

MODULE TEN

In the content session, members discuss demographic factors (age, race, gender) that might influence people's opinions. In the action session, members inform others about their completed action projects.

CONTENT SESSION: DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

In a diverse society like ours, people have many different perspectives. In this session, members examine how people's age, race, and gender might influence people's opinions. First, members read polling data showing sharp differences of opinion based on gender, race, and age. Then in small groups, they think of reasons for these differences.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 10A for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Analyze and express a reasoned opinion on why age, race, and gender may give people different perspectives on issues.
2. Explain other factors that may influence people's opinions.
3. Express a reasoned opinion on the importance of discussing issues with people with different perspectives.

Notes

Differing Perspectives

Introduction

Working in AmeriCorps, you'll encounter people with varying experiences and different opinions. They may hold opinions at odds your own. Understanding other people's perspectives is a useful skill in today's diverse society. In this session, we'll look at some factors that might create differing points of view.

I. Differences of Opinion

People's opinions are shaped by their experience, education, and also by their sex, age, and race. Below are six opinion polls that show strong differences based on gender, race, and age. When you read them, try to think of reasons why the opinions split as they do.

Remember that the point of this session is not to argue for or against any of these positions. Rather, it is to understand why gender, race, or age might influence an individual's point of view.

- Do female soldiers get treated better than male soldiers?
 - men: 30% yes
 - women: 9% yes
- In the presidential election, who did you vote for?
 - men: 54% Bush
 - women: 55% Gore
- Is O.J. Simpson guilty? (1995)
 - whites: 61% yes
 - blacks: 68% no
- Do you think that black Americans will ever be able to close the income gap and earn as much money as white Americans?
 - whites: 19% will not be able to
 - blacks: 49% will not be able to
- Do you think gays and lesbians should be allowed to be legally married? (2000)
 - age 18-34: 54% yes
 - age 65+ : 14% yes
- In the next century, do you think the environment will be better, worse, or about the same as it is today?
 - age 18-29: 68% worse
 - age 64+ : 32% worse

II. Activity

In small groups, discuss why the opinions in each poll split as they do.

III. For Discussion

- Why do you think these groups' opinions split so much on these issues?
- What other issues do you think split along race, gender, or age lines?
- What other factors, aside from race, gender, and age, might cause deep differences in opinion?
- Do you think it's important to discuss controversial issues with people with different perspectives? Why or why not?

Corporation for National Service
A Facilitator's Guide to Effective Citizenship Through AmeriCorps

Conducting the Session

- Ask members: "Why doesn't everyone hold the same opinion on controversial issues?" (Accept various answers.) Explain that today they are going to take a look at different perspectives on issues.
- Distribute **Handout 10A**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Differences of Opinion**. When they finish, briefly answer any questions they may have.
- Divide the members into groups of three or four. Tell them to discuss reasons for the differences in opinion in each poll.
- Regroup the members and discuss the results using the questions in **Section III: For Discussion**.

Notes

ACTION SESSION: SPREAD THE WORD

As the final step, members inform others about their action projects. First, members read and discuss why and how to tell others about their projects. Then they decide on a method for informing people and prepare to do so.

Facilitator Checklist

- Pens and paper for members
- Copies of Handout 10B for members

Learning Objectives

Members will be able to:

1. Explain why it's important to inform others about a project.
2. Decide on an effective method for informing others about their project.

Notes

Spread the Word

Introduction

Now that you've finished and evaluated your project, one important step remains: informing others about what you did. Your project may give people ideas of how they can help their community. Other people may want to do a similar project. They can learn from your successes and even from your missteps. Below are 10 suggestions for telling others.

I. Nine Ways to Spread the Word

1. Submit your project to the Corporation for National Service's online EpiCenter, which lets you submit practices for others to use. <http://www.cns.gov/resources/epicenter/index.html>
2. Submit it to the Civic Engagement Website and electronic newsletter, which profiles member action projects.
3. Submit it to state commissions and state Learn & Serve web sites. Locate them at <http://www.nationalservice.org/stateprofiles/index.html>
4. Submit a 250-500 word article to *Service-Learning Network*, 601 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90005.
5. Write letters describing the problem you addressed and the project you completed to public officials, inviting their future participation in program events.
6. Create a short video that could be used in future Corporation for National Service civic engagement trainings to show program staff and other members an example of an action project.
7. Write an editorial or article for local newspaper describing the problem you addressed and how you addressed it.
8. Make presentations to government or non-profit agencies that work on or care about the problem you addressed.
9. Showcase your project at a "resource fair." Find out if any community agencies are holding one. Or, work with other local national service programs (AmeriCorps, Vista, Learn & Serve, America's Promise, Campus Compact, etc.) to organize your own resource fair and showcase the services your groups have provided to the community.

II. For Discussion

1. Do you think informing others of your project is important? Explain.
2. What ideas, other than those mentioned, do you have for informing people about your project?

III. Activity

Meet with your project team. Discuss and decide how you want to inform others about your project. Make it happen!

Conducting the Session

1. Tell members that one final but important piece remains on their action project. Distribute **Handout 10B**. Ask members to read the **Introduction** and **Section I: Nine Ways to Spread the Word**.
2. When they finish, hold a discussion using the questions in **Section II: For Discussion**.
3. Ask members to join their project teams and do the activity described in **Section III: Activity**. Before the end of the session, have groups report to the whole group on what they are going to do. Because members cannot complete this activity during this session, ask members to contact you to show you how they informed others about their project.

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2. What other issues do you think split along race, gender, or age lines?
3. What other factors, aside from race, gender, and age, might cause deep differences in opinion?
4. Do you think it's important to discuss controversial issues with people with different perspectives? Why or why not?

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