

Introduction: Welcome to National Security Settings

Arriving at the visitor center as instructed, we emptied personal valuables into the gray plastic tray before passing through the electronic sensor portal. We were told that all cell phones or wireless communication devices of any kind would not be allowed beyond that point. We were told these items would have to be locked up in a wall locker, a large number of which were in the reception hallway. After storing our phones in the lockers and retrieving our other personal possessions that had passed through the security screening, we left the initial security screening area. Several uniformed and heavily armed security guards in bulletproof vests continued to watch all who moved through the reception area. After being checked in by the reception staff and having our previously requested authorized visitor status confirmed, we were each issued a visitor badge and told that we would be constantly accompanied

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Consulting Psychology in National Security Organizations, by L. B. Moret and C. H. Greene III
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by an escort while in the building. The receptionist then called to request an escort. The escort arrived and directed us to the office where we were to meet with several of the organization leaders, our potential clients. As we moved down the halls on the way, doors closed one after another. The escort had activated a flashing red hallway light that alerted the employees, who were disappearing behind the rapidly closing doors, to the fact that “uncleared” personnel were in the area.

The escort explained that before we could start the meeting, we would have to “sign an NDA.” Deciding that we would probably figure out what an NDA was at some point in the process, neither of us asked the obvious question. Our next stop was the security office. The NDA, or nondisclosure agreement, proved to be a document that required our signature and essentially informed us that we would be prosecuted by the U.S. government if we later disclosed any of the information we were about to hear or see. The people we met were welcoming, and a series of meetings followed in which these focused, energetic people shared a variety of acronyms as well as their considerations on an interesting series of organizational interrelationships that might be affected by our pending project. We could quickly tell that working with these people would be stimulating and informative. Neither of us remembers exactly what we had expected, but this experience inspired us both and offered a feeling of excitement at the prospect of helping these people achieve their organizational goals. This scenario describes the start of our first national security (NS) consulting experience, and both of us found those beginnings intriguing.

Though the scenario is written as if it were one experience, it is really a compilation of two similar but separate experiences for each of the authors that occurred at different times years ago. For both of us, the first experience initiated a sequence of many challenging and rewarding projects for a series of NS organizations. Throughout this book, as we share our insights and those of other senior psychologists in these settings, we speak with one voice that represents our collaborative views. The prospect of recollecting and sharing some of the many interesting and rewarding experiences we have had in NS settings is exciting, partially because the work is challenging and the people are generally exceptional. But it is

also exciting because the nature of the U.S. NS mission, and the consultant's role in it, is focused either indirectly or directly on the protection of American citizens and the stability of our nation.

For us, the opportunity to help introduce capable and committed professionals to this important work is a significant privilege. This book may also be valuable to a broader audience that includes transitioning practitioners, graduate students in consulting psychology, students new to psychology, or even leaders in NS settings who work with psychologists. The culture, challenges, and satisfaction of NS work, as seen from the psychologist's perspective, should be helpful to anyone who wants a clearer picture of this challenging environment.

In addition, we suggest some of the requisite characteristics and competencies that contribute to success and satisfaction in this work. Despite the long history of consulting psychology's contributions to NS in the United States, the nature of this sensitive, often officially classified, work has resulted in little public information on its productive results or the rewards and challenges for psychologists who consult in these settings. Civiello (2009), in a special issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* that focused on organizational consulting in NS contexts, stated,

For the past few years, there has been increasing discussion and controversy regarding the roles psychologists play in the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) and Department of Defense (DoD). With few exceptions, not much of this discussion has been informed by those who do the actual work. (p. 1)

We hope this book will help increase professional understanding of this vital and rewarding work. Our collective years of work in NS settings number over 35. And our experiences have brought us into relationships with many seasoned NS colleagues who have supported us as team members, mentors, and friends. Research for this book provided an opportunity to consult again with many of those colleagues who work, or have worked, in the NS structure. To incorporate their observations and recommendations, we conducted a series of interviews with 20 of our colleagues in consulting psychology. All of them are psychologists who have spent

significant portions, or all, of their careers in NS work. We collected information about

- consultation roles they had filled,
- steps in their career path,
- their experiences and recommendations about security clearances,
- things that are particularly valuable for psychologists to know in this career field,
- lessons that were the hardest to learn,
- differences and similarities between work in NS settings and work in other settings,
- the most important competency they must have in their role, and
- a typical ethical challenge they faced in their role and the setting in which they work.

Many of our colleagues who offered their thoughts have worked in both external and internal NS consulting roles over time. Many have also worked in nongovernmental civilian organizations. Their NS work settings have been primarily in the intelligence community, Department of Justice (DoJ), and Department of Defense (DoD) within military special operations organizations. Their expertise added immensely to the content of suggestions and observations we present. As we incorporate their thoughts and observations in the pages to come, we refer to them collectively as our *NS psychology colleagues*.

Consulting psychologists who support NS organizations come from a wide variety of professional educational backgrounds and skill sets. Personnel selection and placement, organizational development, forensics, leadership coaching, occupational health care, production efficiency, human factors engineering, and safety are just a few of the areas of educational preparation and subject matter expertise that psychologists bring to these organizations.

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY IN NATIONAL SECURITY SETTINGS

As we examine the roles of the consulting psychologist in NS settings, it is important, particularly for the transitioning psychologist, to recognize the perspective and resources of the larger professional consulting psychology

community. The American Psychological Association's (APA) Division 13 is home to the Society of Consulting Psychology. The nature of consultation and the roles of a consultant can be quite diverse. To act effectively and ethically requires that consulting psychologists maintain awareness of their situational identity and the nature of their working relationship with other entities on an ongoing basis.

A consulting psychologist is one who has received recognition by his peers as an expert in his area(s) of functioning and who provides specialized, technical assistance to individuals or organizations in regard to the psychological aspects of their work. Such assistance is advisory in nature, and the consultant has no direct responsibility for its acceptance and implementation. (Rigby, 1992, p. 8)

The effective application of psychological principles in organizations, delivered from a consultative role, requires psychologists to examine and resolve personal, practical, and ethical questions. Consulting psychology practice differs in some important ways from health care and academic or research psychology positions. But generally, consulting psychologists find that their application of tools, techniques, and processes in the NS sector is much the same as in nongovernmental organizations. The use of job analysis, program validation research, leadership coaching, individual or organizational assessment, marketing analysis support, or other subject matter expertise is used in similar ways in the NS organizational environment. However, security concerns, cultural factors, and the authority structures in the organization may pose potential stumbling blocks that can be significant. For example, the security classification of some information will dictate where and how that information can be presented or discussed. Or a consultant's presentation slides may have to be marked in specific ways with levels of security authorization before being shown.

There are some less well known and more unique aspects of NS psychological consultation within which a smaller number of psychologists work. These responsibilities are carried out by uniformed military psychologists. Their jobs may require the psychologist to become knowledgeable, or even proficient, in some specific techniques and skills being used

by operational specialists in the organization. The psychologist is thus able to develop experientially based knowledge and to establish credibility with their audience. Examples include completing parachute “jump” qualification; weapons qualification; Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) certification; or training in support to intelligence operations. NS organizations may require psychologists to provide human performance consultation to police or paramilitary Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams, Hostage Rescue Teams, unmanned or piloted aircraft operations, and the assessment and management of intelligence resources. Some psychologists are well suited for this type of work and find that they value the opportunity to challenge their physical, mental, and emotional capabilities. Psychologists may be required to use their experientially based knowledge to help plan training or qualification exercises so that member skill levels may be more reliably detected and evaluated. Psychologists in such settings typically consult with instructors, evaluate student or member performance under stress, provide coaching on intra- and interpersonal techniques to enhance performance in vital skill areas, and provide infrequent referrals to medical resources. The psychologists who do this less common type of consultation have, over time, worked their way into positions for which this level of direct engagement is required. Consultants hired from outside the organization are not generally expected to take on such personal challenges or risk.

Given that this type of work represents a small portion of consulting psychologists’ responsibilities in NS settings, we do not devote much attention to it in this book. We also do not discuss other less common roles that consulting psychologists play in intelligence and counterintelligence programs, such as conducting research, developing and refining intelligence gathering methods, or training intelligence agents. Again, these responsibilities are typically assigned to a small subset of psychologists with many years of experience working in the intelligence community. Instead, we examine some of the more typical roles that consultants fill, especially the ones most common among psychologists who are new to the field.

There has been some controversy within the psychology professions about the application of psychological services within some NS organizations. Some psychologists have charged that psychological consultants

should not provide services in settings where their work is not open to the scrutiny of external nongovernmental ethics reviews (Arrigo, Eidelson, & Bennett, 2012, p. 18), and there have been cases in which psychologists in NS settings have been alleged to have violated accepted ethical standards in the provision of their services (Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014). Although a small number of psychologists, in any specialty, sometimes stray from agreed-on ethical standards, it is our hope that this book will contribute to an increased understanding of the work consultants do in NS settings as well as an increased collegial trust and respect for the ethical nature of this work and the contributions of professional consulting psychologists who carry it out. Consulting psychologists can often reach an ethical resolution that balances their values and professional ethics with the objectives of the organization and the nation. Some of these resolutions may require more courage than others. Though this book is not intended to be a detailed ethics text or casebook, we do address some of the more significant aspects of these ethics issues in Chapter 7.

We believe a knowledgeable appreciation of the differences and respect for the diverse values reflected in sometimes conflicting professional perspectives can be enhanced by regular discussions with professional colleagues who practice in NS consulting roles and by continuing education experiences offered through APA or other commercial providers.

NATIONAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS

There are multiple possible interpretations of the term *national security*. For our purposes we consider the term to encompass any factors and activities related to the national defense and foreign relations of the United States. The agencies that could fall under the term *NS organizations* are numerous and diverse in their missions.

Because of the nature of today's threats, NS concerns no longer refer, as they did in the early part of the 20th century, just to threats of war or invasion by foreign military forces. U.S. NS concerns now include the protection of energy, communication, and transportation infrastructure; prevention of domestic and international terrorism; preservation of economic stability; and design and development of our response systems for

natural disasters (Mangelsdorff, 2006, p. 7). This broadening trend has continued as technological and social developments have produced more numerous and complex vulnerabilities. For example, the tremendous expansion of Internet-based commercial and social media communications has created large new windows of vulnerability. Large electronic repositories of business and social exchange are a treasure trove for adversaries who would gain access to the personal information of American citizens as well as to organizational databases to exploit these data for criminal or terrorism purposes.

These expanding challenges require the effective application of international diplomacy, relationships, and economic incentives to facilitate international collaboration, maintenance of effective armed forces, protection of our population and material infrastructure, protection of sensitive intelligence information and technology, and implementation of civil defense activities to include disaster preparedness. The organizations at the center of many of these challenges include, among others, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, National Security Agency (NSA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Department of State (DoS), Department of Justice (DoJ), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Defense (DoD), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and Department of Energy (DoE).

This partial list of agencies and departments should illustrate some of the diversity and complexity of America's NS organizations. This broad array of organizations, missions, and capabilities offers many opportunities for meaningful contributions by psychological consultants. In an effort to give examples of these opportunities and the attendant consulting capabilities that we believe are most central to success, we present case examples and after-the-fact analyses of actual consulting projects.¹ The identities of consultants and clients and the details surrounding these cases are obscured or merged to respect the confidential nature of some of the original information.

¹All case examples provided in this book are compilations using assumed (first) names. Any resemblance to actual persons or cases is coincidental.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

In Chapter 1 we review some of the historical contributions to NS made by consulting psychologists. Although consulting psychologists have long served the needs of NS organizations, much of the growth of psychological roles in NS has occurred in response to times of war or international conflict when America has invested heavily in governmental resources with the hope of resolving nationally threatening, large-scale problems. Mangelsdorff (2006) emphasized the interconnectedness of growth in NS challenges and the growth of the science and practice of psychology as a profession (p. 9).

In Chapter 2 we present a sample of the many types of projects to which psychologists contribute in NS organizations. Planning and managing organizational change, development of personnel selection processes, coaching managerial skill development, and detection of insider threats are just a few of the challenging interventions carried out by consulting psychologists in NS settings. Psychologists may also help managers define and prioritize key issues or provide and apply subject matter expertise that is not inherently available in that part of the organization.

Chapter 3 offers observations on the culture and “personality” of some of the U.S. NS organizations, their missions, and people. We combine our experiences with those of our NS consulting colleagues to try to describe the “feel” of some of these organizations and the nature of the people who work there. We summarize collective observations on the compatibility of consultant values, demeanor, and experience with organizational characteristics and culture. The successful blending of organization and consultant characteristics usually rests on the balance of organizational expectations and consultant experience and adaptability. We provide case examples of interventions that were productive and others that were less so, in the hope that the scenarios will help sensitize readers to potentially significant practice variables.

Chapter 4 considers the differences and similarities between NS and other organizational settings. Our experience and the experiences of our NS colleagues suggest that there are many similarities between consulting in NS organizations and consultation with other large organizations.

Some of the differences can be significant, and a working awareness of them can be critical in the consultant's approach and credibility and the shaping of project outcomes.

In Chapter 5 we provide information on the professional competencies that have served consultants well in these settings. The typical academic preparation of psychological consultants can include such concentrations as industrial and organizational, clinical, public safety, leadership, educational, and organizational development—and others. We explore some of the interesting and effective applications of these competencies and a few situations in which previous experience interfered with current application.

Chapter 6 examines security clearance requirements. The sensitive nature of the work in NS organizations requires a system to ensure that all employees and contractors are disciplined and resistant to the influence of adversaries who would steal information, sabotage systems, attack employees in the organization, or attack other U.S. citizens. The heart of this system, the security investigation, is a review of the background, stability, judgment, and vulnerability of each employee and is made to determine the level of potential reliability that the employee brings into the workplace. We discuss the security investigation process, the administrative and social stresses of information access, and the requirements for maintenance of the clearance.

In Chapter 7 we address ethical issues and challenges in NS consultation. As in many other psychological applications, clear designation of the “client” entity in these settings is a critical aspect of practical and ethical success. In NS consultation, as in consultation services in general, an organization is usually the “client.” Consultants may also find themselves in multiple relationship roles with personnel or may meet challenges to their ability to firmly manage the confidentiality of client information. These situations, and others, often require an analysis of ethical parameters, many of which are specifically addressed in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2017a). We examine some situations in which professional ethics and operational expedience can clash as well as the courses of action that can help consultants reach an ethical resolution.

We conclude the book with an Afterword, reflecting on some key take-aways, as well as two appendices. Appendix A lists some commonly used abbreviations in NS organizations, and Appendix B includes a table of military ranks. This information can be useful to consulting psychologists in NS settings.

This book is an effort to introduce readers to the challenges and rewards of psychological consultation in NS settings. Psychological consultation in the NS sector directly or indirectly contributes to the safety of American citizens, the protection of American culture and freedoms, and guardianship of the technologies and assets that help ensure these protections continue; they are objectives that attract the passions of many. We hope that the information we present will help prepare and energize readers for the many consulting opportunities that exist in this rewarding and diverse realm.