Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick

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Abstract

Consultation and collaboration have been identified in the literature as essential parts of school psychology service delivery (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Sladeczek, Kratochwill, Steinbach, Kumke, Hagermoser, 2003; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, 1999; Zins & Erchul, 2002). The purpose of this study was to examine the consultation practices of school psychologists who work in rural and urban regions of New Brunswick. Thirty-three school psychologists and residents in psychology were invited to participate. The response rate was 42.4% (n=14). Most respondents were experienced psychologists and the majority worked in both rural and urban settings.

The psychologists engaged in consultation as consultants and consultees regularly, with the majority (10/14) consulting at least two to three times per week. Consultation took place at the school-level most often: 12 respondents acted as consultants with teachers and school administrators at least two to three times per week, while 13 sought advice from teachers and administrators at least once per month. By contrast, respondents consulted with professionals outside the school system less than once per month. The focus of the consultation was most often on academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional issues: 10 participants consulted about these issues at least two to three times per week, and all but one reported being confident or very confident when consulting in these areas. As consultees, 14 participants consulted about socio-emotional issues at least once per month and 13 consulted regarding academic and behavioural concerns at least once per month. Eleven school psychologists were at least somewhat satisfied with their current level of consultation, and eight felt as though they had the right amount of time to spend on consultation. Participants also identified barriers to

school consultation, including heavy caseloads, servicing too many schools, and others' lack of awareness of psychologists' expertise. Factors that they perceived facilitated effective consultation were: being part of a school-based team, established meeting times for consultation, time allotted in daily schedules for consultation, support and commitment from teachers and administrators, additional psychologist resources, recognition of all participants' skills and knowledge as valuable, the development of relationships with team members, and a reduced emphasis on completing psycho-educational assessments.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

My first experience with consultation was during my school psychology internship, a requirement of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Canada. Consultation between my supervising psychologist and other professionals in the school system, including teachers, school administrators, guidance counsellors, speech–language pathologists, and other school psychologists, took place frequently and I soon realized the importance of this practice. Information sharing and collaborative problem-solving between the consultee, my supervisor, and myself seemed to facilitate the provision of service to an individual student or a school. When my supervising psychologist and I put a behavioural program into place for an individual student, it was imperative for us to consult with the classroom teacher. Through our communication with the classroom teacher, we could retain a clear picture of the student's needs and the teacher's goals for the program. As a consultee, the classroom teacher provided us with valuable information about the student's behaviour, the circumstances around the behaviour, and the impact it had on others in the classroom. As consultants, it was our responsibility to ensure that the behaviour plan addressed the behaviour that was most problematic, and that it was of practical use within the classroom setting. In order for the program to be successful, it was important for us to discuss and document specific strategies for positive reinforcement and consequences to the classroom teacher. I also began to notice that the process of consultation helped to build new professional relationships for myself and strengthen existing professional relationships between my supervisor and her colleagues. My internship experience

confirmed what I had already learned through coursework in the Master of Arts in School Psychology program, that consultation is central to the practice of school psychology.

The consultation practices that my supervisor and I were involved in corresponded closely with the ecobehavioural model of consultation. Consistent with this model, a target agenda was mutually agreed upon early on in our consultation process, which was followed by a shared problem-solving process between my supervisor and myself, along with the consultee. My supervisor and I worked with consultees so that specific needs were addressed in a way that improved the functioning of the school, a group of students, or an individual student. This process also closely corresponds with the ecobehavioural model of consultation. For example, I took part in and witnessed successful problem solving efforts in a number of cases, including the behaviour problems of individual students, the learning needs of a gifted child, a school-wide crisis intervention, and the need for an action plan in a school that was having difficulties around race relations.

In recent decades, school-based consultation has been identified as one of the professional activities most valued by school psychologists (Curtis, Hunley, & Chesno Grier, 2002; Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008). Practitioners often rank consultation as their most desired and necessary professional role and as a professional activity in which they would like to engage more frequently (Curtis et al.; Gutkin & Curtis). The 1990 launch of the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, a refereed journal dedicated exclusively to consultation theory and research, was an indication of the rising interest in consultation (Gutkin & Curtis). There is increased evidence that school-based consultation and collaboration is

an effective practice in psychological and educational service delivery (Anserello & Sweet, 1989; Gutkin & Curtis; Sladeczek, Kratochwill, Steinbach, Kumke, & Hagermoser, 2003; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, 1999; Zins & Erchul, 2002). There is little research on the consultation activities of school psychologists who practice in rural communities, however. Dramatic variations often exist in service delivery between rural and urban settings, and Power (2003) suggests that consultation is particularly important in rural areas, due to the limited access to resources.

At the present time, there is little research about the consultation activities of Canadian school psychologists, particularly those who practice in rural regions. This study's purpose was to identify and compare the consultation practices of school psychologists who worked in rural and urban regions of New Brunswick, and to determine what they perceived as barriers and facilitators to consultation. In determining some of the challenges and support to consultation, strategies for successfully addressing and overcoming barriers may be generated and school psychologists might become better equipped to advocate for the practice of consultation.

Literature Review

Consultation is a method of providing psychological and educational services, where consultants and consultees build cooperative partnerships and partake in a mutual problem-solving process. The goal of consultation is to encourage students' well-being and performance (Zins & Erchul, 2002). Consultation is a critical skill and one of the primary job functions of a school psychologist (Boone, Minore, Katt, & Kinch, 1997; Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, & Wallingsford, 2002; Curtis, Hunley, Walker & Baker, 1999). It provides a means of communication between professionals, can expand a knowledge base, facilitate the development of a professional support network (Boone et al.), and build productive relationships between professionals or agencies (Henning-Stout & Bonner, 1996; Scholten, 2003). In addition to the professional support consultation provides, it can also develop a mutual trust and respect between consultants and consultees. This in turn builds cooperative partnerships, and facilitates the development of working relationships between institutions and the empowerment of consultee systems (Caplan & Caplan, 1993; Power, 2003; Zins & Erchul). School psychologists may engage in consultation as consultants or as consultees. Consultation often occurs with classroom teachers, school administration, and other support staff (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Henning-Stout & Bonner, 1996). Consultation may also take place with clergy, social workers, general medical practitioners, paediatricians, psychiatrists, nurses, and criminal justice professionals such as lawyers, judges, police officers, and probation officers (Caplan & Caplan, 1993).

While there is some empirically-based literature on the consultation practices of school psychologists (Bramlett et al., 2002; Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Curtis et al., 1999; Curtis et al., 2002; Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin & Shwery, 2004; Henning-Stout & Bonner, 1996; Wilczynski, Mandal, & Fusilier, 2000), the existing research has many limitations. There are few Canadian studies on this topic (Corkum, French, & Dorey, 2007; Murray, 2007) and as a result, most of what we know about consultation applies to school psychologists practicing in the United States. Until very recently, there was no literature on the consultation practices of school psychologists who practice in rural and urban areas in Canada. Murray (2007) was the first to investigate the perspective of school psychologists who practice in rural and urban communities in Nova Scotia.

Despite the limitations in the research, there is evidence that consultation makes up a significant part of school psychology practice. One US study found that 96.4% of 1700 surveyed National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members engaged in consultation during the 2004-2005 school year (Curtis, Lopez, Castillo, Batsche, Minch & Smith, 2008). An earlier US study that surveyed 1400 NASP members found that 97.3% percent of school psychologists engaged in consultation during the 1994-1995 school year (Curtis et al., 1999). Amongst school psychologists who participated in the 1999 study, 25.6% reported servicing more than 50 students by using consultation practices. In 2008, a similar study found that 28.5% reported servicing 50 or more students through consultation, which indicates a modest increase in servicing large numbers of students through consultation over the past 10 years (Curtis et al., 2008; Curtis et al., 1999). A study by Stoiber and Vanderwood (2008) found that school psychologists ranked the practice of consultation as their second most common activity,

following assessment. Corkum, French, and Dorey (2007) surveyed 27 school psychologists in Nova Scotia about the current and preferred professional roles in their practice. They found that participants spend nearly 25% of their time engaged in consultation, and indicated that it is the second most common activity in their practice, after assessment. Like Stoiber and Vanderwood (2008), Corkum et al. found that consultation was the second most preferred role of participants. Respondents also reported that they would like to have more time to engage in consultation activities. A study by Murray (2007) investigated the consultation practices of 38 school psychologists who work in urban and rural regions of Nova Scotia. Murray's survey of participants found that about 95% acted as consultants, that is, provided specialized knowledge to others, at least two or three times per week. Consistent with Corkum et al., Murray found that more than 70% of participants would prefer to spend more time on consultation.

Importance of Consultation

Consultation is often an important catalyst in delivering educational and psychological services to schools and their students (Sladeczek et al., 2003). In a study by Stoiber and Vanderwood (2008), more than 100 school psychologists were surveyed regarding the importance of 20 different professional practices. While participants in this study were more likely to engage in, and felt more competent, conducting traditional assessments, they rated consultation as being the single most important practice to school psychology service delivery (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008). Consultation is characterized by the potential to reach a maximum number of children through system-wide, class-wide, or teacher-centred consultation (Meyers, Meyers, & Grogg, 2004). Presenters at the *Invitational Conference on the Future of School Psychology* in 2002

suggested that, in addition to the use of rapidly changing technologies and empirical evidence to inform practice, future growth in the field of school psychology will be measured by school psychologists' success in fostering productive connections between school and home, and their efforts to work effectively with children, teachers, families and other diverse professionals (Meyers et al.). It is suggested that consultation, with its focus on prevention, risk reduction, and intervention, has the potential to service a range of students in spite of limited professionals or resources. This is especially important given that there are projected shortages of school psychologists in the near future (Curtis, Chesno-Grier, & Hunley, 2004; Meyers et al.). Gutkin and Conoley refer to the "Paradox of School Psychology," where school psychologists need to focus their time and professional capabilities first on adults, before they can successfully serve children. They claim that the promising influence that school-based consultation has on the lives of students is due to collaborative relationships that grow and strengthen over time (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999).

Core Characteristics of Consultation

There are a number of common characteristics to consultation (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). One is indirect service delivery, that is, psychologists do not provide first-hand service to clients, but mainly interact with colleagues or other professionals (consultees), who then work directly with clients. Consultation also includes a dual set of goals. One goal is that problem-solving serves as an instrument for developing consultative interventions that provide remedial services for clients' presenting problems (Arredondo, Shealy, Neale, & Winfrey, 2004; Gutkin & Curtis; Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000; Zins & Erchul, 2002). Another goal is the improved functioning of consultees in effectively

responding to client problems and preventing comparable problems in the future (Gutkin & Curtis; Meyers et al., 2004). The consultant-consultee relationship is another element of consultation. During the course of consultation, professionals voluntarily agree to engage in the process, and thereby build mutual working relationships that influence and mediate the efficacy of consultation services. Consultants are expected to encourage consultees to be active participants in the process (Erchul & Myers, 1996; Gutkin & Curtis; Schiappa, Beaulieu, Wilczenski, & Bontrager, 2000; Zins & Erchul, 2002).

Levels of Consultation

Consultation can be focused at an individual, group, and systems level. The individual level of consultation is primarily client-centered, and involves addressing the needs of a specific student (Bramlett et al., 2002; Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000). In regards to individual student needs, academic concerns are the most common referral reasons for school psychologist consultation (Bramlett et al.). Concerns around task completion and motivation, behaviour, school refusal, and violence are also regular focuses for consultation. Mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts are among the least common referrals (Bramlett et al.). School psychologists may also participate in program planning, provide teacher assistance, and facilitate referrals to outside agencies as a part of student-centered consultation.

Another level of consultation involves addressing the needs of a small or large group (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000). Goals for consultation at a group-level may involve enhanced student performance or well-being along with improved social or behavioural functioning. Consultation with a small or large group target can be particularly effective in school settings, given that school psychologists can

engage in consultative efforts within a group of same-aged peers, a classroom, or even within a specific grade level (Gutkin & Curtis). Consultation aimed at specific groups can involve the development, implementation, and evaluation of prevention programs, awareness programs, and academic programs. For example, school psychologists may support teachers and school administrators with the implementation of social skills programs such as problem-solving and anger management training, awareness programs for bullies and bullying victims, or self-advocacy groups aimed at learning disabled students (Macklem & Kalinsky; Sladeczek et al., 2003).

A third level of consultation is district or system-wide consultation (Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000). At times, consultation requires expansion to involve large groups of consultees that comprise an entire school district or student services system. The organizational model of consultation, which is discussed in more detail below, addresses concerns that exist at a systems level. This focus of consultation includes evaluating systems-wide processes and programs, introducing prevention programs, implementing awareness programs, addressing safety issues, putting remedial interventions into practice, parent outreach programs, networking, and advocacy (Macklem & Kalinsky).

Models of Consultation

While there are several approaches to consultation, four models are most often discussed in the literature: mental health, organizational and systems consultation, problem-solving, and ecobehavioural (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000; Zins & Erchul, 2002). The models differ in the roles and relationships of consultants and consultees, as well as the implementation of consultative interventions.

Nevertheless, the models have more commonalities than differences and there is a consensus regarding the core components of the consultative process (Zins & Erchul).

Mental Health Consultation Model

One of the earliest models of consultation is mental health consultation, which was formulated by Caplan (Caplan & Caplan, 1993; Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). In the past, it was the standard for all consultation models. According to Caplan, consultation can be defined as a process of interaction between two professionals, the consultant as a specialist, and the consultee, who asks for help in solving a problem that is within the consultant's scope of competence (Caplan & Caplan). Important aspects of Caplan's model are that the consultee may choose to accept or reject the consultant's recommendations, and that the consultee ultimately accepts professional responsibility for the client (Sladeczek et al., 2003). Caplan also suggested that the relationship between the consultant and consultee is advantageous yet, openly hierarchical, given that the consultant has the power associated with being a specialist. Caplan describes four overlapping types of mental health consultation: client-centred case consultation, program-centred administrative consultation, consultee-centred case consultation, and finally, consultee-centered administrative consultation (Caplan & Caplan; Knotek, Kaniuka, & Ellingsen, 2008; Sladeczek et al.). The four approaches differ in terms of the consultation goals (prevention, remediation) and the consultation focus (individuals or programs) (Gutkin & Curtis).

In client-centered case consultation, the ultimate goal is to help the consultee bring about positive changes within the client (Sladeczek et al., 2003). Program-centered administrative consultation involves the consultant working with a group of consultees as

a way to assist with the prevention, management, or treatment of individuals who have mental health issues (Sladeczek et al.). In consultee-centred case consultation, the consultant's primary responsibility is to identify the consultee's professional limitations, address a lack of understanding with reference to the client's problems, improve the consultee's skills and functioning, support the consultee, and help him or her build confidence and self-esteem (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Sladeczek et al.). The consultant establishes why the consultee is having difficulties with a case and helps resolve those difficulties so the consultee can see to the client's problem independently. This may require the consultee to reframe former conceptualizations of the problem (Knotek et al., 2008). Ideally, the consultee is better equipped to provide treatment, which in turn, results in some improvement in the client (Meyers, 1995). While the betterment of a single client is a positive result, the primary goal of consultee-centred consultation is to benefit all similar clients in the future (Gutkin & Curtis). Finally, consultee-centered administrative consultation targets changes at a systems or administrative level, with the consultant assisting the consultee in managing program goals and effectively coping with collegial issues (Sladeczek et al.).

Problem-Solving Model of Consultation

Consultation is frequently conceptualized as a problem-solving process. When the focus of consultation is on a specific problem, a consultant may be asked to answer questions, share an opinion, or give advice about coping with or remediating a problem (Scholten, 2003). Problem-solving consultation is also referred to as behavioural consultation (Feldman & Kratochwill, 2003). However, it can address the a wide range of problems that students experience (academic difficulties, behavioural problems, social

concerns) (Sladeczek et al., 2003). Some advantages to school-based problem solving consultation have been identified in the literature (Feldman & Kratochwill). For example, it has the potential to be used preventatively. Research has shown that services aimed at larger populations can have greater impact than selected interventions aimed at single students (Frank & Kratochwill, 2008). Problem-solving consultation also has the potential to educate and support general educators. For example, school psychologists can enable teachers and other school personnel to implement a variety of academic and behavioural interventions to address the needs of students. Another advantage to problem-solving consultation is that it promotes a team approach and cooperative problem solving, and takes into consideration the unique experiences and perspectives of team members. Ideally team members share information and use their combined knowledge to serve students more effectively than a single team member would be able to independently (Feldman & Kratochwill).

Frank and Kratochwill (2008) have identified essential stages to problem-solving focused consultation. First, relationship building between the consultant and consultee is essential. Strategies to develop trust and respect include clarifying expectations, sharing valuable information, and appreciating the perspectives of all team members. Next, consultants and consultees identify the problem or target behaviour for example, in observable and measurable terms. A consequent problem analysis or a functional behavioural assessment is the third stage to problem-solving consultation. In the final two stages, school psychologists assist in the implementation, and evaluation, of an intervention (Frank & Kratochwill).

Organizational and Systems Model of Consultation

In organizational consultation, the client is typically a group within an organizational system or an entire organization itself (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000). Goals within the model are to enhance student performance or well-being along with improved interpersonal functioning in the organization (Kerwin, 1995). Organizational and system-wide change can be particularly effective in school settings, given that school psychologists can engage in consultative efforts at the classroom, grade, school, or district level (Gutkin & Curtis). Organizational consultation at a school-level can involve the development, implementation, and evaluation of: system-wide programs, prevention programs, awareness programs, and academic programs (Macklem & Kalinsky). The school psychologist may act as a mentor, trainer, supervisor, or specialist for the school or district. A fundamental assumption of school-based organizational consultation is that children are more likely to have healthy psychological and educational experiences when the context includes a healthy organizational system. Program evaluation, leadership, problem-solving and school-community relations are just a few issues that can be addressed by organizational and systems consultation (Gutkin & Curtis; Macklem & Kalinsky).

Ecobehavioural Model of Consultation

Ecobehavioural consultation emerged by combining aspects of earlier models of consultation (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). In the 1980's problem-solving consultation and behavioural consultation were two single models. In 1990, an integration of problem-solving and behavioural consultation was introduced as ecological consultation. Finally, the model was given the new title of ecobehavioural consultation, which integrated

behavioural and problem-solving approaches with more consideration for environmental events surrounding the problem (Gutkin, 1993; Gutkin & Curtis). The ecological perspective allows for a wider conceptualization of the environmental variables. In addition to the antecedents and consequences of behaviour, an ecological approach considers other distal variables, such as setting events. Distal variables, along with antecedents and consequences of the behaviour, are complex interconnected components of a student's school environment. Distal variables may include: teachers, parents, parent-child relationships, teacher-student relationships, school administration and leadership styles, district administration or leadership styles, and any or all interactions between the variables (Gutkin; Lopez & Nastasi, 2008).

In ecobehavioural consultation, the consultant and consultee work collaboratively to identify the causes of a client's problem and prevent, improve, or resolve the problem through the development of interventions specific to the client (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Lopez & Nastasi, 2008). School psychologists who follow this model typically consult around academic or behavioural difficulties that involve problem interactions among students, parents, teachers, school administrators and other persons at school, home, or community agencies. The consultant guides the consultee through a process of problem-solving as a way of developing effective interventions. The target problems or problem behaviours need to be clearly defined. Should there be multiple difficulties, the overall problem is broken down into components, which are then ranked in order of importance to determine the target (Gutkin & Curtis).

For the purposes of this thesis, the ecobehavioural model of consultation was adopted. This model focuses on collaborative partnerships, where consultants and consultees engage in a problem-solving process together, and share the responsibility for implementing interventions that support student success (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999). Therefore, consultation will be defined as a method of providing psychological and educational services that is oriented towards prevention and remediation. Consultants and consultees build cooperative partnerships, for the purpose of exchanging knowledge. It is a mutual problem-solving process that is collaborative, reciprocal, and systematic, and works towards the improvement of individual students' well-being and performance.

Shift from Consultation to Collaboration

In 1996, Erchul and Myers identified a number of what they saw as misguided assumptions about school-based consultation, and suggested that a traditional model of consultation may not be appropriate for use in school settings. They noted that Caplan's mental health model of consultation was intended for use by external consultants with extensive education and training. A clear distinction between school psychologists and the specialized consultants for whom Caplan intended the mental health model, is that school psychologists share the responsibility of students' well-being, while external consultants are ultimately free of responsibility for client outcomes (Erchul & Myers). Caplan's model also characterized consultation as a voluntary process for consultants and consultees (Caplan & Caplan, 1993). Erchul and Myers (1996) noted that teachers, as consultees, may be required by school administration to seek and accept recommendations made by the school psychologist so that it is not voluntary. In Caplan's model, treatment integrity relies on a consultee's freedom to accept or reject

recommendations. A collaboration model, whereby both the consultant and consultee mutually agree on the best form of intervention and work together to ensure that it is manageable and practical for a school setting, would balance out the lack of freedom (Erchul & Myers). Caplan's model also suggested that the consultant – consultee relationship is mutually advantageous yet, clearly hierarchical (Caplan & Caplan). Effective collaborative relationships on the other hand, are characterized by shared concerns of like-minded individuals who have distinct perspectives (Walther-Thomas et al., 1999). At times, school psychologists may be viewed by others as a school-based expert, and therefore teachers, as consultees, may not feel as though they are equal parties in the consultation process. Therefore, it is recommended that school psychologists openly acknowledge the differences in knowledge and skills that exist between themselves and teachers, as consultees, and encourage teachers to assert themselves as different, yet equal, partners in the collaborative problem-solving process (Erchul & Myers; Schiappa et al., 2000).

Collaborative Consultation Model

A collaborative approach to consultation can be an effective method of providing consultation services to schools, and often leads to successful intervention outcomes and increased productivity in schools (Sladeczek et al., 2003; Walther-Thomas et al., 1999). A collaborative consultation model is based on the premise of an egalitarian relationship between co-collaborators, rather than a hierarchical one (Greenough, Schwean, & Saklofske, 1993). The core elements of collaborative consultation are mutuality and reciprocity. With respect to mutuality, co-collaborators share ownership of the process. In regards to reciprocity, co-collaborators have equal access to information and equal

opportunities to participate in problem identification, decision making, and outcomes. Collaborative relationships within this model are characterized by mutual trust and open communication, mutual approaches toward identifying the problem, bringing together resources to select problem-solving strategies, and shared responsibility in the implementation and evaluation of programs or interventions. Within a collaborative consultation model, there is improved participation of teachers, families, and agencies outside the school system (Greenough et al.).

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

According to a study by Ouellette, Briscoe, and Tyson (2004), there is a strong interest in enhancing family-school and community partnerships among key stakeholders such as parents, school representatives and service providers. Power and others suggest that a coordinated and integrated effort toward treatment or intervention by professionals from different systems of care is preferred over a more fragmented delivery of services by an array of providers (Bray & Rogers, 1995; Power). In order to appropriately address the mental health needs of children, professionals require a comprehensive understanding of the child's functioning in various contexts (Helge, 1985; Power, 2003). School psychologists are encouraged to include family and community members in the collaborative process because this establishes a shared sense of responsibility for the mental health needs of their students (Hargrove & Keller, 1997; Power). Interprofessional collaboration is very important when access to community resources is limited, which is the case in rural settings (D'Amour, Ferrada-Videla, Rodriquez, & Beaulieu, 2005; Hughes & Clark, 1981).

Barriers to Consultation and Collaboration

A number of barriers to consultation and collaboration have been identified in the literature, including: an emphasis on completing psycho-educational assessments, heavy caseloads, a lack of psychologists, a lack of support from an administrative level, a lack of teacher support, and a lack of time for consultation (French & Mureika, 2002; Helge, 1985; Murray, 2007; Wilczynski et al., 2000).

French and Mureika (2002) suggest that in older models of school psychology, there was a strong emphasis on the need for psycho-educational assessments as a means of determining appropriate placement and programming. The traditional practice of "refer, test, place" is time-consuming, serves few students, and often results in long waitlists for service, leaving many students' needs unaddressed (French & Mureika). Despite reports from school psychologists who wish to spend more time engaging in consultation, and less time completing psycho-educational assessments, the pressure to assess students remains a challenge to effective consultation (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Murray, 2007; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Wilczynski et al., 2000).

Having to cope with heavy caseloads has been identified in the literature as a frequent barrier to consultation (Helge, 1985; McLeskey et al., 1988; Murray, 2007; Wilczynski et al., 2000). Murray determined that heavy caseloads, along with focusing on psycho-educational assessments, were the two more significant barriers to consultation in the practice of Nova Scotia participants. Often, the high expectations regarding the completion of psycho-educational assessments actually contribute to the heavy caseloads that school psychologists typically face (French & Mureika, 2002).

A lack of psychologists and their resultant limited visibility, particularly when servicing too many schools, is also a challenge to the practice of consultation. School psychologists have identified servicing too many schools as being a frequent barrier to consultation. Having a limited number of school psychologists often results in servicing too many schools, and in turn contributes to the reduced visibility of school psychologists. Research indicates that teachers tend to be more likely to consult with school psychologists who are a common presence in their schools (Murray, 2007; Gonzalez, 2004).

Another obstacle to the practice of consultation is an absence of administrative support (Wilczynski et al., 2000). A study that surveyed 355 National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members found that nearly 27% of respondents identified a lack of administrator support as a barrier to consultation. One example of limited support from an administrative level that affects consultation is when school psychologists are often not invited by school administrators or supervisors to participate in school or district meetings (French & Mureika, 2002).

A lack of teacher support for the consultation process also has the potential to negatively impact consultation in school-settings (Murray, 2007; Wilczynski et al., 2000). More than half of the school psychologists who participated in study by Murray indicated that a lack interest on the part of other professionals was sometimes a barrier to consultation. Due to time constraints, teachers may limit the extent of their involvement in consultation and collaboration. Given that collaboration is often more time consuming than a prescriptive approach to consultation, teachers may actually prefer to receive

advice or specific recommendations from school psychologists, rather than engage in a collaborative problem-solving process (Zins & Erchul, 1996).

Given the limited number of psychologists in the schools, heavy caseloads, and high expectations regarding the completion of psycho-educational assessments, school psychologists often find that there is a lack of time for consultation in their practice (French & Mureika, 2002; Helge, 1985; McLeskey et al., 1988; Wilczynski et al., 2000). Not only does a lack of time create challenges for consultation between school-based personnel, time-constraints have been identified as a major barrier to developing partnerships between school, families, and community agencies as well (Ouellette et. al., 2004).

Facilitators of Consultation and Collaboration

A number of factors that facilitate consultation and collaboration have been identified in the literature. They include: a team approach that includes pre-planned team meetings, support and commitment from school administrators and teachers, time allotments for consultation within daily schedules, and clear communication (Arredondo et. al, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005; Erchul & Myers, 1996; Glenn & Randall, 1994; Gonzalez et al., 2004; Lewis & Newcomer, 2002; Murray, 2007; Safran, 1991; Walther-Thomas et al., 1999; Wilczynski et al., 2000).

Having school-based teams, along with regularly scheduled team meetings, are two of the most important factors to consultation. A number of authors suggest that effective collaboration occurs with a team approach, because regularly scheduled meetings provide opportunities for team members to share their respective concerns, while at the same time work collaboratively with others to solve a problem (Arredondo

et. al, 2004; D'Amour et al., 2005; Glenn & Randall, 1994; Lewis & Newcomer, 2002; Murray, 2007; Walther-Thomas et al., 1999; Wilczynski et al., 2000). Sharing different perspectives, knowledge, and intervention strategies facilitates the development of comprehensive solutions to problems. In addition, treatment or intervention plans that are developed and implemented collaboratively are more likely to be successful, given the extensive support and commitment of all the team members (Erchul & Myers, 1996; Lewis & Newcomer; Walther-Thomas et al.).

Support from key stakeholders, such as school administrators and teachers, who are willing to engage in consultation, also helps to facilitate consultation and collaboration in schools (Glenn & Randall, 1994; Murray, 2007; Wilczynski et al., 2000). Some authors propose that the willingness of key stakeholders to engage in consultation has great potential to positively or negatively affect the effectiveness of collaborative efforts (D'Amour et al., 2005; Erchul & Myers, 1996; Glenn & Randall; Safran, 1991).

The literature on consultation suggests that it is important to have allotments of time specifically for consultation within school psychologists' daily schedules (Glenn & Randall, 1994; Walther-Thomas et al., 1999; Wilczynski et al., 2000). In a study by Murray (2007), most school psychologists who participated ranked time allocated in their daily schedule for consultation as a facilitating factor. Participants further emphasized the importance of having student service supervisors who provided school psychologists with the freedom to have flexible schedules that allocate time for consultation and collaboration.

Clear communication between co-collaborators is also important. Safran (1991) reviewed the literature on consultation and collaboration in school settings, and identified communication as a key component. While a knowledge base of the subject matter for collaboration is important, an understanding of how to collaborate appropriately and a mutual respect for all individuals involved is equally essential. Interpersonal communication skills are necessary for mutual exchanges of information and shared responsibility among team members (Safran).

Strategies specifically for collaborating in school settings were identified by Walther-Thomas et al. (1999). They are: building administrative support, adequate professional development, staff commitment, manageable professional schedules, and scheduling common planning time. Administrative support at the school-level ensures commitment and support for new programs, the provision of necessary resources, and enables teams to work more efficiently. Support from district administrators can facilitate communication between schools and the community, promotes cooperation and collaboration between and within schools, and ensures careful consideration of proposed initiatives before they are implemented. Adequate professional development is an essential means of preparing school members for new initiatives and the change in roles and responsibilities that might accompany them. The willingness of staff to work with others over time is a key component to effective collaboration in schools, and results in positive working relationships, an appreciation for the potential contributions of each individual, and recognition of the benefits of collaboration. Finally, manageable schedules and planned meeting times ensures that students' needs are being appropriately

addressed by collaborators who have had the time and opportunity to work together towards common goals (Walther-Thomas et al.).

The New Brunswick Model of Consultation

According to the *Guidelines for Professional Practice for School Psychologists,* the traditional mandate of school psychologists working in the New Brunswick school system was to address the needs of learning-disabled students, estimated to be about five percent of the total student population (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2001). The proclamation of the Educational Act in 1997 introduced inclusionary practices in the schools, and resulted in an increase in the population of students who required school psychology services, including students with cognitive challenges, behavioural and emotional disorders, impulse control problems, and the full spectrum of pervasive developmental disorders. As school psychologists' responsibilities broadened, their role had to change in order to meet the diverse needs of students. The role of school psychologists shifted from the traditional responsibilities of assessment to being involved in prevention and consultation, which allowed them to apply the full range of knowledge and skills in their practice (New Brunswick Department of Education).

In 2004, the New Brunswick Department of Education developed *Guidelines for Referral for School Psychological Consultation*, which stipulates that the entry point to any service provided by school psychologists is a referral for consultation. The first step in the referral process is a teacher-centered instructional consultation, which may include: classroom observations, teacher and para-professional coaching, staff in-servicing, or discussion with the teacher, the school-based team, and others as required. The second step in the referral process is a student-centered consultation, which requires a written

referral and informed parental consent, and must follow a consultation with the school psychologist either directly, or at a school-based team meeting (New Brunswick Department of Education, 2004). Within this framework, no psychological services or intervention take place prior to consultation, and decisions regarding psycho-educational or behavioural assessments rest with the school psychologist. Regularly scheduled school-based team meetings provide repeated opportunities for school psychologists and other school personnel to gather and collaborate, and may include prioritizing the school's needs, discussing student cases, and determining a course of action or intervention for the students who are in need of service (New Brunswick Department of Education).

Canadian Psychological Association Guidelines

In 2007, the Canadian Psychological Association's (CPA) Section of Psychologists in Education adopted *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Canada,* which was based on the New Brunswick Department of Education's 2001 document *Guidelines for Professional Practice for School Psychology*. In the CPA's guidelines, there is significant emphasis on collaboration among school psychologists, teachers, and other mental health professionals, as well as consultation with community stakeholders in education, such as medical practitioners and professionals who are employed by government and service agencies. Within the guidelines, it is recommended that schools adopt a service-delivery model that requires an initial consultation with the school psychologist prior to referrals for psycho-educational or behavioural assessment (Canadian Psychological Association, 2007).

The CPA document (2007) outlines five levels of intervention for school psychologists. The first is student-focused indirect intervention and involves consultation, program planning, parent collaboration, goal setting, teacher assistance, interagency networking, and the facilitation of referrals. The second level of intervention is student-focused direct intervention, that is, individual psychological assessment, individual therapy, or group behaviour skills development. The third level of intervention is school-wide intervention, which is largely collaborative and consultative in nature, involving activities such as liaison, collaboration, in-service education, prevention, consultation, best practices, planning, and teaching. The fourth level of intervention is district/system-wide intervention and consists of a number of consultation activities, such as in-service education, outreach, and networking. Other aspects of district/system-wide intervention can include: screening, evaluation, intervention programs, and advocacy. The final level of intervention is research. School psychologists are responsible for keeping their knowledge up to date, and the research literature should guide their daily practice. These guidelines emphasise consultation and collaboration activities throughout all five levels of intervention (Canadian Psychological Association).

Rural psychology in Canada

According to Statistics Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada researchers, "rural and small town" (RST) refers to individuals who reside in towns or municipalities that are located outside the main commuting zone of larger urban centres with a population of 10,000 or more residents (du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2001). Rural and remote regions occupy more than 90 percent of Canada's land mass (McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002). In 2001, over 30 percent of Canada's population

lived in predominantly rural regions, amounting to more than nine million Canadians (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), 2002). More than half of the populations of five Canadian provinces - Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan - as well as Nunavut, Yukon, and Northwest Territories - live in predominantly rural areas (AAFC, 2002).

Psychological services are much less available to rural Canadians in every province (Bazana, 1999; Hunsley, Lee, & Aubry, 1999; McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002). For example, in 1999 in Saskatchewan, there was only one psychologist for the 428,000 rural residents of the province (Bazana). According to national statistics, there is, on average, one registered psychologist for every 9,619 residents in rural Canada, compared to one registered psychologist for every 2,195 residents in urban Canada (McIlwraith & Dyck). The lack of availability of psychological services in rural areas likely accounts for, at least in part, the lower percentage of rural Canadians who use psychological services. Only one percent of rural Canadians have consulted a psychologist, compared to three percent of urban and suburban Canadians (Hunsley et al.).

Conditions in Rural Settings

The above statistics are disturbing when one considers conditions in many rural regions in North America (McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002). Many rural residents are employed in industries that are economically uncertain and dependent upon factors beyond their control, such as world commodity prices and weather conditions. Sources of rural employment also tends to be in the natural resource or manufacturing industries, which have the most dangerous work conditions, involving increased risk of occupational accidents or injury, increased exposure to toxins, and poor air quality (Beebe-

Frankenberger, 2008; Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; McIlwraith & Dyck). Such uncertainty and danger, combined with the higher rates of unemployment and high poverty levels, all contribute to high rates of stress among rural Canadians and their families (Beebe-Frankenberger; McLeskey et al., 1988; Reschly & Connolly, 1990). Polls and observations have suggested that 52 percent of rural residents experience frequent stress, as opposed to 36 percent of suburban residents and 43 percent of urban residents (Barbopoulos & Clark; McIlwraith & Dyck).

In addition, rural locations in Canada have a disproportionately large number of persons with long-term physical disabilities and psychological needs such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse (McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002). Beebe-Frankenberger (2008) also suggests that children and adolescents in rural settings are equally at risk for substance abuse as their urban peers, and notes there is a sudden increase in rural children who enter school with prenatal exposure to drugs, specifically methamphetamine, and demonstrate academic, social, and behavioural problems. Approximately 65 percent of Canada's Aboriginal people reside in rural areas of the nation (McIlwraith & Dyck). Studies indicate that 84 percent of Aboriginal survey respondents report family violence within their community (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003), and that Aboriginal communities have a higher incidence of suicide, fire, drowning, motor vehicle accidents, substance abuse, and poisoning than the national average (McIlwraith & Dyck).

Rural Culture

Some argue that there is a "rural culture" (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; Fagan & Hughes, 1985). That is, it is posited people who live in rural regions demonstrate a common set of qualities including the values of "volunteerism," an emphasis on

community, close family ties, conservatism, a lack of interest in institutionalized services, and a commitment to tradition. School psychologists who enter into employment positions in rural regions should be aware and informed of the possibility of a "rural culture" (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; Fagan & Hughes, 1985; McLeskey et al., 1988). Sutton and Pearson (2002) conducted interviews with approximately 100 school counsellors who practiced in small towns and rural schools in Maine and upstate New York. Interviewees of this study indicated that they spent considerable amounts of time and energy attempting to learn and comprehend the culture of the community (Sutton & Pearson, 2002).

On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind the considerable variance in rural towns (Beebe-Frankenberger, 2008; Sutton & Pearson, 2002). Rousseau (1995; as cited in LeDuc, 1997) concluded that "rural" applies to a broad range of communities, including those that are agricultural, industrial, poor, and prosperous. It is impossible to select any one feature that captures the basic nature of rurality. The specific traits of a rural town will differ as a function of the town's geographic location, history, political organization, and economic activity (Sutton & Pearson, 2002). Therefore, it is recommended that psychologists aim to understand the unique characteristics of the specific area in which they are working, rather than form general opinions about a "rural culture" (Beebe-Frankenberger).

Differences in Rural and Urban Consultation

Some researchers have found that rural and urban school psychologists tend to spend similar amounts of time engaging in consultation (Murray, 2007; Hughes & Clark, 1981). There is also some evidence that the practice of school psychology and the role of

consultation are significantly different in rural settings and urban or suburban settings (Curtis et al., 2002). A US study determined that rural school psychologists served significantly more students through follow-up assessments and significantly fewer students through consultation than their urban and suburban peers (Curtis et al.). A more recent Canadian study Murray (2007) found that participating school psychologists who worked in urban areas of Nova Scotia were significantly more likely to provide specialized knowledge to family doctors. Murray also found that participants who worked in an exclusively rural setting or a combined rural and urban setting were significantly more likely to provide specialized knowledge to social workers. These findings may be due to an increased accessibility of external agency professionals to school psychologists who work in urban settings. In the case of rural school psychologists, professional isolation may reduce the accessibility of other agencies (Murray). School psychologists who practice in both urban and rural settings have indicated that developing ideal roles would require a change in the amount of time devoted to each single professional responsibility. Specifically, school psychologists have indicated that a reduction in assessment time, an increase in time devoted to putting interventions in place, and time and opportunities for consultation would be a move toward the ideal (Curtis et al.).

Characteristics of Rural School Psychologists

From a study that surveyed 1,748 National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members in the United States, 28.8% of the randomly selected participants indicated that they practice in a rural setting, a slight increase from a 1999 survey, which found that about 25% of participants practice in rural settings (Curtis, et al., 1999; Curtis

et al., 2008). There is some evidence to show that, when compared to urban school psychologists, those who practice in rural regions tend to be slightly younger, have less training, and are less experienced (Helge, 1985; Kramer & Peters, 1985). Others have also found that school psychologists who practice in rural settings are less likely to be licensed or registered than school psychologists who practice in non-rural regions, and that more carry the title of psychometrist than psychologist. Some researchers conclude that rural school psychologists comprise a group of new professionals who would most need and benefit from consultation and professional support (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; Curtis et al., 2002; Kramer & Peters, 1985).

Challenges of Rural School Psychology Service Delivery

In Canada, rural Manitobans have reported too few school psychologists as one concern regarding the lack of psychological services available to them (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002). While having too few psychologists is the primary challenge in the practice of rural school psychology in Canada, there are a number of additional challenges. This section outlines them. It is important to note that this section includes many outdated citations and thus it is difficult to know whether the same conditions persist.

Emphasis on Generalist Practice

Since there is often a lack of specialized mental health services in rural communities, psychologists in rural settings are often under pressure to be generalists and much less likely than their urban counterparts to have a specialized role. Often rural school psychologists do not have the option of referring cases to more appropriate professionals. As a result, they must expand their practice into more comprehensive

services in order to serve students appropriately and be more functional in rural schools (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; Fagan & Hughes, 1985; McIlwraith & Dyck, 2002; McLeskey et al., 1986; Reschly and Connolly, 1990; Sutton & Pearson, 2002).

Travel

School psychologists in all settings are required to travel to and from the different schools to which they are assigned. Rural psychologists often serve schools that are scattered across vast geographic areas, along many kilometres of secondary roads in varying conditions, while urban school psychologists typically serve schools that are close in location (McLeskey et al., 1988). Weather concerns can also heighten difficulties in travelling to and from different schools, with heavy snowfalls, freezing rain, and high winds being common in many regions (McLeskey et al.). The time spent travelling by rural school psychologists can be substantial, and takes away from the direct service of students.

Language

In addition to differences in social and cultural perspectives, dialect or primary language barriers may also exist between a rural school psychologist and his or her students and families (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; McLeskey et al., 1988). As a result, the quality of interaction between the psychologist and others may be compromised (Helge, 1985). Language barriers also present as challenges for urban school psychologists. Interpreters and bilingual practitioners are far less available in rural than urban settings (McLeskey et al.). English and French are New Brunswick's two official languages, and as in any other area, there is the possibility of language barriers to service delivery and to consultation. According to the 2006 Census of Population from Statistics

Canada, of the nearly 720,000 people who live in New Brunswick (NB), about 463,000 are English speakers, approximately 233,000 are French speakers, and about 18,000 speak other languages. More than 17,500 NB residents identify themselves as Aboriginal, of whom 3,000 speak an Aboriginal language (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Resistance to Change

In two studies, rural school psychologists have commented that residents of rural communities tend to be resistant to new concepts and suspicious of the psycho-educational process (McLeskey et al., 1988; Sutton & Pearson, 2002).

Caseload

Rural psychologists often have heavy caseloads (McLeskey et al., 1988). Rural school psychologists who participated in one study ranked a heavy caseload as one of two top problems that significantly influence the delivery of psychological service to students who live and go to school in rural settings (McLeskey et al., 1986).

Funding

According to Benson (1985), rural school districts tend to be lowest in terms of financial support and resources, and sometimes face insufficient funding for educational systems (Beebe-Frankenberger, 2008; McLeskey et al., 1988). Furthermore, funding shortages have slowed down and in some cases, halted the introduction of advanced telecommunications technology to many rural communities (Latham & Burnham, 1985). Funding also has a tremendous influence on the proportion of time a school psychologist spends on work-related activities such as direct service, interpretation and report writing, consultation, and professional development (Curtis et al., 1999).

Professional Isolation

Two factors that are specific to rural settings contribute to professional isolation. First, it may be difficult to feel at home in any particular place if required to spend a significant amount of time travelling to and from several different schools (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; McLeskey et al., 1988). Second, given the emphasis on generalist practices, rural school psychologists often work with a diverse array of rural clients, which is further complicated by having few colleagues to consult regarding unique cases (Barbopoulos & Clark).

Limited Opportunities for Professional Development

Opportunities for learning through professional development and continuing education in rural regions are infrequent (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003; Kramer & Peters, 1985). For rural school psychologists, attending national and provincial conventions, professional development workshops, and observing guest speaker sessions require much travel, additional financial expenses, and time away from the direct service of students (Reschly & Connolly, 1990). Often such activities are considered impractical, given the high needs of their rural population. At the same time, psychologists have an ethical responsibility to keep abreast of new testing instruments, current research, and empirically supported interventions, particularly for issues with which they have limited experience (Barbopoulos & Clark). This can be problematic for rural school psychologists if there are few local opportunities for professional development and continuing education.

Confidentiality and Overlapping Relationships

There are a number of potential ethical dilemmas that rural psychologists may face in their practice. Confidentiality and client privacy in a rural community presents a greater challenge than in an urban community, given the increased likelihood that individuals will know one another (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003). In addition, the ethical guidelines governing psychologists' practice indicates that psychologists should avoid overlapping relationships. Given that rural communities have limited options for shopping, social gatherings, recreational activities, and religious worship, chance encounters between a psychologist and client are inevitable (Barbopoulos & Clark).

Lack of Specialized Services

When urban school psychologists determine a client has needs outside their area of competence, they typically refer the individual to a community agency or another professional who has expertise in that particular area. As previously discussed, this alternative is one that many rural psychologists do not have (McLeskey et al., 1988). Nevertheless, a lack of specialized services does not excuse the rural psychologist from providing adequate and current treatment for every client, regardless of the issue presented or service required (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001). In such circumstances, rural school psychologists will have to pay close attention to their boundaries of competence and try their best to operate within these boundaries.

Because of the challenges associated with rural practice, including an emphasis on generalist practice, limited availability of specialized services, unique ethical dilemmas, and professional isolation, consultation may be even more important to rural school

psychology practice. In-depth consultation is one effective way to deal with diverse cases ethically, and with competence. At times, psychologists ought to consult with other professionals in order to adequately assess and treat clients (Barbopoulos & Clark, 2003). Maintaining established professional links with colleagues from past educational and employment experiences may prove to be a helpful strategy for rural school psychologists who are in need of consultative support (Barbopoulos & Clark). Given that rural regions often have limited access to specialized services and resources, rural school psychologists may have to make special efforts, or at the very least more extensive efforts than urban school psychologists typically would, to develop professional supports in a rural community.

Purpose of Study

Consultation is a critical skill, and has been identified by school psychologists as a professional activity in which they would like to engage more frequently (Gutkin & Curtis, 1999; Wilczynski et al., 2000). At the present time, there are some significant gaps in our knowledge of school psychologists' consultation practices. There is little research about the consultation activities of Canadian school psychologists, particularly those who practice in rural regions. The purpose of this study was to identify the consultation practices of school psychologists who work in rural and urban settings in New Brunswick, and to determine what they perceived as barriers and facilitators to consultation. In determining some of the challenges to consultation that school psychologists face, strategies for successfully addressing and overcoming such barriers may be generated. Similarly, in identifying some of the factors that facilitate consultation

practices, school psychologists might become better equipped to advocate and gain support for the practice of consultation.

CHAPTER II

Method

This study examined the consultation practices of school psychologists who worked in rural and urban areas in New Brunswick (NB). Respondents were asked about their experiences in their roles as consultants and as consultees, and they identified barriers and facilitators to effective consultation.

Participants

Participants were registered psychologists and residents in psychology who worked in schools in New Brunswick, Canada. Participants were contacted by means of an email listserv of New Brunswick school psychologists. At the time of this study, the proportion of NB school psychologists working in either rural, urban, or a combination of the two settings was unknown. However, given the geographic and population characteristics of New Brunswick, school psychologists who work in both rural and urban settings were thought to be relatively common in the province. According to Statistics Canada (2006), there are three cities in New Brunswick with a population greater than 50,000 and seven municipalities that exceed a population of 10,000. These are often within commuting distance to outlying suburban and rural areas. Rural and small town residents comprised nearly one-half (48.9%) of the total New Brunswick population in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Given that some of the school districts comprise both cities and rural communities, it is quite possible for a school psychologist to service schools in both urban and rural areas.

Measures

A survey developed by Murray (2007) for a study of the consultation practices of Nova Scotia school psychologists was the measure for this study (see Appendix A). This was modified from a survey designed by Craig and Church (2005) to examine the consultation patterns and professional support networks of school psychologists who worked in rural and urban settings across Canada.

In Part One of the survey, participants were asked for demographic information: age, gender, credentials, full or part-time employment, the length of time they had been practicing as a school psychologist, the number of schools they serviced, and whether the schools were in rural or urban areas. Based on the latter category, respondents were assigned to one of three groups: respondents who worked exclusively in rural settings, those who worked exclusively in urban settings, and those who worked in both rural and urban settings. Rural was defined according to the du Plessis et al. (2001) definition of "Rural and Small Town:" towns or municipalities with a population of 10,000 or fewer residents, outside the main commuting zone or larger urban centres.

Part Two of the survey had questions about the consultation practices of school psychologists, as both consultants and consultees. In the survey, school consultation was defined as: "A method of providing psychological and educational services in which consultants and consultees form cooperative partnerships for the purpose of exchanging knowledge. It's a reciprocal, systematic, and collaborative problem-solving process." A consultant was defined as: "A person who has specialized knowledge in a particular area and provides information to the consultee." A consultee was defined as: "A person who seeks assistance or information from a consultant." Participants' experiences as

consultants were examined first. Respondents were asked how often they were sought out for information or specialized knowledge about work related issues, the reasons for which they were consulted, and by whom they were sought. Participants were asked to rate their level of confidence in acting as a consultant for academic, behavioural, family problems, social-emotional, and ethical issues. In addition, they were asked to indicate how important the following were to their practice as consultants: working collaboratively with others to solve problems; providing knowledge and resources regarding behavioural, academic, and social-emotional issues; providing direction and support around ethical and professional issues to other psychologists; and providing direction and support around ethical and professional issues to other professionals.

School psychologists' experiences as consultees were examined next. The questions were similar to those about their role as consultants. Participants were asked how frequently, for what reasons, and from whom they sought assistance or information about work related issues. They were also asked to rate how important the following items were to their practice as consultees: working collaboratively with others to solve problems; gathering knowledge and resources regarding behavioural, academic, and social-emotional issues; receiving direction and support around ethical and professional issues from other psychologists; and receiving direction and support around ethical and professional issues from other professionals.

In addition, participants were asked to rate the extent to which the following were barriers to effective consultation: heavy caseload, servicing too many schools, focus on psycho-educational assessments, travel time, professional isolation, others' lack of awareness of the expertise of psychologists, lack of interest on the part of parents, lack of

interest on the part of other professionals, and them not viewing consultation as an effective use of time. Finally, participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the amount of time they have for consultation, and if they would prefer to spend more, less, or the same amount of time on consultation. They were also asked to list some factors that they believed facilitate effective consultation and collaboration in schools.

Procedure

Following approval from Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board, participants were first contacted using an email listserv of New Brunswick school psychologists, requesting a show of interest in participating in the study. In the email message, potential participants were informed of the focus of the study and provided with examples of survey questions (see Appendix B). They were asked to email the researcher directly if they were interested in participating in the study. Two weeks after the first email message, a reminder message was sent, which included a copy of the first message (see Appendix C). Once psychologists expressed interest in the study, they were asked to provide the researcher with a current mailing address. Then participants were mailed a single package, with the following:

1. Two copies of an Informed Consent form (see Appendix D) which outlined the purpose of the study, instructions regarding participation, ethical considerations, and the contact information of the researcher and her supervisor. On the consent form, psychologists were asked if they wished to receive a copy of the study results. Space was allotted for participants to

include their contact information, in the form of an email address or mailing address, so that they could receive the study results. Participants were instructed to keep one copy of the consent form for their own records and to sign the other and seal it in an accompanying envelope marked consent form;

2. the survey (see Appendix A);
3. an envelope marked consent form; and
4. a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher's supervisor.

Participants were instructed to sign the consent form and seal it in the envelope marked consent form. After completing the survey, they were to return it, along with consent form, in the stamped and addressed envelope. The surveys and sealed consent forms were separated immediately after they were received, and were stored separately in a locked cabinet.

Data Analysis

Due to a low response rate and a high number of respondents in the combined rural-urban group, it was not possible to carry out statistical analyses. Demographic information provided by the participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts. Many of the survey questions were formatted as Likert scales, and responses to those items were also analyzed using descriptive statistics frequency counts. The number of respondents who endorsed each item was examined.

Short-answer responses were transcribed, grouped according to similar content, and then analyzed by the researcher.

CHAPTER III

Results

An overview of the survey results will be presented in this chapter. First, the response rate of the survey will be reported, followed by participants' demographic information, professional credentials and employment characteristics, and responses to questions based on their experiences in the role of consultant and consultee. Finally, participants' ratings of satisfaction with their opportunities for consultation and perceived barriers and facilitators to consultation will be reported.

Response Rate

A total of 33 licensed psychologists and residents in psychology were on the New Brunswick school psychologist email listserv. Both the original email message (see Appendix B) and the reminder email message (see Appendix C) were sent to all 33 persons on the listserv. The researcher received 15 emails (45.5%) from psychologists who expressed an interest in participating in the survey, and those persons were mailed a survey package. A total of fourteen surveys were returned, a 42.4% response rate. All 14 surveys were included in the data analyses.

Demographic Information

Personal Characteristics

Thirteen of the 14 respondents were female. Respondents ranged in age from 26 to over sixty (see Table 1).

Table 1

Personal Characteristics

Age	Number of Respondents
26 – 30	4
31 – 35	0
36 – 40	1
41 – 45	2
46 – 50	1
51 – 55	1
56 – 60	3
60 +	2

Professional Credentials and Employment Characteristics

All of the respondents were employed on a full-time basis. The majority (11) were registered psychologists, and three were residents. While years of experience did vary, more than one third of respondents (5) had 20 or more years of experience (see Table 2). The participants' responses varied greatly in terms of the number of schools they serviced, but 11 out of 14 reported servicing more than ten schools (Table 3).

Table 2

Professional Credentials

Years of Experience	Number of Respondents
0 – 5	3
6 – 10	2
11 – 15	3
16 – 20	1
20 +	5

Table 3

Employment Characteristics

Number of Schools Serviced	Number of Respondents
0 – 5	3
6 – 10	0
11 – 15	3
16 – 20	3
20 – 25	2
25 +	3

Location of Schools Serviced

Three respondents indicated that all their schools were located in rural settings, and one respondent indicated that all her schools were located in an urban setting. The other 10 respondents stated that they serviced schools in both rural and urban settings. Since the majority of respondents practiced in both urban and rural settings, it was not possible to compare rural and urban school psychologists.

Number of Schools Serviced in Urban and Rural Settings

Of the 11 respondents who reported working in urban settings, two did not report the number of schools they served (see Table 4). Of the 13 respondents who stated that they worked in rural settings, one did not report the number of schools she served (see Table 5).

Table 4

Number of Schools Serviced in Urban Settings

Number of Schools Serviced in Urban Settings	Number of Respondents
0 – 5	1
6 – 10	4
11 – 15	0
16 – 20	1
20 – 25	0
25 +	3

n = 9

Table 5

Number of Schools Serviced in Rural Settings

Number of Schools Serviced in Rural Settings	Number of Respondents
0 – 5	4
6 – 10	4
11 – 15	3
16 – 20	0
20 – 25	0
25 +	1

n = 12

School Psychologists as Consultants

How Often School Psychologists Provided Specialized Knowledge to Others

More than three quarters of participants (11) indicated that they acted as a consultant at least once per day. The rest of the respondents (3) reported acting as a consultant between two and three times per week. They were sought out for information or specialized knowledge most often by teachers and school administrators. There was

considerable variability in how often they were consultants to supervisors, parents, and students and there was much less consultation with criminal justice professionals, nurses, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), family physicians, and psychiatrists (see Table 6).

Table 6

How Often School Psychologists Provided Specialized Knowledge to Others

	Never	Less than once per month	Between once per month & once per week	2-3 times per week	Almost everyday
Others	Number of Respondents				
Teachers[b]	0	0	1	6	6
School Administrators[a]	0	0	2	7	5
Supervisors[a]	0	4	4	3	3
Students[a]	0	5	4	2	3
Parents[b]	0	1	6	4	2
Guidance Counsellors[a]	0	0	6	7	1
School Psychologists	0	2	9	2	1
Social Workers[a]	0	6	7	0	1
Educational Assistants[a]	0	3	9	2	0
Other Psychologists[a]	1	7	4	2	0
SLPs[a]	0	11	3	0	0
Occupational Therapists[a]	1	10	3	0	0
Family Physicians[a]	1	10	3	0	0
Psychiatrists[a]	1	11	2	0	0
Nurses[a]	1	12	1	0	0
Criminal Justice Professionals[b]	1	12	0	0	0

[a]n = 14
[b]n = 13

Focus of Consultation

Respondents reported that they consulted most often about behavioural issues. Six indicated providing knowledge or information regarding behavioural issues almost every day, and 12 at least two to three times a week. Participants acted as consultants for academic issues nearly as often, with 10 respondents stating this took place at least two to three times each a week. Eight respondents acted as consultants regarding social-emotional issues two to three times per week and two others consulted for this reason almost every day. Seven participants were sought for knowledge or information regarding family problems at least once per month and four were consulted two to three times per week. Participants acted as consultants for ethical issues least often (see Table 7).

Table 7

Focus of Consultation

	Never	Less than once per month	Between once per month & once per week	2-3 times per week	Almost everyday
Issues			Number of Respondents		
Academic[a]	0	1	3	5	5
Behavioural[a]	0	0	2	6	6
Family Problems[a]	0	3	7	4	0
Social-Emotional[b]	0	0	3	8	2
Ethical[a]	0	8	6	0	0

[a]n = 14
[b]n = 13

Confidence as a Consultant

Participants rated their level of confidence in providing knowledge or sharing information on a number of different issues (see Table 8). All fourteen respondents reported being very confident or confident in acting as a consultant for behavioural issues and nearly as many (13) reported being very confident or confident in acting as a consultant for academic and socio-emotional issues. They were less confident consulting about family problems. While their ratings of confidence in providing information or sharing knowledge regarding ethical issues varied, the majority of participants were confident or very confident in handling ethical issues.

Table 8

Confidence as a Consultant

	Not at all confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident
Issues[a]	Number of Respondents			
Academic	0	1	6	7
Behavioural	0	0	5	9
Family Problems	0	7	6	1
Social-Emotional	0	1	7	6
Ethical	0	4	8	2

[a]n = 14 for each response category

Importance of Different Consultation Practices as a Consultant

Almost all respondents rated four features of consultation as important or very important in their role as consultants: working collaboratively with others to solve problems, providing knowledge and resources regarding behavioural issues, providing knowledge and resources regarding academic issues, and providing knowledge and

resources around socio-emotional issues (see Table 9). Though responses varied more regarding the importance of acting as a consultant for ethical issues, all respondents found it at least somewhat important.

Table 9

Importance of Different Consultation Practices as a Consultant

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Consultation Practices [a]	Number of Respondents			
Working collaboratively with others to solve problems	0	0	3	11
Providing knowledge and resources regarding behavioural issues	0	0	1	13
Providing knowledge and resources regarding academic issues	0	1	4	9
Providing knowledge and resources regarding socio-emotional issues	0	1	2	11
Providing direction and support around ethical issues to other psychologists	0	6	3	5

[a] n = 14 for each response category

School Psychologists as Consultees

How Often School Psychologists Consulted with Others

There was a range of responses in how often participants were consultees: three reported they acted as consultees at least once per day, eight between two and three times per week, two respondents sought assistance two to three times per month, and one less than once per month. Participants consulted most often with teachers, and frequently sought information or assistance from school administration, students, and parents.

Generally, they consulted with supervisors, educational assistants, school psychologists, other psychologists and guidance counsellors between once per month and once per week, and rarely consulted with speech-language pathologists (SLPs), psychiatrists, nurses, occupational therapists, and criminal justice professionals.

Table 10

How Often School Psychologists Consulted with Others

	Never	Less than once per month	Between once per month & once per week	2-3 times per week	Almost everyday
Others			Number of Respondents		
Teachers[a]	0	1	3	5	5
School Administrators[a]	0	0	5	6	3
Supervisors[a]	0	2	7	4	1
Students[b]	0	2	6	2	3
Parents[a]	0	2	7	3	2
Guidance Counsellors[a]	0	2	6	6	0
School Psychologists[a]	0	1	6	6	1
Social Workers[a]	0	3	10	1	0
Educational Assistants[a]	0	4	6	3	1
Other Psychologists[a]	0	6	7	1	0
SLPs[a]	0	10	4	0	0
Occupational Therapists[a]	1	11	2	0	0
Family Physicians[a]	0	9	5	0	0
Psychiatrists[a]	0	10	4	0	0
Nurses[a]	1	12	1	0	0
Criminal Justice Professionals[a]	0	13	1	0	0

[a]n = 14
[b]n = 13

How Often School Psychologists Consulted about Different Issues

More than half of participants sought information about behavioural issues and socio-emotional issues at least two or three times each week, and information about academic issues between once per month and once per week. All but one respondent indicated they sought information or assistance around ethical issues less than once a week (see Table 11).

Table 11

How Often School Psychologists Consulted about Different Issues

	Never	Less than once per month	Between once per month & once per week	2-3 times per week	Almost everyday
Issues			Number of Respondents		
Academic[a]	0	1	7	4	2
Behavioural[a]	0	1	5	5	3
Family Problems[a]	0	2	7	4	1
Social-Emotional[b]	0	0	5	7	1
Ethical[a]	0	8	5	1	0

[a]n = 14
[b]n = 13

Importance of Different Consultation Practices as a Consultee

All the respondents rated seeking information and assistance about behavioural and academic issues as either important or very important, and all but one indicated seeking information and assistance around socio-emotional issues was important or very important. Participants varied in how important they considered consulting with others about ethical issues (see Table 12).

Table 12

Importance of Different Consultation Practices as a Consultee

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Consultation Practices[a]	Number of Respondents			
Working collaboratively with others to solve problems	0	2	2	10
Seeking information or assistance regarding behavioural issues	0	0	5	9
Seeking information or assistance regarding academic issues	0	0	5	9
Seeking information or assistance regarding socio-emotional issues	0	1	4	9
Seeking information or assistance around ethical issues to other psychologists	0	3	4	7

[a]n = 14 for each response category

Satisfaction with Opportunities for Consultation

Half the participants (7) reported being satisfied with the amount of time they had for consultation practices, four were somewhat satisfied, two indicated they were not at all satisfied, and only one respondent was very satisfied. Most respondents (8) indicated they had the right amount of time for consultation, one indicated that she would prefer less time, and the other five respondents would have liked more.

Barriers to Effective Consultation

None of the participants reported that consultation was an ineffective use of their time. Eleven respondents identified heavy caseload as a barrier to consultation, and eight participants saw servicing too many schools as being a frequent barrier. Taking into account the number of schools the participants serviced, seven out of 12 who serviced 10 schools or more indicated that servicing too many schools is a barrier, yet one who serviced 37 schools stated that servicing too many schools was never a barrier to consultation.

Eight participants reported others' lack of awareness of school psychologists' expertise as a barrier to effective consultation. Lack of interest on the part of others was sometimes identified as a barrier. There was variability in participant ratings regarding focus on psycho-educational assessment and travel time. Six out of nine participants who serviced 15 schools or more never saw professional isolation as a barrier, and two respondents who serviced five schools or less identified professional isolation as a barrier (see Table 13).

Table 13

Barriers to Effective Consultation

	Almost never a barrier	Sometimes a barrier	Often a barrier	Almost always a barrier
Barriers[a]	Number of Respondents			
Heavy caseload	1	2	7	4
Servicing too many schools	1	5	3	5
Focus on psycho-educational assessment	6	4	4	0
Travel time	3	6	4	1
Others' lack of awareness of psychologist's expertise	3	3	7	1
Lack of interest on the part of other professionals	3	7	4	0
Lack of interest on the part of parents	0	11	3	0
I do not see consultation as an effective use of my time	14	0	0	0
Professional isolation	6	3	3	2

[a]n = 14 for each response category

Factors that Facilitate Effective Consultation

All participants rated being part of a school site-based team as helping to facilitate consultation. Three other facilitators were also rated highly: established meeting times for consultation with school staff, time allotment in their daily schedule for consultation, and support and commitment from school administration. There was more variability in how they viewed the other two factors (see Table 14).

Table 14

Factors that Facilitate Effective Consultation

	Almost never a facilitator	Sometimes a facilitator	Often a facilitator	Almost always a facilitator
Facilitators[a]	Number of Respondents			
Being part of school site-based team	0	0	6	8
Established meeting times for consultation with school staff	0	2	4	8
Time allotted in my daily schedule for consultation	1	1	5	7
Support and commitment from school administration	0	3	5	6
Support from other psychologists	2	3	7	2
Training and professional development in how to consult effectively	2	4	6	2

[a]n = 14 for each response category

Participants were asked to describe factors that they believe facilitate effective consultation and collaboration in schools. Only two respondents chose not to. The amount they wrote varied from one line to one page. Most wrote briefly, and in point form, so that it was sometimes difficult to interpret what they meant. Responses were examined for common word usage. For example, several participants listed “time” and “support from various others” in their responses. Their comments were analysed by grouping them together based on comparable subject matter. The criterion for identifying a theme was that it was mentioned by a number of the psychologists. Six main themes

were identified: allotted time for consultation and additional psychologist resources, support and "buy-in" for the consultation process, school psychologists' participation in school-based teams, recognition of all participants' skills and knowledge as valuable, development of relationships with team members, and less emphasis on psycho-educational assessments.

Allotted Time for Consultation and Additional Psychologist Resources

Five participants indicated that having time to consult with different groups would help facilitate consultation in schools. Two participants simply noted "time" as a factor, without further elaboration. One reported that prearranged time for school psychologists to consult with one another would be of help. Another respondent reported "time to meet/talk with parents – most of whom work outside the home" would be of benefit. One participant stated that she often has insufficient time to meet with teachers, going on to explain that her discussions with teachers are very rushed because meetings are squeezed in before school or whenever they might have some free time in their teaching schedule.

Three participants reported that, in order to consultation to be effective, there had to be enough psychologists. One participant noted, "Having less schools to service so that I can be a more frequent presence in the schools I serve … and having more psychologists working in schools with me." Another participant stated that the current high psychologist to student ratios make it difficult to consult in schools, while the third indicated smaller caseloads also permits more flexibility in terms of scheduling.

Support and "Buy-in" for the Consultation Process

Six participants indicated that backing and support from persons in supervisory or leadership roles, or from the system itself, is an important factor in effective collaboration and consultation in schools. Three participants identified systemic support (school district, district supervisor, superintendent/director) as being crucial to consultation. Another of the above-mentioned participants, along with three others, identified administrative support as a facilitator. One noted that a "culture and mindset in the schools that consultation is important - often determined by school administration." A total of six participants, some of whom also were mentioned above, stated that "buy-in," or the willingness of a number of stakeholders to engage in the consultation process, is important. Two remarked upon administrative buy-in, noting, "willingness to collaborate from school administration, teachers, etc." Two respondents indicated support from teachers was a facilitating factor, one specified parental support, and another simply mentioned "consultees."

School Psychologists' Participation in School-based Teams

Five participants identified school psychologists' involvement in school-based student service teams and team meetings as an important factor in consultation. One stated that there needs to be regularly scheduled meetings and case conferences that are well structured. She outlined the necessary ingredients. First, a facilitator to chair the meetings is necessary, so that everyone, including parents, has ample time to speak. Second, meeting minutes should be distributed to all participants and reviewed at the next meeting for follow-up, and third, time within the meetings should focus on "constructive suggestions" rather than "complaint(s)." One participant outlined a "team philosophy"

that has been adopted in the district: every school has a student services team and every district has a district student services team. When schools make referrals to school psychology, they are not for "psycho-educational assessment, behavioural assessment, or counselling." Rather, the first step in the referral process is a request for "school psychology consultation." There is no further action until a consultation takes place. According to the respondent, this model has been in place for 10 years and "schools are pleased with the relatively fast response time and the fact that a crisis is responded to very quickly." The respondent went on to say, "there is still a lingering concern over the limited amount of psycho-ed(ucational) assessments completed but most schools understand the trade off needed for consultation."

Recognition of all Participants' Skills and Knowledge as Valuable

Three respondents indicated that in order for consultation to be effective, the skills and knowledge of all participants should be valued. Two identified the professional expertise of teachers and administrators as essential to the consultation process. A third respondent noted that the role of school psychologists is also undervalued by others: "education needs to value the role of outside professionals (people who aren't teachers) in the team approach." She stated that she was often excluded from meetings involving a student on her caseload.

Development of Relationships with Team Members

Being a familiar presence in schools and building working relationships with school staff was also considered important. Two participants indicated that developing relationships with those you work with facilitates effective collaboration in schools. One reported that "developing relationships with teachers and school administrators" was of

particular importance, “so that they begin to see you as a resource.” Another participant noted that school teams are more likely to include school psychologists in meetings when they are familiar to the staff members.

Less Emphasis on Psycho-Educational Assessments

Two respondents identified a decreased focus on conducting psycho-educational assessments as a factor that contributes to effective collaboration in schools, but did not elaborate why this is the case.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

This section will highlight the main findings of this study and discuss the findings as they relate to the existing literature. Since this study employed the same measure used by Murray (2007) to investigate the consultation activities of school psychologists who work in urban and rural regions of Nova Scotia, this section will refer to Murray's study often. Comparisons will be made between the practices of school psychologists in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, bearing in mind the New Brunswick guidelines for professional practice differ from that of Nova Scotia, and strongly promote the practice of consultation. Limitations of the study, implications for school psychologists, and suggestions for future research will also discussed.

Participant Characteristics

All fourteen participants were employed on a full-time basis in New Brunswick schools, most were licensed psychologists, and many were experienced professionals, having practiced for a decade or more. Eleven participants were licensed psychologists. The other three were Residents in Psychology, meaning that they were in their three year supervision period prior to becoming licensed with the College of Psychologists of New Brunswick. Nine participants (64%) had been practicing as a school psychologist for at least eleven years, of which five had been practicing for 20 years or more. The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study indicate that they were a fairly experienced group. In a study by Murray (2007), which examined the consultation practices of Nova Scotia school psychologists, half of the participants were Candidate Registered Psychologists, which is the equivalent of being a Resident in Psychology in

New Brunswick. More than 50% of Murray's participants had five years of experience or less and 92% had been practicing for less than 15 years. That is, the respondents in this study were more experienced practitioners than those in Nova Scotia (Murray), and it is important to note that variations in findings between the two studies may reflect the distinct perspectives of two groups with different levels of experience.

The majority of respondents serviced a very high number of schools: three participants worked in 25 schools or more, eight serviced at least 11 schools, while only three worked in 10 schools or less. When compared geographically, one participant reported they serviced schools in an urban setting exclusively, but did not indicate the number of schools she serviced. Three participants worked in rural areas exclusively, but there was variability in the number of schools they serviced, with two working in 15 schools or more and the other in five schools or less. Among the 10 participants who worked in both rural and urban settings, one participant did not indicate the number of schools she serviced. Three of them serviced 35 schools or more, while the five others serviced between 11 and 25 schools. One participant who worked in both settings did not indicate the number of schools she serviced. Approximately two thirds of the participants in a study by Murray (2007) worked in rural areas exclusively, and nearly half (45%) worked in five schools or less. When compared to the employment characteristics of the Nova Scotia school psychologists who participated in that study, participants in the current study were far more likely to work in both rural and urban areas (71%) and in a significantly higher number of schools, with all but three participants servicing 11 schools or more. Compared to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia has only two cities, and one

municipality that exceeds 10,000. This may account for the higher number of Nova Scotia school psychologists working in rural or urban areas exclusively.

Frequency of Consultation

Most participants regularly engaged in consultation, both as consultants and consultees. They were more likely to act as consultants on a daily basis than as consultees, with 11 consulting every day and the other three at least two to three times per week. This is consistent with the frequency of consultation as reported by participants in Murray (2007). As consultees, only three participants consulted every day. Most (8) sought information or assistance between two to three times per week, one participant sought information or assistance about work-related issues very rarely, less than once per month. Again, these findings are very similar to the findings of Murray. The findings of the present study correspond with the findings of other studies, and suggest that school psychologists engage in consultation more often as consultants than as consultees (Murray), and service a number of students through consultation practices (Corkum et al., 2007; Curtis et al., 2008; Curtis et al., 1999).

With whom do School Psychologists Consult?

In the role of consultant, participants provided information or assistance to teachers and school administrators most often. This is consistent with other findings (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Murray, 2007). As previously mentioned, in New Brunswick, accessing school psychological services first begins with a referral for consultation, and consultation frequently takes place during school-based team meetings. Therefore, it is not surprising that participants consulted primarily with teachers and school administrators, since they are a common presence on site-based teams. As

consultants, they also consulted with supervisors, students, parents, guidance counsellors quite frequently, with many participants consulting with these individuals at least two or three times per week. This is comparable to the findings of earlier research on consultation (Caplan & Caplan, 1993; Costenbader & Swartz; Henning-Stout & Bonner, 1996). Respondents may have consulted with these groups regularly because of their presence in schools or within the school district, which provides them with repeated opportunities to connect with school psychologists.

As consultees, the participants in the current study sought information or assistance, from teachers, school administrators, supervisors, students, parents, guidance counsellors, and other school psychologists most often, with many of them consulting with these individuals at least two or three times per week. Two consulted with students far less often than the others, two consulted with parents far less often, at a rate of less than once per month, and another respondent sought assistance from teachers less than once a month. This is inconsistent with previous research (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Henning-Stout & Bonner, 1996; Murray, 2007), and the frequency of consultation with teachers, parents, and students by other respondents in this study. When asked how often they sought assistance or information, one of the above-mentioned respondents noted, "For parents, students, and educational assistants I answered according to how often I would gather information from these individuals for an assessment. These people wouldn't be considered consultants." Some of the literature suggests a shift from consultation to collaboration in school settings. However, this, and other similar, comments indicates that some school psychologists may view the practice of consultation as a process where experts provide and seek information and assistance from one another,

rather than a process where two or more individuals collaborate as a method of problem solving. Therefore, caution is warranted in assuming that school psychologists, and others, recognize consultation as a collaborative problem-solving process. Some may view consultation as a one-way process where individuals ask experts questions and they in turn, use their knowledge and expertise to answer those questions.

As both consultants and consultees, participants consulted most often with professionals within the school system, specifically teachers and administrators and consulted with professionals outside of the school system far less frequently. This is consistent with the findings of Corkum et al. (2007). It is possible that participants in this study had less interaction with professionals outside the school system, and thus did not have the opportunity to establish working relationships with speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, family physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, and criminal justice professionals. This study's findings suggest that consultation took place primarily at the individual school level and secondarily, at the school system level. Power (2003) suggests that sharing the responsibility for implementing effective interventions between the educational and mental health fields is imperative to meeting needs of children. This, however, requires ongoing collaborative partnerships among practitioners such as school psychologists, community members, and families (Power). This study found that participants had few interactions with mental health professionals outside the school system.

What is the Focus of Consultation?

As both consultants and consultees, respondents focussed on behavioural or academic issues most often. Murray (2007) had similar results. A number of studies have shown that school psychologists spend a considerable percentage of their time on activities related to conducting assessments (Bramlett et. al., 2002; Corkum et al., 2007; Curtis et al., 2008; Curtis et al., 1999; Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008), so it is understandable that they would spend more time consulting about academic and behavioural issues. As consultants and consultees, participants consulted regarding socio-emotional issues nearly as often as they did for academic and behavioural issues, and consulted regarding family problems and ethical issues least often, which again, is consistent with the findings of Murray. The frequency of consultation across all five areas (behavioural issues, academic issues, socio-emotional issues, family problems, and ethical issues) was similar whether they were consultants or consultees. While it is difficult to conclude this with certainty, the practice of consultation among this group may have taken place in a cooperative fashion, characterized by information sharing between school psychologists and others. In 1996, Henning-Stout and Bonner found that the majority of school psychologists prefer to collaborate with others more than exclusively providing information and assistance as a consultant, and that school psychologists engage in a give-and-take process of mutual relationships in order to be effective in their professional role.

Confidence in Sharing Knowledge and Providing Information regarding Professional Issues

Most of the participants in this study reported feeling confident or very confident in their ability to provide information or knowledge for academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional issues. Nearly two-thirds indicated that they felt very confident providing information or knowledge about behavioural issues and one half reported feeling very confident acting as a consultant regarding academic concerns, which is consistent with the findings of others (Bramlett et al., 2002; Murray, 2007). When acting as a consultant about ethical issues, most participants (71%) were confident or very confident, and when consulting about family problems, one-half of respondents were somewhat confident, making it the area in which they were the least confident. All but one of the participants in this study (93%) stated they were very confident or confident when acting as a consultant about socio-emotional issues, which is considerably greater than the 21% of participants in a study by Murray, who reported feeling very confident or confident when consulting about socio-emotional issues.

Importance of Consultation Practices

The majority of school psychologists who participated in this study rated working collaboratively with others to solve problems and providing knowledge and resources regarding behavioural, academic and socio-emotional issues as important or very important consultation practices, regardless of their role as consultant or consultee. These findings are similar to Murray's (2007) study where a sizeable margin of participants also found consultation around these issues important or very important. Most respondents in Murray's study also found providing direction and support, as well as receiving

information and assistance, regarding ethical issues as important or very important. On the other hand, nearly all participants in the present study rated seeking information and assistance around ethical issues as important, but most did not rate providing direction and support around ethical issues as important or very important. Perhaps since nearly 65% of school psychologists who participated in the current study have 11 or more years of experience, they may not see the need for consultation around ethical issues.

Satisfaction with Consultation

Eight respondents (57%) from the present study indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the amount of time they had to spend on consultation, a slightly higher proportion than the 37% of Murray's (2007) participants. Consistent with Murray's remaining findings about satisfaction with consultation, where 10.5% of school psychologists were not at all satisfied with the amount of time they had for consultation activities, two participants (14%) in this study also reported being not at all satisfied. In contrast to prior studies (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Murray) where school psychologists indicated they would like to spend more time on consultation, most of the respondents in the present study felt that they had the right amount of time to spend on consultation, with only five respondents (36%) indicating that they would like more time. This may be because New Brunswick has adopted a model for school psychological services that places a lot of emphasis on consultation.

Barriers to Effective Consultation

Most participants in the present study found heavy caseloads a significant barrier to consultation; this is comparable to the findings of other studies (Helge, 1985; McLeskey et al., 1988; Murray, 2007; Wilczynski et al., 2000). In addition to heavy

caseloads, participants indicated that servicing too many schools and others' lack of awareness of psychologist's expertise were barriers to effective consultation. Servicing too many schools may mean that others are unaware of psychologist's expertise because, as one respondent noted, it is difficult to build relationships with school personnel if you are not a frequent presence in their school. A study by Gonzalez et al. (2004) found school psychologists' availability was the single most influential barrier to consultation between teachers and school psychologists, as teachers were far more likely to consult with school psychologists if they spent a great amount of time in their school. Unlike the findings of others (Costenbader and Swartz, 1992; French & Mureika, 2002; Murray; Wilczynski et al.), participants in this study did not identify focus on psycho-educational assessments a significant barrier to consultation. Again, this may be due to the previously mentioned referral process for psychological services that New Brunswick has adopted. School psychologists in this study were satisfied with the amount of time they had for consultation and do not view an emphasis on completing assessments as a barrier to consultation. This suggests that New Brunswick's policy may have influenced the practice of school psychologists in the province

Factors that Facilitate Effective Consultation

All of the participants in the current study indicated that being part of a school-based team was often or almost always a facilitator to consultation and all but two reported that having established meeting times for consultation with school staff was often or almost always a facilitating factor. This is consistent with other studies (Murray, 2007; Walther-Thomas et al., 1999). Participants in this study also stressed the importance of being a frequent presence in the schools and developing relationships with

school staff. The latter aligns with the findings of Henning-Stout and Bonner (1996). The inclusion of school psychologists on school-based teams and having fewer schools to service may help school members view them as a resource, which could facilitate the growth of key relationships and promote the practice of consultation. Gonzalez et al. (2004) found that teachers were significantly more likely to consult with school psychologists who were visible and accessible in their school.

Consistent with Murray (2007), all but two participants in this study (86%) identified allotments of time for consultation within daily schedules as being a frequent facilitator. Likewise, other studies have suggested that time is a major obstacle to the widespread implementation of consultation in school settings (Costenbader & Swartz, 1992; Wilczynski et al., 2000). Some participants in the present study noted the importance of having a flexible schedule, or the freedom to schedule their workday as needed. Participants in this study also stated that having adequate amounts of time to meet with parents and consult with teachers was key. Earlier studies (Cummings, Harrison, Dawson, Short, Gorin, & Palomares, 2004; Power, 2003) have suggested that enhanced partnerships between schools and students' families help facilitate consultation. Respondents in a recent study indicated that school psychologists can help empower, support and comfort parents, and help parents and schools communicate, which is vital given the importance of parental involvement in consultation (Murray).

Support and commitment from school administration was another key factor, with 79% of the participants indicating it was almost always, or often important to consultation. This is similar to Wilczynski et al. (2000) and Murray (2007), where approximately 87% of participants reported support and commitment from school

administration was a frequent, if not constant, facilitator to consultation and collaboration in schools.

Limitations

The sample size was one of the biggest limitations of this study. Fourteen psychologists volunteered for this study, a 42.4% response rate. Some potential participants may not have subscribed to the listserv, and therefore would have been excluded from the survey. In addition, school psychologists who have a limited interest in consultation may have been less likely to express interest in participating in the study. Uneven sample sizes within the rural group (3), the urban group (1), and the combined group (10), also meant that it was not possible to make comparisons between the three groups.

The survey had some limitations as well. Participants were asked how frequently they engaged in consultation activities and were required to choose between four response options: less than once per month, between once per month and once per week, two to three times per week, or almost every day. Given the sizeable difference between once per month and once per week, some respondents wrote “about once per week” beside the items. Other respondents wrote “never” or “n/a” rather than choosing one of the four options. The categories may have been too broad or too limited, and respondent choices may have been more accurately gauged had the response options been more clearly defined.

Finally, respondents were asked to share their opinion on factors that facilitate consultation and collaboration. The information provided by participants however, was rather limited. Although twelve included written responses, eight of them provided point-

form comments amounting to five lines or less. It is possible that some respondents' restricted their responses out of concern for anonymity, despite the assurance of confidentiality.

Implications

Regardless of the above-mentioned limitations, the findings of the present study have some potential implications for school psychologists and the practice of school psychology. The participant group of New Brunswick school psychologists shared important perspectives and provided valuable information about their consultation practices.

Implications for School Psychologists

The findings of this study suggest that a number of school psychologists in New Brunswick regularly engage in consultation, and more than half were at least somewhat satisfied with the amount of time they had. In order to maximize consultation, participants advocated becoming a part of a school site-based team, attending established team meetings, and having time allotted into daily schedules for consultation. School psychologists who participated in this study also indicated that developing and maintaining positive relationships with school-based team members is important, in order that school psychologists are seen as a resource.

The findings also suggest that some New Brunswick school psychologists face common barriers to consultation, many of which they have little control over, such as heavy caseload and servicing too many schools. There are other areas, however, where they can have the potential to make some changes. For example, they can inform others about their expertise and the diversity of services they are capable of providing. As one

participant noted, schools may come to understand the value of consultation and have less concern over the limited amount of psycho-educational assessments conducted.

Implications for School Districts / System Level

School psychologists in this study indicated that support from school districts and from those in positions of leadership is one of the most important facilitators to effective consultation in the schools. Heavy caseloads, a lack of psychologist resources, and servicing too many schools are some barriers to consultation that New Brunswick school districts may be able to address. Superintendents, supervisors, and school administrators could help support school psychologists by acknowledging these barriers, and by making efforts within their authority to improve them. It might also be helpful for district student services supervisors to allot specific amounts of time for consultation, which will help school psychologists to build collaborative working relationships with team members.

While participants consulted regularly within the school system, they very rarely consulted with professionals from outside agencies. Mutually sharing knowledge and expertise with outside professionals is potentially advantageous to school psychologists. However, they require systemic support from administrators, supervisors, and superintendents, as building these kinds of relationships takes time and effort. Participants in this study identified support from school administrators and district supervisors as important. Therefore, school districts must value the consultation skills that school psychologists have to offer in the same way they do assessment and counselling skills. School administrators, district supervisors, and superintendents could help school psychologists educate others about the advantages of consultation. As one

participant noted, school administrators in particular can support school psychologists by creating a mindset in their schools that consultation is important.

Implications for the Profession of School Psychology

Participants in this study identified others' lack of awareness of school psychologists' expertise and a lack of interest on the part of other professionals as barriers to consultation. While school psychologists may take on the role of educating others about their array of services upon themselves, it may be beneficial for professional organisations to advocate and educate others about the competencies of school psychologists and the value of consultation.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many more areas for continued study on the consultation practices of New Brunswick school psychologists. The examiner received emails expressing an interest in participating in the study from only 42.5% of the school psychology listserv members, so many New Brunswick school psychologists have not been surveyed. Many of the participants in this study were experienced school psychologists, so a survey of those who are relatively new to the field may yield differences in perspective. In addition, the small sample size and group sizes prevented any comparisons between school psychologists who practice in rural, urban, and combined settings. A more in-depth investigation, such as an ethnographic study, or a study that includes face-to-face interviews with school psychologists, may provide far more insight into the consultation practices as they occur in each setting.

It is important for others to continue to investigate the consultation practices of school psychologists who work in rural regions of New Brunswick and other areas. While it was difficult to identify more than a few New Brunswick school psychologists who worked exclusively in rural settings, there are methods of investigation that may provide more information about the consultation practices of school psychologists and how consultation may differ by location. For example, direct, first-hand observations of psychologists as they engage in consultative or collaborative practices in each setting and in-depth interviewing may offer additional information, and therefore allow for comparisons between settings.

The present study investigated the how often, with whom and for what reasons school psychologists consulted, but did not ask participants about the formats used for consultation, for example, face-to-face meetings, conversations via telephone or video conference, or correspondence via mail or email. An investigation into the ways in which school psychologists actually engage in consultation, and which methods they find most productive and efficient, might facilitate future consultation practices.

The effectiveness of consultation in meeting students' needs, bearing in mind the two different approaches, may be worthy of investigation. This could involve comparisons between the effectiveness of consultation when it occurs as a first line of retrieving school psychological services, in a site-based team meeting format, as opposed to self-directed and "as needed" consultation that takes place throughout daily practice. Given the expectation regarding research-based practice in the field of school psychology, studies regarding the most effective methods or approaches to engaging in consultation may be important.

Studies that examine consultation practices of school psychologists who work in other provinces across Canada could help determine whether their consultation practices are similar to the participants of this study. These types of studies could also help identify perceived barriers and facilitators across various locations, and investigate whether school psychologists encounter similar challenges and supports to consultation regardless of geographic location, or if they tend to vary by setting. Identifying barriers to consultation may result in the development of practical approaches to overcome them. Correspondingly, identifying facilitators to consultation may initiate approaches for implementing effective supports into daily practice. For example, if similar challenges and supports are identified across various regions, school psychology associations, organizations, and other systems-level groups may be able to facilitate education and reform around such issues.

Conclusion

The results of this study identified some of the current consultation practices of school psychologists in New Brunswick and outlined a number of factors that may facilitate school-based consultation and collaboration. The study confirmed many findings of other studies: school psychologists who participated in this study viewed consultation as a significant part of their practice, engaged in consultation at the school-level regularly, and consulted with teachers and school administrators most frequently. Unlike other studies, most of the current study's participants were at least somewhat satisfied with the amount of time they currently have for consultation and felt as though they spend the right amount of time consulting with others. A second unique finding of the present study is that, when compared to other studies, respondents considered an

emphasis on completing psycho-educational assessment less of barrier to effective consultation. These differences, as compared to other studies and the study by Murray (2007) in particular, may be related to the differing policies in accessing school psychology services between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This study may have implications for school psychologists because they have the potential to educate others about the diversity of services they are capable of providing and the value of consultation activities. This study may also have implications for school districts in that, school administrators and district leaders have the authority to support and promote school psychologists' consultation practices.

To conclude, I would like to end on a personal note. I have now been working in rural schools for a number of months. My schools have been without consistent school psychology services for many years and at the present time, there are more than 100 students on a waitlist for psycho-educational and behavioural assessment. My schools have become accustomed to a "refer, test, refer, test" approach to accessing school psychology services. I know that it will be impossible to meet the needs of all these students in a timely manner using an approach that focuses on assessment. Consultation, however, is characterized by its potential to reach large numbers of students. Therefore, my colleague and I have started to consult with administrators, speech-language pathologists, and learning centre teachers in order to develop strategies to better manage our heavy caseloads. We would like to introduce early screening practices and research-based pre-referral activities to learning centre and classroom teachers. Our hope is that these students will begin to receive effective supports and interventions sooner than later,

rather than sitting idle waiting for an assessment that unfortunately, may take years to come.

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Appendix A

Survey

Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick

Part I – Demographic Information

1. Currently Employed
Part time _____
Full Time _____

2. Credentials
Candidate Register _____
Registered Psychologist _____

3. How many years have you been practicing as a school psychologist?
0-5 _____
6-10 _____
11-15 _____
16-20 _____
20+ _____

4. Gender
Male _____
Female _____

5. Age

21-25	_____	41-45	_____	60+	_____
26-30	_____	46-50	_____		
31-35	_____	51-55	_____		
36-40	_____	56-60	_____		

6. How many schools do you service?
0-5 _____
6-10 _____
11-15 _____
16-20 _____
21-25 _____
25+ _____

7. How many of the schools that you service are located in:
Urban areas _____
Rural areas or small towns (i.e. populations of fewer than 10, 000)? _____

Part II - Consultation

School Consultation:

- A method of providing psychological and educational services in which consultants and consultees form cooperative partnerships for the purpose of exchanging knowledge. It is a reciprocal, systematic, and collaborative problem-solving process.

- **Consultant** – A person who has specialized knowledge in a particular area and provides information to the consultee.

- **Consultee** - A person who seeks assistance or information from a consultant.

Please answer the following questions in your role as a Consultant:

1. **On average, how often do others seek information or specialized knowledge from you about work related issues?**

   At least once per day _____
   2-3 times per week _____
   At least once per month _____
   2-3 times per month _____
   Less than once per month _____

2. **Please rate how frequently you act as a consultant or provide specialized knowledge to the following:**

	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Parents	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Students	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
School Administrators	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Supervisors	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Teachers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Educational Assistants	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
School Psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Speech-Language Pathologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other Psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Psychiatrists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Family Physicians	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

(2. cont'd)	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Nurses	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Occupational Therapists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Social Workers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Criminal Justice Professionals (i.e. RCMP Officers, Judges, Lawyers etc.)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Guidance Counselors	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

3. Please rate how frequently others seek out your assistance for the following issues:

	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Academic	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Behavioral	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Family Problems	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Social-Emotional	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Ethical	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

4. **Please rate your level of confidence providing information or sharing knowledge on the following issues:**

	Not at all Confident **1**	Somewhat Confident **2**	Confident **3**	Very Confident **4**
Academic	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Behavioral	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Family Problems	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Social-Emotional	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Ethical	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

5. **As a consultant, please rate how important each of the following is to you in your practice as a school psychologist.**

	Not at all Important **1**	Somewhat Important **2**	Important **3**	Very Important **4**
Working collaboratively with others to solve problems	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Providing knowledge and resources regarding behavioral issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Providing knowledge and resources regarding academic issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Providing knowledge and resources regarding social-emotional issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Providing direction and support around ethical and professional issues to other psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Providing direction and support around ethical and professional issues to other professionals. Please indicate which professionals:				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____ _____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Please answer the following questions in your role as a Consultee:

Consultee - A person who seeks assistance or information from a consultant.

6. **How often, on average, do you seek assistance or information from others about work related issues?**

   At least once per day _____
   2-3 times per week _____
   At least once per month _____
   2-3 times per month _____
   Less than once per month _____

7. **In the role of the consultee, please rate how frequently you seek assistance or information from the following:**

	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Parents	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Students	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
School Administrators	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Supervisors	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Teachers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Educational Assistants	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
School Psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Speech-Language Pathologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other Psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Psychiatrists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Family Physicians	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

(7. cont'd)	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Nurses	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Occupational Therapists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Social Workers	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Criminal Justice Professionals (i.e. RCMP Officers, Judges, Lawyers etc.)	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Guidance Counselors	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

8. As a consultee, please rate how frequently you seek information or assistance from others about the following issues:

	Less than once per month **1**	Between once per month & once a week **2**	2-3 times a week **3**	Almost everyday **4**
Academic	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Behavioral	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Family Problems	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Social-Emotional	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Ethical	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

9. As a consultee, how important are the following to you in your practice as a school psychologist.

	Not at all Important **1**	Somewhat Important **2**	Important **3**	Very Important **4**
Working collaboratively with others to solve problems	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Gathering knowledge and resources regarding behavioral issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Gathering knowledge and resources regarding academic issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Gathering knowledge and resources regarding social-emotional issues	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Receiving direction and support around ethical and professional issues from other psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Receiving direction and support around ethical and professional issues from other professionals. Please indicate which professionals:				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____ _____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____ _____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

10. Please rate the extent to which each of the following is a barrier to effective consultation practices:

	Almost Never a Barrier **1**	Sometimes a Barrier **2**	Often a Barrier **3**	Almost Always a Barrier **4**
Heavy caseload	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Servicing too many schools	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Focus on psychoeducational assessments	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Travel time	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Others' lack of awareness of psychologist's expertise	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Lack of interest on the part of other professionals	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

(10. cont'd)	Almost Never a Barrier **1**	Sometimes a Barrier **2**	Often a Barrier **3**	Almost Always a Barrier **4**
Lack of interest on the part of parents	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
I do not see consultation as an effective use of my time	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Professional isolation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Other (Please specify):				
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
_____	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

11. How satisfied are you with the amount of time you have for consultation?

Not at all Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1	2	3	4

12. Please choose one of the following:

_____ I would prefer to spend less time on consultation

_____ I spend the right amount of time on consultation

_____ I would prefer to spend more time on consultation

13. Please rate the extent to which each of the following helps facilitate effective consultation practices:

	Almost Never a Facilitator **1**	Sometimes a Facilitator **2**	Often a Facilitator **3**	Almost Always a Facilitator **4**
Support from other psychologists	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Support and commitment from school administration	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Time allotted in my daily schedule for consultation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Being part of school site-based teams	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Established meeting times for consultation with school staff	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Training and professional development in how to consult effectively	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

14. In your opinion, what are some of the factors that facilitate effective consultation/collaboration in schools?

Thank-you for taking the time to fill out this survey!

Appendix B

Contact and Introduction Letter

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education (School Psychology program) at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. As part of my program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Church. I am inviting you to participate in my study, *Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick*. The purposes of this study are to examine the consultation practices of school psychologists and to see if there are differences in consultation between school psychologists who work in rural areas and those who work in urban areas.

This study involves the completion of a survey that will focus on your consultation activities, both as a consultant and consultee, for instance, who you consult with, the focus of consultation, how often you consult, how important you consider consultation, opportunities for and barriers to consultation, and factors that facilitate effective consultation. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings after the study is completed, one will be sent to you by mail or e-mail.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this e-mail with your mailing address. I will send you the survey and a consent form along with a stamped addressed envelope. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Only researchers involved in this study, Lisa Craig and Elizabeth Church, will have access to the surveys and consent forms, which will be stored in a locked cabinet. After seven years, all printed materials will be shredded. No identifying details of participants will appear in any written materials that will be produced from this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Lisa Craig by e-mail at [redacted] or Dr. Elizabeth Church by phone at 902-457-7621 or by e-mail at elizabeth.church@msvu.ca. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Thank you.

Lisa Craig
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student

Appendix C

Reminder Letter

Two weeks ago, I sent you an e-mail asking if you would like to participate in my study, *Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick*. If you have responded, thank you. If you have not yet responded, and would like to participate in the study, please contact me by e-mail at [redacted] with your mailing address. I have included the original e-mail below, for your reference.

Thank you.

Lisa Craig
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education (School Psychology program) at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. As part of my program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Church. I am inviting you to participate in my study, *Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick*. The purposes of this study are to examine the consultation practices of school psychologists and to see if there are differences in consultation between school psychologists who work in rural areas and those who work in urban areas.

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If you have any questions about this study, please contact Lisa Craig by e-mail at [redacted] or Dr. Elizabeth Church by phone at 902-457-7621 or by e-mail at elizabeth.church@msvu.ca. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Thank you.

Lisa Craig
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student

Appendix D

Free and Informed Consent Form

Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick / Lisa M. Craig

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education (School Psychology program) at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS. As part of my program, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Church. I am inviting you to participate in my study, *Consultation Practices of School Psychologists in New Brunswick*. The purposes of this study are to examine the consultation practices of school psychologists and to see if there are differences in consultation between school psychologists who work in rural areas and those who work in urban areas.

This study involves the completion of a survey that will focus on your consultation activities, both as a consultant and consultee, for instance, who you consult with, the focus of consultation, how often you consult, how important you consider consultation, opportunities for and barriers to consultation, and factors that facilitate effective consultation. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings after the study is completed, please include your address at the end of the consent form, and one will be sent to you by mail or e-mail.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

Only researchers involved in this study will have access to the surveys, which will be stored in a locked cabinet. Consent forms and surveys will be stored separately. After seven years, all printed materials will be shredded. No identifying details about participants will appear in any written materials that will be produced from this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Lisa Craig by e-mail at [redacted], or Dr. Elizabeth Church by phone at 902-457-7621 or by e-mail at elizabeth.church@msvu.ca. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, by phone at 902-457-6350 or by e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Continued on Page 2

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____

Participant's Name (please print) **Date**

_____ _____

Participant's Signature **Witness' Signature**

If you would like a summary of the results after the study is completed, please include your e-mail address or your mailing address below.

E-mail address _____

Mailing address _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records and place the completed consent form in the enclosed envelope marked 'Consent Form'.