

EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES: WORKSHOP DESIGN

By: Drs. Kathleen E. Allen and Cynthia Cherrey

I. **The Concept: Breaking Down Barriers of Dependency – Moving Towards Empowerment.**

- A. In Dyads: Have participants introduce themselves and answer the following two questions ... “Why is empowerment important to you?” and “What drives this in you?”
- B. Introduce partner to large group and address partner’s perspective on empowerment. While participants are speaking, one facilitator takes notes on a sheet of newsprint which is turned away from the group. At the end of all introductions, these notes are revealed to the group. The goal of the facilitator who is taking notes is to capture a holistic picture that reflects the unique differences and common threads of the group.

Conceptualization: The dyad exercise at the very beginning of the workshop is designed to break down the traditional expectation of participant and presenter roles (where one listens and the other talks). Since this is a workshop on empowerment, the facilitators have designed the teaching strategies to reflect different aspects of empowerment. In this exercise, we are attempting to reinforce and model a partnership concept of teaching and learning. Empowerment is enhanced through active listening and the development of each person’s unique voice. The dyad sharing and introduction of one’s partner begins to lay the foundation for this process.

II. **The Concept: Establishing the link between a ranking mentality and dependency and domination.**

- A. Have participants physically line up along a variety of dimensions such as: age, education, position, status of school, relationship with presenters, satisfaction with intimate relationships, satisfaction with work relationships, physical beauty, etc.

Conceptualization: We live in a society that ranks individuals, ideas, and organizations. When power is added to this ranking mentality, it transforms into a dominator model that creates judging relationships between people and a judgmental and competitive society and mindset. It is within this mindset that dependency flourishes. In a dominator society, dependency is reinforced. This exercise is designed to allow participants to become aware of the multiple ways we use ranking in our society, the added effect that power has on being ranked, and the resultant feelings that go with that.

III. **The Concept: Visualizing a Partnership World.**

- A. Participants are asked to close their eyes and relax and asked to visualize what the world would be like if our relationships and organizations were based on partnerships. What would it look like? What would they hear? What would they feel? The following questions are read to help participants focus on different aspects of this question.
 - What would men and women’s lives be like if there were an equal partnership between women and men?
 - How would it affect our self image?
 - How would it affect our family relations?
 - Would international relations differ?
 - Would race relations differ?
 - How would it affect our education?
 - Would the corporate sector and the work place be altered?
 - How would it affect social priorities?

- What kinds of things would be considered funny?
 - What would be most highly valued and rewarded?
- B. Participants are then asked to share their visions in a large group. While this sharing is going on, a facilitator jots themes, and ideas on newsprint and reveals it to the group at the end of sharing.
- C. Participants are asked to read pairing statements from Eisler and Loye's "Key Concepts Comparison of the Dominator and Partnership Models" and state what they think these concepts mean to them.

Conceptualization: This exercise is designed to help us begin to understand and see a shared reality of what a partnership world looks like. The link between a partnership world and the development of empowerment will be made and how power when it is defined as control over others, reinforces dependency.

IV. The Concept: The process of moving from dependency to empowerment.

- A. Facilitators model a "reader's digest" version of the journey they took from dependency to empowerment in an aspect of their lives.
- B. Participants are asked to develop their own journey from dependency to empowerment in an aspect of their lives.
- C. Participants are asked to form gender based dyads and share their journeys. Each person is asked to be a story teller while the other is a listener. The dyad is then asked to identify common themes and patterns as well as differences in their journeys. These are written on newsprint and simultaneous sharing occurs when all sheets are posted on the wall. Participants are given time to wander around the room and look at the results of this task.
- D. The results of the individual journeys create a form of grounded research on the process of moving from dependency to empowerment. The next task creates a framework for using that information to develop a model on the developmental process of moving toward empowerment. The following questions are used to reframe the data:
- What were the frustrating aspects of being dependent?
 - What were the positive aspects of dependency?
 - What triggered/caused you to begin your journey toward empowerment?
 - What maintained or reinforced your continued journey toward empowerment?
 - What pulled you back and what ways did you sabotage/avoid your movement towards empowerment?
 - What are the positive aspects of being empowered?
 - What are the frustrating aspects of being empowered?
- E. In a large group, we then ask the question "What can we now say about the journey toward empowerment?"

Conceptualization: The participants have just participated in an exercise in developing a theory or model of the journey toward empowerment from the grounded experience in their lives. This information is shared and analyzed from a variety of angles until key themes and patterns appear. These then form the basis for the development of a model of empowerment. From this model, strategies can now be built to help inform our practice. This exercise also models another empowerment strategy which draws out knowledge and insights from individuals. Participants become enablers of themselves and each other. During this conceptualization, observations of the journey that are also reflected in the literature will be shared. One example might be that the process toward empowerment may be experienced roughly as two steps forward, one step back, one step sideways, etc.

V. The Concept: Transferring and Applying this to our work.

A. Participants are placed into groups of 4 to 5 to allow for maximum exchange and creation of strategies to trigger, develop, and enhance empowerment. Each group is asked to focus on a different level of application.

Group 1: Using the previously developed model as a guide, develop strategies that pertain to the empowerment of individual.

Group 2: Develop strategies that pertain to the empowerment of relationships.

Group 3: Develop organizational strategies that can be reflected through the culture, the structure, and the processes.

Conceptualization: Each of these groups share their results which are written on newsprint and tape them on the wall. This allows for the evolution of ideas to be visualized by all participants.

VI. The Concept: The Politics of Empowerment and the Importance of this Work to Student Affairs.

A. Have a dialogue on the politics of empowerment. This dialogue is designed to help individuals understand the level of dissonance/conflict you invite into your life when you empower yourself and others. Other concepts, like developing strategies for empowering your colleagues/boss; developing networks and pockets of empowerment; and the importance of this work in student development and the “practice” of student affairs – to change the world one person at a time will be discussed!

VISUALIZING A PARTNERSHIP WORLD

- What would men and women's lives be like if there were an equal partnership between women and men?
- How would it affect our self image?
- How would it affect our family relations?
- Would international relations differ?
- Would race relations differ?
- How would it affect our education?
- Would the corporate sector and the work place be altered?
- How would it affect social priorities?
- What kinds of things would be considered funny?
- What would be most highly valued and rewarded?

JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

- What were the frustrating aspects of being dependent?
- What were the positive aspects of dependency?
- What triggered/caused you to begin your journey toward empowerment?
- What maintained or reinforced your continued journey toward empowerment?
- What pulled you back and what ways did you sabotage/avoid your movement towards empowerment?
- What are the positive aspects of being empowered?
- What are the frustrating aspects of being empowered?

**EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES WORKSHOP
PRE AND POST-ASSESSMENT FORM**

Instructions: On the left-hand side of this form, please indicate your current level of understanding and competence in the concepts relating to empowerment. After the workshop, you will be asked to indicate on the right-hand side of this form your level of understanding and competence of empowerment strategies.

Pre-Assessment Codes:

- 0 - Don't Know
- 1 - Understand Somewhat
- 2 - Know theory or concept
- 3 - Understand how to apply theory or concept
- 4 - Am currently practicing application of concept
- 5 - Am personally competent in this area
- 6 - Am able to teach others to be competent

Post-Assessment Codes:

- 0 - Don't Know
- 1 - Understand Somewhat
- 2 - Know theory or concept
- 3 - Understand how to apply theory or concept
- 4 - Am currently practicing application of concept
- 5 - Am personally competent in this area
- 6 - Am able to teach others to be competent

0 1 2 3 4 5 6	How issues of authority affect dependency.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	The link between a ranking mentality, domination and dependency.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding of what an empowering relationship might look like.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding of the process of moving from dependency to empowerment.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding of what triggers movement toward empowerment.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding of the ways empowerment is sabotaged.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding of the ways the movement from dependency to empowerment is maintained and enhanced.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding how feedback, responsibility, and accountability affect empowerment.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding how support and challenge trigger, sabotage, and maintain movement toward empowerment.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding how communication patterns and language can help trigger, sabotage, and maintain movement toward empowerment.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	Understanding how these concepts can transfer and apply to myself, my work, and/or my clients.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6