Power Mapping

for Participatory Action Research (PAR) Teams

## Why Power Mapping?

Sharing power is central to participatory teams; yet, power navigation is often an ambiguous process and few clear guidelines exist. Therefore, PAR teams are often left to navigate the inevitable ambiguity in PAR processes anew, every time a process begins. While this negotiation is a vital aspect of authentic engagement and participation, PAR teams are often left with few resources in how to begin and navigate processes, especially in relation to decision-making and power sharing. When faced with moments of ambiguity, or other limitations such as time, PAR team members may revert to traditional hierarchical power structures, possibly leading to power missteps.

## Map Power and Resource Realities.

Instead of imagining equality as a starting point, name the realities of power as they exist through an equity lens. Map the power and resource realities of the team. Participants should locate their own social identities and positionalities on the team, as well as skills, networks, and viewpoints they bring to the team. This should also include mapping lived experiences (as relevant to the project), educational experiences, and areas of leadership team members may endeavor to take on.

## Map Values.

Each individual team member undoubtedly comes to the PAR team with a set of personal values and perspectives on how they imagine the PAR team may best work together. PAR team participants should map their personal values, then clarify the shared values of the team. Values mapping should be revisited regularly, especially in moments of tension or uncertainty about how to move forward.

## Map Growth Edges.

Participants should map areas of growth they would like to enhance through their collaboration (ex: facilitating a meeting, presenting at a conference, writing a paper, etc.). By mapping growth edges, participants will identify individual and team opportunities for growth throughout the PAR team’s process rather than relying on assumptions or traditional hierarchies to divide labor.

## Map Limitations and Constraints.

All individuals have constraints, such as time, skillsets, and interest. Oftentimes, constraints go unnamed, which can result in power imbalances where (a) a team member is asked to do something outside of their realm of comfort or capacity, or (b) a team member is unnecessarily burdened with many tasks that nobody wants. Team members should identify their constraints, and corresponding tasks which they do not have interest or skills to take on, as well as less-popular tasks they may be willing to take on. Teams should develop group guidelines for respecting constraints of team members as they inevitably arise, in effort to reducing shame and building PAR team communication structures.

# Power & Values

Mapping Activity

## Power & Resource Realities

What are 3-5 identities you hold that you feel are important for your team to know as they work with you (consider race, gender, sexuality, class, ability status, neurodivergence)? Which of these are privileged identities, which have led to experiences of oppression?

Education is often seen as a key to upward mobility, and research has traditionally been rooted in academic spaces and ideals. How have your experiences and identities shaped your access to education and your educational journey?

What has been your relationship to research (as a researcher, participant, etc.?) Consider your personal relationship to research, as well as how identity groups/communities you are a part of have engaged with (or been engaged by) research historically.

What lived experiences do you have that are relevant to this team’s work and focus?

What lived experiences distance you from the work or focus?

What role(s) do you tend to play on teams; what role(s) do you see yourself playing on this team (so far)?

What skills do you bring to the team?

What connections (to people, places, funds, etc.) do you have that may be beneficial to this team?

## Growth Edges

What are some skills you would like to develop through your team’s work?

What tasks feel exciting-kind-of-scary to take on?

What support do you need in moving from scary to exciting?

How do you like to receive feedback?



## Values

What values guide your everyday life?

What values guide how you show up in your team’s work?

What values do you hope the team uses to guide your collective work?

## Limitations and constraints

What are some limitations around your participation on this team? (ex: time, family care needs, scheduling, format of meetings)

What tasks do you not feel comfortable or interested in taking on?

What would make it easier for you to share when limitations or constraints arise?

# Discussion Questions

**After your group has individually filled out the power mapping questions and read over one another’s responses, here are some discussion questions which may guide a conversation about the power map.**

What feelings are arising after writing and reading your group's responses?

What do you want to lift up after reading your group’s responses?

What do you notice about your group’s responses that suggest how the team may best navigate power?

Are there potential new group agreements that emerge from the power mapping process?

Is there anything else you want to add to this conversation?