

Appendix II

Managing Power Dynamics Within the Coalition

A Theoretical Framework for Power

There are many theoretical frameworks in public health, but not many exist that specifically apply to public health and community power-building for health equity. The article “Theory in Action: Public Health and Community Power Building for Health Equity” uses a theoretical framework to organize power into three “faces”: **visible, hidden, and invisible**. The framework explores the role power plays in public health and identifies opportunities to shift power within public health organizations.

Power is defined as “the capacity to act to individually and collectively shape our world.”¹ Community power is defined as “the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain, and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance health equity.”¹ Building community power is a means of advancing health equity. This framework is relevant for coalition building when managing power dynamics and brainstorming ways to shift power equitably. Additionally, sharing power is a way to tackle health inequities, by allowing communities to make public health decisions and be supported in community building.

Next, the framework defines the three faces of power and provides actionable ways to build community power.

Face of power	Definition	Actions to build community power
Visible	<p>“Exercising influence in the political or public arena and among formal decision-making bodies to achieve a particular outcome.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalitions can exercise visible power by using data, research, and communications to educate and influence decision makers 	Organize people and resources to influence public or formal decision-making processes through direct involvement and action
Hidden	<p>“Organizing the decision-making environment, including who can access decision making and what issues are being considered by decision-making bodies.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalitions can exercise hidden power by building networks that shape the conditions preceding formal decision making, such as setting public agendas and determining where to focus resources and acting as facilitators of community networks. 	Building sustainable, long-term infrastructure to affect the conditions that precede decision-making
Invisible	<p>“Shaping information, beliefs, and worldviews about social issues.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalitions can exercise invisible power by using data, advocacy, and other public health tools to continue to shift the landscape to a holistic, social determinants of health approach. 	Lifting up worldviews, values, and forms of behavior by shaping public narrative

The practice of shifting power has long been a tactic in community-organizing movements as a way to address health inequities. The goal of shifting power is to identify shared concerns, develop an understanding of the issue, and influence decision making.

Managing power dynamics within coalitions

In a perfect world, all coalitions would operate effortlessly. Members would all agree on common goals, equitably share power, and work together on one accord. However, the reality of organizational functioning is oftentimes messy. More realistically, groups move towards their shared goals with bumps in the road due to personality clashes, lack of communication, and inherent power dynamics. This resource will explore power dynamics and how to navigate them, and how to manage conflict within coalitions.

We would be remiss not to mention white supremacy culture and its effects on power dynamics within public health coalitions. [White supremacy culture](#) is defined as “a form of racism centered upon the belief that white people are superior to other people of other racial backgrounds and that whites should politically, economically, and socially dominate non-whites.”² White supremacy manifests within organizational and coalition cultures, oftentimes without explicitly intending to do so. Characteristics of white supremacy culture are often used as organizational norms without being chosen by the group. The characteristics are damaging to both people of color and white people in that they elevate the values, preferences, and experiences of one racial group above all others.²

As mentioned earlier, power dynamics exist within all organizations. They are not inherently negative or bad, but it is important to acknowledge where power lies within coalitions. Power dynamics are influenced by a variety of factors such as social class, age, race, gender, education level, and cultural background³. These factors impact how power is shared within organizations. They can have both positive and negative impacts on relationships within coalitions. When power is shared equally or fairly, it can result in positive relationships. Conversely, when power is shared unequally or unfairly, it can result in tension, conflict, and harm within relationships. Privilege due to various social factors can enable certain individuals to have more power than others, often at the expense of marginalized groups³. Acknowledging one’s privilege and how it affects relationships in the coalition is important for managing power dynamics.

When examining power dynamics within the coalition, consider its makeup. Think about its members and leaders, what power structures exist between coalition members and leaders, and how the coalition currently interacts. Identify the sources of power and strategize ways to shift it. Power

imbalances undergird structures of oppression and lead to inequities. Power is about influence, relationships, and knowledge.

One tool for navigating power dynamics is a power analysis. A power analysis is a visual tool that maps where power sits within a community organization. This tool allows for stakeholder mapping to identify the sources of power and their connections. The analysis provides coalitions to examine questions such as who has power? What do they use it for? What unequal power dynamics exist in the organization/amongst individuals? Power analyses are a great way to learn the strengths and weaknesses of allies and reflect on your own power.

The National Academy of Community Organising created a guide for how to create a power analysis. There are 10 steps to conduct a power analysis⁴:

- Step 1:** Identify your community. What are the boundaries? Who is included in it?
- Step 2:** Create a list of organizations and individuals who hold power
- Step 3:** Categorize your list - Create a grouping of individuals and organizations. It will help to see which areas lack
- Step 4:** Fill in the gaps - Reflect on who is missing from the analysis. Who has power that you haven’t thought of?
- Step 5:** Put names to positions
- Step 6:** Research key individuals
- Step 7:** Investigate organizations
- Step 8:** Identify potential allies
- Step 9:** Analyze potential opponents
- Step 10:** Update and protect your power analysis

The guide goes into further detail about how to create a power analysis. Included on their website are templates for creating your own power analysis. To read more about the power analysis guide and template, please visit their website.

Types of coalition structures

How a coalition is organized and structured can affect how power is shared among key stakeholders. For viral hepatitis coalitions, key stakeholders can include the health department, community members (people impacted by viral hepatitis and advocates), clinicians and case managers, and representatives from other social service and government organizations. There are three common approaches to coalition organization: health department-led, community-led and health department/community co-led.

	About	Responsibilities	Opportunities	Things to consider
Health Department-Led	The HD convenes a group of stakeholders to receive community feedback on new or potential initiatives.	The HD is responsible for deciding the purpose for convening and organizing the coalition. Decisions on specific activities are often shared with coalition members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HD expertise on viral hepatitis • Resources (funding and staff time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reinforce existing power dynamics • Can be driven by HD goals and grant deliverables • Can minimize community voices
Community- Led	Community-led coalitions are brought together by specific issues impacting specific communities. They may be groups of individuals and/or smaller community groups.	The community leads are responsible for organizing, prioritizing activities, and securing resources. Coalition members provide input into these activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers community voices • Has a specific purpose and community will to achieve stated purpose • Can pool resources among different organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be difficult to organize/ make decisions if leadership is shared among many organizations/ individuals • Can be difficult to secure and coordinate resources
HD/Community Co-led	A coalition that is co-lead between the community and the health department.	Shared responsibilities: the HD might be responsible for administrative activities and providing resources, and the community might be responsible for goal/ objective setting and overseeing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared decision-making power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having to navigate sharing power when there is differing levels of influence

Additional resources:

- NASTAD Virtual Learning Collaborative: Building or Enhancing a Coalition to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis, Part I ([YouTube](#))
- NVHR: [Coalition Building Toolkit](#)
- [Community Organizing, Partnerships, and Coalitions](#)

How to navigate conflict within coalitions

Conflict is normal and often a sign of engaged organizations. It can mean that individuals are passionate about their ideas and beliefs and are willing to stand up for them. Conflict naturally occurs when bringing together diverse ideas, mindsets, and experiences. While conflict may be uncomfortable, there are potential benefits. When appropriately managed, it can benefit the coalition by identifying hidden problems, improving understanding of the root causes of the conflict, leading to new ways of thinking about problems and solutions, and enhancing communication among coalition members. Learning how to navigate conflict is an essential tool for building and maintaining strong coalitions.

There are numerous reasons for conflict in coalitions. Some include disagreements on the coalition's purpose and goals, poorly managed conflict, and lack of clear communication. If left unresolved, it can damage the coalition's efforts to achieve a common goal and jeopardize the coalition's success. Processes that help mitigate conflict include shared understanding of the coalition's purpose and goals, well managed conflict, and effective communication.

Here are six strategies on how to manage conflicts in coalitions from [The Ohio State University's Building Coalition Series](#)⁵:

- Define the problem
- Identify what is causing the problem
- Brainstorm solutions
- Weigh risks of each solution
- Pick solution
- Develop an action plan
- Additional recommendations to manage conflict include practice active listening, keep emotions in check, separate the people from the problem, and focus on the group's interests.

Conflict resolution is an important skill for coalition leaders to have. Below are two conflict resolution techniques that can be used in coalitions.

One conflict resolution technique is using interest-based negotiation⁶. Instead of focusing on each side's position, interest-based negotiation identifies the specific interests that determine a party's stance. In interest-based negotiation, both parties share the interests that underlie their grievances and try to jointly negotiate a solution that satisfies all parties. This type of negotiation offers many benefits. One benefit is viewing the opposing party as a negotiation partner, not someone to win against. Another benefit is the emphasis on value creation. By focusing on creating value, it ensures that all parties are satisfied with the outcome. Lastly, interest-based negotiation focuses on relationships and substance, whereas other types of negotiation might force parties to choose between the relationship and substantive goals.

A second conflict resolution technique is the Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-Reduction (GRIT) method⁷ was developed by Charles E. Osgood during the Cold War. This technique is useful in situations where conflict is serious enough to cause a rift and potentially irreparable harm within the coalition. The GRIT method involves one side initiating a breakthrough by conceding or compromising on one of their demands. Then the other side concedes or compromises on one of their demands. The purpose of this method is to break down barriers and build trust between the opposing parties until an amicable solution is reached. Similar to interest-based negotiation, this method includes agreeing to talk formally, listening to the other parties' concerns, establishing common ground, discussing innovative solutions, and exchanging concessions.

Acknowledgments

NASTAD is grateful for the development of this resource by Alex Eanes, consultant; Zakiya Grubbs, NASTAD; Rita Isabel Lechuga, NASTAD.

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Citations

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- 3) Hecker, J., & Kalpokas, N. (n.d.). Power Dynamics in Research. ATLAS.ti. <https://atlasti.com/guides/qualitative-research-guide-part-1/power-dynamics>
- 4) <https://www.freedomtoascend.com/guides/power-dynamics/#:~:text=Power%20dynamics%20are%20influenced%20by,within%20organizations%20or%20social%20structures>
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- 8) Laura Westmaas, B. A. (2022). 5.5 Conflict Management Strategies for Groups and Teams. [Ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub](http://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub). <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/conflictmanagement/chapter/5-5-conflict-management-strategies-for-groups-and-teams/>

Additional resources

[Addressing Medical Mistrust to Improve Health Outcomes for People Living with and Impacted by HIV in the Southern United States](#)

[Re-envisioning Community Engagement: A Practical Toolkit to Empower HIV Prevention Efforts with Marginalized Communities | NASTAD](#)

[NVHR Coalition Building Toolkit](#)

[Hepatitis VLC: Engaging Non-Traditional Partners and People with Lived Experience...](#)

[Hepatitis VLC: Working in Coalition to Advance Viral Hepatitis Testing: SSPs and MAT settings](#)