

Power, Possibilities, Me

A JusticexDesign protocol for supporting students to consider how forces of power and oppression might be embedded in the design of content, objects, and systems—and to reflect on their own powers in relation to content, objects, and systems.

Power

- What types of power do you see in/demonstrated by this piece of content? (See types of power described on the following page)
- What evidence are you seeing for the different types of power?

Possibilities

What or who do you think this piece of content stand for?

- What do you think this piece of content makes possible?
- Who or what do you think this piece of content empowers?
- What opportunities do you think this piece of content offers the people, communities, or systems that it empowers?

What or who do you think this piece of content stand in the way of?

- What or who do you think this piece of content prevents or stops?
- What or who do you think this piece of content challenges?
- What obstacles do you think this piece of content might create for the people, communities, or systems that it challenges?

Me

- How do you feel connected to this piece of content?
- How do you feel distant from this piece of content?
- When you view and interact with this piece of content, what power(s) do you have?
- How, if at all, do you think your powers are connected to the powers you named in the piece of content?
- How, if at all, do you think your powers are in conflict with the powers you named in the piece of content?

Suggestions for using this protocol

This protocol is intended to support students to develop a critical sensitivity to design, or nuanced lenses through which they observe, probe, and make sense of inherent forces of power and oppression embedded in the design of content, objects, and systems. Sentence starters on the following page may support learners to reflect on the prompts.

Before beginning the protocol

Develop a working collective definition of the concept of power. Then choose a piece of content (i.e. artwork, news article, video, document, image, etc.).

Begin by looking closely at the piece of content using the following [Agency by Design](#) Making Moves for *looking closely*:

- **Notice everything**—Cast a wide net to capture all that you can observe.
- **Revisit**—Look/listen/touch again, and see if you can find something new.
- **Use categories**—Look for different kinds of features or components.
- **Juxtapose**—Look at things side by side; compare, observe relationships.
- **Physically change perspectives**—Look from high, low, far away, close up.

Initial observations about power

After looking closely at the content (an image, piece of text, video, artwork, etc.), Ask students: How, if at all, does this piece of content show power? Invite learners to make some initial observations about power present in the piece of content.

Contextualizing the content

After looking closely at the content and considering initial observations about the power, you might provide more context on the piece. Alternatively, you might invite students to research the context of the piece. Ask: *Where was this made? Who made it? What else was going on at that place and time?*

Complexify your collective concept of power

Introduce or revisit some [types of power](#):

- **Power over**—being coercive, repressive, corrupt, etc., e.g. the government might have power over the people
- **Power to**—doing something to shape or change your world e.g. a person might have power to sign a petition or volunteer their time
- **Power with**—finding common ground, building collective strength e.g. people might find power collaborating with one another on a project or initiative
- **Power within**—being able to imagine or feel hope; having personal resolve e.g. people may find power within to be brave, creative, resilient, confident

Sentence Starters – Power, Possibilities, Me

Power

What types of power do you see in/demonstrated by this piece of content? What evidence are you seeing for the different types of power?

I see power _____ [over, to, with, within]. The evidence I am seeing for this type of power is...

Possibilities

What or who do you think this piece of content stands for?

I think this piece of content stands for....

What do you think this piece of content makes possible?

I think this piece of content makes _____ possible because/by....

What or who do you think this piece of content empowers?

I think this piece of content empowers _____ by....

What opportunities do you think this piece of content offers?

I think this piece of content offers _____ the opportunity to _____

What or who do you think this piece of content stands in the way of?

I think this piece of content stands in the way of...

What or who do you think this piece of content prevents or stops?

I think this piece of content stops/prevents _____ from...

What or who do you think this piece of content challenges?

I think this piece of content challenges _____ by...

What obstacles do you think this piece of content creates?

I think this piece of content creates the obstacle _____ for...

Me

How do you feel connected to this piece of content?

I feel connected to this piece of content because...

How do you feel distant from this piece of content?

I feel distant from this piece of content because...

When you view and interact with this piece of content, what power(s) do you have?

I have the power (over, to, with, within) because....

How, if at all, do you think your powers are connected to the powers you named in the piece of content?

I think my powers connect to the powers in the content because....

How, if at all, do you think your powers are in conflict with the powers you named in the piece of content?

I think my powers conflict with the powers in the content because....