

Unit Three: Power

Lesson 1: Power and Gender

Standards Addressed by Lesson: **ECONOMICS Standard 3.1** Students understand that the exchange of goods and services creates economic interdependence and change (a – d).

Objectives of Lesson: To explore power dynamics and gender.

Instructional Strategies: Brainstorm activity, role play

Vocabulary: Neoliberalism

Suggested Resources to Obtain: None

Suggested Time: Between 50 and 60 minutes

Materials Needed:
-Props for skit
-Dialogue for cue cards

Attachments: None

Lesson Outline

Introduction to Lesson:

This lesson will get the class to think about the issue of power and its impact on gender dynamics. The class will start out with a brainstorm activity then move into a skit where the issues of power and gender are reflected.

Icebreaker / Quick Activity to Assess Prior Learning: None

Activities

Activity 1: **Brainstorm: What is Power?**

1. What is Power? (If group is struggling to come up with a definition, ask them if they know how to say "power" in Spanish -poder-. Then ask what poder means as a verb - to be able to-. Offer the definition of power: the ability to control circumstances / to be able to control circumstances.)

2. Who has power?

Some examples that previous classes came up with: the U.S., the government, first world, men, corporations, media, principals, teachers, authority, people, president, material possessions, addictions, police, fear, culture has power over our ability to make decisions, greed, money, death, debt, religion, parents, management.

3. Why is it this way? Why are those who are in power, in power?

If group needs more prompting, ask if certain people have more privilege in our society? (whites males, women, people with financial resources). Could it be that this contributes to these power dynamics?

4. Prompt group to come up with some positive connotations of power. (e.g. personal power, being empowered, self-esteem, self-discipline, power of compassion, forgiveness, love and understanding.)

5. Why do we initially think of power in a negative sense? (Violence is so prevalent in our society, it's such an accepted norm that we see power in the context of dominance, violence, humiliation, power over people, control. We are not taught the power of peace and nonviolence.)

Activity 2:

Power Dynamics Skit

This is a skit that reflects some of the issues the class discussed in the brainstorm session around power and gender.

Props

U.S. Flag
paper ties (for CEO & managers to wear)
cue cards with dialogue
Mexican Flag
crayons
money bag
bag of nickels (have approx. 10 per worker)

Roles: (depends on the size of the group, these numbers are for a group of 20)

2 Factory managers (should be male if possible)

1 CEO (should be male)

Rest of the class is broken up into workers making 2 assembly lines

Set the Stage

Hand out sheets of paper and crayons to each worker and explain the following: The workers are in a Mexican factory producing clothing for a large U.S. company, the KAP. Workers are required to make outfits for KAP's summer fashion line as quickly and efficiently as possible while still maintaining quality because they are going to be paid by the piece. For each outfit workers make that is of acceptable quality they will receive 5 cents.

Workers will have around 5 minutes (equivalent to one working day) to draw and color as many sets of pants and shirts as they can. At the end of the working day, their managers will count up their work and pay them accordingly.

Give workers and managers their cue cards with dialogue. The workers can say them at any time during the 5 - 7 minutes. Managers say their lines only in response to workers' comments. Tell participants to really imagine themselves in the roles they are taking on, ad lib, REALLY GET INTO IT.

CEO: (calling factory managers in Mexico)
ring, ring.... "I need 5,000 summer outfits by tomorrow and if you don't come through like the last time you didn't, I'm going to be ready to take my order to Guatemala!"

Facilitator: Tell workers the workday has begun.

Worker: Can I go to the bathroom?

Manager: No. Stop being lazy. You need to get back to work; we have a deadline to meet!

Worker: Can I get up to get a drink of water?

Manager: No. Stop being lazy. You need to get back to work; we have a deadline to meet!

Worker: The lighting and ventilation are terrible and it's hot in here. Can I rest for a bit?

Manager: No. Stop being lazy. You need to get back to work; we have a deadline to meet!

Worker: I've been here since 7am and it's now 5pm. I need to pick up my daughter at school, can I leave?

Manager: If you want to keep your job I recommend you keep working because we have a quota to meet tonight!

Facilitator: After 5-7 minutes are up, explain that it's the end of the work day and managers need to count up the pieces (outfits) and pay workers according to QUALITY pieces. Remind managers that KAP will only pay for good, quality pieces.

Managers: go through the assembly line person by person, counting the pieces and giving out nickels.

Facilitator: Give CEO the big bag of money and say, "Here is your annual salary!"

Discussion Questions:

Now the Educator can explain to the group that they are going to answer the following questions about their experiences, based on one piece of information: the KAP CEO made \$16.9 million last year. The factory workers in Mexico make \$4.20 a day. Thinking about these facts, answer the questions about your experience. Pitch the questions to the entire group one at a time. (Although we don't have the earnings of a factory manager, they can join the CEO in answering these questions).

1. How are you living? What is your life like?
2. What do your day-to-day activities look like? Do you work hard?
3. What are your children's lives like?
4. What kind of worries or concerns do you have in your life? Do you have financial worries, etc.?

Encourage each segment to answer the same question before moving on to the next one. For example, the CEO and managers should respond, then the workers.

After discussing the questions, bring it back to the issue of power and gender with the following questions:

1. How did you see issues of power and gender reflected in this skit?

2. What is it about our society that maintains this dynamic of power and gender?

If the group hasn't already stated it, ask them, could these dynamics be maintained, perpetuated by:

- An economic system (neoliberal/capitalist) that enables the rich to get richer at the expense of the workers and poor?
- Racism: system that gives whites privilege at the expense of people of color?
- Patriarchy: a system that gives men privilege at the expense of women?

Some comments the educator may want to add to the discussion:

The issue of power and who or what has it is an interwoven web of dependency. For example, in our society, corporations, media, the government, money are some of the people and entities that have power. In order for corporations to maintain their power, they depend on the media and government to maintain a system that keeps them in power. However, the government is also dependent on corporations and the media for its power as well. Each perpetuates power for the other. Corporations need the media and a culture of consumerism. However, an important point to make is that this structure, these institutions, depend on people for their power. People ultimately have the power as Gandhi showed us. They support corporate power and their complacency supports the government. Their lifestyle which is based on consumerism has them participating in a culture that supports this violent structure.

Helpful Hints / Comments from Previous Facilitators:

If the group does not come up with the issues of race and gender as maintaining current power structures in the world, it may be because these dynamics are not a part of their reality. If the educator has statistics that reflect the true reality of the world, this may put the issue of race and gender into concrete terms for them. For example, the percentage of women or people of color in congress, as CEOs of corporations, in positions of management as compared to the percentage of women and people of color who live in poverty, are illiterate or are in prison.

DJPC 2004