

Session Objectives

- To discuss power and its role in organizing.

Workshops

- Power Sculpture 60 minutes
- What is Power Discussion 30 minutes
- Evaluation 15 minutes
- Total Time 01 hours, 45 minutes

Human Sculpture Power Exercise

Description

By taking their place in a human sculpture, participants experience taking power and losing power in relation to others. During the debrief, they identify different types of power, discuss traditional assumptions about power, compare power of individuals to power of groups and define power. This exercise was developed by Taylor Root and Eli Il Yong Lee while at YouthAction. It has its roots in Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed.

Objectives

1. To begin thinking about power and its role in our lives.
2. To identify different types of power.

Time

60 minutes

Participants

10-30 people

Materials

- Table
- 4 chairs
- Butcher paper
- Markers
- Tape

Steps

- Send all participants out of the room.
- Clear a space of all furniture except the table and four chairs, which should be set up like this:



- Pick 3-4 participants to be observers and bring them back into the room. Position them around the edge of the room.

The other participants will enter the room one at a time. Each participant will look at everything in the room and take the position that s/he thinks is the most powerful. The participant will freeze in that position until I tell them to un-freeze. The participants are not allowed to move any furniture. You will observe the creation of the sculpture and your job will be to report on how power relationships change during that process.

- Go outside and give instructions to the sculpture participants. Have the other participants outside line up at the door of the room, but they should not be able to see into the room until it is their turn to go in and become part of the sculpture.

Your job is to enter the room and take the position of most power. You can use your bodies and faces to demonstrate your power. You can be expressive but you cannot move any furniture. Remember, take the position of most power in the room.

- After all participants have taken a place in the sculpture, tell the observers,
Walk around and through the sculpture, like you are in an art museum looking at a big sculpture.

After a couple of minutes, tell the participants,

You can unfreeze and relax, but please stay where you are.

- Ask the observers:

Please describe what you see and what you saw happening as the sculpture took shape. Who do you think has the most power? Who do you think has the least power? Who had power and then lost it? Did anything unusual happen?

- Ask each sculpture participant:

- *Can you describe why you took the position you did?*
- *Who did you have power over?*
- *Did you lose power to someone who came in later? How? How did that feel?*
- *Who do you think ended up with the most power?*

- Ask the entire group:

- *Traditionally, what position in the room is the position of power? Why do we feel this way?*
 - *Usually the “teacher’s chair” – the one behind the desk – is the position of power because we have all gone to schools and we are taught that the teacher has ultimate power in the classroom. That memory of authority stays with us as we go on in life.*
- *What different kinds of power are expressed in our sculpture?*
 - *Look for physical or violent power, power of thinking, potential power, and grouped power.*
- *What kinds of power are missing when each person has to act alone?*

- *Grouped power.*
- Point out what you thought was interesting in the process of the sculpture taking shape. Pay special attention to power shifts – when one person has power, but then that power is taken away by a new person.

Description

This brief brainstorm allows participants to define power and discuss different types of power. This exercise was developed by Taylor Root and Eli Il Yong Lee while at YouthAction.

Objectives

1. To define power.
2. To identify different types of power.

Time

30 minutes

Participants

Unlimited

Materials

- Butcher paper
- Markers
- Tape

Steps

- *How would you define Power? Write responses on butcher paper. Power is the ability to get what you want.*
- *Is power good or bad? Why or why not? Power is neutral. It can be used for good or for evil.*
- *What are some types of power? What are some examples of each type of power?*
 - Write responses on butcher paper.
 - Examples: money, influence, relationships, physical, mental, people, psychological.
- *We'll be talking a lot about power throughout the year. It is one of the key concepts to understanding organizing. Just remember – power is neither good nor bad, but it can be used for good or bad. And power is relative – it is always changing, like in the Institutional Change Map. Our role as community organizations is to constantly try to change the relations of power in favor of our communities.*