

UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF RESEARCH

Session 1

90 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Youth define social science and understand the power of social science research to make change happen.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Copy and cut out the *Knowledge is Power Role Play Scenarios* (Master Copy 3.1).

I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): Name a subject that you have researched.

II. WARM UP: NAME ORIGINS (10 MINUTES)

Have youth go around and say how they got their name or what its origin is. Allow one or two follow-up questions to each person if others would like to know more.

III. DEFINING RESEARCH BRAINSTORM (20 MINUTES)

Step 1: Think. Give participants a piece of paper and a pen, and ask them to spend a few minutes silently brainstorming all of the research they have ever done. What subjects have they researched? How did they collect information about their subject (e.g., read, search the Internet, interview people)?

Step 2: Pair. In pairs, have youth share what they wrote, and then together come up with a definition of research.

Step 3: Share. As a group, have youth share their definitions of research. Also have youth give examples of research from their experience. Record answers on butcher paper.

Step 4: What is social science? As a group, ask youth what social science is (the study of human society and relationships in and to society), ask for some examples of social science disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology, economics, psychology, history, and political science). Ask youth to identify the examples and definitions from steps 1-3 that are related to a social science.

Knowledge is Power



IV. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: ROLE PLAY (30 MINUTES)

Step 1: Split youth into two groups. Have each group plan out a skit using scenarios in which research is used to make an argument. Use the *Knowledge is Power Role Play Scenarios* for students to work from, or you can make up your own scenarios.

Step 2: Give youth 5-10 minutes to prepare their skit. Each skit has to answer the questions:

1. What is the problem being addressed?
2. What is the solution?
3. How is research used to advocate for a solution?

Step 3: Have youth present their skit to the entire group.

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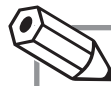
V. DEBRIEF (10 MINUTES)

Sample questions:

- Why do you think these groups used research in their campaigns for changing their community (e.g., helped them prove their point; made them better advocates.)?
- What kind of research was best for making a solid argument (e.g., video evidence, surveys, statistics, interviews)? Why?

VI. CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Do the take-home assignment as a brainstorm or close with an Around the World statement.



Optional Take-Home Assignment

Instructions:

- *Write down three issues or problems that impact you and other youth in your community.*
- *After each issue or problem, write down at least one thing that a person or group could do to solve, improve, or raise awareness of that issue or problem. Briefly explain how this would help.*
- *Bring your ideas to the next session!*

Knowledge is Power Role Play 1

SCENARIO 1: THE POUGHKEEPSIE HIGH SURVEY

"The whole thing started out with this one little survey that we never thought would be anything" Ms. McKinney, 17, said. "The way our school runs, sometimes you might think students wouldn't care as much as they did."

In spring 2003 the government class at Poughkeepsie High in New York did an unheard-of thing: It released a poll to the student body asking what everyone wanted to see changed in the school's budget.

At the Board of Education meeting, six students of the government class formally presented their report, full of charts, graphs, and suggestions. Some wished for programs, like driver's education, they had been absent from Poughkeepsie High's budget for years and seemed worth reconsidering, board members said. Others, like paying students to do school maintenance or pressing troublemakers into janitorial service as a form of detention, were illegal.

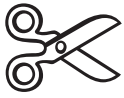
At least five board members took it upon themselves to congratulate the students and promised to take the survey results into consideration. The students also discovered that even the superintendent of the school district had wanted to have student opinion and was very pleased and surprised at how seriously the students took it.

Potential characters: High school students, board of education members, school superintendent.

Your skit must answer the following questions:

- What is the problem the government class is addressing?
- What is its solution?
- How did students use research to advocate for (argue for) their solution?

Skit (5 minutes)



Knowledge is Power: Additional Role Play Scenarios

NEWSCAST SCENARIO

- Channel 9 is covering a protest against police brutality that community members are holding in front of the police chief's office. The protestors claim it is a serious problem in their neighborhood.
 - There are several people at the protest who claim they have experienced police brutality and are willing to be interviewed by Channel 9.
 - The protestors have brought several videotapes of police brutality in West City to the news station.
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TRIAL – ATTORNEY AND EXPERT WITNESS

- Big City files a class action suit against Yeasty Yeast Factory on behalf of West City youth with asthma. (West City is a low-income neighborhood in Big City.) They want to shut Yeasty Yeast Factory down because of the pollution and bad smell it creates.
 - An expert witness on environmental health is at the trial. He knows that:
 - The yeast factory is ranked the second worst toxic air polluter in Big City.
 - Rates of asthma in West City are twice as high as the rest of Big City County and three times higher than the rest of the state.
 - A young person with a bad case of asthma who lives near Yeasty Yeast is also at the trial. He or she believes the asthma is a result of the fumes from the factory.
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PUBLIC POLICY – GOVERNOR GIVING A SPEECH

- Public Advocates (a nonprofit research group) releases a poll of more than 100,000 people that says that 75 percent of Californians are unhappy with the public education system.
- The same Californians who reported being unhappy said that they would prefer the California budget give more money to schools than to prisons.
- In response to this information, the Governor is holding a press conference about a new law he is making to address their concerns.