for Praxis Workshops

Amaqhawe Learning Collective

Workshop One

This workshop seeks to start conversations about power and its multiple forms.

Participants will be guided through open-ended discussion to articulate what power means to them, how it affects them, how they wield it, and perhaps interrogate ways power works that they had not thought of before.

The outcomes for this workshop include:

- Identifying different forms of power
- Describing and analyzing our own experiences of power
- Interrogating whether power is 'good' or 'bad' and, if we want change, why? **What ethic drives our desire for change?**

What is power?

How power works on us, through us and for us.

We've all experienced it: feeling powerful, feeling powerless. Yet many of us don't give it much second (or third) thought.

But what **is** power in a social context? How does it shape who we think we are, what we feel able to achieve, and how our decisions and options are framed?

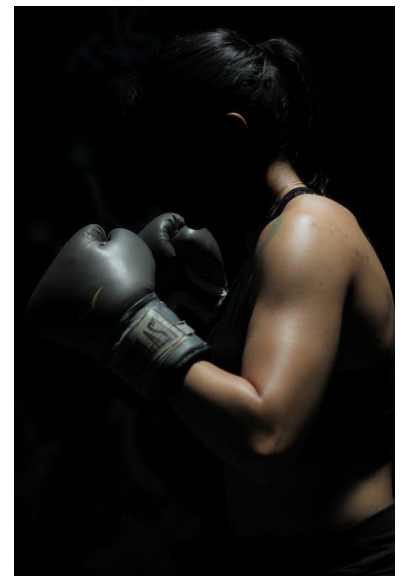
Is power something we can wield? When? How? Where? And if the answer is 'no', how can we go about challenging the framings that reduce our choices and our chances?

And what makes us want change in the first place?

This workshop lays the foundation for a series of conversations about social power, its multiple forms, the relationship between power and fear, power and language, power and resources, power and history.

The premise is that one cannot begin to contest power, identify strategic change moments around which to organize, or begin to imagine experiences outside of one's own (or understand one's own experiences in a broader context) without thinking about power.

Most challenging to thinking about power is realizing its many forms. We often associate power with strength—and this is not by accident. Power often whispers a threat of pain or violence. This connection between fear, threat and power is an important one to understand if we are to notice what stops us from challenging power.



Power is often equated with physical strength

At the end of this workshop, participants will be asked to reflect a little each day until the next workshop, noticing power in their world and their choices.



Key Concepts

power
change
everyday experience
freedom
fear
intersections
ethic
ideal

Contact

Facilitator & Author

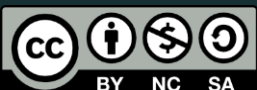
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Activities

1. Brainstorm the word 'power'.

What do those in the room understand by this word? Through either proffered definitions, or scenarios as examples, mind-map as a group the existing understanding of the word 'power'.

2. Stories we build, stories we tell: think, pair, share

Participants get 5 minutes silent time to think through (and jot down if they wish) two personal scenarios that they'd be willing to share with the groups about:

- A time they felt powerful
- A time they felt powerless

After this individual activity, participants get voluntarily into smaller groups of two or three to share their stories and see what similarities and differences arise.

After a further ten minutes of discussion (longer if necessary), the group reforms and we can share what has been discussed in the smaller groups. The stories shared will dictate the flow of discussion, but the idea is to find commonalities, differences and complexities through the different stories.

3. Pulling out the power

How was power playing out in these stories? What enabled one person to exert their will or preference on another? Is this always negative? How did the protagonist of the story **feel** at the moment their story reveals?

4. Axes of power—key trends

What common threads are emerging? Anticipate that axes of power like gender, class, race, language, geography will arise, but others may too (e.g. 'faceless' power such as categories, institutions and systems).

5. Telling the story differently—imagining change

If we could write the story differently, how would we change the ending? Why would we change it this way? Participants go back to their smaller groups again, pick one of their stories and then decide what they would prefer the story to be and why. Then come back to the group and share.

Next workshop: A Toolbox for Thinking about Power.
