Family/Partnership-centered Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: The Reconceptualization of a Model

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Family/Partnership-centered Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: The Reconceptualization of a Model
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Background to Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- The importance of working meaningfully and constructively with families in promoting a child’s learning and adjustment is unequivocal. Home-school partnerships have been shown to relate to many positive outcomes for children, families, teachers, and schools.
- Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC; Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996) is a structured, indirect model of service delivery whereby parents and teachers are joined to collaboratively address needs and concerns of a child with the assistance of a consultant. Goals of CBC encompass those focused on addressing child needs, and developing home-school partnerships.
- CBC is procedurally operationalized via conjoint interviews (Problem Identification, Problem Analysis, and Treatment Evaluation) aimed at prioritizing shared concerns across home and school settings, evaluating factors contributing to the identified concern, developing an agreeable plan, and evaluating the child’s progress toward goals.
- Traditional approaches to CBC emphasize a problem-solving orientation, aimed largely at addressing problems experienced by individual children.

CBC from a Family-Centered, Strengths-based Perspective

- Implicit in CBC is a goal toward strengthening support systems within a child’s life; however, few mechanisms in the model are aimed specifically at this purpose.
- Family-centered approaches, including those that emphasize family empowerment, support families in proactively identifying needs, mobilizing resources, and accomplishing goals (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1994).
- Family-Centered Services (FCS) strive to help family members “become better at solving problems, meet needs, or achieve aspirations by promoting the acquisition of competencies that support and strengthen functioning in a way that permits a greater sense of individual or group control over its developmental course” (Dunst, Trivette, Davis, & Connell, 1994, p. 162). Emphasis is placed on assisting families to access resources and use their own abilities in an empowering manner.
- From a family-centered perspective, CBC is conceptualized as “a framework for working with families and schools that promotes strengths and capacity building within individuals and systems, rather than focusing [only] on the resolution of problems or remediation of deficits” (Sheridan et al., 2004).
- CBC can be responsive to and address child needs as identified by parents and teachers; build skills and competencies within families and schools; and promote participation and collaboration among systems. Furthermore, it expands family centered approaches by acknowledging that children and families do not exist in a vacuum, and that children function within and across systems, which exhibit bidirectional and reciprocal influences over each other.
- To date, little conceptual work has been conducted that documents how CBC can be implemented within and extend a family-centered framework, while retaining the core goals, principles, characteristics, and procedural guidelines of each.


Research Directions

- Systematic, empirical investigations are needed to identify specific procedural aspects of the model that may be most effective in enhancing a strengths-based, partnership-centered approach.
- In-depth analyses of procedural and verbal characteristics are required to determine the mechanisms by which CBC can be “partnership centered.”
- Mixed-methods studies that investigate outcome and process variables relevant to partnership-centered CBC are necessary, especially compared to outcomes and processes used in “traditional CBC.”
- Longitudinal analyses would be useful to identify long-term effects on consultants’ perspectives and behaviors.
- Analysis of Family, school, and child variables as they relate to differential case outcomes (i.e., high vs. low effect sizes) is necessary.
- Careful analysis of the effects of a partnership-centered approach on the quality and quantity of engagement, empowerment, and collaboration are important.