

Consulting Role Play Exercise
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This exercise demonstrates difficulties Community Psychologists may face when working with communities. The class is split into several small groups. Half of the members of the group receive a description of their role as community psychologists. The other half receive a description of their role as community members. Students then role play a first meeting between these groups and try to negotiate the differing assumption and needs that arise. After completing the role play, students answer a series of questions about the role play. These become the basis of a class conversation about how to form effective collaborations and empower community members.

This class exercise is a role-play. Half of you will play the community psychologists and the other half will play the community members. Your roles are described in the folded sheets of paper attached to these instructions. Please follow these steps:

- 1) Split your group in half
- 2) Give the paper labeled “community psychologists” to one half of your group. Give the paper labeled “community members” to the other half of your group.
- 3) Read the roles described in that piece of paper. DO NOT read the roles given to the other half of your group.
- 4) Act out the scenario and role that has been described to you on your piece of paper. Try to make your role play as realistic as possible.
- 5) Continue with the role play until I call time.
- 6) Once I’ve called time, designate one person to read the questions on the attached worksheet and fill in your group’s responses.
- 7) Discuss each question on the worksheet and have your designated person write in your responses.
- 8) Be sure to sign the bottom of the worksheet when you are done.

Community Psychologist Role

Scenario: You are a group of community psychologists from a local University. You have recently received funding to replicate a drug-awareness program that has been successful in New York. You have decided to implement the program in a local neighborhood that has a high incidence of drug-crimes (based on police statistics). You are meeting with a group of community members to convince them that they would benefit from this program and to get their cooperation. This is your first meeting.

The Program: Because this is a replication study, you must follow all of the program guidelines that were developed in New York to the letter. This program includes: 1) poster and billboard messages encouraging youth to “just say no”; 2) public education seminars that will take place in local churches and youth centers; and 3) the development of a neighborhood watch program.

Your Role: You have never had any interaction with this community before. Your knowledge of this community comes from census and police statistics only. You believe that your program can help reduce the drug problem this community appears to face. You expect the community to be enthusiastic about this program and do not expect any difficulty convincing them to cooperate.

To Start: Begin the meeting by describing the program to the community members and explaining why you have chosen their neighborhood. Tell them that you think it can be very beneficial for their community. Offer to answer any questions. Respond to their concerns, but remember, your goal is to convince them to cooperate.

Community Member Role

Scenario: You are a group of community members. You are actively involved in church groups, youth centers, and community organizations that are trying to improve the quality of life in your neighborhood. You were recently contacted by a group of researchers from the local University who wanted to meet with you to talk about starting a drug-awareness program. The fact that the University researchers would fund this program is very appealing to you (most of your efforts to improve the neighborhood have been based on volunteer labor). Thus, you agreed to meet with the researchers to hear what they had to say. This is your first meeting.

Your neighborhood: Most of the people living in your neighborhood have lived there for years and many live in family homes that have been passed down for generations. When you were growing up, this was a sturdy working-class neighborhood with a lot of community pride. In recent years, however, unemployment has been on the rise. Many of the local shops have gone out of business and crime has increased dramatically. When you look around, you see a lot of homeless people, youth hanging out on street corners, and graffiti. Community pride has dropped drastically.

Your role: You still maintain a lot of pride in your neighborhood and have dedicated yourself to restoring the community to what it once was. While you believe that drugs are a real problem, you are equally concerned about unemployment, school drop-outs, homelessness, gang involvement, and public safety. You believe that strengthening the neighborhood by creating a sense of community, improving education, mentoring youth, fostering economic development, and creating clean and safe public spaces is the best way to return your neighborhood to what it was in your youth.

You are willing to listen to what the researchers say, but you are skeptical. You don't really trust people from the University (you think they are too removed from your community to really understand it). You don't think that a drug-awareness program is going to solve all of your neighborhood's problems, but you don't want to turn away the funding that would come with this program.

To start: Listen to what the researchers say. Ask them if the program can address any of your other concerns. Ask them how a drug awareness program is going to help solve any of the problems the neighborhood faces. Ask them why you should trust them. Ask them what will happen once they (and their money) leaves.

Worksheet

Come back together as a group of six. Discuss each of the questions listed below and have someone write in your responses. When you have finished answering the questions, be sure to sign the bottom.

- 1) Based on the interaction you just had, do you think the drug-awareness program will be implemented in that community? Why or why not?

- 2) How did the community psychologists feel about the community members concerns? Did you feel irritated? Impatient? Understanding? Concerned?

3) How did the community members feel about the community psychologists' insistence on following an already established program? How did you feel about their reason for choosing your community? Do you think they understood you and your community?

4) What would have made this interaction go smoother? How could the two groups collaborate?

Signatures: