

Activity: Power Mapping



TIME ESTIMATE
45-70 minutes



MATERIALS
A blank wall or board for brainstorming, chart paper, markers, post-it notes

PURPOSE

To unpack the concept of power and examine power relationships in the food system through a gender lens.

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, participants will conceptualize power in the context of the gender-food security paradigm by identifying power relationships across various levels (systemic, structural, positional, individual) and within various domains of the food system (corporeal, sociocultural, material)*.

*The three realms (corporeal, sociocultural, material) are introduced in Allen, P., & Sachs, C. (2012). Women and food chains: The gendered politics of food. Taking food public: Redefining foodways in a changing world. Eds. Forson, P. W., & Counihan, C. Routledge. 23-40. To get the most out of this activity, it is recommended that learners read this article before doing this activity.

Page 4 can be printed and distributed as handouts for learners to reference as they work through this activity.

Part 1: Defining Power (Time estimate: 20-25 min)

Facilitator Note

It may be useful to prepare a basic Powerpoint presentation for this activity, however it can also be done using a whiteboard or verbally.

STEPS

- 1 Introduce the activity. Ask the class "What is power?" and write out their responses on a whiteboard or have students submit their response to a platform such as Menti.
- 2 Once participants have had a chance to respond, offer the following definition: **Power, in its most basic form, is the ability of people to achieve the change they want.**
- 3 State that there are different kinds of power (Adapted from PeerNetBC). Define the following types of power either on a whiteboard, chart paper or on a screen. Ask the participants to provide examples of each type of power.
 - Systemic power: Refers to power built into socioeconomic relationships. The systems that hold power in our society include: government, business, education, media, family, health, faith groups, etc.
 - Institutional power: Refers to power held by institutions creates, increases or decreases privilege for different groups of people.
 - Positional power: Refers to power that comes from hierarchies, such as age, experience, titles (ie. PhD., middle-aged person, celebrities).
 - Personal power: Refers to power within each individual to take action, make decisions and participate.

MODULE 7: GENDER, EQUITY AND FOOD SECURITY

- 4 Ask the group “Is power good or bad?”. State that there are different expressions of power (Adapted from [Participatory Methods](#) and [Powercube](#)). Define the following expressions of power either on a whiteboard, chart paper or on a screen. Ask the participants to provide examples of each expression of power.
- ‘Power over’: One group dominating others; having power requires taking power from others and often works through coercion or fear.
 - ‘Power with’: Collective power; finding common ground between different group interests and building collective action.
 - ‘Power within’: An individual or collective belief in self-worth and self-knowledge; recognizes the importance of dignity and fulfilment in empowerment; for example, we have endless reserves of power within: creativity, imagination, love and more.
- 5 Ask participants to draw an image that represents power to them. Drawings can come in the form of: powercube, fractals, spectrum, three dimensional axes, organic structure, onion, tree etc.
- View [examples](#) and [this guide on ways of visualizing power](#) by Powercube.

Part 2 : Power Mapping Gender Equity (Time estimate: 25-40 min)

- 6 Ask participants to now apply their understanding of power to the topic of gender equity and food. Divide the class into small groups of 4-6 people. Once participants are in their groups, provide them with writing utensils, chart paper and/or post-it notes.

Ask participants to draw from the assigned readings, attached quotes and the discussion to now apply their understanding of power onto the topic of gender and food. Provide groups with the following prompts:

- What are some institutions and groups that have power over individuals’ food security outcomes?
- How do institutions and groups shape access to food? Explore privileges that institutions have or don’t have and how this influences individuals’ access within the food system.
- How do various aspects of identity (eg. age, experience, race, titles) intersect with gender to create, increase, or decrease the ability of individuals to influence their food security outcomes?

Facilitator Note

Provide the quotes on page 4 and 5. Depending on the amount of time allocated to this activity, provide at least 5 minutes for the learners to discuss each prompt. Offer visual (a countdown timer on screen) or auditory cues (ring a bell or give verbal instructions) to signal the transition between each prompt.

- 7 Ask participants to draw out a power analysis of gender and food security dynamics. This is about drawing the relationships of power and how different groups relate to each other. Ask learners to map out their response as a drawing that resonates with your group (similar to step 3). Provide groups with the following prompts:
- Who are the key actors within the food system?
 - How are the different actors attempting to leverage power? How do they protect or inhibit food security for various gender identities?
 - How do actors experience or perpetuate oppression in any of the three domains of the food system (corporeal, sociocultural and material)?
- 8 Have the groups share their diagrams with the class. Debrief the activity using the following questions to guide a discussion.
- What similarities arose for the different power maps?
 - If you were to centre gender and sexuality rights, how might the drawing change? Where are the cracks, push points, weak spots?

ASSESSMENT: WRITTEN REFLECTION

Write a reflective journal on one of the following prompts, bringing in elements from the course materials (lectures, activities, and readings), your in-class drawings or from your own experience and academic background.

Sample prompts:

- Oppression in the food system is experienced across various realms and within different institutions. Choose one institution to focus on: government, schools, family etc. What role do members of that group have in perpetuating or alleviating harmful power structures and relationships?
- Reflect on the power mapping activity - how do you position yourself within the food system, in the context of your gender identity? Which structures and systems (economic systems, social norms, media messages, knowledge systems, cultural backgrounds, etc.) have situated you in this position? Where would you place yourself in your in-class drawing of power?

These reflections can be picked up at the end of the class as an 'exit ticket', where learners submit their short reflection before leaving the class or workshop, or assigned as a take-home exercise.

NOTES:

ACTIVITY: POWER MAPPING

QUOTES (To be used in Step 6 of the activity)

Reproductive pressures:

Dickinson, M. "Women, Welfare, and Food Insecurity." *Women Redefining the Experience of Food Insecurity: Life Off the Edge of the Table*, edited by Janet Page-Reeves, Lexington Books, 2014, pp. 65-80.

"If you don't give birth they say oh what happened? You are young, you are healthy, why don't you give birth? What happened? Go to fertilization. Have children. And when you have them, they cause you problems. Oh why do you have children? You want to depend on PA (public assistance). You want to depend on this service, you want to depend... You say to me that I'm healthy. I'm able to give birth. And if you don't have this you go to in vitro or, I don't know. We need a population, so why are you blaming me when I have them.'

At an intuitive level, what Adwa is describing is the tension between demands on women to reproduce a population that can continue to work and consume, a necessity for future profit making, and the demands that they sell their labor on the market today, in order to contribute to profit making right now. Her desire to invest in her children, in their education and their health, is minimized in the contemporary urban political economy. Welfare, as a secondary institution that operates to regulate the labor force, is designed to move poor women as quickly as possible into paid labor and food aid is used as both a punishment and an incentive to induce them to prioritize the needs of current employers over the immediate or long-term needs of their children. The contradictions that Adwa found herself grappling with are part of the broader restructuring of the U.S. economy in which, "reproductive activities have been reorganized as value-producing services that workers must purchase and pay for. In this way, the value that reproductive activities produce is immediately realized, rather than being made conditional on the performance of the workers that they reproduce" (Federici 2012). The stark contradictions that poor women and women of color have long felt, between their role as mothers who are responsible for taking care of their children and their role as workers have been intensified by welfare reforms that prioritize immediate labor force attachment and further devalue non-commodified forms of care-taking."

Nutrition science:

Hayes-Conroy, A., & Hayes-Conroy, J. (2013). "Chapter 9: Feminist Nutrition: Difference, Decolonization, and Dietary Change." *Doing Nutrition Differently: Critical Approaches to Diet and Dietary Intervention*, Ashgate Publishing, pp. 173-188.

"Healthy eating" in our (Western) society continues to be defined in universal terms, with a core set of oft-repeated values and assumptions. This is so despite the fact that there is also an almost limitless supply of conflicting claims regarding what is "best" to eat ... As a particularly powerful claimant, nutrition science contends to (still) have a hold on the best way to eat by "keeping it simple." Indeed, many nutrition and public health professionals argue that:

The answer to the question "What should I eat?" is actually pretty simple. (Harvard School of Public Health website, 2012 emphasis in original)

... Eat a lot of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains; enjoy healthy fats (e.g. olive oil, fish, nuts), but avoid saturated fat (butter, red meat); drink water; limit salt and sugar; exercise and take in an appropriate amount of calories for your body and lifestyle (Harvard 2012) ... And, even though we have recently moved from pyramid to plate (myplate.gov 2012), the central message remains the same - eat like we say and you will be healthy ... Thus, we have a situation where "core" (read: white/Western) nutrition facts are simplified (read: dumbed down) for a largely non-white target population, who are assumed to not be smart enough to keep themselves healthy (or so we are to surmise, judging by the rates of dietary disease in non-white communities, combined with the continual emphasis on education-as-cure)."

ACTIVITY: POWER MAPPING

QUOTES (To be used in Step 6 of the activity; continued)

Health issues:

Russomanno, Patterson, & Jabson. (2019). Food Insecurity Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals in the Southeast United States: A Qualitative Study. <https://www.liebertpub-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/doi/pdf/10.1089/trgh.2018.0024>

“Participants reported suffering substantial, negative physical health outcomes due to high food insecurity, including frequent illnesses and uncontrolled weight gain:

“[I was] eating really unhealthy food, because it was cheaper. Gained weight, and felt sick and tired all the time. Your quality of life really suffers when you put unhealthy things into your body.” (Participant 13, Transgender Male)”

Food aid:

Russomanno, Patterson, & Jabson. (2019). Food Insecurity Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals in the Southeast United States: A Qualitative Study. <https://www.liebertpub-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/doi/pdf/10.1089/trgh.2018.0024>

“Several participants noted that local food pantries were not accessible to them in their communities. One participant stated, “If you’re not living in a homeless shelter, there’s not much access to food pantries.” (Participant 4, Transgender Male) Among participants who noted that food pantries were available and known, almost all reported that these resources were organized by local churches or faith-based organizations. Participants reported distress when deciding to use these food pantries, as they felt uncomfortable and unwelcomed by these institutions due to their TGNC [transgender and gender non-conforming] identity.”

Food insecurity stigma:

Dickinson, M. “Women, Welfare, and Food Insecurity.” *Women Redefining the Experience of Food Insecurity: Life Off the Edge of the Table*, edited by Janet Page-Reeves, Lexington Books, 2014, pp. 65-80.

“One of the difficulties of conducting research on hunger and food insecurity, particularly with women who have children, is determining the degree of food hardship they experience. I asked Adwa if she ever ran out of Food Stamps and cash at the end of the month and she laughed and replied “of course!” I asked her what they do when that happens and she told me that, “If we don’t have cash, we conserve food.” But asking if this meant that they sometimes ate less than she felt they should or if they ever went hungry made her visibly uncomfortable. This was a common response, as other researchers studying hunger in the urban U.S. have confirmed. “Caregivers are often reluctant to admit that their children may not be getting enough food due to shame or due to the fear that their children might be removed from the home by authorities.” (Chilton and Rabinowich 2012, 2)”

Work discrimination:

Russomanno, Patterson, & Jabson. (2019). Food Insecurity Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals in the Southeast United States: A Qualitative Study. <https://www.liebertpub-com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/doi/pdf/10.1089/trgh.2018.0024>

“Participants reported that food insecurity was directly related to inability to find steady employment that paid a living wage ... Several participants attributed their limited employment opportunities to employers’ negative responses to their gender identity. Participants described challenges in securing employment and active discrimination in the workplace, leading to job loss—whether due to being “asked to leave” or preemptive resignation.”