Training Professional Psychologists in School-Based Consultation: What the Syllabi Suggest

Cynthia E. Hazel, Ghyslyn T. Laviolette, and Janeann M. Lineman
University of Denver

This article reports the findings from consultation syllabi from 25 American Psychological Association-approved school psychology programs (40% response rate). Most responding programs offered 1 consultation course and many programs' syllabi stated expecting students to conduct 1 consultation case. The analysis showed most syllabi listed training in multiple models of consultation, with almost all mentioning the problem-solving model. Almost all syllabi listed training in treatment, but fewer than half suggested that students would learn about the use of consultation to promote prevention. Most programs' syllabi mentioned considering others' culture in consultation, whereas fewer than half mentioned considering the impact of the consultant's culture in consultation relationships and even fewer mentioned social justice. The discussion addresses the need for a better understanding of school-based consultation preservice training, consultation training in a diverse and inequitable world, and how practitioners' cognitive appraisals of consultation services could inform school-based consultation training. Considerations for consultation syllabi design are given.

Keywords: consultation, consultation training, school-based consultation, school psychology, social justice, syllabi analysis

The practice of consultation by professional psychologists is a commonly listed activity that is often ill defined. For the purposes of this article, *consultation* is defined as a process of "collaborative problem-solving between a mental health specialist (the consultant) and one or more persons (the consultees) who are responsible for providing some form of psychological assistance to another (the client)" (Medway, 1979, p. 276). The overarching belief of consultation is that supporting existing caregivers in the natural environment will lead to more meaningful and lasting change than will a temporary, one-dimensional relationship with an outsider (Kratochwill, 2008). School-based consultation is the practice of consultation with the goal of improving a client's functioning in the school setting. School-based consultation services have been identified as an efficient and effective means to promote the well-being of children, families, and schools (Erchul & Sheridan,

2008). Given its utility, the training of professional psychology students in school-based consultation should be an evidenced-based, thoughtful activity. This article promotes the discussion of school-based consultation training through a review of school-based consultation training guidelines and research, a content analysis of school psychology consultation syllabi, and recommendations for needed next steps to improve our understanding of school-based consultation training as well as syllabi considerations for instructors of consultation.

Development of Consultation Skills

Clinical skills, including consultation skills, have been theorized to follow a developmental sequence. Drawing from counseling skill development models, three stages of consultation development and a corresponding training modality for each have been proposed: (a) knowledge base, best learned through didactic training; (b) behavioral skills, best learned through laboratory training; and (c) judgment competencies, best learned through field placement training (Brown, 1985, 1993; Pinkerton & Temple, 2000). Similarly, Rosenfield and colleagues identified three consultant developmental stages: novice, competence, and expertise (Cramer & Rosenfield, 2003; Rosenfield, 2002; Rosenfield, Levinsohn-Klyap, & Cramer, 2010). At each stage, the most effective clinical supervision is hypothesized to vary. Providing enough training for students to reach the expert level was expected to be largely beyond the capacity of graduate training programs. These developmental models suggest that consultation coursework is necessary to provide the foundation for students' consultation competency, but that consultation expertise can only be expected to develop during internship or beyond.

CYNTHIA E. HAZEL received her doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado in 2004. She currently is an associate professor in the Child, Family, and School Psychology Program of the University of Denver.

GHYSLYN T. LAVIOLETTE received her Master's from Penn State University in 1997 and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Denver. She currently is a school psychologist for Saint Vrain Public Schools.

JANEANN M. LINEMAN received her Specialist degree in School Psychology from Barry University in 2007 and is a doctoral candidate at the University of Denver. She currently is a school psychologist for Denver Public Schools.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to Cynthia E. Hazel, Child, Family, and School Psychology Program, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, 2450 South Vine Street, Denver, CO 80208. E-mail: chazel@du.edu

Guidelines for Training Professional Psychologists in School-Based Consultation

Training in consultation has been identified as an important component of professional psychology programs. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2008) requires training in consultation for programs seeking accreditation and has identified consultation as one of the functional competencies for professional psychology (Fouad et al., 2009). The Education and Training Committee of the Society for Consulting Psychology's Principles for Education and Training at the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Levels in Consulting Psychology/Organizational Consulting Psychology (Lowman et al., 2002) identifies three levels of consultation in which professional psychologists, wanting to be consulting psychologists, should be trained: individual, group, and organizational. The Principles state that consultation training should include the major theoretical models of psychology, with particular emphasis on relationship development; assessment, interventions, and evaluation methods; multicultural awareness; and professional ethics and standards.

School-based consultation has been identified as a critical competency for practice by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP; 2000, 2006). The NASP (2000) criteria are that "School psychologists have knowledge of behavioral, metal health, collaborative, and/or other consultation models and methods and of their application to particular situations" (p. 23). The NASP criteria emphasize the importance of understanding multiple models of consultation. Although these models, to varying degrees, place emphasis on relationships, the problem-solving process, and cross-cultural considerations, the NASP criteria do not explicitly address these areas.

School-Based Consultation Training Practices

It is clear that training professional psychologists to be competent school-based consultants is not an easy or clear task. As the Consultation Training Task Force appointed by the Society for Consulting Psychology (APA, Division 13) wrote, "The quality of current education and training opportunities is difficult to assess without continued identification of characteristics and competencies that can serve as benchmarks and aspirational guideposts" (Cooper, Monarch, Serviss, Gordick, & Leonard, 2007, p. 3). The lack of clear benchmarks and aspirational guideposts increases the complexity of conducting and evaluating consultation training research.

Research investigating consultation training is quite thin but suggests that students are not receiving the preservice training necessary to become competent consultants. Studies have found a lack of preparation of consultation trainers as well as a lack of courses and supervision in consultation. In the most recently published survey of professional psychology consultation instructors' training and skills (Hellkamp, Zins, Ferguson, & Hodge, 1998), only 63% said they had received formal training in consultation, 77% had not published in consultation, 30% reported not reading journals specific to consultation, and 54% reported that their program's training in consultation was inadequate. However, faculty in school psychology programs were significantly more likely to have been trained in consultation, to report that their program required training in consultation, and (as were industrial–organizational faculty) to judge their program's training as adequate. The existing research suggests that many professional psychology students are being taught consultation by a faculty member who does not possess expert consultation knowledge and skills.

In the most recently published survey of consultation training in school psychology programs, instructors in doctoral programs reported that their program offered at least one course in consultation (Anton-LaHart & Rosenfield, 2004). The finding that all school psychology doctoral programs offered at least one consultation course was a higher percentage than earlier findings of 55% for doctoral school psychology programs (Meyers, Wurtz, & Flanagan, 1981). However, similar to earlier survey findings, the survey responses indicated that the courses were broad in scope and offered minimal consultation experience and supervision. The researchers also solicited syllabi from the instructors, but received very few. The syllabi they received listed less required fieldwork than the survey respondents indicated. They noted that further research into school-based consultation training generally, and using consultation syllabi specifically, was warranted.

Analysis of Syllabi as a Research Method

Analyzing higher education syllabi has been a little-used research methodology. Analysis of text, including the analysis of syllabi, can be used to investigate the cognitive and emotional realities of the author (Perakyla, 2005). As syllabi are not designed as research data, they are not influenced by what the faculty thought the researcher was studying or wanted and, therefore, offer a valuable complement to survey research.

Purposes of Syllabi

Scholars have argued that the syllabus forms a written covenant with the student that allows for his or her informed consent when taking a course (Altman, 1989; McKeachie, 2002). The APA (2002) Ethical Code states that "Psychologists take reasonable steps to ensure that course syllabi are accurate regarding the subject matter to be covered, bases for evaluating progress, and the nature of course experiences" (p. 10). Others have argued that the purpose of a syllabus should be larger: As well as being a contract and written record, the syllabus should also be a tool that helps the instructor identify learning objectives and guides the student in how he or she may optimize his or her learning (Eberly, Newton, & Wiggins, 2001; Grunert O'Brien, Mills, & Cohen, 2008; Parkes & Harris, 2002).

Content Analysis of Syllabi

Researchers who have used higher education syllabi analysis as a methodology have argued that syllabi can be used to study learning activities and assessments (Madson, Melchert, & Whipp, 2004), course development across time (Eberly et al., 2001), and first impressions of the interpersonal aspects of the classroom (Eberly et al., 2001). The syllabus communicates the professor's "feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about the subject matter as well as about the students in the class" (Parkes & Harris, 2002, p. 59). Viewed from this perspective, analysis of syllabi can offer both insight into what was scheduled to occur in the course as well as

the priorities, beliefs, and values that the instructor wished to convey to the students. Syllabi analysis has proven useful to investigate training issues such as spirituality in counselor training (Cashwell & Young, 2004), teaching structural equation modeling (Stapleton & Leite, 2005), and computer technologies (Madson et al., 2004). As an essential tool of communication between instructor and students, syllabi analysis is a valuable research methodology for understanding the intent, direction, and expectations the instructor holds for a course (Madson et al., 2004).

This Study

This study was an examination of consultation course syllabi from APA-approved school psychology programs. The syllabi were examined both inductively and deductively: We looked for emergent themes and investigated four predetermined themes. The a priori themes were developed from the professional guidelines, the consultation training literature, and what was found to be reliably obtainable from the syllabi: (a) consultation model; (b) prevention levels; (c) task distribution with consultee; and (d) approach to diversity, power inequities, and social justice.

Consultation Models

The school-based consultation models that have been taught and researched most extensively are mental health, problem solving, and organizational development (Lopez & Nastasi, 2008). Most school-based consultation research has focused on the variants of the problem-solving model (i.e., behavioral, conjoint behavioral, and instructional; Frank & Kratochwill, 2008; Kratochwill, 2008). The APA (2002) Principles specify knowledge of theory as one of the areas of consultation training, the NASP (2000) criteria require knowledge of various consultation models, and consultation model knowledge is considered the foundation of consultation skills (Brown, 1985).

Prevention Continuum

Consultation can be intended to address one or more levels of need: primary prevention, risk reduction, early intervention, or treatment (Meyers, 2002). Psychological services, including consultation services, have been criticized for focusing too extensively at the treatment end of the continuum. Consultation has been promoted as one means by which professional psychology might address more fully the entire prevention continuum (Hughes, Loyd, & Buss, 2008; Meyers, 2002; Zins, 1995). In Kratochwill and Pittman's (2002) conceptualization of comprehensive consultation training, they included training in various ecological levels of change, designed to assure skills in the prevention through intervention continuum. Similarly, the APA (2002) Principles address training in various ecological levels, which are closely related to the prevention continuum.

Task Distribution With Consultee Continuum

Consultation is conceptualized as an indirect service model; the use of indirect service provision is so implicit as to not be mentioned in the APA (2002) Principles or NASP (2000) criteria. However, some research has suggested that school-based consultation can, and perhaps should, include direct components (Atha-nasiou, Geil, Hazel, & Copeland, 2002; Kratochwill & Pittman, 2002; Watson & Sterling-Turner, 2008). The task distribution continuum included indirect service, consultee or client training, tasks shared between consultant and consultee, and direct service.

Approach to Diversity, Power Inequities, and Social Justice

The APA (2002) Principles and a growing body of consultation training literature (see, e.g., Ingraham, 2008; Ingraham & Meyers, 2000; Miezitis, 2003) stress the importance of understanding how participants' cultures may influence consultation. Within the consultation relationship, power inequities have been a subject of interest (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008). School-based consultation as an act of advocacy (Clare, 2009) and school consultants as agents of social justice (Shriberg & Fenning, 2009) are emerging dialogue areas (Speight & Vera, 2009). This continuum had four stages: *blind* (no attention given to how cultural factors or power might affect consultation), *applied to others* (attention given to how cultural factors and power of clients and consultees might affect consultation), *applied to self* (attention given to how cultural factors and power of consultant might affect consultation), and *justice-seeking* (attention given to how consultation might be use to promote social justice).

Method

Participants and Data Sources

The potential participants were all APA-approved school psychology (or school psychology combined, i.e., school–clinical psychology) programs ($N = 63$). Using the Web sites of and phone calls to the programs, we tried to determine the person who most frequently taught consultation; otherwise, we identified the program director. E-mails were sent to each program's identified contact asking for the person who most often taught consultation in their program to send us all course syllabi pertinent to consultation. From this solicitation and three follow-up e-mails, we received 32 syllabi from 25 programs (40% program response rate). Identifying information on the syllabi was blacked out before the analysis began.

Data Analyses

Two forms of data analysis were performed with the goal of enhancing understanding and increasing the rigor of the study: a thematic analysis and a descriptive analysis. For the thematic analysis, each syllabus was coded independently by the first and third authors on a matrix of the four theme areas and then a summary matrix was compiled by program. The interrater agreement for the themes ranged from 90% to 93% (90% for consultation models and prevention continuum, 91% for task distribution with consultee continuum, and 93% for approach to diversity, power inequities, and social justice). A fifth theme, target of change, was eliminated as its interrater reliability did not meet 90% or better. The interrater agreement by programs ranged from 79% to 100% (89% median). The authors reviewed each point of disagreement and came to consensus. Then, a master matrix was created of all the programs, and the themes were graphed and summarized with text.

The second author initiated the descriptive analysis by summarizing each syllabus and listing verbatim sections that illuminated the syllabi components of individual courses and programs. Then she summarized the descriptive analysis across the areas of course description, course objectives, class topics, required experiences, and assessment of competence. Independently, the first and third authors confirmed the descriptive analysis of these areas by reviewing the syllabi cited. For assessment of competence, independent analyses varied slightly; discrepancies were examined jointly and consensus reached.

After the thematic and descriptive analyses were completed, we reviewed the two analyses for how one informed the other, enhanced the knowledge of the other, and contradicted the other. Most of the coded sections within the descriptive analysis categories were found to also be coded for and used in the thematic analysis, providing a grounded substantiation of the importance of a priori themes. However, the descriptive analysis provided information regarding course goals, which was missing from the thematic analysis and is presented in the results.

Results

Descriptive Findings

Of the 25 programs, 17 (68%) offered one course dedicated solely to consultation. The range was programs whose one consultation course covered only direct service or programs that offered one course that covered consultation and another topic (such as crisis response or counseling) to one program offering four courses specific to consultation. In total, 88% of programs' syllabi suggested that students would receive one full course or more of consultation training.

Course goals. Most syllabi stated that a primary course goal was to expose students to theories of consultation and research regarding its practice. Most programs' syllabi addressed various consultation models, but only about half of programs (48%) mentioned legal and ethical considerations in at least one course syllabus. Another goal listed on some syllabi could be termed *professional orientation*: a desire to instill in students a systemic, change-oriented, socially conscious approach to their consultation practice. These syllabi had as part of their course descriptions phrases such as, "The course covers promising strategies that emphasize restructuring education to establish policies and practices based on a shared responsibility for educational outcomes"; "The course is strongly grounded in social psychological research on attitude change, influence and power, causal attribution, organizational characteristics, and organizational change"; "The purpose of this course is to place the knowledge and associated skills of the problem solving model in the larger systemic context of the school culture"; and "Consultation is an alternative context for providing academic or behavioral interventions for children that uniquely empowers the systems surrounding then, such as the school and/or home." Syllabi with this goal also emphasized power inequities, prevention, child–family school partnerships, and culturally competent practices.

Means of achieving goals. There were multiple means of promoting and assessing students' mastery of the above goals. All syllabi had reading assignments; see Table 1 for the most commonly assigned readings. See Table 2 for the values that assign-

Table 1

Most Frequently Assigned Texts and Readings Across 32 Courses

Source	Frequency (%)
Texts	
Kratochwill, T. R., & Bergan, J. R. (1990). *Behavioral consultation in applied settings: An individual guide.* New York: Plenum Press.	31
Erchul, W. P., & Martens, B. K. (2002). *School consultation: Conceptual and empirical bases of practice.* New York: Plenum Press.	19
Thomas, A., & Grimes, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Best practices in school psychology* (4th ed., Vol. I & II). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.	19
Brown, D., Pryzwansky, W. B., & Schulte, A. C. (2006). *Psychological consultation and collaboration: Introduction to theory and practice.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.	16
Sheridan, S. M., Kratochwill, T. R., & Bergan, J. R. (1996). *Conjoint behavioral consultation: A practitioner guidebook.* New York: Plenum Press.	12
Readings	
Ingraham, C. L. (2000). Consultation through a multicultural lens: Multicultural and cross-cultural consultation in schools. *School Psychology Review, 29,* 320–343.	34
Ivey, A. E., & Ivey, M. B. (2007). *Intentional interviewing and counseling: Facilitating client development in a multicultural society* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.	28
Brown, D., Pryzwansky, W. B., & Schulte, A. C. (2006). *Psychological consultation and collaboration: Introduction to theory and practice* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.	19
Gutkin, T. B. (1999). Collaborative versus directive/prescriptive/expert school-based consultation: Reviewing and resolving a false dichotomy. *Journal of School Psychology, 37,* 161–190.	19
O'Connor, K. J. (2000). *The play therapy primer* (2nd ed.). New York: Wiley.	19
Ramírez, S. Z., Lepage, K. M., Kratochwill, T. R., & Duffy, J. L. (1998). Multicultural issues in school-based consultation: Conceptual and research considerations. *Journal of School Psychology, 36,* 479–509.	16
Rosenfield, S. A., & Gravois, T. A. (1996). *Instructional consultation teams: Collaborating for change.* New York: Guilford Press.	16
Sterling-Turner, H. E., Watson, T. S., & Moore, J. W. (2002). The effects of direct training and treatment integrity on treatment outcomes in school consultation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17,* 47–77.	16
Sheridan, S. M., Eagle, J. W., Cowan, R. J., & Mickelson, W. (2001). The effects of conjoint behavioral consultation: Results of a 4-year investigation. *Journal of School Psychology, 39,* 361–385.	13
Watson, T. S., & Robinson, S. (1996). Direct behavioral consultation: An alternative to traditional behavioral consultation. *School Psychology Quarterly, 11,* 267–278.	13

Note. Frequency measures were calculated for texts and readings across all syllabi ($N = 32$). All texts and readings required by more than 10% of syllabi were listed. Books reported as readings represent various selected chapters as indicated by instructors.

Table 2

Course Assignments in Descending Order of Grade Value as Listed on 32 Course Syllabi

Assignment type	Value of course grade (%)[a]	Number (%) of courses requiring[b]
Consultation case report[c]	Median: 40; Mode: 40; Range: 18–100	21 (66)
Exams	Median: 36; Mode: 30; Range: 15–100	14 (44)
Consultation meeting analysis	Median: 34; Mode: none; Range: 18–50	8 (25)
School-wide programming	Median: 33; Mode: none; Range: 25–50	3 (9)
Review of literature	Median: 20; Mode: 20; Range: 10–50	16 (50)
Role playing	Median: 15; Mode: none; Range: 5–25	3 (9)
Cultural competency and awareness	Median: 15; Mode: none; Range: 10–20	2 (6)
Participation and professionalism	Median: 10; Mode: 15; Range: 1–40	18 (56)
Personal goal setting or philosophy	Median: 10; Mode: none; Range: 7–17	4 (13)

[a] Median, mode, and range are reported for all course syllabi that included grade value of assignments. If more than one assignment in a course fell into the same assignment type, the values of the various assignments were combined (i.e., the percentages of grades from a midterm and final exam were added to represent the total percentage of grade for that course for exams). [b] If a course syllabi listed an assignment type, with or without grade information, it was included in the total number of courses requiring the assignment type. [c] Consultation case reports consisted of written or oral reports about all or part of a consultation case.

ment types represented for students' grades across the 32 courses. The most frequently mentioned assignment was a consultation case report; mentioned in 21 (66%) syllabi, its median grade value was 40% (with a range of 18% to 100%). The second most commonly listed expectation was participation or professionalism; although commonly listed, its median grade value was 10%. The next most common assignment was literature reviews (16 syllabi, or 50%). Literature reviews varied from student-led discussions of assigned readings to presentations of a topic to written reports; literature reviews ranged in value from 10% to 50% of a student's grade, with 20% being the median value. Of the 32 syllabi, 12 (38%) listed exams. In one syllabus, exams constituted 100% of a student's grade; however, the median score was 36% of a student's grade. Only two (6%) syllabi listed grading on cultural competency and awareness, for 10% and 20% of a student's grade.

Of the 25 programs, 17 (68%) included one or more consultation cases as a requirement, leaving eight (32%) programs' syllabi with no listed consultation case. Many syllabi with a consultation case expectation stated that the student would follow the problem-solving model in a consultation with a teacher regarding a child who had been identified as needing some form of remediation. The five (20%) programs that offered more than one consultation class listed students conducting at least one consultation case in the syllabi.

Looking at just the 17 programs with syllabi that required a consultation case, supervision was listed in syllabi for seven programs (41%); however, the supervision structure and frequency were not articulated clearly. Four programs listed both program- and site-based supervision and three programs listed program-based supervision only. Syllabi indicated that reflection was expected concurrently to the consultation through assignments of audio- or videotaping of sessions (eight programs or 47%), reflective journals (6 programs or 35%), analysis of one or more consultation meetings (two or 12%), and transcribing recordings of sessions (two programs or 12%). Summative assignments were written case reports (15 programs or 88%) and oral case presentations to the class (seven or 41%). See Figure 1 for a graphic representation. However, because only 17 programs' syllabi men-
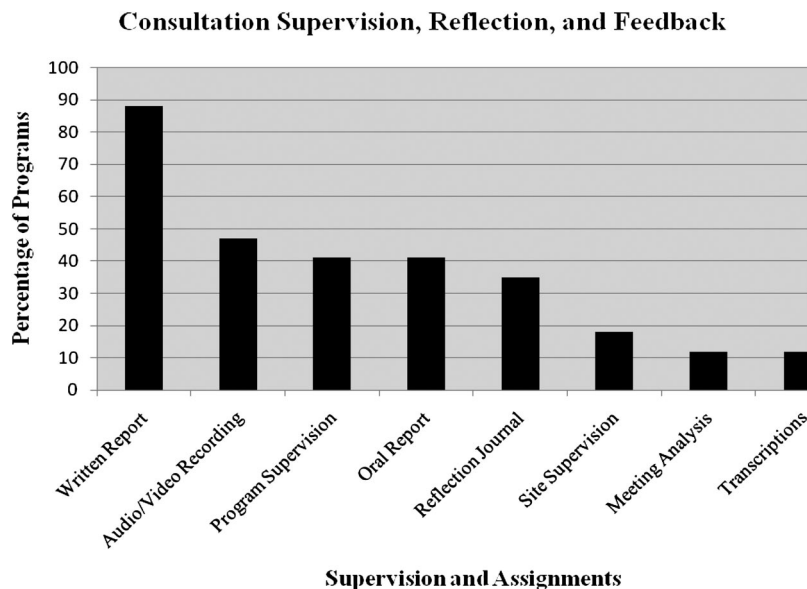

Consultation Supervision, Reflection, and Feedback

Figure 1. Types and percentages of consultation supervision, reflection, and feedback activities for the 17 programs with a consultation case listed in syllabi. As syllabi could list more than one required activity, total is greater than 100%.

tioned a field experience, the total percentage of the programs that listed the above experiences was much lower.

Some syllabi listed unique assignments designed to promote students' ownership of their learning and to effect systems change. Assignments related to student ownership included asking students to write personal learning objectives at the start of the course, having students record themselves role playing a consultation session prior to any lecture or readings and use the recording as a personal starting point to evaluate their learning, writing a consultation philosophy statement, and working with a peer to identify how the consultant's culture was affecting the consultation. Assignments designed to promote systems change included providing teacher in-services, measuring school climate, and designing school-wide programs.

Overall, the descriptive analysis showed that most responding programs offered one course in consultation. Assignments varied but consultation case reports, participation or professionalism, reviews of literature, and exams were most frequently listed in syllabi, with consultation case reports and exams constituting the largest portion of a student's grade. Just over two thirds of programs' syllabi set the expectation of one or more consultation cases.

Thematic Findings

Consultation models. Either in the assigned readings or course calendar, most programs' syllabi conveyed that students would be exposed to multiple consultation models. On the syllabi, the problem-solving (sometimes referred to as behavioral) model was most frequently listed (88% of programs), followed by mental health (64%), ecological/organizational (60%), instructional (56%), conjoint (52%), and cross-cultural (48%).

Prevention continuum. Using a four-part delineation of the prevention continuum (universal, risk reduction, early intervention, and treatment), syllabi indicated that students would be trained predominantly in the treatment end of the continuum: 96% of programs' syllabi addressed treatment, whereas fewer than 50% addressed how to use consultation at other levels of need.

Task distribution with consultee continuum. Consultation is defined as an indirect service model; however, consultation activities can be considered a continuum with *training and shared tasks placed between indirect and direct service*. Only 92% of programs' syllabi indicated that they taught any indirect service in their consultation courses; in other words, 8% (two programs) indicated in their consultation syllabi that students would learn exclusively about direct service provision (such as student or family counseling). In total, 32% of programs' syllabi mentioned training in direct service, 24% in consultee training, and 12% in task-sharing as part of consultation.

Approach to diversity, power inequities, and social justice. Discussion of diversity and social justice varied greatly across syllabi. For 20% of programs, diversity issues were not mentioned in the syllabi. Most programs' syllabi (80%) made mention of considering the culture of others, but only 44% of programs' syllabi stated that students would be expected to identify or reflect on their culture and identities. Even fewer, 28% of programs' syllabi, brought up justice and power considerations as they might apply to consultation.

Discussion

This study analyzed consultation syllabi of APA-approved school psychology programs from both a descriptive and thematic lens. The syllabi suggested that most school psychology students were offered at least one full course in consultation that addressed multiple consultation models. In student activities and expectations, just over two thirds of programs' syllabi included at least one consultation case (most with a teacher regarding an individual student); of those, fewer than half mentioned supervision for the case. Although most syllabi indicated training in consultation to provide treatment, fewer than half of syllabi mentioned using consultation to promote prevention, risk reduction, or early intervention. Given the increased emphasis on cultural competency in our pluralistic society and schools, we were surprised to find that one fifth of programs' syllabi did not address diversity and cultural issues and that fewer than a half of programs' syllabi stated that students would be expected to consider the impact of their culture and social position on consultation.

This study in many ways augments previous doctoral school psychology trainer surveys. In the Anton-LaHart and Rosenfield (2004) study, all responding trainers reported that their programs offered at least one consultation course. Our analysis of consultation syllabi showed that only 88% of the responding school psychology doctoral programs had one full course (or more) in consultation. However, both are higher than findings from previous decades of only 55% of school psychology doctoral-level programs offering at least one consultation course (Meyers et al., 1981). Anton-LaHart and Rosenfield commented that programs' focus on breadth may mean a sacrifice of depth, particularly in case experiences, compounded by superficial supervision, and "as a result, students are most likely not reaching competency in their consultation skills" (p. 55). We would agree that few syllabi suggest to students that they will be receiving well-supervised clinical experiences but also note surprising deficits in content listed; specifically, there was a lack of syllabi emphasis on culturally aware, preventative, systemic changes that empower participants and challenge social inequities.

Considerations for School-Based Consultation Training and Research

Need for a better understanding of school-based consultation preservice training. It appears that many professional psychology students are entering internships ill prepared to provide broad, effective school-based consultation. However, poor preinternship consultation preparation is speculative because of limited data regarding training (Alpert & Tarfique, 2002) and because little research has been conducted on the elements of training that prepare a student to take on the role of school-based consultant. For instance, the *Handbook of Research in School Consultation* (Erchul & Sheridan, 2008) does not include a chapter on consultation training or the process by which one gains consultation skills, perhaps due to the lack of research in this area. If consultation is a clinical skill that follows a developmental sequence, foundational knowledge and supervised consultation experiences should be an extremely important component of training (Newman & Sutton Burkhouse, 2008; Rosenfield et al., 2010). A comprehensive study with incentives to assure a strong response rate

would be very helpful in defining what is and is not occurring in the school-based consultation training of professional psychologists and how this training does or does not prepare practitioners to provide school-based consultation.

School-based consultation training in a diverse and inequitable world. Given the increased diversity of and inequity of resources possessed by children, families, and schools, it is imperative that we examine how consultation and consultation training can optimize services for the greatest number and the greatest good. Similar to moving from an individual to a population-based mental health approach to promoting the competency and wellness of children (Doll & Cummings, 2008), increasing consultation preparation will require difficult discussions about resource allocation and training emphasis. Speight and Vera (2009) argued that greater introspection into how school consultants have supported the status quo will be needed to move "from sensitivity to injustice and human suffering to dedicated effort to challenging those systems that maintain inequities" (p. 87). Henning-Stout and Meyers (2000) argued that it is the individuals most marginal to the system who can offer the most untainted perspective on how diversity affects consultation. If consultation is to promote social justice, it will be important that consultation researchers and professional psychologists are trained to recognize their cultural perspectives, the impact of privilege in consultation, and how to solicit and consider the perspectives of all participants, especially those with the least power. The fact that many of the syllabi examined did not mention a social justice frame to the training of school-based consultation could be evidence of Speight and Vera's assessment that "prior to determining how social justice can be promoted via consultation it seems imperative that school psychologists first deliberate the potential meaning and relevance of social justice to their theory, research, and practice" (p. 84). Scholarly investigation into and discussions of the ways in which psychology and consultation have perpetuated inequities as well as promoted social justice through school systems are needed.

How practitioners' cognitive appraisals of the utility of consultation services can inform school-based consultation training. Recent studies have shown that psychologists in schools spend approximately 20% of their professional time in consultation, but would like to spend more (Hall, 2002; Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Bandura's (1978) *reciprocal determinism* would explain consultant behavior as the interaction of cognitions, behavior, and environment. Cognitive appraisals of the utility of engaging in indirect service provision have been little studied in school-based consultation. Developing a professional belief system that prioritizes consultation services was mentioned in some syllabi and has been discussed in school-based consultation training literature (Alpert & Taufique, 2002; Meyers, 2002; Salmon, 1993). Research into how professional belief systems (cognitions), consultation skills (available behavior options), and school settings (environment) interact to predict a professional psychologist's school-based consultation practice is an area ripe for inquiry.

Limitations

This study included syllabi from APA-approved school psychology programs. We narrowed our study to APA-approved programs because of our belief that, having met the APA-approval standards, these would be rigorous, encompassing professional psychology

programs. We narrowed our study to school psychology programs because they have been shown to provide the most consultation training (Hellkamp et al., 1998) and by definition are concerned with school-based training. Within the potential pool of APA-approved school psychology programs, these syllabi represent 40% of the programs. This falls within recent consultation training survey response rates (32% for Hellkamp et al.,1998; 48% for Anton-LaHart & Rosenfield, 2004; and 60% for Meyers et al., 1981) and is better than previous solicitations of consultation training syllabi (12% of programs for Anton-LaHart & Rosenfield, 2004) but is still disappointingly low. It is impossible to know whether the syllabi from nonresponding programs, non–APA-approved programs, or nondoctoral programs would have led to different findings.

For the thematic analyses, the interrater agreement rate was low for one construct, leading us to eliminate it as not reliably assessable from these syllabi. For the remaining four themes, the rate was 90% or higher, which led us to conclude that these aspects of the syllabi could be reliably assessed. Furthermore, when we reviewed our disagreements, consensus was easily reached. The interrater agreement by programs was a larger range (79–100%), which highlights that not all syllabi provide as explicit or comprehensive communication. Because we were able to reach consensus, we decided to include all syllabi received in order to have as broad a representation as possible of the consultation syllabi that professional psychology students are receiving. This suggests that the reliability of our interpretations is high. However, it reinforces that not all aspects of school-based consultation training are available for analysis from syllabi.

Although syllabi represent a contract with students, the degree to which instructors' courses aligned with their syllabi is unknown. Undoubtedly, there will be content covered in a course beyond what is listed in the syllabus. These unknowns make it impossible to infer course experiences from syllabi. Inferring student course experiences and learning is also a concern with retrospective faculty survey data. As Anton-LaHart and Rosenfield (2004) found, faculty reported more field experiences than their syllabi indicated; which is more accurate is unknown. Observations and student feedback would greatly augment faculty surveys and syllabi data; studies using these data are needed.

Lastly, in programs with multiple consultation courses, it is likely that not all students take the full consultation course offerings of their program. Most of our findings were reported by program. For students who did not take the full consultation course offerings, these findings overestimate the breadth of what was communicated to the students about the consultation training they would receive. Taken together, it is best to view these findings as what was indicated to students through the syllabi about instructors' priorities, beliefs, and values regarding consultation training rather than what students were taught about consultation.

School-Based Consultation Syllabi Design Suggestions

Syllabi are often the first communication students receive about a course and also a permanent document to which they may return as the course progresses. Following are some consultation syllabi considerations, drawn from the findings of this study and the literature review. Although specific sections of the syllabus might

be constructed to convey the following points, below are global considerations regarding the message a potential student might receive from a school-based consultation syllabus.

How students might optimize their learning. The syllabus will serve as a strong learning tool for students if it answers the following questions: (a) Why was the stated material selected, (b) what does the instructor hope for students to learn from these materials, (c) how is progress evaluated, (d) why is progress evaluated as it is, and (e) what is the expected value of experiences that have been included? As students are just beginning to conceptualize the complex set of clinical skills that are required for school-based consultation, understanding the relationships between the various components of the course content prior to the course and having this explanation to return to as they progress through the course can help with their ability to integrate consultation content.

Instructor's orientation to school-based consultation. We found that some syllabi more clearly communicate the instructor's intentions regarding which consultation models would be taught; which prevention levels would be addressed; which methods of task distribution with consultees would be covered; and how diversity, power inequities, and social justice could be addressed through consultation and would be addressed in the course. The literature suggests that providing students with information regarding these themes will assist in their development of foundational consultation knowledge. Providing an overview of these themes in the syllabus and returning to them throughout the course could assist students in their didactic learning.

Instructor's orientation to students as consultants-in-training. Student-centered teaching has been shown to increase student learning outcomes (McCombs & Miller, 2009; Prus & Waldron, 2008). A learner-centered approach requires two facets: (a) a supportive and safe environment that encourages learning, and (b) curriculum and instruction to support learning in a content area (Lineman & Hazel, 2009). Feeling safe and supported is all the more important when learning a clinical skill, as there is more risk-taking and mistake-making necessary than in purely didactic learning. Some students may have trouble visualizing how they will get from their initial skill level to the proficiency that they desire. Other students have unrealistic expectations of the gains that will be possible for them within the course period. Helping students set meaningful but realistic expectations for their development can start with the syllabus. The syllabus can be the initial point of explaining to students what professional advances are expected, what student efforts are required to accomplish these advances, what supports will be provided to students, and how students can access these supports.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this article suggest that many consultation course syllabi do not make clear mention of the multifaceted, complexities of comprehensive school-based consultation training. Further research into the desired outcomes, methods, and results of school-based consultation training is greatly needed to clarify best practices for training professional psychologists to be expert school-based consultants.

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