

Series Editor's Foreword

Rodney L. Lowman

The field of consulting psychology has blossomed in recent years. It covers the applications of psychology in consultation to organizations and systems as well as individuals and teams. However, very few graduate training programs focus on this field of specialization, so consulting psychology roles are mostly populated by those who came to the field after having trained in other areas of psychology—including industrial–organizational (I-O), clinical/counseling, and school psychology. Yet such training is rarely focused on consulting psychology and psychologists, and graduate students have to learn through on-the-job training and by reading books and articles, attending conferences and workshops, and being mentored in the foundational competencies of the field as they seek to transition into it.

After a number of years of editing *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, the field's flagship journal, I felt that an additional type of educational product was needed to help those transitioning into consulting psychology. I therefore instigated a partnership of the Society of Consulting Psychology with the American Psychological Association (APA) and worked with an advisory board (initially consisting of Drs. Judith Blanton, Dale Fuqua, Skipton Leonard, Edward Pavur, Jr., and myself) to create a new book series describing the specific, fundamental skill sets needed to practice in this area of specialization. Our goal in this book series is to identify the major competencies needed by consulting psychologists and then to work with qualified authors to create short, accessible but evidence-based

texts that will be useful as both stand-alone volumes and in combination with one another. The book is aimed at graduate students in relevant training programs, psychologists planning a transition into consulting psychology, and practicing professionals who want to add to their areas of expertise.

What constitutes fundamental skills in consulting psychology? The educational guidelines created by the Society of Consulting Psychology and approved by APA (2007a) and the *Handbook of Organizational Consulting Psychology* (hereinafter, *Handbook*; Lowman, 2002) provide useful starting points. Both of these contributions were organized around the concept of levels (individual, group, and organizational) as a taxonomy for identifying fundamental skills. Within those categories, two broad skill sets are needed: assessment and intervention.

As with many areas of psychological practice, the foundational skills that apply in one area may overlap others in the taxonomy. Interventions with individuals, as in executive coaching, for instance, usually take place in the context of the focal client's work with a specific team and within a specific organization, which itself may also constitute a client. Understanding the systemwide issues and dynamics at the organizational level usually also involves work with specific executives and teams. And multicultural/international issues suffuse all of our roles as consulting psychologists. The APA (2007a) guidelines and the *Handbook* (Lowman, 2002) concluded, properly, that consulting psychologists need to be trained in and have at least foundational skills and experience at the individual, group, and organizational levels, even if they primarily specialize in one of these areas.

As you learn more about consulting psychology through this book series, I hope you will come to agree that there is no more exciting or inherently interesting area of study today than consulting psychology. The series aims not only to cover relevant literature on timeless topics in consulting psychology but also to capture the richness of this work by including case material that illustrates its applications. Readers will soon understand that consulting psychologists are real-world activists, unafraid to work in real-world environments.

Finally, as one who trained in both I-O and clinical psychology, I should note that consulting psychology has been the one area in which I felt that all of my training and skill sets were both welcome and needed. This book

series aims to make a difference by helping more psychologists join the ranks of qualified consulting psychologists who can help organizations and the individuals and teams within them meet some of their greatest needs: functioning effectively; bridging the individual, group, and organizational levels; and coping with the rapid expansion of knowledge and escalating competition and internationalization. Collectively, we can influence not only an area of specialization in psychology but also the world.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

As both series editor and author of this contribution to the series, I can say that this book provides a broad overview of the topics covered in more detail in the individual volumes. The organizing perspective of individual, group, and organizational approaches provides the basic framework, with assessment and intervention being the two basic professional competencies that need to be learned.

As an overarching view of a large and growing field, this book cannot provide depth to any one topic—that's not its purpose. Rather, it aims to introduce readers to a field that is an exciting area of practice for psychologists and other professionals. Although this book is mainly aimed at psychologists, other professionals can also benefit from it. In some chapters (e.g., Chapter 7), the focus is on ethics and standards that govern the practice of psychology in general and consulting psychology in particular. Psychologists have an obligation to practice ethically; those in other professions may be governed by different ethical considerations, but the issues (e.g., confidentiality, informed consent, conflicts of interest) are probably covered in applicable codes that usually say something similar to the codes of psychologists. The particular ethics standards I use in this book are those applicable to U.S. psychologists; those residing in other countries can use these as examples of applicable rules and laws, but they will need to identify the ethical and legal standards that apply to them. The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014), however, are used worldwide, as they are the gold standard for all aspects of testing standards.

Consulting psychology is a field that is underrecognized and, when it comes to formal graduate training programs, underresourced. Some of the many reasons for this include (a) the fact that it covers a wide range of specific applications; (b) psychologists may come to consulting psychology from other areas of professional practice (e.g., clinical/counseling, I-O psychology); and (c) its research is often conducted by persons in a variety of specializations and settings, not just academics. The result is a practice-oriented field that has worked backward from practice to its foundational elements. I hope that this book series in general—and this book in particular—will encourage those aspiring to practice consulting psychology to get excited about this field. Much work is needed to help make our organizations and the individuals and groups within them become more effective and value driven, and to create that sweet spot in which individual, group, and organizational needs coalesce to the mutual benefit of all. Consulting psychologists who are able to understand, assess, and intervene with individuals, groups, and organizations are especially well equipped to meet this need.

An Introduction to
**Consulting
Psychology**

1

The Work of Consulting Psychologists

The work of consulting psychologists includes a variety of activities and specialization. Some focus mainly on individual assessment and coaching, others on team consultation or systemwide changes. Many work across a number of different levels. What they share is that they apply psychological knowledge to issues about which they advise others—or the group or organization as a whole—to work more effectively, to create conditions of high satisfaction and motivation, and to help people get along better with one another. Although the focus of this book is on consulting psychology in the context of work and work organizations, most of the principles also apply to other types of psychological consulting. Note that the primary role of consulting psychologists is to advise others on how to do their jobs—not to do their jobs for them. (This can be difficult for many psychologists to learn because their training largely focuses on developing competency at the individual level. Typically, they study in-depth a

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An Introduction to Consulting Psychology: Working With Individuals, Groups, and Organizations,
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somewhat narrow domain of knowledge that they apply to a consensually agreed-upon standard, rather than studying an array of areas.)

Broadly speaking, there are two major domains of knowledge (assessment and intervention) and three distinctive but overlapping levels to which consulting services can be applied (individuals, groups, organizations). Through skilled psychological assessment, the consulting psychologist can help the client (whether individual, group, organizational or some combination) understand what needs to be addressed for more effective functioning. Building on a broad knowledge of theory and research relevant to the particular problems or needs at hand, the psychologist helps empower clients to become more effective and more resilient.

The apparent conceptual simplicity of the consultation process belies the many moving parts and the complexity of theory and knowledge behind effective assessment and intervention. To identify appropriate assessment methods for the issue for which consultation is sought, the psychologist must have a wide-ranging diagnostic repertoire that encompasses individuals, groups, and organizations. To intervene requires matching what is learned through assessment with theory- and research-based intervention approaches that have diagnostic relevance and have demonstrated some likelihood of resulting in system or subsystem improvement. The rest is mostly art: translating knowledge and research into language that both reflects the knowledge base relevant to the particular issues at hand in a way that is both understandable and potentially impactful to the client or the client's representatives. With beginners, the process often appears mechanical and somewhat disjointed, with fully trained and experienced consultants, smooth and synergistic, and with master consultants, awe inspiring and life changing.

WHAT DO CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS DO?

Working With Individuals

Often, a large part of psychologists' consulting practices involves work with individuals. Psychological assessments can be powerful and efficient ways of understanding what ails individuals in the context of their work;

what they are best suited to do; and who, among a group of individual candidates, is most likely to succeed in a defined work context. They can identify strengths and weaknesses relevant to career choice and change, assess fitness for work of persons with physical or mental disabilities, and assess the likelihood of behaving badly on the job, such as by stealing or by not following prescribed policies.

Consulting psychologists assess individuals using psychological tests, interviews, collections of perceptions from others in their clients' workspace, and self-assessments. They feed back the data collected to their clients or assessees and make recommendations about hiring potential candidates, firing and laying off employees, and managing problematic behavior on the job. They consider the ways in which individual behavior may be influenced by the groups or organizations in which people work. They often consult in the context of organizations in which they help identify the best people to do the important jobs. But they also work with individuals who seek the services of consulting psychologists for issues of career choice and change, who wish to be coached to be more effective in their work, and even those contemplating end-of-work-life transitions.

Individual-level consultation is not just done with persons experiencing problems. Many high-level, very successful executives hire consulting psychologists to help them sustain their effectiveness and improve in particular areas as they take on new roles. For example, as managers become executives, they must focus more on strategy and less on the day-to-day management of the organization. Consulting psychologists who work with such individuals must be fully competent in their skills, be able to build relationships quickly, and be prepared to be challenged. The overall focus in such cases is on enhancing success, not fixing problems.

In this book, case examples are provided to illustrate theory and practice. All cases are composites; none reflect actual specific cases, and all names and company names are fictional. The case material, however, is illustrative of the type of work with which consulting psychologists get involved. The first case is presented next.

Case 1: Individual-Level Issues at Scientific Dezigns

Phoebe worked in the sales department at Scientific Dezigns. She was not happy with the meeting she had just had with her boss. She masked her reactions, however, by trying to understand the perspectives of her boss, Rollie Rodgers, about what he described as being another instance of her poor interpersonal relations.

“Complaints have been made,” he stated. She resisted the urge to say, “By whom and about what?,” knowing that he would protect the identity of her detractors—likely her underperforming subordinates—in a way that seemed to take their side. “Jolly Rollie” was her pet nickname for her boss—who avoided contact, never wanted to rock the boat, and tried to preserve the veneer of camaraderie while never getting to the heart of the issues at hand. For those who didn’t reach monthly performance objectives, however, Rollie was not so jolly.

Phoebe had loved her last boss, who was, like her, a well-trained scientist who was rational, logical, supportive, and not very political. Of course, that boss had not lasted long in the sales department of Scientific Dezigns. Sales were acceptable, but with company transitions and a merger, the last boss went to another subsidiary, and there was no job there for her to follow. She was quietly looking and biding her time with a boss whom she did not respect and two new male coworkers, neither of whom she either wanted or respected, and who seemed to be out to do her in.

Perhaps most galling of all was that Rollie had stated that Phoebe needed to visit the company’s consulting psychologist for some help with her “problems.” “I’ve used him myself,” he said in his good-old-boy drawl, but she later learned that what he had neglected to mention was that he had “used him” only to make the referral about a manager who “was sorely lacking in the people skills department.” The discussion with Rollie about a referral had not gone well, and although she would have preferred to visit a recruiter rather than a shrink, Phoebe was place bound until her 16-year-old son completed high school. With the recession, higher level jobs were not that plentiful.

Crisp, courteous, and contained, Phoebe always tackled unpleasant things she did not want to do by jumping into them quickly, rarely letting

ambivalence set in. Yet, she had little stomach for discussing directly the anonymous attributions made about her and little interest in confronting the subordinates who could not be bothered to come directly to her with their concerns. Although she had her suspicions about who was complaining—two supervisees to whom she had to give less than positive feedback about their performance the previous week—she felt it was useless to address these individuals directly when she had no direct evidence of their complaints.

Phoebe listened to the psychologist's overly soothing voice on his voicemail and hung up, deciding instead to send him an e-mail that said, "Mr. Rodgers has suggested I contact you to discuss his perception that my interpersonal skills needed work. I am agreeable to meeting with you. Phoebe Kurstan." To the point and clear—and only mildly suggestive of the hostility and anxiety of which not even she was aware. Many in the office, however, interpreted her ambience of neutrality as coldness and disinterest.

For the consulting psychologist, the goals of meeting with such an individual client are complex. Why, other than the "recommended" referral, is Phoebe seeking help at this time? Is she motivated to work on the issues that caused the referral or is she just "going through the motions"? What was the "real" purpose of the supervisor's referral? Would the client authorize the psychologist to talk with her supervisor? Is the prospective client in the right career? Is she in the appropriate job? How well could she engage in a coaching relationship?

Working With Groups

Consulting psychologists work not just with individuals but also with groups. Groups are simply collections of individuals who have interrelationships with one another and who have some common purposes that bind them together. In the case of work groups, members typically have relationships with people that exist over time. They work together in some defined way to perform a productive function or task. But they also consist of people who have personal feelings for, and relationships with, one

another. They like some members of their groups more than others, their feelings may vary over time, and they cooperate more with some people than others.

Because the individuals in work groups are discrete people, they also bring with them identities that influence not just their personal lives but also their work lives and how they react to events in the workplace. For example, individuals are members of gender, racial/ethnic, age, sexual orientation, religious/non-religious, and immigration status groups. Persons of color, for example, may be sensitive to perceived criticism, those with strong religious identities who work in scientific companies may feel they have to hide their beliefs, and young people may feel that existing processes are hopelessly outdated. But these identities can also create internal conflicts in their intersection, for example, a gay, Black, older, religious, scientist may compartmentalize some of these identities in the workplace.

Groups can consist of people who work face-to-face, or they may be virtual groups composed of individuals who are not colocated (see Purvanova, 2014). Sometimes these virtual teams may consist of people who are located in different countries or, in a large company, they may be people in the same building or city who rarely see one another in person. Although the same issues of norms, getting along with one another, social loafing, and managing affect can occur in virtual as occur in contiguous teams, they may take different forms and may need to be addressed differently depending on the circumstances.

Usually, groups have leaders. The leader is responsible for the team's working together to achieve its mission. Leaders come in many different types, and they may be the source of group cohesion and effectiveness, or they may be divisive (Filho, Tenenbaum, & Yang, 2015). Unofficial leaders also emerge in the group, including leaders of the group's socioemotional functioning. Different group leaders may assume leadership roles at different times and for different purposes.

Work teams may also be embedded in a network of other teams (e.g., manufacturing, marketing, sales), and such teams may experience difficulties from within the team or between teams in getting along with one another. One group, say sales, may blame another group, say manufactur-

ing, for not delivering the product on time, who then in turn may feel that the sales group made overly optimistic promises about delivery dates.

And members of a work group come and go while the team stays intact—that is, the social entity can exceed the life of its individual members. This also means that when members leave a group, their losses must be dealt with, and as new ones arrive, they must be assimilated. In some groups, those changes are facilitated by formally celebrating the contributions of the member to the group and sending them off with best wishes. Others do not formally recognize departures and leave to the gossip mill the processing of feelings—good and bad—associated with the loss. When group members leave after having been promoted to higher levels, some members may be proud that the person has risen to a more influential position, but others may be jealous and believe that the promotion was unjustified. When work team members' services are terminated, others in the group may think that the terminations were unjustified and they might fear for the security of their own position.

In short, the many moving parts of work groups and teams means many opportunities for consulting psychologists to help them run more efficiently. These kinds of phenomena also highlight the importance of consulting psychologists understanding both individual and group dynamics, regardless of their areas of specialization.

Case 2: Group-Level Issues at Scientific Dezigns

The senior executive team on which Rollie Rodgers served was not a place for camaraderie. Scientific Dezign's CEO, Bruce Waltham, and his six direct reports (including Rodgers) met weekly for an hour and a half, but this was not the venue in which many real decisions got made. Rather, the meetings were for the sharing of information and blame, and Waltham imparted both in equal measure, edging slightly to the latter.

Rodgers was always frustrated in these meetings, but he rarely let it show. He could be counted on to add small, judiciously chosen, bits of humor to the conversation at hand, particularly when tensions threatened to surface, but otherwise he stared politely at the committee's chair and nodded slightly, suggesting affirmation but possibly masking his real reactions.

Relationships among members of this group were competitive, and a “CYA” norm had emerged over time. The concern with attributing blame had created a culture for the group in which few felt safe but subtle jibes and macho-like comments prevailed on those occasions when the silence was broken by someone other than the CEO. Truth be told, no one liked those meetings, but no one had the courage to confront the CEO or the group itself.

A consulting psychologist contemplating work with a group such as this would need both a reason and an invitation to intercede. Interventions with a group whose members and leaders are unhappy with their way of relating to each other or whose results are not up to expectations are difficult, but at least there is some leverage with which to work since there are strong pressures to change. Assuming group members had some motivation to identify and name the issues and to work toward change, the intervention might use a process approach (e.g., Schein, 1998) in which members of the group identify their preferred ways of relating versus what they currently were experiencing. Alternatively, a goal-focused approach might place more emphasis on the problematic outcomes. Individual interviews with members of the group might precede efforts at the group level.

Working With Organizations

When they run smoothly, organizations may seem to the outsider—or even to some of those inside the system—as if they are almost automated entities. For example, a machinery-intensive company such as a paper mill takes trees; converts them to pulp; and removes the water from the pulp using chemical processes and heavy equipment, which ultimately converts the pulp mass to paper used in newsprint, for stationery, greeting cards, toilet paper, and so on. When the machines are running well, they do so with great precision and the employees and supervisors seem at the time not to be very busy. But when the machines shut down for mechanical or other reasons, as they often do, the employees immediately jump into action and the climate becomes more frenetic than laid back. The costs

of idle time on very expensive machines are considerable. Similarly, work organizations from the outside often look more stable than they really are. Few companies, for instance, in the private sector survive 75 years (De Geus, 2002a; see also Levinson, 2009). As De Geus (2002b) noted,

The average life expectancy of a multinational corporation—Fortune 500 or its equivalent—is between 40 and 50 years. This figure is based on most surveys of corporate births and deaths. A full one-third of the companies listed in the 1970 Fortune 500, for instance, had vanished by 1983—acquired, merged, or broken to pieces. Human beings have learned to survive, on average, for 75 years or more, but there are very few companies that are that old and flourishing. (para. 2)

And those of us who lived through the financial meltdown of the past decade may remember the once-powerful corporations Goldman Sachs, Enron, Bear Stearns, Montgomery Ward, MCI, Washington Mutual, Countrywide, and Tyco. All of these were once-powerful, apparently sound, companies that were found to be malfunctioning and ethically challenged and in short order ceased to exist or were absorbed by other companies.

In large and specialized organizations, people's work may be relatively isolated from that of others in the organization. Yet, their collective fates are tied to the effectiveness with which they can get their work done and the success of the organization in fulfilling its mission. They also depend on the appropriateness of that mission in a constantly changing environment. Thus, the organization consists of a complicated system with many different parts that must interact successfully with its environment to successfully fulfill a purpose. And of course the greater the need and the more positive the outcomes associated with fulfilling that mission (profits, etc.), the more competition there is likely to be found in the environment and, hence, the more need to compete effectively with other organizations.

Let's consider a specific industry: commercial aviation. Each airline has huge investments in equipment and makes its money only when planes fly. But the planes must first and foremost operate safely, so airlines must manage the need for profits from planes being in the air with the need to follow a whole host of safety regulations in a highly regulated industry. When

flights are delayed or cancelled, the airline must immediately manage a bevy of unhappy customers and get them on their way as quickly as possible. The capital that it takes to manage an airline is immense, the problems associated with managing a workforce constantly in motion complex and persistent, and the competition is keen (if shrinking through mergers and acquisitions). Such factors set the context within which consultation to that type of industry may occur.

People work from the context of their particular perch in the organization, especially in large organizations, and are rarely in a position to see the bigger picture or to understand the full complexity of the organization. In contrast, consulting psychologists are trained to understand the organization as a whole and are well situated to consider the bigger picture. As outsiders, they are often better equipped to see the organization in its complexity, to understand what may be driving the experienced problems, and to know how to address them.

Case 3: Organization-Level Issues at Scientific Dezigns

The board of directors of Scientific Dezigns was chaired by Peter “Pal” Johnston, head of a local small manufacturing company and a major stock holder. A man with less education than those who surrounded him, he had a reputation for micromanaging, tolerating no dissent, and having a quick temper. He was feared by those who knew his history of acting in anger and turning on a dime against anyone whom he perceived as having challenged his authority. As a result, the board meetings were highly structured, with more focus on decision making than on discussing the nuances of disagreement.

Several of the people he had fired had opened competing businesses in the same area; others, however, experienced traumatic personal reactions and never recovered fully. At the same time, some knew how to play Johnston, meeting with him privately at any opportunity to gossip and solicit his good will. He took their efforts to charm him to be genuine and thereafter took their sides on issues that arose. Were it not for his stock ownership, he would not have had anything to do with Scientific Dezigns and was quietly ridiculed among the scientists when they were

among themselves. Those closer to him knew enough to fear him for his reputed bare-knuckled exercise of control; lack of cognitive complexity; and tendency to act immediately and think, if at all, later. His work sphere was small and controllable. His generous self-view was of being a man of action, oriented to customers, doing good in the world. But he had little understanding—and less interest—in knowing that others viewed him as being a bully and either avoided him or had learned how to use him to their advantage. Those who protested his behavior or tried even gently to confront it lived to regret it usually sooner rather than later. But as a major stockholder in the company with access to money, his abusive behavior was more or less tolerated by Waltham and his direct reports. The company needed his money and therefore tolerated his abuse.

Intervening at the organizational level is complicated by the inter-relatedness of the parts—and the number of them. For-profit, but also many not-for-profit organizations, have multiple systems needed to get the work done—production, marketing, research, finance, human resources—and these can have a differential impact on operations. The board of directors is usually the policy-setting body of a corporation, and it directly controls the hiring and firing of the president or CEO of the organization, who in turn controls many aspects of the company. As with the group level, although plenty may be wrong with an organization, those who have the authority and power to bring in consultants to take action must be the ones to feel an organization's pain, or at least be aware of it.

Although a psychologist might conceptualize the problem in this case to be with the individual board chair and stock holder, from an organizational standpoint, that would lead to a very limited understanding of both the problem and how to intervene. Power-seeking and controlling individuals are common in high-level positions in organizations. The question is, "Is the organization adversely affected by how power conflicts are resolved?" Yet, over time, an organization is unlikely to succeed if dissent is not possible and if people are working and living in a climate or culture of fear. There is much material to work with at the individual and group levels, but if the problems experienced at the lower organizational levels stem from the power dynamics at the top, at some point that level too must be addressed.

Organizational-level intervention must work within the complexities of needing to assess across a range of issues and a large number of employees. Yet well-developed, scientifically anchored tools, such as well-designed and well-validated surveys (e.g., Church & Waclawski, 1998), enable the sources of organizational problems to be pinpointed and interventions planned. In this case, a survey of employee attitudes, including those of board members, might help to open up a conversation on corporate values and the organization's climate and, in turn, result in opportunities to identify a potential connection between a dysfunctional board and the climate in the rest of the organization. Such approaches should not be undertaken, however, without sufficient energy and engagement from key stakeholders at the various levels of the organization, which will be affected by the intervention. Organizational change is complicated, anxiety provoking, and sometimes painful and should not be undertaken without a solid commitment.

Consulting Across All Three Levels

Taken together, Cases 1 through 3 illustrate the interrelatedness of the three levels—individual, group, and organizational/systemic—in attempting to understand consulting dynamics. Because much of consulting psychologists' research is done at one level, they do not always see that behavior is not only a function of the psychological dynamics that the individual brings to the table but also a function of the environment with which they interact and their efforts to cope with that. Things are not always as they seem, or rather, they are often more complex than they seem. Constructions and conceptualizations appropriate to a single level (e.g., assumptions about the influence of personality variables on the behavior of managers) do not always help the psychologist know the full dynamics of what may be driving behavior—and of how to intervene to remediate it.

Where Consulting Psychologists Work

Because consulting psychologists may work primarily at the individual, group, or organizational level, or some combination thereof, they may be

found in many different settings. Consulting psychologists are employed by work organizations (for-profits, hospitals, government organizations, nongovernmental organizations, schools, and consulting firms), or they manage their own private consulting firms of either a boutique or large scale. Development Dimensions International (DDI), for example, was started by one psychologist, Bill Byham, as a small consulting firm, but it grew into a large, internationally recognized, and highly successful firm working with top-level organizations. RHR International is another large-scale firm that was founded by a clinical psychologist, has multiple locations and affiliates in the United States and internationally, and has employed a number of psychologists who have either made careers there or gone on to other roles. Or, consulting firms can be smaller and more localized. TalentSmart, for example, based in San Diego, California, specializes in applications of emotional intelligence. The consulting firm Leadership Worth Following is based in Dallas, Texas, and specializes in executive assessment and coaching. Consulting psychologists may also be educators, teaching in colleges, universities, or private training programs. The Center for Creative Leadership, for example, has major offices in Greensboro, North Carolina; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and San Diego and employs psychologists as both trainers in their leadership training programs and coaching. Other consulting psychologists have part-time practices in consulting psychology while pursuing careers in other areas of psychology such as clinical and counseling, industrial–organizational, social, or school psychology.

Whatever their location, type of organization, or type of consultation provided, consulting psychologists must generally be prepared to work under time pressure. They must learn to rapidly understand the general characteristics of the situation in which they find themselves, ask the appropriate questions, and establish early on their credibility for the job at hand. The pace is fast, and executives, the usual decision makers, are demanding. If managers and executives do not make a connection with the consultant quickly or experience the consultant as competent, they will usually find someone else with whom to work.

If consulting psychologists simply try to respond to each situation in the same way using an approach with which they are familiar, they are

likely to be incorrect a number of times. Psychologists are not trying to sell an unneeded product or approach, but they must nonetheless “sell” themselves and their general approach if they wish to have (and to retain) clients. If they arrive too quickly at a solution that does not fit the situation or shows no understanding of the situation at hand, they will experience difficulties. Thus the consulting psychologist must straddle the line between what it means to be a psychologist and the realities of surviving in the rough-and-tumble world of corporations and other types of work organizations. But if they do not retain their identity and ethical expectations of being psychologists, they will not be functioning as consulting psychologists, just as consultants of any stripe, plying their respective trades.

THE VALUES OF ORGANIZATIONS AND THE VALUES OF PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychologists are trained in the science and practice of psychology and in the ethics of a profession committed to serving the greater good. As the “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (hereinafter, “Ethics Code”; American Psychological Association [APA], 2010) describes,

Psychologists are committed to increasing scientific and professional knowledge of behavior and people’s understanding of themselves and others and to the use of such knowledge to improve the condition of individuals, organizations, and society. (Preamble)

They are expected to practice a science-based discipline and to put their clients’ interests ahead of their own. They have restrictions on how they can market and advertise their services. And they must be skilled at managing complex client situations with multiple clients and those whose interests must be taken into account.

Organizations exist also to serve a productive purpose that has value in some marketplace (including the marketplace of ideas), but such purposes are unlikely to be the same, or to represent the same values, as those of many psychologists. Rather, organizations exist to serve a particular purpose, such as manufacturing, knowledge creation, or service delivery,

through which they earn money and other rewards for their stakeholders. They are, of course, not obligated to behave in a manner consistent with the Ethics Code, although they have a number of laws and regulations that govern their behavior. To the extent that their leaders view their goals as being to promote the narrowly defined success of the organization (e.g., shareholders' dividends, quarterly profits) even when that pursuit comes at the expense of other goals or values (e.g., employee satisfaction and well-being), conflicts in role and values may arise with which the consulting psychologist will have to deal (see Lefkowitz, 2003; Lefkowitz & Lowman, 2010).

WHY CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY IS EXCITING WORK

If the above examples of consulting psychology work appeal to you, it is likely that you will find a happy and professionally satisfying occupational home doing this type of work. Indeed, there is more money to be made here than in most areas of psychology (see, e.g., Blanton, 2007; O*NET, n.d.-c), but I argue that the reason to do it is to help to make a difference in organizations and in the lives of the individuals and groups within them.

For those excited by complexity, who thrive on addressing real-life problems in real time, and who care as much about strengths and optimization as dysfunction, consulting psychology is a remarkable area in which to practice. It also offers the opportunity to influence more people than applications of psychology that focus solely on addressing the needs of individuals. Whether in successfully addressing issues experienced by leaders (who in turn influence a number of employees, such as the CEO of a large company employing thousands or more) or helping to solve work group issues, psychologists who consult can make a significant difference.

FOR WHOM THE BELL DOES NOT TOLL

Consulting psychology is probably not the venue of choice for many mental health clinicians. What attracted them to psychopathology and individual-level functioning they may not find in assisting with the

problems and issues of people who, for the most part, are typically concerned with work issues. Few clinical or counseling psychology programs have much to say about work and organizations and consulting. If taught at all, it usually occurs in the context of consulting to other mental health professionals on mental health issues. Passion for the subject matter is important in deciding whether consulting psychology is a good fit.

PLAN OF THIS BOOK

This book was written as an overview of the field of consulting psychology in the Fundamentals of Consulting Psychology book series. As such, it provides a broad overview of the field intended to help those just beginning their study of psychology, as well as those already practicing in other areas, to become excited about working in this area. Further training will be needed in the areas of specialization.

The “Guidelines for Education and Training at the Doctoral and Post-doctoral Levels in Consulting Psychology/Organizational Consulting Psychology” (APA, 2007a) provide a structure that is helpful as an organizing device, dividing the practice of consulting psychology into three levels (individual, group, and organizational) and two major activities (assessment and intervention; see Table 1.1 with some sample areas). This book makes use of that structure as its primary organizing device.

The remaining chapters of this book introduce major work activities at the various levels (individual, group, organizational) and then pro-

Table 1.1
Levels and Types of Activities in Consulting Psychology

	Levels		
	Individual	Group	Organizational
Type of Activity	Sample Activities		
Assessment	Career Assessment	Role Analysis	Culture Assessment
Intervention	Coaching	Tavistock Groups	Scanlon Plan

ceed to professional practice issues. Chapter 2 focuses primarily on the work of consulting psychologists at the individual level, examining how to help individuals build upon their strengths and abilities to improve performance and manage major career transitions. This chapter also covers other areas of assessment, such as screening potential job or promotion candidates and measuring employee psychopathology. Coaching, the most popular form of individual-level intervention, and various other intervention approaches are discussed. Chapter 3 looks at group-level assessments and interventions, such as evaluating work group dynamics (e.g., members' roles and communication patterns) and working with individual members and the team as a whole to improve group-wide performance and procedures. Chapter 4 reviews consulting psychology at the organizational systemic level, examining key theoretical models for assessing organizations as a whole, including its culture, and targeted interventions for improving various systems and subsystems. Chapter 5 covers leadership and demonstrates that the levels are often artificial boundaries, so it is important to know how they intersect and overlap. Chapter 6 introduces multicultural/international issues relevant to consulting psychology, such as addressing workplace discrimination, using diversity to improve organization-wide outcomes, and working with international companies. Chapter 7 reviews the Ethics Code (APA, 2010) and other professional guidelines that consulting psychologists should be familiar with. The final chapter, Chapter 8, looks ahead to provide suggestions for future work.