*Nadia Chaney

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers!

Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is a wild, wonderful format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a topic on a specific question. Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!), Goals and Agreements for today's session (please add anything you need/want to the agreements, and hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session), 3 discussion questions (answer in any order) and 3 case studies that we will use to design 3 new activities together. I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the website in a short while. Have fun!

This month we are discussing BALANCING VOICE AND POWER IN GROUP DYNAMICS

In any group of people there are different aspects of power that are active, and affecting your group dynamic. One way of looking at these is in these three categories: RANK, ROLE and PERSONAL power. RANK refers to power that a person gets from society in general. It could from their gender, race, class, language, or any other aspect of their social location that gives their voice an unearned or automatic authority. ROLE has to do with the role that they play in the group, for example if they are the boss in a group with their employees, or the facilitator, or a funder, their voice usually carries more authority in the group. The third category is where it gets interesting. PERSONAL power is psychological. It has to do with someone's resilience, their self-knowledge, their life experience, their values, their reputation, their charm, their eloquence, their magnetism. We all have personal power. It's unique to each person and it can be fostered and developed, but it is more activated in some people than others. Often, in groups, people who have a lot of power in any or all of these three categories will dominate group dialogue and process.

Partners for Youth Empowerment

VOICE is not just the sounds that come out of the throat! VOICE, for our purposes today, is the expression of the whole self. That could be ideas, emotions, words, sounds, body language, dress or any other way participants express themselves. So our task today is to talk about how we balance all this power in a group so that every voice is heard. As facilitators, what can we do in terms of structure, delivery, relationship and reactions that help to balance the power in our groups so that everyone's voice can thrive?

Nadia Chaney Welcome, Barbara!

Barbara Ball Hi Nadia!

Nadia Chaney Shilpa! Great to have you here!

> Shilpa Setty Thank you Nadia!! I feel great to be here too ☺

Barb Applepieski Thanks for the wonderful introduction to power and voice!

Nadia Chaney hi Mayan! great to see you back here!

Mayan Patel Awesome intro I can't wait for this one!

> Nadia Chaney ☺technically over in a few mins, but as you know the floor stays open all month.

> Mayan Patel ☺Am running an event this evening with the theme nourishment. Going to see how role rank and personal power play out in this one! Ill revisit and add my thoughts tonight or tomorrow

> Nadia Chaney looking forward to your insight.

*Nadia Chaney

Today's Goals:

1) To explore the potential, principles and practices of balancing voice and power in group dynamics.

2) To use case studies (examples) to examine some of the issues and complications regarding balancing voice and power in groups.

3) To share our experiences and best practices of balancing voice and power in groups.

4) To connect, reinvigorate and have meaningful fun online.

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for agreements to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.

1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe.

2) Share at your level; Everyone is welcome, no matter their level of experience as a facilitator or community organizer. All questions are important, and all answers (or further questions) are valuable. It is also okay and important to respectfully disagree with each other.

3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to REFRESH your browser fairly often.

4) Maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.

5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads.

6) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.

***Nadia Chaney**

Check-in Question for May 19, 2016: Describe your PERSONAL POWER as if it were a natural landscape.

Nesreen Ali mm I like this - so if I can describe it. my personal power would be described as that transition from wooded dense forest, to wide-open ocean. taking something complex and opening it up to a whole new reality with a group of people.

Nadia Chaney Wonderful Nesreen, and great to see you again!

Sola Story My personal power? Raw lightning, roaring thunder... Tapped!

    Nadia Chaney Yes, Sola! I have certainly seen THAT in action! Great to see you.

    Sola Story Hashima Nadia☺

Barbara Ball My personal power is maintaining calm and carving a path, though sometimes it may seem like going with the flow. I'm like a trickling creek, winding through the forest.

Nadia Chaney Wonderful Barbara! Isn't it already fascinating to see how different styles and expressions of personal power might interact in a group?

Amber Hescock Johnson Hmm... Perhaps a steep mountain pass with beautiful views letting me and others know we can do it, that the effort is worthwhile and so are we.

    Nadia Chaney yes, Amber! Thank you!

Mutya Macatumpag My personal power is a thousand year old cedar tree standing in the middle of a volcanic flood rolling down the mountain.

    Nadia Chaney Yes, I can see that!! Mutya, it's wonderful to have you here.

Nadia Chaney I think I'll add my own in here, too. My personal power feels like a bright, clear night sky, full of stars.

Shilpa Setty My personal power feels like landscape is wide land with green grass, with thin fresh air.

    Nadia Chaney Beautiful.

Nadia Chaney Did you all see that I posted the first discussion question? If you are still enjoying each other's landscapes of personal power, that's cool too wink emoticon

Michele Health-Promoter Hi Sorry I'm late... Today I would describe my personal power as - A surfable breaker that lands foamy on the seashore on a sunny day... I think.

    Michele Health-Promoter Thank you so much for this conversation and opportunity to reflect here.

Deb Reynolds I'm a bright blue sky with high cirrus clouds.

Nadia Chaney Welcome Deb Reynolds and Michele Health-Promoter!

Barb Applepieski A sweet little garden with lots of useful vegetables, herbs, and pathways made of found stones. This garden also welcomes the helpful weeds and is abundant enough to share with neighbours, friends, and curious passers-by!

*Nadia Chaney

Discussion Question #1: How do you know if the power in a group is out of balance? What clues do you see, hear, or feel?

Barbara Ball - Some individuals talking more than others
- Some individuals retreat/become quiet/may seem disengaged
- Not all ideas/thoughts shared are acknowledged
- The dynamic "feels" unbalanced. I feel it in my gut. Like I want to shift energy from one part of the group to another.

Nadia Chaney Awesome, Barbara. Thanks for getting this one rolling! Let's open some of these ideas up even further, and get into some of the nuances. When you pick up on some of these signals, what details are you looking for, or how do you test your assumptions?

> Nadia Chaney (Also, in the spirit of the 3rd Thursday, now that this question is open I'm posting the next one.)

> Shilpa Setty We can also make out with facial expressions that they are checked out

> Nadia Chaney Shilpa, how do you double-check your perception that someone is checked out, based on the facial expression that you saw? How do you make sure that what you think you see is really what they are feeling?

> Shilpa Setty If its the group, then it starts with one person, and gets communicated to others in the group, so much communication happening with eye contact is one way of confirming that expression. When it is one person, I ask them if they want to share their thoughts, chances are more they share what's on their mind

[Sola Story](#) Sometimes imbalance leads to triggers and emotional toxicity being played out in the group...

> [Nadia Chaney](#) Great, yes. Thank you, Sola. What does that look like? How do you know someone is triggered?
>
> [Sola Story](#) Agitated movements, side conversations or sometimes confrontational comments...
>
> [Michele Health-Promoter](#) withdraws - sometimes disassociative - anger
> [Nadia Chaney](#) even talking too much and interrupting can be clues that someone is triggered. That's where we sometimes see the vicious cycles of unchecked power in groups

[Barbara Ball](#) I guess one technique I use, particularly when we're in a circle, is simply eye contact. Trying to connect with the "quieter" folks, to signal encouragement without verbalizing it

> [Nadia Chaney](#) That's lovely Barb. It's more part of the next question...I still want to hear more about how you NOTICE the imbalances, how do you check your perceptions...do you know what I mean?
>
> [Barbara Ball](#) Ahhhh, ok.
>
> [Barbara Ball](#) got it
>
> [Nadia Chaney](#) I'm asking because, for me, sometimes I have my own perception so much in the way in a group I can't see the power playing out in it's many aspects...I want to know more about how you all handle this paradox...
>
> [Nadia Chaney](#) I'm copying your reply above to the Discussion Question #2...
>
> [Barbara Ball](#) Body language (arms crossed), tone of voice, volume of voice, body position (leaning in or out), the tone of comments being shared
>
> [Barbara Ball](#) Facial expressions (smile, eye rolling, neutral)

Shilpa Setty The atmosphere is something like, nothing new is going to come up

Nadia Chaney Shilpa Setty that's an interesting one! So, when power is out of balance you can tell because the group's energy/synergy is less alive?

Nesreen Ali When there is not a lively discussion - there are either pre-existing or newly created blocks to participants speaking up, which you will need to be mindful of as a facilitator. as well, as the facilitator if you are holding too much power it means you are probably talking too much, or in some way, framing discussions in a way that do not allow space for people to participate equally.

Nadia Chaney Here's a follow up question on this one: Can you always tell when power is out of balance in a group? Why or why not?

Barb Applepieski I can tell when power is out of balance when I feel like I want to "save" the group instead of finding ways to facilitate the group re-balancing its own equilibrium. I think this speaks more to my own power than the power within the group. I can facilitate this rebalancing by listening. By allowing the dynamic to happen so that I can hear what the group really needs! Harder than it sounds haha...

Nadia Chaney nice, Barb! Thanks for bringing that new angle into the discussion

Michele Health-Promoter Yes, this is what I mean by starting to take up too much space. Thanks for wording it this way.

Barb Applepieski I was just going to comment that you had done the same for me!

Michele Health-Promoter Most times I feel like I can tell. Sometimes I know because I start to take up too much space. Sometimes I feel unsure about how to handle a power imbalance in a way that continues to honour and validate where people may be at.

Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze Thanks Michele, I was thinking along similar lines re: where people are at. To state the obvious: there will be power differences. Whether social (PoC/white, etc) or organizational (staff/mgmt, etc). The social will accompany these people most of their lives, and the structural ones will still be there in the org when we leave. So the floor is not even -- from group to group the disparities can be narrower (more homogenous groups) or wider (more diverse group, staff and mgmt together, etc).

But is power difference always the same as power imbalance? It's not just a question of 'how the power shows up in the room' (ie privileged folks leaving space, marginalized folks taking space, etc) but also a question of what aspects of this difference does the group want to challenge. What part of the difference to you accept (for the time being), and what part do you actively work to even out? I think it important to be explicit about it, particularly since the power difference will continue after our session and marginalized participants might have their own interest in maintaining a certain 'balance' with the power difference they have to cope with. (Obviously, privilege folks will also have desire to maintain "harmony" -- mix of a genuine need for peace, blindness to the impacts of inequity and more or less conscious desire to protect their privilege)

So I guess I'm asking a follow up question... which is probably up there already in the thread what does it look like when there is power difference?
how do we know when challenging/evening that power difference will create more balance (and how far to push, while leaving the group (and particularly marginalized folks) in a better space then when we arrived?

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #2: What are some of the core principles that you rely on to balance voice and power in your group work? Share some of the things you say and do that help everyone's voice to thrive.

[Nesreen Ali](#) What I tend to do, is acknowledge someone who is a talker contribution , summarize and then quickly pick someone in the group who has yet to participate in that part of the discussion. it is more of a technique than principle i suppose.

[Nadia Chaney](#) Copied over from Barbara Ball: I guess one technique I use, particularly when we're in a circle, is simply eye contact. Trying to connect with the "quieter" folks, to signal encouragement without verbalizing i

[Nesreen Ali](#) as well, setting up clear ground rules at the beginning that everyone will have the opportunity to participate if they so choose, some people may find it difficult to contribute in a group so offering alternative ways of sharing ideas (writing them, or drawing them) is important.

what is really key letting people have time to process questions and not just jump into discussion can be really helpful for folks who tend to speak up less.

Nadia Chaney Posting Discussion Question #3 now...

Michele Health-Promoter I really like to set group agreements and when there's time ask the group to create them. "Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken" - taking a deep breath and letting silence reign -

Deb Reynolds One technique is to ask for breathing room in between people- to let things settle in. It totally depends on the situation, but 20 seconds can be a welcome space for breath and feeling into what has been said.

Nadia Chaney For me, one thing I'm often thinking about is what are the OBSTACLES to participation. I look at my group dynamic and try to think about what can make the space more accessible in every way I can imagine. Often, just a few words like "you can't do this wrong" can help...

> Shilpa Setty I use it too, "there is nothing right or wrong" and this helps quiter people talk

> Michele Health-Promoter Re: obstacles - I try to acknowledge some of the environmental and emotional barriers (things going on in the world or our community that can impact where folks may be at) that I am coming into the room with. I find sometimes (and especially if it's obvious to me that others may be experiencing the same) validating aloud makes it safer for others in the group to share where they are at. I generally like to do this as part of a check-in of some sort at the front end of multi-session programming. And occasionally when there seems to be some sort of impasse.

> Nadia Chaney love this Michele. I'm so often working outside of my own home community, that finding out from partners, hosts and co-facilitators what these dynamics might be is something I really rely on.

Barb Applepieski These are great ideas!

> Nadia Chaney right? there's nothing like thinking together.

[Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze](#) Anybody tried using a 'speaking token' system? ie you have only so many 'tokens' that allow you to say something, in order to (a) make more visible who speaks a lot and who doesn't and (b)have a material way to reign in folks who take too much space and those who don't? Would be curious to hear how that was introduced, worked out, and debriefed...

[Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze](#) A 'peaking' signal is useful to manage time (and space): some agreement set early that we all have experienced getting caught in our mind and going on and on and on... (or experienced being on the other side) so granting the facilitator the right to interrupt with a hand signal that they think we got the point (reached peak in value of the comment), so they can interrupt, summarize the point (confirm that this is right) and move on. It sounds harsh but can work really well particuparly when working with more 'head space' conversation (not always appropriate to more sensitive heart space convos, obviously). That can really help make more space for folks who speak less.

[Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze](#) Small group discussion or paired discussion are also a mean to offer those who don't speak confortably in plenary a space to speak. I often see facilitators, when running late on an agenda, ask the group whether they prefer to break out or go into plenary... which always leads to the loud voices saying: plenary! ('cause of course it's comfortable for them). Making time for break outs creates time for all to be heard, even if not by all.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #3: What are some of the design elements you use to authentically invite all the voices in a group? Share some games and activities that you use to balance voice and power in your groups.

[Nesreen Ali](#) What a great question, looking forward to learning from other folks on this one!

> [Nadia Chaney](#) same!

Barbara Ball To help balance voice, I sometimes go to quiet free-writing first, to give people a chance to collect their thoughts and feelings. Not everyone thinks on their feet quickly and is comfortable speaking off the cuff. Then invite people to share, one by one, around the circle

Nadia Chaney Brilliant! I'm posting the final Discussion Question now...after that, Case Studies!

> Shilpa Setty Nadia Chaney this above comment of yours is just what helps hear everyone's voice. Forseeing what might be going on in participants and acknowledging that will clear their mind space to think of what is asked smile emoticon You do it brilliantly!

> Nadia Chaney Thanks Shilpa! I actually deleted it because I realized I had one more discussion question, but I'll repost it here so people know what you're referring to. "Let's keep all these discussion questions flowing WHILE I post the first case study. Remember, this format gets really branched out and hard to track...that's part of the fun but it can be frustrating too. Don't feel like you NEED to be on top of all the threads at once!"

Deb Reynolds I invite a physical form of response, a movement, a gesture that wants to be seen. It doesn't have to make any sense (to anyone) - it's something that is bubbling and wants to come up and out.

> Nadia Chaney Oh I LOVE that. I think the invitation to the unspoken, the unconscious, the irrational, the raw expression can go SO FAR in balancing power.

Barb Applepieski Sadly I must go - and in the middle of such a juicy question! Looking forward to the transcription and to connecting with all of you next time.

> Nadia Chaney Til soon, Barb! Be well!

Shilpa Setty I get everyone to play an energizer which uses mind and body where everyone is alert and involves completely. Like Zip, Zap, Zoom; house, tenant, and tsunami etc

Michele Health-Promoter Draw/Share and Emoji of where you are at right now. Metaphor Check-Ins. "If you were a superhero what power would you have an why?" - the hand print exercise -

Nadia Chaney What's the hand print exercise?

Michele Health-Promoter Each finger is a different question, so it can be tailored as a check in or evaluation e.g. So the questions can be "A strength you bring to the group, a challenge, something you want to learn, something you want to share, anything you want us to know.

Michele Health-Promoter There's also Head, Heart and Hands exercise - which can work well when there is conflict

Nadia Chaney thank you! I like that. I'd love to use them to decorate teh room after. I like having visual "voice" in a group...

Michele Health-Promoter Yes, exactly

Nadia Chaney

Discussion Question #4: Tell us a short story of time you found it challenging to address power imbalances in a group you were facilitating. What did you do? As you read each others stories, please share what you have done (or would like to try) in similar circumstances.

Bunty Cumberpants Hi - Ruth here, just back from facilitating a group, sorry to be late! This can sometimes be an issue when we facilitate our Self-advocacy groups for People with Learning Disabilities, but more often than not from those there to support, rather than the group members themselves. We find that the agreements set at the beginning of the session go a good way to mitigating against this, but we have also put together some 'golden rules' for supporters now which have also helped to redress the balance.

Nadia Chaney How/when do you share the golden rules, Ruth? (Great to see you, btw!)

Bunty Cumberpants And you Nadia ... so we give all new support staff a copy when they first come to the group and we get our Members to reiterate them when the need arises ... this has a great impact, but is also hugely reinforcing for Self-advocacy skills

>   Nadia Chaney thank you so much for sharing this. Would it be appropriate to share some or all of the golden rules?

>   Bunty Cumberpants Yes, I can share some of them. So "before you come to the session, please check with the person/persons you are supporting how they would like to be supported" and "please respect our right to speak for ourselves" "sometimes it is easier if our carers or staff are not in the room" "thank you so much for your support"

>   Nadia Chaney I love how straightforward they are. And, I connect it to Amber Hescock Johnson's point in the Discussion Question #3

Amber Hescock Johnson Question: Does it ever make sense to enlist those whose voices dominate in encouraging others to bring forth their voices? If pulled aside or somehow otherwise enlisted in the effort of balancing voices? I wonder if that ever works, or if it just reinforces an imbalance.

>   Nadia Chaney Yes, absolutely that can work. For me, I think about what KIND of power is playing out (rank, role, personal), and try to assess and discuss the person's intention. Are they aware of their impact? Are they invested in the group's dynamic? This helps me decide on my approach. What about others on this assembly? Do you use this technique, too?

>   Amber Hescock Johnson Nadia Chaney Thank you Nadia!

>   Shilpa Setty Yes I do. As we work with teachers, whenever there is Principal or the Head person of the school there is this power dynamic that plays out, But, what has helped is talking to them separately; and also telling them in advance how the training works so that they adjust the way they participate.

>   Nadia Chaney This is the thread I was connecting to, Bunty Cumberpants

>   Bunty Cumberpants Thanks, that's really helpful.

Nadia Chaney First Case Study is up!

Barbara Ball I have some big personalities in my current group. All are wonderful souls, but definitely a challenge to maintain balance and keep the space open for quieter girls to contribute. In a group of 10, I have 4 people who are outgoing/very verbal, two who started out quiet as a mouse, and the rest are somewhere in-between. I try to find ways of sharing the power with some of the quieter girls, like asking them to pick the check-in question for the day. And sometimes purposefully shifting the bigger personalities to a support role (e.g. recording our brainstorming notes on the flip chart). Interestingly, I have one girl who seems to have a lot of power (RANK, ROLE and PERSONAL power) but sometimes appears disengaged… too cool. I used the "we're going to leave our coolness outside, and pick it up later" line from CF1, and did silly moves mirroring, and that helped smile emoticon

*Nadia Chaney

Case Study #1: You are facilitating a group of youth at a school, once a week after school for two hours. In the existing dynamic in the classroom, the young men (who make up about half the class) do most of the talking. What can you do to shift this dynamic?

Nesreen Ali Randomly assign partners, so youth can work together and share a presentation. This will help youth hear each other, and create something together. With the expectation, the person who self-identifies as being less talkative presents the results of their discussion activity.

> Nadia Chaney awesome, Nesreen, nice one! How do you support the less talkative folks to step up, and the more talkative ones to step back? What do you do (if anything) to make this big leap feel do-able?

> Nesreen Ali Perhaps having the whole group share rules/agreements that they will be respectful of all voices, and where possible. Another technique I have used, is physically standing by a youth in order to help them speak up. One more technique is actually

talking through with that more quiet youth what they think and validating to them off-the-side-of-the-convo that it is okay to say what they feel. Sort of coaching them ☺

Nadia Chaney (just posted case study #2. remember there's a transcript in case you're feeling like you can't read it all.)

Amber Hescock Johnson Pick an activity that has nothing to do with volume/talking? smile emoticon I am thinking of some of the activities we did in Creative Facilitation training with Peggy Taylor and Mutya Macatumpag.

> Nadia Chaney awesome. yes. can you think of a specific example to share?

> Amber Hescock Johnson Magic Clay and Sculpting Emotions (both use the body for expressions rather than actual "voice")

> Nadia Chaney thank you, Amber! If people want instructions for these, they are here:
> Creative Workshop Activities for Working with Youth and Adults
> pyeglobal.org

Barbara Ball I might try group performances, and in this case, split by gender. It would give the young women a chance to speak on a topic, uninterrupted, and the young men would be in a supportive, undivided attention/listening role (lights, camera, action, and applause)

> Nadia Chaney ooh cool idea! how would you set it up? would you name the power imbalance in the group? or, how would you set a context for splitting by gender?

> Barbara Ball That's a great question! When i was imagining the scenario, there was a clear gender divide in the conversation (which you didn't actually specify smile emoticon I don't think I'd come out and say, hey, we haven't heard from the girls, so let's do this... But I might say that I'd be interested to hear thoughts on a topic from a gender perspective, to bring to light other perspectives we may not have considered

Michele Health-Promoter This is such an interesting question for me because in my work around IPV, building healthier relationships, and sexual health it's sometimes the other way around. And, because of gender dynamics it's often quite tricky 'handling' the voices and the space that is taken up when either group can dominate for different reasons.

Nadia Chaney Yes, this is the question of intersections of power that I was hoping we'd get to. How rank, role and personal power can be creating complications with each other. Would love to hear some perspectives on this.

Michele Health-Promoter You know, each session is different but I feel that this is one of the places that I take the most risks around where I 'fit' or don't 'fit' re gender(and the impact of that) but it does mean that I elect to take more space that I am usually comfortable, and with regard to being vulnerable with a group. I try to validate the experiences of both sides while making sure and clear that the pieces around 'systemic oppression' are real and can create an environment in which we learn how to devalue each other by not listening, by talking over, by dismissing etc... So, to be honest, sometimes I pull 'rank' It doesn't always sit well with me but I know I've made the right decision when the energy in the room shifts and when we all take that deep breath where we can forgive ourselves and each other for using power in ways that isn't okay. It's hard and it doesn't always work and sometimes I leave feeling raw and defeated so I'd love to know what other folks do and how they mitigate some of these pieces.

Nadia Chaney I totally struggle with this, too. I really try to let my emotions guide me in these cases, to be as real as I can, but at the same time keep the balance of insight and self-awareness and analysis....gets so tricky!

*Nadia Chaney

Case Study #2: You are discussing community agreements with a new group of adults that you will be working with for two days. You've already noticed that everyone in the group tends to look to the manager before saying anything. What can you include in the agreements to help people feel more comfortable sharing in the group?

Nadia Chaney Shilpa Setty, I thought you might have some insight on this from your work with teachers and principals?

[Nesreen Ali](#) You can't push against ingrained behaviours of control and submission in the work-place. With that understanding, it sounds like this group would benefit from submitting discussion points anonymously. If you have the opportunity to do this pre-meeting send out a survey to get people's feedback. Establish in your agreements that opinions/views expressed in this space must be respected and should not influence job performance post-meeting.

[Nesreen Ali](#) Also prepare yourself to have to dig, and create discussions a lot more in this situation. Reiterate this is supposed to be a place of safety, and that all opinions are valued.

[Nadia Chaney](#) You don't think you can ever push against ingrained power-positions? Is there ever a place where you can?

[Nesreen Ali](#) Oh man good point - you need to somehow foster courage into all of the work you do. that from a principle standpoint is what i would say is key - courage to speak truth to power. what do you think?

[Nadia Chaney](#) Sometimes I go into workplace facilitation or other places with a strong hierarchy knowing that my work is to disrupt. I try to have a conversation with power-holders beforehand to help them see the value of stepping back, and of investing in the loss of some of their privilege. Then, with that person's understanding, I consciously empower the position and voices of folks with less power, prioritizing their voices and supporting the power holder to acknowledge their contributions and insights.

[Michele Health-Promoter](#) I'm curious if it's ever okay to ask those with power to step out of the space? From a facilitator standpoint there is something underlying that needs to be attended to, I think. I mean, if the intention is to bridge communication then no, that won't work at all but if it's to gather information and elicit engagement - having the manager/management in the room feels like a really big barrier.

[Barbara Ball](#) I was wondering the same thing...

[Tom-Pierre Frappé-Sénéclauze](#) I'd be concerned to reinforce stratification rather than equalize by asking the manager to leave. The 'mutiny' syndrome may exacerbate tension between staff and management and lead management to be even more authoritarian and defensive...

Ultimately, I think it depends if the 'manager' is genuinely 'in with the program' and interested in empowering staff. Often it's a grey zone - they are at the surface, because

that's what 'good' managers are supposed to do, but might not have the skills/confidence to do it genuinely in practice. But that's a place you can work from, because at least they will try to take your cues and step back... So

(1) assuming some level of buy-in from manager: Getting them prepared ahead of time to leave a lot of space and validate the fact they encourage all to speak frankly. Coaching them to show vulnerabilty themselves in the group (without making it all about them either, ie short). Some pre-arranged signal with them if they are 'asserting' power rather then creating space might help, if they know they have a tendency to take back control.

(2) assuming manager (and mgmt) is not really on board: a lot less can be done... plant seeds that a better way is possible, and hope they pick up on it? Maybe provide some tools for staff to cope or at least know that this isn't the only way this can be?...

Key practical question there is how do we know ahead of time how much that will be an issue and how much we need to prepare for it?

At the end of that spectrum we might need to acknowledge the power divide is to wide to be bridged by creative means and need to work to create a more even power relation -- ie work more on the union side (if unionized) to strengthen structural counter-force. In internal politics just as for international/intersocial politics you often need a material power base if there are to be some sharing of power.

Which brings us back to age old debate between bridge building and radical politics within marginalized community: when is working to equalize voices within hierarchical organizations / structurally segregated societies (assuming working both with mgmt/staff, target/agents,etc) a detriment to the formation of an actual counter-power? Maybe a conversation for another time!

Shilpa Setty "All are equal" is one of the agreement. When the above scene happens, I tell them that its okay to share, and you don't have to everytime see that teacher or principal in a lively tone of voice. Though, something that adds to it is talking to them in advance so they are also letting themselves loose and go with th flow

*Nadia Chaney

Case Study #3: You are in a group discussing a community issue that affects everyone. One person in the group continually responds immediately to anyone who speaks. You've tried asking people to raise their hands, but this person is not respecting the hands, either. They just keep jumping in. When another participant asks them to wait their turn they become angry and offended. What can you do?

Nadia Chaney Anyone with experience in participatory process that can give us some insight on this one? Maybe Mutya Macatumpag or Michele Health-Promoter?

Nesreen Ali I think you have to call out the behaviour and place that person within the broader discussion. Acknowledge, truncate and offer them other opportunities post the meeting to provide all of their input.

> Michele Health-Promoter I like tying to 'call in' - sometimes anxiety is why folks take up lots of space (they may feel that they haven't been heard on the issue). I struggle with always 'calling out' I think I try to do this in a slightly non-traditional kind of way but I do agree that the behavior if ongoing needs to be addressed.

Michele Health-Promoter Validate that the conversation may be a difficult one; remind folks to not make assumptions about why folks are talkative or not; Acknowledge that many people have not had a chance to weigh in. Ask for a round. Use a speaking stone or something visual/tangible that indicates someone has the floor...

> Barbara Ball Oh - I like the speaking stone idea!

Amber Hescock Johnson Acknowledge the positive side of their behavior: enthusiasm, passion/concern, and eagerness to participate. Maybe ask the group to help consider how we can bring balance and including more voices so everyone owns it. I love the speaking stone, Michele Health-Promoter!

> Michele Health-Promoter Yes, "Calling In" versus "calling out" - and strengths based more... but I do think this is complicated because if it's the same person and there is an

ongoing challenge to share space I will check in one and one and will let them know that I will also talk about it in a broader way with the group.

Amber Hescock Johnson Michele Health-Promoter Thank you, yes, great point. Mutya Macatumpag When there is an abundance of expression coming from one person, I acknowledge that expression by thanking the person for their enthusiasm and then I offer encouragement for folks who have been talking to make space for the quieter voices in the room. Sometimes, we have to say things a couple times and eventually there is understanding to wait and give space. I would probably also bring up in the room that it's important to keep open up the circle in this work and I would offer up a moment of silence for folks who haven't spoken and would like to share something that has been shared...

Mutya Macatumpag Opening*
Hasn't*

Mutya Macatumpag I would also acknowledge the energy in the room and talk about how when coming to places of larger discussions and emotions, things will come up and we may feel challenges and trigger and how do we continue to hold space for us to go to the harder places at the same time really truly listen to one another without devaluing or judging eachothers opinions...

Nadia Chaney totally. I think we always have to learn together how to enter these complex spaces of listening AND being heard.

*Nadia Chaney

We won't have time for this case study I think, but I'm posting it here for posterity, and for people who join in to the conversation after our scheduled time, which you are all welcome to do:

Case Study #4: You are hosting a gathering of community elders and youth. The elders are doing most of the talking in the group. The youth are on phones, and are chatting with each other. In both groups, there is are a few dominant personalities

that seem to be influencing the behaviour of others. What can you do to help the group to come together to hear each other?

Shilpa Setty I'm so feel like doing Listening and Not listening activity with this group, but considering its a gathering, not sure if this will fit in.

*Nadia Chaney

Wow, you beautiful people are just amazing! This has been an INCREDIBLY inspiring session. I love doing this work, and it is so much easier knowing you all are out there doing it too. Thank you for your depth, compassion, insight and intelligence this month. PYE will soon post the transcript and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts. We are always open to new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist, activist and social artist friends! Don't forget to check www.pyeglobal.org for upcoming trainings, too, there's some new ones just posted.

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Barbara Ball Thank you Nadia! This was my first 3rd Thursday Assembly, and I found it really helpful and inspiring. So glad to be a part of this community!

>   Nadia Chaney Yay! So glad to have you here, Barb! Welcome to the community!

Michele Health-Promoter Thank you Nadia. There is so much here for me to chew on. Thanks for providing this space to continually reflect and reimagine how I do this work.

>   Nadia Chaney much respect to you Michele, wonderful to have you here.

>   Michele Health-Promoter Nadia Chaney I love this space so much and wish my schedule allowed for more consistent engagement.

>   Nadia Chaney I keep thinking we should do it twice a month and flip the time zones...

Shilpa Setty Thanks a lot Nadia!! I found it very interesting and insightful with all the ideas and experiences shared. I loved the introduction to today's assembly and also how you kept notifying us when you are posting next question.

>   Nadia Chaney thanks, yes, I think I'll keep doing that. Nilisha Mohapatra, that little innovation seemed to make a nice shift for folks, fyi ❤️