

Active Learning Exercise: Discussion about Power

To be used with “Community Organizing and Social Change” by Randy Stoecker. *Contexts*. Winter 2009.

This exercise is meant to stimulate a robust conversation among students about power and get them engaged with the topic.

Instructions for the Instructor

1. Before class, make four signs labeled, “agree,” “strongly agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Hang one sign in each corner of the classroom.
2. Tell students that you will be reading a series of statements about power. After each statement, they should go stand under the sign that most closely reflects their own reaction to the statement.
3. Read the first statement (listed below). After students have assembled in groups under the signs, ask each group to discuss why they picked that particular position and to choose a spokesperson to explain their position to the class.
4. Give the students about 3 minutes (depending on the class size) to discuss their position and choose a spokesperson. Then have the four spokespeople explain their group’s positions.
5. Now ask everyone to leave their group and go to the center of the room. Then ask students to again go stand under the sign that most closely reflects their own reaction to the statement. (This gives students the opportunity to change their positions, if they choose to do so.) Ask whether, after hearing the various arguments, any students changed their position. Then ask a few volunteers to explain why they decided to change their positions.
6. Repeat this exercise for the following statements. You can manage the length of the exercise based on how many statements you discuss.

Statements about Power

- Power corrupts.
- You can’t get anything done without power.
- Power comes from position or money.
- Organizations that want to change things in their community should seek power.