Power Analysis & Action Planning

To see, to analyze, to act.

A three-hour popular education workshop compiled by Rahula Today.

1. Name Game

In a new group it is best to start with a game to lighten any tension, make introductions, and start to find common ground. See the Appendix on education for ideas.

2. Opening Dialogue

In this method, dialogue is the key to making learning relevant to the learner's life experience and opening the process to their contributions. Facilitators should explain that we are trying to develop a new approach to teaching and learning to enable a circular flow of knowledge. Find out about the group's experience with different learning situations, what worked for them, what didn't, and so on. Explain that since there will be no teachers here, everyone is a teacher—we are all equals and everyone has something to offer.

3. Trust Games

Since we will be exploring all the way from deep inside ourselves out to the social conditions that cause our oppression, we need to develop a level of trust to facilitate expression. Using these or similar games can help:

- Zen Counting: Everyone should sit in a circle with eyes closed. The object of the game is to count to 15 (or some suitable number) with each person stating one number. The numbers should "bounce" around the room—don't say a number right after someone next to you. If two people speak at the same time, start over. If the group finds it easy, try counting backwards. This is a fun way to demonstrate the difficulty of making progress in a new group and show how quick we can adapt to solve our problems.

- Trust Fall: In groups of four, alternating roles with one person as the "faller" and the other three with hands up and knees bent for support, take turns falling into the circle of support. This can both develop your trust of the individuals in your group, as well as build your courage to take chances. Be careful!

4. 10 Chairs

This game is used to demonstrate the arbitrary division of power in our society. The number of chairs depends on the size of your group but generally have one-third of the group sit aside as spect-actors, another third of the group to sit in the chairs (7 – 9 is a good size), then one person in the tenth chair, separated from the rest. The facilitator should publicly single this person out (Power) for some random characteristic like their cool haircut or sneakers, and then choose three other people who will serve as Authority. The people acting as Authority should do anything you tell them, and particularly make sure that the person in Power is overly well taken care of. Bringing food works well, or massages, just to let the other chair people know something is special about this person.

Then the facilitator should go to the first person in the row and tell them their chair is needed, then direct them to their neighbor's lap, even it's uncomfortable. Bring the chair over to Power, so s/he can stretch out. If the people protest, use Authority to take the chair. This game can go however the actors wish, some people may decide they have had enough and physically resist being robbed of their chair. Some people may opt for the floor. Some may simply let their chairs be taken and let themselves be stacked up into one chair, while Power has collected the other nine.

When you come to a conclusive point, stop the game, come back together in a circle, and dialogue on people's feelings during the activity and their reactions afterward. Begin with the audience, they have an important perspective. Next, ask the people having their chairs taken. Finally, ask the Authority who had to take the chairs, and then ask Power who got all the chairs. This discussion will segue into the next activity:

5. Word Association

In pairs (ideally with someone you don't know well) do a silent word association off the word POWER: draw a circle on a piece of paper with the word inside, then ride words or phrases coming off the circle. Build off each other's sentences but do not talk, communicate only through what is written. This is the beginning of the process of CODIFICATION, alternative ways of considering spoken words. *The written word is a powerful code, and helps lead to action.

6. 3 Kinds of Power (from StarHawk)

Dialogue with the group on what they came up with in their word associations. Present StarHawk's analysis of three kinds of power: power WITHIN, power WITH, and power OVER—and on a large sheet of paper, divide the ideas that came out of the word association activity into one or more of the three types. Note how power can have both progressive functions and oppressive functions, and if people are ready at this stage, relate experiences of power and oppression.

7. Oppression Grid (from Esperanza Martell)

Moving from the dialogue on power, this model is useful for broadening the discussion into a critical approach to our society. You should write up the grip from left to right, top to bottom, or cover the four squares and remove as you go. Discuss experience with and understanding of the words in the grid. Give yourself time to move slowly, this is a lot of ideas at once, but it is essential to see the interconnectedness of oppression.

IDEOLOGIES:	INSTITUTIONS:
Capitalism	Government, Family
Patriarchy	Religion, Schools
White Supremacy	Military, Prison Industrial Complex
- ISMS:	**INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION:**
(Prejudice combined with power)	
Racism, Sexism	Silence, fear, anger
Classism, Ageism	Hate, self-destruction
Heterosexism, Abilism	Violence, drug abuse, suicide

8. Identity Portrait

Art is an essential tool in the development of critical consciousness because it allows us to first consider ourselves, then through that understanding begin to realize that we are political actors, not subjects of a process beyond our reach. In this activity, use any medium (paint, draw, poem, sing, rap, dance, collage, photo) to create a METAPHORICAL portrait of your identity. Using a metaphor helps get us into an alternative way of thinking. If drawing, use one side of a page to show you perceive yourself in the context of your community, then on the other side show yow you and your community are perceived from outside. If singing, write two verses, etc. Instead of drawing my face, I might draw a group of people patching up an old sailboat in the shadow of shiny new racing boats. After the activity, volunteers should share their portraits with the group.

9. The Problem Tree (Paulo Freire)

The next step in the CODIFICATION process is to bring the written word into an image. To better understand the root causes of social problems we experience, the image of the tree can be very powerful. To start, take a problem that you found to be common in the group through the dialogues, word association and identity portrait. Drawing this larger issue as the trunk of the tree, dialogue with the group on what the roots of this problem are, drawing those in, then address the more immediate problems we see as coming out of the main issue—the leaves. Once you have done one example, have small groups draw their own problem trees based on a common issue. For different issues, other images like rivers flowing into an ocean can be more effective. Use your imagination—no one technique works for every situation.

10. Forum Theater (Augusto Boal)

Another code we can use to better understand the words that come up in our dialogue is the physical image. We will use our bodies to act out scenes of oppression that come from the Problem Tree activity. The actors begin with a dramatic situation from everyday life and try to find solutions—parents trying to help a child on drugs, a neighbor who is being evicted from his home, an individual confronting racial or gender discrimination, or simply a student in a new community who is shy and has difficulty making friends. Audience members (or spect-actors) are urged to intervene by stopping the action, coming on stage to replace actors, and enacting their own ideas. Move through this activity by first (in pairs) showing a scene of oppression represented by one of the leaves from the Problem Tree. Then add a second step to animate the scene, add

a sound, then add a word or phrase. Finally invite individual spect-actors to step into an image of oppression and change it into an image of liberation. Repeat the animation process for this new image. Now we are ready to act on our problems.

11.Action Planning (Midwest Academy)

Ultimately, the reason for developing alternative methods of education is to challenge internalized oppression and arrive at solutions to sociopolitical issues faced in our communities. The most useful skill one should get out of this workshop (after the ability to truly listen) is knowing how to take action once we have understood a problem. Midwest Academy developed a simple technique for developing plans considering both long term vision and the short term steps necessary to make it happen. This activity can be done either to teach the process of action planning, or to reach consensus on a collective problem and actually begin to organize around it.

After developing a timeline going from TODAY to NEXT WEEK, NEXT MONTH, and NEXT YEAR, use the Academy chart to develop formal goals, work out organizational considerations, take note of potential constituent groups and allies, potential opponents, the target (a person who has the power to meet your demands), and decide on the tactics you will use to bring public awareness or pressure your target. At the end (if the activity is done more as a training than an actual plan) small groups should present their work to the facilitators as though they were potential funders who need to be convinced to support the campaign.

12.Conclusion

It's good to go around the circle occasionally during the workshop to have participants give a word describing how they feel at that moment, but here you have time to really talk about how people responded to each activity and how facilitators could improve the workshop for the next time. What did we learn, what did we want to learn that we didn't, and so on. This time is also useful to make connections with the group, networking for future activity.