

2007

## Addressing the school psychologist shortage : past trends and implications for the future

Erin Delaine McCoy  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©2007 Erin Delaine McCoy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McCoy, Erin Delaine, "Addressing the school psychologist shortage : past trends and implications for the future" (2007). *Dissertations and Theses @ UNI*. 1145.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/etd/1145>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses @ UNI by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

ADDRESSING THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST SHORTAGE: PAST TRENDS AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Educational Specialist

Erin Delaine McCoy  
University of Northern Iowa  
July 2007

## ABSTRACT

This thesis begins with a brief history of the field of school psychology, starting with the Hybrid years and continuing through to the present day. Research on the trends that have occurred in the field of school psychology are reviewed. Past trends discussed include: demographics, personnel needs, function and roles, employment conditions, and job satisfaction. This study examined reasons why school psychologists in Iowa left their positions and, specifically, what effect job satisfaction played in their decision to leave. Results indicated two reasons Iowa school psychologists left their positions: role restrictiveness and lack of building support. School psychologists in Iowa were most satisfied with available resources and supervision and were least satisfied with their job role and salary. Results from this study are important to school psychologists, supervisors of school psychologists, administrators, and faculty trainers.

ADDRESSING THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST SHORTAGE: PAST TRENDS AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A Thesis  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Educational Specialist

Erin Delaine McCoy  
University of Northern Iowa  
July 2007

This Study by: Erin Delaine McCoy

Entitled: Addressing the School Psychologist Shortage: Past Trends and Implications for the Future

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Educational Specialist

6/8/07  
Date

Dr. Kerri Clopton, Chair, Thesis Committee

6-8-07  
Date

Dr. Charlotte Haselhuhn, Thesis Committee Member

6-8-07  
Date

Dr. Barry Wilson, Thesis Committee Member

7/25/07  
Date

Dr. Sue A Joseph, Interim Dean, Graduate College

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. HISTORY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY.....	5
The Hybrid Years .....	5
The Thoroughbred Years.....	7
Past Trends in School Psychology .....	9
Demographics .....	9
Gender .....	9
Ethnicity and culture.....	11
Age and years of experience.....	12
Personnel Needs .....	13
Supply of school psychologists .....	14
Demand for school psychologists .....	14
Attrition .....	15
Function and Roles .....	16
Services provided .....	16
Ratios .....	18
Employment Conditions .....	20
Degree level .....	20
Place of employment .....	21
Salary .....	23
Job Satisfaction .....	24

Implications for the Future .....	26
CHAPTER 3. METHODS.....	29
Subjects .....	29
Procedure .....	29
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS .....	31
Demographics .....	31
Reasons for Leaving .....	32
Job Roles .....	33
Perceived Role Expectations vs. Roles Experienced .....	34
Levels of Satisfaction .....	35
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION .....	36
REFERENCES .....	40
APPENDIX: EXIT TELEPHONE SURVEY – RECORD FORM.....	42

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on the shortage of school psychologists has focused on trends in demographics, personnel needs, function and roles, employment conditions, and job satisfaction. Demographic trends in gender, ethnicity, and age have frequently been reported in the literature. The percentage of female practitioners in the field has increased every decade with the most recent estimation at around 72% (Curtis, Grier, Abshier, Sutton, & Hunley, 2002). The female representation in the field has increased every decade, yet the ethnicity of the practitioners has remained predominately Caucasian (Curtis et al., 2002). This trend is also evident in the ethnicity of school psychology graduate students with only 17% of students being members of ethnic minorities (Thomas, 1998). The mean age of practitioners has continued to increase as well. Currently one out of every three practitioners is over the age of 50 with more and more practitioners approaching retirement age (Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2004). Curtis et al. (2004) projected that by 2010, 4 out of 10 school psychologists are expected to retire and by 2020, 2 out of 3 will have left the field. The current demographic state of the field lacks diversity, both in gender and ethnicity, and is in danger of losing the majority of its current practitioners to retirement.

Personnel needs are determined by estimating the supply and demand of practitioners. Depending on the method of estimation, the total number of practitioners nationwide is estimated to be between 30,000 and 34,000. Thomas (1998) estimates that roughly 1,750 graduates enter the field every year. With the large numbers of



practitioners leaving the field the supply of graduate students will be unable to meet the demands of the field. It is unclear where school psychologists who leave the field go. Attrition patterns have not been systematically researched. Since these data are unavailable estimations of supply and demand are estimates at best. Projections for the demand of practitioners are based on a conservative estimate of a 5% attrition rate per year (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004; Reschly, 2000). In order to make more accurate projections of supply and demand it is necessary to collect data on the attrition of practitioners from the field.

Functions and roles of school psychologists vary greatly. Practitioners perform a wide range of roles such as assessment, consultation, interventions, counseling, and research. Fagan and Wise (2000) indicate that the majority of practitioners' time is spent in the administration and interpretation of psychological assessments. However, school psychologists indicated preferred job roles in direct interventions, problem-solving, and consultation (Reschly, 2000). These job roles vary by geographic region, with some practitioners spending nearly an entire day more in assessment per week (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). The job roles that a school psychologist engages in are often dependent on the ratio of practitioner to student. According to Curtis et al. (2002), the lower the ratio of practitioner to students, the less time spent in activities related to special education. When school psychologists are able to serve fewer students, they are more likely to engage in professional activities that are more preferable to them.

School psychologists are employed in a variety of settings including public schools, private schools, residential facilities, and universities. The most common degree

obtained by practitioners in the public schools is the specialist degree (Ed.S). There has been an increase in the number of graduate students obtaining a specialist degree, but the number of graduate students obtaining a doctoral degree in school psychology has increased as well. As more students are attending graduate school longer in order to receive higher degrees, they are entering the field at a slower rate. This slow rate of entry into the field prevents unfilled positions from being filled quickly and exacerbates the shortage issue.

Job satisfaction studies on school psychologists have yielded positive results in areas of work and colleagues, supervision, and pay and benefits (Reschly, 2000). An area that has consistently been rated as unsatisfactory is opportunity for advancement. The job satisfaction of practitioners varies across geographic regions. Particular areas that varied among practitioners include satisfaction with salary and supervisor (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Studies have also examined satisfaction with particular job roles. Levinson (1990) found that job satisfaction increased as time spent in assessment related activities decreased. Also, the greater the discrepancy between actual and desired role functions, the less satisfied school psychologists were with their career.

Understanding trends is useful when trying to make estimations, however the lack of concrete data makes these estimations guesses at best. Despite the level of shortage predicted, the research done is minimal. Most is purely speculative and relies on the analysis of trends. Where the shortages are, the exact number of openings, and reasons contributing to the shortage have not been documented. The purpose of this research is to identify contributing factors for leaving the position as a school psychologist in Iowa. My

two research questions are: (1) What are the reasons for school psychologists leaving their positions in Iowa and/or leaving the profession? and (2) Are the school psychologists who are leaving positions in Iowa dissatisfied with their role and, if so, did they have hope that the role would change? Did they believe that they were instrumental in making that change?

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORY OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

The shortage of school psychologists has been present nearly every year since 1976 (Reschly, 2000), yet little has been done to determine contributing factors or how to address this shortage. The trends in demographics (Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2004; Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2004; Reschly, 2000; Zhou, Bray, Kehle, Theodore, Clark, & Jenson, 2004), personnel needs (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004; Curtis, Hunley, et al., 2004; Reschly, 2000), function and roles (Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Reschly, 2000), employment conditions (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004; Curtis, Hunley, et al., 2004; Reschly, 2000), and satisfaction (Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Reschly, 2000), have all been assessed and used to project future trends in the field of school psychology. By examining the history of the field of school psychology, one can better understand the historical influences on current practices and how these influences contribute to the shortage of school psychologists.

#### The Hybrid Years

The history of school psychology dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The period between 1890 and 1969, known as the Hybrid years, is characterized by the emergence of special education and school psychological services (Fagan & Wise, 2000). With the enforcement of compulsory attendance laws, children with a variety of physical and cognitive deficits were enrolled in public schools for the first time. The purpose of school at this time was to educate the masses in the most efficient manner. The role of the school psychologist during the Hybrid years was to segregate children into the proper educational setting, giving them the appropriately labeled nickname “gatekeeper.” With

the development of the standardized test, the Binet-Simon, and other psychological tests, school psychologists became identified by the great number of tests they administered. School psychologists were often viewed as “guests” in the house of education. Schools were primarily seen as institutions committed to the teaching of children, not necessarily a place for psychological services to be given (Fagan & Wise, 2000). During this time period, there were no data on the number of school psychologists practicing since there was no clear definition of the roles, training practices, titles, or credentialing procedures (Fagan, 2004).

The period between 1920 and 1940 can be characterized by the formalization of the profession of school psychology. The first training program in school psychology was developed at New York University during the mid-1920s. This program symbolized the notion that professionals working with school-aged children need to be appropriately educated and trained in a formal manner. Shortly following the development of university training programs, two states, New York and Pennsylvania, were the first to establish credentialing procedures for school psychologists practicing in the public school system (Fagan & Wise, 2000). With only two states providing training and credentialing, many of the needs for psychological services in the schools were not being met. During the Great Depression, teachers and psychologists from the Works Progress Administration, a relief measure designed to provide public employment for those who were out of work, were hired in the New York City and Chicago schools to help provide psychological services to meet the great need. Still, even with the apparent demand for school

psychologists in the public schools, there were no data on how many practitioners would be needed to provide adequate services (Fagan, 2004).

The first practitioner to student ratio was recommended at the Thayer Conference in West Point, New York in 1954 (Fagan, 2004). The Thayer Conference was the first national conference on school psychology and provided practitioners nationwide an opportunity to discuss topics of training, credentialing, and practice (Fagan & Wise, 2000). This early ratio recommendation was to have one school psychologist for every 3000 students, creating a demand for nearly 15,000 new school psychologists (Fagan, 2004). With this being the first attempt at establishing ratios for practitioners, this was also the initial discussion of the shortage of school psychologists. Estimated ratios by Fagan (1988) during the Hybrid years improved from 1:180,000 to 1:10,000. Still even with this large ratio, compared to modern-day standards, there was no real pressing need to actively recruit persons into the field. Many schools were not providing special education services or requesting the assistance for psychological services (Fagan & Wise, 2000). It was not until state and federal legislation enacted during the Thoroughbred Years, that the services provided by school psychologists became crucial to the functioning of regular and special education in the public school systems.

### The Thoroughbred Years

This time period, from 1970 until the present, is characterized by “regulation, association growth, and professional division and reorganization” (Fagan & Wise, 2000, p. 55). Despite the formulization of the field of school psychology, there was still disagreement over the credentialing of practitioners. The majority of school psychologists

held non-doctoral degrees, which is in opposition to the American Psychological Association's (APA) philosophy, creating a rift between APA and the National Association of School Psychology (NASP). The point of disagreement focused on entry level degrees, as well as titles for school psychologists. Not only did professional organizations affect the field of school psychology, the enactment of laws was highly influential as well.

In 1975, Public Law 94-142 was enacted, providing education to all handicapped children. Every school district was required to provide special education to all children, regardless of their handicap, in the least restrictive environment. School psychologists' roles became essential in the identification and placement of handicapped children in the public schools. The enactment of PL 94-142 created an increase in the number of children served in special education. Between the years of 1970 and 1990, the number of students in special education increased from 4.5 million to 5.5 million (Fagan & Wise, 2000). In this same amount of time, the ratio of practitioner to students improved. In 1974, the reported mean national ratio was 1:4,800 and, in 1986, the national mean ratio was 1:2,100 (Fagan, 2004).

During the 1980s and 1990s, as the number of students served in special education increased and the quality of special education was questioned by parents, the Regular Education Initiative was enforced. Students were no longer simply tested and placed in special education. The Regular Education Initiative was a movement toward the mainstreaming of special education students in the general education classroom. This movement changed the role of school psychologists from "gatekeepers" to influential

participants in pre-referral assessment and interventions (Fagan & Wise, 2000). However, as the role and function of school psychologists evolved, the imminent shortage of practitioners was just beginning to be discussed in the field.

### Past Trends in School Psychology

Trends in school psychology have been examined in order to determine patterns and make predictions for the future. These trends are imperative when making projections of shortages of school psychologists. An overview of past and present trends in demographics, personnel needs, function and roles, employment conditions, and job satisfaction are discussed. A synthesis of the trends and implications for the future of school psychology are also presented.

#### Demographics

Gender, ethnicity and culture, age, and years of experience are demographic variables that have been studied extensively in the field of school psychology. Trends in these areas have been used to make predictions concerning the field and, in particular, the impact of the school psychologist shortage.

Gender. Curtis, Grier, et al. (2004) examined many demographic trends, beginning with the most remarkable change: the feminization of the field of school psychology. The ratio of male to female practitioners was compared by decade, beginning in 1970. According to Farling and Hoedt (1971), during the 1969-1970 academic year, males comprised 59% of the field and women 41% (as cited in Curtis, Grier et al., 2004). Little difference was seen in the 1980-1981 academic year, but by the 1989-1990 academic year, women represented 65% of the field. The feminization of the



field continues to increase and current figures estimate the percentage of female school psychologists in the field to be around 72% (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2002). In a study by Hosp and Reschly (2002), the percentage of female practitioners varied across census regions. The numbers ranged from 53.6% in the Mountain region (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, and WY) to 78.4% in the West South Central region (AR, LA, OK, and TX). Not only has this increase been seen in practicing school psychologists, but also in school psychology graduate students, faculty, and program directors.

Reschly (2000) noted that the representation of females in school psychology graduate programs has been on the rise. In the 1960's, the proportion of males to females was equal. There was an increase of 10% each decade following. Current numbers from the 1990s indicate that the gender composition of graduate students in school psychology is 80% female (Thomas, 1998). A similar trend in university faculty has been documented. In the 1970s, Farling and Hoedt (1971) estimated the representation of female faculty members to be roughly 18% (as cited in Curtis, Grier et al., 2004). A 10% increase in female faculty members each decade parallels the increase seen among school psychology graduate students. The current percentage of faculty reported by Thomas (1998) is estimated at 46% female. The smallest female representation is among school psychology program directors. During the 1960s, only 11% of all program directors were female, compared to the 1970s where 24% of directors were women signifying the biggest increase in female directors. Each decade, thereafter, an increase occurred as well, with the percentage of female program directors reported to be around 33% in the 1990s (Reschly, 2000).

Ethnicity and culture. Despite the increasing ethnic and/or cultural diversity representation in the United States, the overwhelming majority of school psychologists are still Caucasian. In a comparison by Curtis, Grier, et al. (2004), there has been little change in the ethnic and cultural makeup of the field. In Smith's (1984) study, 96% of all school psychologists were Caucasian. The most recent numbers reported show that 92.8% of all school psychologists are Caucasian (Curtis et al., 2002). Similar unbalanced ethnic/cultural representation is seen among graduate students and faculty.

The percentage of minority graduate students has been slowly increasing in school psychology programs. In a study by Zins and Halsell (1986) the three largest ethnic/cultural minority groups represented in school psychology graduate programs were African American (6.3%), Puerto Rican (1.9%), and Mexican American (1.3%). During the 1989-1990 academic year the percentage of minority graduate students enrolled in a school psychology program was 6.1% (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004). Ten years later, in the 1999-2000 academic year, Thomas (1998) reported 17% of graduate students were members of an ethnic minority. However, despite this increase in minority representation in graduate programs, this increase has yet to be seen among practitioners. It is unclear why this discrepancy exists. Zhou et al. (2004) discussed barriers for minority students in graduate school that may impede them from being accepted into programs, graduating, and/or continuing employment in the field. Potential factors that may influence minority student representation in graduate programs may be the small number of applicants qualified for the program, lack of awareness of the program, inflexibility of the admissions criteria, lack of academic skills necessary to succeed in college, and the small

number of ethnic minority faculty to serve as role models. McMaster, Reschly, and Peters (1989) reported 10.7% of university faculties in school psychology graduate programs were members of an ethnic minority. Nearly a decade later, this number had increased to only 15%. The small number of minority faculty may be associated with the shortage of all school psychology faculty (Little & Akin-Little, 2004).

Age and years of experience. Currently, one out of every three school psychologists is over the age of 50 (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004). The continual “graying” of the field has been charted, showing an increase in the age of practitioners. In 1980-1981, the mean age of school psychologists was 38.8 years (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004) and two decades later the mean age increased to 45.2 years (Curtis et al., 2002). According to Curtis et al. (2002), there has been a decline of practitioners under the age of 40, from 43.2% to 31.2%. At the same time, the percentage of practitioners over the age of 50 has increased, from 20.2% to 32.8%. Hosp and Reschly (2002) found a significant difference in the mean ages of practitioners across the country. School psychologists in the Mid-Atlantic region (NJ, NY, and PA) had a mean age of 45.5 years (lowest mean age) while the Northeast region (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT) had a mean age of 49.3 years (highest mean age). There has been less data collected on the ages of graduate students and faculty. In 1999-2000, practitioners, with a mean age of 44.6 years, were slightly, but significantly younger than faculty ( $m = 47.1$ ; Curtis, Hunley, et al., 2004).

School psychologists’ years of experience have shown a similar trend to that of age. As the age of school psychologists has increased, so have the years of experience.

Curtis, Hunley, et al. (2004) did a comparison of data collected on years of experience by Graden and Curtis (1991) and Curtis, Grier, et al. (2002). The changes in years of experience between 1989-1990 and 1999-2000 were all significant, except for years 1-5 of experience. School psychologists with 11-15 years of experience decreased from 24% to 15%, between the years 1989-1990 and 1999-2000, while school psychologists with 21-25 years of experience increased from 6% to 14%, in the same amount time. During these two decades, the percentage of school psychologists with 20 or more years of experience, as reported by Curtis, Grier, et al. (2002), doubled from 10.2% to 20.7%.

Overall, the following trends in the field of school psychology have been noted: an increase in the representation of females among practitioners, graduate students, and university faculty; an overwhelmingly large representation of Caucasians; an increase in the number of school psychologists over the age of 50; and an increase in the number of school psychologists with 20 or more years of experience. Summarizations from these trends tend to show the imminent severe shortage of school psychologists in the future. In order to determine when these extreme shortages will occur, the supply of new school psychologists and demand for these practitioners was examined.

### Personnel Needs

The number of school psychologists who enter and exit the field due to attrition and other reasons are necessary in determining the supply and demand for practitioners. From these estimates, shortage projections can be made.

Supply of school psychologists. To determine the supply of practitioners needed for the field, it is necessary to examine the number of school psychologists entering the field, as well as the number of school psychologists leaving the field (Curtis, Hunley, et al., 2004). Studies done by McMaster et al. (1989) and Thomas (1998) estimated that 1,750 school psychology students graduate every year and enter the field. Curtis examined data from 1999-2000 (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2002) to estimate the number of school psychologists exiting the field. It was predicted that by the year 2015, 52.9% of all current school psychologists will retire and by the year 2025, 83.7% of the currently employed practitioners will retire. Thomas (2000) conducted a state-by-state analysis of NASP members asking demographic information, job characteristics, and salary information. Of those surveyed 10% of currently employed school psychologists planned to retire within the next three years. Some states will find nearly 50% of school psychologists retiring within the next 10 years. Although 1,750 new school psychology graduates enter the field each year, Thomas contends this will not replace the number of school psychologists leaving the field.

Demand for school psychologists. There are roughly 30,000 school psychologists employed in the United States (Reschly, 2000). According to Reschly, there are two resources that approximate the number of school psychologists practicing. Lund, Reschly, and Connolly Martin (1998) designate the first source as surveys from the school psychology leadership in each state, while the second source are state reports to the U.S. Department of Education (Reschly, 2000). Neither one is a true count of the number of practicing school psychologists, but the sources are highly correlated ( $r = .98$ ).

Curtis, Grier, et al. (2004) pointed out that both methods have flaws. For example, the state reports only include school psychologists working with students with disabilities, and so those working in other settings may not be included in the estimate. Curtis, Grier et al. estimate the number of school psychologists to be closer to 34,000. It is difficult to accurately estimate the future demand of school psychologists because the profession is influenced by a variety of factors: state and federal legislation, economic circumstances, and attrition.

Attrition. Attrition is defined as professionals leaving the field because of retirement, advancement within the profession, alternative employment opportunities, or other unknown reasons. According to Reschly (2000), no studies systematically researching attrition have been published to date. Despite this, estimates of a 5% loss due to attrition have been used in projections (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004; Reschly, 2000). Reschly (2000) also notes the lack of data on the career pattern of doctoral graduate students. Not all of these graduates gain employment in the public school systems, so tracking places of employment of these students is critical to determining a more accurate attrition rate.

Numbers for the supply and demand for practitioners, as well as the rates of attrition are estimates at best. There is no national directory of school psychologists and so, consequently, the current estimate of the number of school psychologists is based on either state leadership surveys or state reports. Attrition is an area that has not been studied and so information on where and when school psychologists leave the profession is not available. However, two areas that have been examined regularly within the

function and roles of school psychologists are the type of services provided and the ratio of students to practitioner.

### Function and Roles

School psychologists perform a wide variety of job roles that includes assessment, consultation, interventions, counseling, and research. Job roles often vary by the geographic region in which the school psychologist practices and the ratio of students to practitioner.

Services provided. The primary role of early school psychologists was one of assessment and placement. The majority of practitioners' time was spent in administration and interpretation of psychological and educational tests (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Based on the outcomes of these tests, children were sorted into categories and taught in their appropriate educational setting. Lesser roles included remedial instruction, interventions, counseling, consultation, administration, and research. According to Reschly (1998), despite school psychologists preference to spend more time in direct interventions, problem-solving, and consultation little has changed in the amount of time devoted to assessment activities (Reschly, 2000).

To examine the current services delivered by school psychologists, Curtis et al. (2002) conducted a demographic study. They analyzed data collected by Curtis, Grier, Abshier, and Sutton (2001) during the 1999-2000 academic year and compared it to data collected by Graden and Curtis (1991) during 1989-1990 academic year and to data collected by Curtis, Hunley, Walker, and Baker (1999) during the 1994-1995 academic year. Results from this comprehensive comparison demonstrated several notable trends.

First, the percentage of school psychologists completing 100 or more evaluations a year decreased from 12.2% in 1989 to 2.8% in 1999. Also, practitioners completing 25 or fewer reevaluations a year increased from 31% in 1989 to 42.5% in 1999. The percentage of school psychologists engaging in consultation increased as well. Twenty-five percent of school psychologists in 1989 reported completing 50 or more consultation cases, while in 1999, 37.9% of school psychologists reported this many or more completed cases. Despite this decrease in evaluations and increase in consultation services, the percentage of school psychologists who reported no delivered services in consultation, individual counseling, and student groups/in-service programs actually increased from 1989 to 1999. These data reflect that practitioners are decreasing their amount of time in assessment, but not necessarily spending more time in preferred job roles, such as consultation or counseling.

Hosp and Reschly (2002) found a difference in the amount of time spent in psychoeducational assessment and direct intervention by geographic region. School psychologists in the Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT) and Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, and PA) spent the least amount of time in assessment, with an average of 19 hours per week being reported. Practitioners in the East South Central (AL, KY, MS, and TN) spent the most amount of time in assessment, with an average of 26 hours per week reported. This difference is nearly a whole additional day per week of psychoeducational assessment services. It was not surprising then, to find that school psychologists in regions where the most hours were spent in assessment spent the least amount of time in direct interventions. The region that reported the greatest amount of time in direct



interventions (and the least amount in assessment) was the Mid-Atlantic region, with 9.9 hours a week devoted to direct interventions.

Ratios. The ratio of school psychologists to students is an indicator of the quality of services provided (Fagan & Wise, 2000). According to Curtis et al. (2002), the lower the ratio of practitioner to students, the less time spent in activities related to special education. School psychologists who have a high ratio are more likely to spend more time in evaluations and reevaluations, as opposed to direct interventions and consultation. When school psychologists are able to serve fewer students, they are more likely to engage in professional activities that are more preferable to them.

NASP recommends a practitioner to student ratio of 1:1,000. Actual ratios have improved dramatically since the early history of school psychology. During the Hybrid Years, Fagan (1988) estimated ratios to be around 1:180,000. As the number of school psychologists increased this ratio has approached a greater level of acceptability. Thomas (2000) conducted a survey of NASP members and found the mean ratio of practitioner to students to be 1:1,816. Fifty percent of school psychologists had a ratio below 1:1,500 and 90% had a ratio below 1:3,000. At the time of his study, only five states met the NASP 1:1,000 recommended ratio: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York. A similar finding was unveiled by Hosp and Reschly (2002). Practitioner to student ratios were the lowest in the Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT) with a mean number of students per psychologist being 1,049 and highest in the East South Central (AL, KY, MS, and TN) with a mean number of students being 3,858 per school psychologist.

Curtis et al.'s (2002) comparison of the 1989-1990 to 1999-2000 academic years, also found that the ratio has decreased. The percentage of school psychologists working in school settings with a ratio of 1:2,000 or greater had decreased from 38.8% to 25.2%. Curtis et al. found the number of practitioners with the recommended ratio of 1:1,000 increased from 17.9% to 35.7%, between 1989 and 1999. However, regardless of this movement toward practitioners meeting the recommended ratio, Curtis et al. predicted that if school psychologist positions remain unfilled, the ratio of practitioner to students will begin to increase in the future.

Lund et al. (1998) correlated past trends with current patterns on a variety of personnel needs, one of which was practitioner to student ratios. They analyzed data from 1966, 1974, 1989, and 1993 and found that current practitioner to student ratios in a state were significantly correlated with past ratios. Another influence that was investigated was the effect of per-pupil expenditures on the practitioner to student ratio. Lund et al. found that the higher the per-pupil expenditure, the lower the practitioner to student ratio.

Early in the history of school psychology, the predominant role of practitioners was to evaluate and place students in special education. Since then, there has been a movement away from assessment and toward interventions and consultation. Practitioners report a preference in spending more time in direct interventions, problem-solving, and consultation, however, not all school psychologists have moved toward this preferred role. School psychologists' job roles are dependent, in part, on which state they practice, their student to practitioner ratio, and their employment conditions.

## Employment Conditions

School psychologists are employed in a variety of settings including public schools, private schools, residential facilities, and universities. Yearly salaries of school psychologists often differ by the geographic region in which the school psychologist works and the level of degree obtained. Each of these areas has been impacted by the shortage and projections for the future are discussed.

Degree level. There are three levels of training that a school psychologist may attain to become a practicing school psychologist: master's, specialist, and doctoral. The master's degree is, on average, 40 credit hours, however in order to be licensed additional credits are needed. The specialist degree (Ed.S.) is a newer degree, and typically includes, on average, 68 credit hours, a practicum and an internship. This degree is usually granted by a department of education and is considered, in some school district salary scales, a M.A. plus 30. The doctoral degree is, on average, 106 credit hours and includes an area of specialty training. The specialist degree is becoming more popular as an entry-level degree in the public school system, with doctoral degrees most often needed to enter private practice (Fagan & Wise, 2000). This trend of specialist degrees increasing in the field has occurred only in the last 30 years. In 1969-1970, Farling and Hoedt (1971) reported that 93% of school psychologists held Master's degrees (as cited in Curtis, Grier et al., 2004), while in 1999-2000, Curtis, et al. (2002) reported 41% held master's degrees, 28% had a specialist degree, and 30% of school psychologists held a doctorate.

Curtis, Grier, et al. (2004) examined the increase of specialist degree level school psychologists and the decrease in school psychologists with master's degrees. They

discussed two possible reasons for this change. One reason is that the largest increase in school psychologists occurred during the 1980's, a time when there was a shift away from the master's degree and toward the specialist degree. The second reason is that during the 1970's credentialing and training standards were raised by NASP and those school psychologists who entered graduate school in the 1980's had their training influenced by these standards (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004). Training programs for master's degrees in school psychology have decreased since the standards proposed by NASP were adopted. In a 10 year period, Thomas (1998) reported the percentage of master's level programs decreased from 16% in 1986-1997 to just 4% in 1996-1997. On the other hand, the percentage of doctoral students in school psychology has increased. In 1969-1970, less than 1 out of 20 school psychologists held a doctoral degree, while in 1999-2000, 1 out of 3 schools psychologists held this degree (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004). A suggested reason for this increase was the recommendation by the APA to hold the doctoral-degree as an entry level degree. However, as more students are attending graduate school longer in order to receive higher degrees, they are entering the field at a slower rate. This slow rate of entry into the field prevents unfilled positions from being filled quickly and exacerbates the shortage issue.

Place of employment. Public schools employ approximately 85% of school psychologists (Reschly, 2000). Typically, school psychologists work in both regular and special education classrooms within elementary and secondary schools (Fagan & Wise, 2000). School psychologists may also be employed in private schools, residential facilities, mental health agencies, and universities. Curtis et al. (2002) reported that of

those school psychologists working in the public schools, 25% work in rural settings, 31% in urban schools, and 44% in suburban schools.

Generally, school psychologists are employed in a single school district. A school psychologist in this position would serve the whole elementary and/or secondary system. Another fairly popular alternative is the special education cooperative. This option is advantageous for rural and suburban school districts because services and employees are combined and spread throughout several school districts. This is typically done as an opportunity to conserve money and spread valuable services. The third employment setting is for one school psychologist to serve multiple school districts (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Thomas (2000) surveyed NASP members in 1999 and found 12 states with school psychologists reporting responsibility for services to five or more schools: AZ, HI, IA, IN, KY, LA, ME, MO, MS, ND, PA, and WV.

Typically, school psychologists with specialist degrees are employed in the public school system; however, school psychologists with doctorates can be employed in various places outside the public school system. Without a tracking system, there are no data on where these school psychologists gain employment. This makes the estimation of the supply and demand and, ultimately of the shortage of school psychologists, difficult. Estimates are rough at best. As school psychologists continue to serve more and more schools, they will be more likely to spend time in roles they prefer less, such as assessment, and less time in preferred areas of intervention and consultation. As the shortage of school psychologists continues, more practitioners will be responsible for additional schools, leading to over-worked and dissatisfied practitioners.

Salary. Comparing salaries of school psychologists can be challenging because there are a number of factors that can influence an individual's income, beyond cost of living. School psychologists' salaries are based on the length of their contracts, which can vary by school setting, years of experience, and degree level (Fagan & Wise, 2000; Reschly, 2000). The length of a full-time contract can range from 178 to 250 days (Reschly, 2000). Reschly (1998) found the median contract length to be 192 days with a median salary of \$48,000 (as cited in Reschly, 2000). Thomas (2000) found the mean salaries of Master's (\$43,447), Master's + 30 (\$49,738), Specialist (\$45,262), and Doctorate (\$55,262) school psychologists, with an overall mean of \$49,089. The average salary of university faculty based on years of experience as a school psychologist was also reported. The mean salary was \$52,271, but the survey did not indicate the position within the university (assistant, associate, or full-time faculty) or if summer school teaching or other outside sources of income were included.

In a regional comparison by Hosp and Reschly (2002), the West South Central (AR, LA, OK, and TX) reported the lowest mean salary of \$39,228. The highest mean salary of \$55,271 was reported in the Mid-Atlantic region (NJ, NY, and PA). An interesting pattern emerged from the salary data when comparing the practitioner to student ratios of these regions. Geographic regions with the highest mean salary also reported the lowest practitioner to student ratios, while those regions with the lowest mean salary reported the highest practitioner to student ratios. Hosp and Reschly also found that the West South Central region, with the lowest mean salary, also had the highest percentage of school psychologists with doctoral degrees. This analysis of salary

data should be interpreted with caution, however, because factors such as credentialing, cost of living, and ratio of employment settings (rural vs. urban vs. suburban) were not taken into consideration.

Curtis, Hunley, et al. (2004) did a salary comparison of school psychologists working in rural, urban, and suburban school settings. Data from the 1999-2000 academic year (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2002) were analyzed. The results showed a significant difference among the salaries of school psychologists employed in the rural setting versus the urban and suburban settings. School psychologists in the rural settings earned a mean salary of \$46,715, while those in urban settings earned on average \$54,000 and suburban school psychologists earned \$54,884.

Much of the research that compares salaries of school psychologists has resulted in rough estimates, due to many factors not taken into consideration during the surveying process. Different regions of the country pay various salaries and research found that particular job roles were correlated with school psychologists' salaries and student to practitioner ratios. To date, there has been no research determining which areas, urban, suburban, or rural, are affected the greatest by the shortage of school psychologists, however, salary could affect where school psychologists choose to practice or if they even enter the field.

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an indicator of overall contentment with one's job and has been associated with variables such as self-esteem, professional attitude, absenteeism, and turnover (Levinson, Fetchkan, & Hohenshil, 1988). Typically, job satisfaction studies on

school psychologists have yielded positive results in areas of work and colleagues, supervision, and pay and benefits (Reschly, 2000). An area that consistently falls in the dissatisfactory domain is the opportunity for advancement. Most job satisfaction surveys are done with practitioners in the schools as opposed to those in nonschool settings and so these results need to be interpreted with some caution (Reschly, 2000).

Hosp and Reschly's (2002) regional comparison of school psychologists found that overall school psychologists were very satisfied with their colleagues and work duties and were dissatisfied with potential for promotion. However, there were some differences in satisfaction seen across regions. First, satisfaction with salary varied significantly. School psychologists in the Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, and PA), Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT), East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, and WI), and Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, and WA) were the most satisfied with their salary, and happened to be among the highest paid as well. The second job satisfaction factor that varied significantly among school psychologists was satisfaction with supervisors. Practitioners that were most satisfied with their pay and had the lowest practitioner to student ratios were the least satisfied with their supervisors.

Job satisfaction studies have also examined roles and functions of school psychologists. Huebner (1993) conducted a study that examined school psychologists' job satisfaction in secondary schools. The results yielded findings that were expected. Job satisfaction increased as time spent in assessment related activities decreased. Job satisfaction also increased as time spent in counseling and intervention related activities increased. Related to function and roles of school psychologists, Levinson (1990)



investigated the discrepancy between the actual and desired role functions, as well as the perceived control over role functions among full-time practicing school psychologists.

Results from this study showed that the greater the discrepancy between actual and desired role functions, the less satisfied school psychologists were with their career. Also, those school psychologists who were more dissatisfied perceived themselves to have less control over their roles as school psychologists.

### Implications for the Future

Researchers have used the aforementioned trends to make future predictions for the field of school psychology. Reschly (2000) made several projections on the demographics and roles of future school psychologists. He predicted that the dominance of women in the field to continue throughout the next 10 years, and by the year 2010, he expected the percentage of graduate students to be 90% female and practitioners to be 80%. Faculty and program directors are expected to increase in their proportion of women as well. As the trend toward the overwhelming majority of practitioners being female continues, the employment of male practitioners is seemingly out of reach. With more males leaving the profession than entering, it seems that the field is missing out on the opportunity to employ half of the population. Fagan (2004) comments that the job stability of women is unclear and since they leave the workforce for child rearing and other educational careers, like teaching, they may not follow the traditional retirement predictions, making some projections inaccurate.

Predicting supply and demand is more difficult because it is dependent on the economic conditions of the state and country. The current graduates entering the field

will not be able to fill all of the openings from school psychologists leaving the field. Curtis, Hunley et al. (2004) estimate that the peak of the shortage will occur in 2010, with nearly 9,000 school psychologist positions unfilled. The retirement projections are greatest for school psychologists with a doctoral degree. These school psychologists are retiring at a rate that is unequal to the retirement rate of school psychologists with master's or specialist degrees.

One of the major effects of the shortage of school psychologists is the increase in practitioner to student ratios (Curtis, Grier, et al., 2004). With the increase in the number of students each school psychologist is responsible for, there is a greater likelihood that practitioners will be less likely to engage in professional activities they prefer, such as direct interventions and consultations, and spend more time in assessment activities that have been shown to be less satisfying for school psychologists as a group.

An option discussed to alleviate overworked school psychologists and utilize the oversupply of clinical psychologists is the controversial idea of respecialization. Crespi and Politikos (2004) provide both the controversies and advantages that respecialization could have on the field of school psychology. Respecialization involves professionals, such as a clinical psychologist, changing focus from their original graduate degree in to another area. Sometimes this change in specialization may include additional coursework, and other times it does not. For example, Curtis, Hunely et al. (2004) use the example of hiring a psychologist with a background in neuropsychology to work with students with brain injuries if there are no school psychologists available in the district. The controversy lies within whether or not the neuropsychologist is qualified to work with

children in school settings. School psychologists are held to high standards set by the National Association of School Psychologists and receive specialized training in all of the following domains: data-based decision making; consultation and collaboration; effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills; socialization and development of life skills; student diversity in development and learning; school systems organization, policy development, and climate; prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health; home/school/community collaboration; research and program evaluation; school psychology practice and development; and information technology (Crespi & Politikos, 2004). In order for respecialization to work, psychologists would need to be retrained in the area of education which takes time and money. This may fill the need for school psychologist practitioners temporarily, but the field should not rely on the oversupply of clinical psychologists to be the answer to all the shortage problems.

It is important for supervisors and trainers of school psychologists to understand past trends in the field and how they impact current practices. The need for school psychological services will always be present in our public school system. In order to retain the practitioners currently in the field and recruit new practitioners, it is necessary to understand why school psychologists leave their jobs and what areas of dissatisfaction may cause them to leave. The current study focused on determining why school psychologists in Iowa left their positions and areas of their in which job they were the least and most satisfied.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Subjects

School psychologists from each Area Education Agency (AEA) in Iowa who had left their current positions at the end of the 2004-2005 academic year were invited to participate in this study. This included school psychologists who were retiring, moving, or changing positions within their AEA. There are 12 AEAs in Iowa employing over 350 school psychologists. School psychologists from the Des Moines Public Schools are not directly employed by an AEA but were included in this study.

#### Procedure

Prior to the distribution of materials, each AEA human resource department was contacted in order to obtain a list of school psychologists contracted for the 2004-2005 academic year and a list of school psychologists who have signed contracts for the 2005-2006 academic year. Salaries for the school psychologists were also requested. This provided the researcher with an accurate list of school psychologists who have left their positions and gave an opportunity for the researcher to send reminder letters to non-respondents.

Each school psychologist supervisor within each AEA in Iowa received a packet containing informed consent forms and self-addressed stamped envelopes. In each packet a description of the study with a scripted paragraph was included for the supervisor to read when distributing the consent forms. Participants were required to complete and mail back the consent form independently in order to participate. All returned consent

forms regardless of willingness to participate were entered into a sweepstakes for the chance to win a \$50 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

Participants were contacted via telephone during the time they indicated they prefer to be contacted. Data were collected using open-ended questions including general background information, such as education, past work experience in education, and professional affiliations; details of the most current work placement, including contract length, salary, practitioner to student ratio, and amount of time spent in travel; reasons for leaving; and actual and desired time spent in school psychologist job roles. Information on job satisfaction was collected using a five-point Likert scale. The participants' answers were recorded by the researcher on a survey form (see Appendix) and the entire interview process took approximately 45 minutes.

The interview data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency of open-ended responses and the means and medians of the Likert scale responses were analyzed. Data from the exit interview was aggregated and no identifying information was attached to individual responses. Results were reported to the Iowa Department of Education. Individual AEAs did not receive information because of the small number of participants. Participants were informed that results would only be shared with individual AEAs with five or more participants. By requiring that five or more school psychologists participate before results are released to the AEA will ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was not breached. In subsequent years, AEAs without five or more participants will be able to receive results as soon as this minimum requirement is met.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

A total of 19 school psychologists in Iowa left their positions following the 2004-2005 academic year. Of the 19 school psychologists, five returned their consent forms and were able to be contacted for a telephone interview. All five participants were contacted, but only four were available for interviews. Since these participants represent only a small portion of school psychologists in Iowa, results should be interpreted with caution.

#### Demographics

Participants were asked demographic information which included specific information regarding their most recent placement as a school psychologist. All participants were Caucasian with the average age being 40 years. The median number of years working as a school psychologist in Iowa was 4 years (range = 1 to 21). Only one participant had previously worked outside the state of Iowa as a school psychologist. The average length of employment with their most recent AEA was 7.50 years (range = 1 to 8 years). The average contract length was 193.50 days with an average salary of \$40,878.

Specific questions were asked which addressed aspects of each school psychologist's placement. Practitioner to student ratio is an indicator of the quality of services provided (Fagan & Wise, 2000). The lower the ratio of practitioner to students, the less time the practitioner spends in activities related to special education. A school psychologist with a higher ratio is more likely to spend more time in evaluations and reevaluations, as opposed to direct interventions and consultation (Curtis et al., 2002).

The median practitioner to student ratio of the participants in this study was 1:1,000-1:1,500, which is near the NASP recommended ratio of 1 practitioner for every 1,100 students. The number of buildings served for each school psychologist ranged from 3 to 6 buildings. The amount of time spent traveling was of interest due to the common practice of school psychologists serving more than one building. There was a large range in the number of minutes each week spent in travel between home and work that each participant reported. The range was from 10 minutes per week to 300 minutes per week of travel between home and work. The average number of minutes per week spent driving from home to work was 169 minutes, nearly three hours a week. The average number of minutes per week spent driving throughout the course of the week (i.e., driving between schools during the day or from school to the office) was 100 minutes, with a range of 0 minutes to 150 minutes per week.

#### Reasons for Leaving

In order to determine reasons why school psychologists are leaving, participants were asked to list reason(s) for leaving their current position. Many factors played into a person's decision to quit his/her job as a school psychologist. Each participant listed more than one reason for leaving his or her current position as a school psychologist. There were only two areas that two of the four participants listed as the main reasons for leaving: role restrictiveness and lack of building support. Other reasons indicated were: lack of personal opportunities (i.e., roles outside of work within the community lived in), lack of AEA support, lack of community support, advancement opportunity, move due to spouse, burned out, salary, and out of state move.

### Job Roles

Participants were asked to estimate the number of hours each week they are involved in the following areas of practice: standardized assessment, CBM assessment, direct interventions, problem-solving consultation, systems/organizational consultation, applied research/program evaluation. An 'other' category was also available in order for school psychologists to list other significant areas of their practice.

Participants had difficulty quantifying the number of hours they spent in various job roles each week due to the variance that occurs as a practitioner in the school setting; however, there were common job roles among the participants. All four participants spent nearly 20% of their work time in problem solving. Problem solving was defined as engaging in problem identification and problem analysis to determine the resources to be allocated on an individual student basis (Tilly, 2002). Only one participant identified spending time in systems level consultation; the other three participants consulted only on individual student problem solving cases. Three of the four participants spent 25-30% of their work week in assessment. Three of the participants were using CBM assessment, while the other participant predominantly used traditional standardized assessments. The remainder of the time fell into the 'other' job role category. Roles listed in this category were attending IEP meetings, team meetings, report writing, and training.

Following this estimation process, participants were then asked to decide how many hours each week they would prefer to spend in each of these areas of practice. There was no one specific job role that all participants would prefer spending more time doing. There were no patterns that could be determined by examining actual job roles



versus desired job roles. For example, participants engaging in a lot of assessment did not necessarily prefer to spend less time doing assessments. A pattern may not have emerged due to the few number of participants in this study.

### Perceived Role Expectations vs. Roles Experienced

Participants were asked to discuss their current role as a school psychologist. Specific questions were asked regarding their perceived role expectations versus the roles they experienced, how job roles have changed over time, and personal control over job roles.

Three of the four participants felt that the school psychologist role they experienced was different than they had expected. The roles experienced were influenced by the AEA that the school psychologist worked in. For example, two of the three participants had expected the role to be more systems-focused; however, after working in the field experienced more work with individual students. There were also expectations of two of the participants that their roles within the schools would be more consultative and school staff would be appreciative of their help; however, these participants felt the consultative role was hampered by staff that did not have the desire to change or who were resistant to help.

Participants were asked to discuss how their role as a school psychologist has changed since entering the field and how they felt about these changes. One participant was unable to answer this question due to being in the field for only one year. Of the other three participants, two felt their roles have changed. These changes included increased focus on systems within schools and data-based decision making. The two

participants that experienced a change in roles, however, had different feelings about these changes. The participant that has worked in Iowa for five years felt excited about the change in job roles, while the other participant, who has worked in the field for over 20 years, felt frustrated and negative about the change.

Personal control over job roles as a school psychologist was also explored. Of the participants interviewed, two felt they had a lot of control over their job roles. These participants mentioned being able to spend more time in areas of personal interest, such as direct interventions, and professional freedom to choose and implement research-based interventions. One participant felt there was no personal control over the roles experienced as a school psychologist. This participant felt the role of the school psychologist was strictly controlled by the AEA and the need to keep the school district happy.

#### Levels of Satisfaction

Satisfaction with specific aspects of the school psychologist position were rated on a 5-point Likert scale with a rating of one meaning "Very Dissatisfied" and a rating of five meaning "Very Satisfied." Areas that school psychologists were the most satisfied with were Resources ( $M = 4.25, SD = 0.96$ ) and Supervision ( $M = 4.00, SD = 0.82$ ). School psychologists rated Job Role ( $M = 2.75, SD = 1.50$ ) and Salary ( $M = 2.50, SD = 0.57$ ) as areas in which they were the least satisfied.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Only four school psychologists out of the 19 who left their positions participated in the interview process. This small number of participants makes it difficult to draw any broad generalizations to answer the research questions. Examining the data that were collected from the four participants showed that there were several reasons that factored into their decision to leave their positions as school psychologists. Some of these factors were out of the control of the practitioner, such as moving due to a spouse's career, while other factors resulted from the job environment, such as lack of advancement opportunity, salary, and burn out. The two areas that more than one participant provided as reasons for leaving their current positions were role restrictiveness and lack of building support.

Job satisfaction is important to retention of qualified school psychologists. Job satisfaction studies that have been previously conducted showed that school psychologists, in general, were satisfied with work and colleagues, supervision, and pay and benefits (Reschly, 2000). An area that has consistently been shown as an area with which school psychologists are dissatisfied is opportunity for advancement (Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Reschly, 2000). Results from the current study were somewhat consistent with the previous job satisfaction studies. School psychologists in this study were most satisfied with resources and supervision and least satisfied with job role and salary. Again, these satisfaction ratings were gathered from only four participants and may not reflect the feelings of the entire group of school psychologists who left their positions.

A study by Levinson (1990) showed that the greater the discrepancy between the actual and desired job roles, the less satisfied school psychologists were with their career. School psychologists who were less satisfied also perceived themselves to have less control over their own job roles. In the current study, there were no patterns that emerged when examining the actual job roles of school psychologists compared to their preferred or desired job roles. However, when participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their job role, as a group this was an area in which they were least satisfied. Also, two of the four participants reported feeling they had control over their own job role, yet overall they were dissatisfied with their job role. These results may be due to the small sample size and the results should be interpreted with caution. One participant was extremely dissatisfied with his job and work environment and his ratings may have significantly impacted the results.

The study of job satisfaction is imperative to finding answers to the shortage of school psychologists. Results from this study and previous studies indicated that lack of advancement opportunities were areas of dissatisfaction, which directly impacts the retention of school psychologists in the field. AEAs should use this as an opportunity to incorporate leadership positions in which school psychologists could still use their knowledge, but, perhaps, in a specialized manner (i.e., behavior, assessment, curriculum). As the field of school psychology moves toward a systems-based approach and away from a focus on individual students, more opportunities can become available to school psychologists who prefer more of a consultative role and less of a test and place role.

There was a major limitation of this study that should be considered. Only four of the 19 school psychologists who left their positions returned their consent form and were able to be interviewed. Due to this small sample size, it was impossible to make any broad generalizations or conclusions about why school psychologists in Iowa left their positions. Future research may want to focus on designing a procedure that results in more school psychologists participating in the study. The current study relied on supervisors within each AEA distributing the consent forms to school psychologists who were leaving their positions. Then the school psychologist was responsible for completing the consent form and returning it. There was no way to monitor if the consent forms were actually distributed, which may have impacted the return rate.

Instead of reacting to the number of school psychologists leaving their positions each year, AEAs would benefit from regularly evaluating the job satisfaction rates of their current staff of school psychologists. This would provide formative information of areas that need to be improved in order to retain practitioners. One area in which school psychologists have consistently been dissatisfied with is the opportunity for advancement. This should be a point of discussion among school psychologists at the state and national level when addressing the shortage of practitioners within the public schools if we want to begin to be proactive in the retention of school psychologists.

Examining the past trends in school psychology can be valuable to understanding the current shortage of school psychologists. Demographics, personnel needs, function and roles, employment conditions, and job satisfaction provide useful information that explains the condition that the field started in and where it is now. In order to make

improvements for the future it is necessary to learn about the history and past trends in the field of school psychology.

Information from these trends is useful for supervisors of school psychologists, administrators, faculty trainers, and others with responsibilities in the education of youth. School psychologists can also learn from these trends in order to advocate for themselves and the profession. Until the school psychologist shortage is obsolete, the current efforts of increasing recruitment, respecialization of clinical psychologists, and postponing retirement “The three ‘Rs’ for the future are more likely to be Resist, Recruit, and Retain than Relax, Retrain, and Retire” (Fagan, 2004, p. 427).

## REFERENCES

- Crespi, T.D. & Politikos, N.N. (2004) Respecialization as a school psychologist: Education, training, and supervision for school practice. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(4), 473-480.
- Curtis, M.J., Grier, J.E., Abshier, D.W., Sutton, N.T., & Hunley, S.A. (2002). School psychology: Turning the corner into the twenty-first century. *Communiqué, 30*(8), 1-5.
- Curtis, M.J., Grier, J.E., & Hunley, S.A. (2004). The changing face of school psychology: Trends in data and projections for the future. *School Psychology Review, 33*(1), 49-66.
- Curtis, M.J., Hunley, S.A., & Grier, E. (2004). The status of school psychology: Implications of a major personnel shortage. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(4), 431-442.
- Fagan, T.K. (1988). The historical improvement of the school psychology service ratio: Implications for future employment. *School Psychology Review, 17*(3), 447-458.
- Fagan, T.K. (2004). School psychology's significant discrepancy: Historical perspectives on personnel shortages. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(4), 419-430.
- Fagan, T.K., & Wise, P.S. (2000). *School psychology: Past, present, and future*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Hosp, J.L., & Reschly, D.J. (2002). Regional differences in school psychology practice. *School Psychology Review, 31*(1), 11-29.
- Huebner, E.S. (1993). Psychologists in secondary schools in the 1990s: Current functions, training, and job satisfaction. *School Psychology Quarterly, 8*(1), 50-56.
- Levinson, E.M. (1990). Actual/desired role functioning. Perceived control over role functioning, and job satisfaction among school psychologists. *Psychology in the Schools, 27*, 64-73.
- Levinson, E.M., Fetchkan, R., & Hohenshil, T.H. (1988). Job satisfaction among practicing school psychologists revisited. *School Psychology Review, 17*(1), 101-112.
- Little, S.G. & Akin-Little, A. (2004). Academic school psychologists: Addressing the shortage. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*(4), 451-459.

- Lund, A.R., Reschly, D.J., & Connolly Martin, L.M. (1998). School psychology personnel needs: Correlates of current patterns and historical trends. *School Psychology Review*, 27(1), 106-120.
- McMaster, M.D., Reschly, D.J., & Peters, J.M. (1989). *Directory of school psychology graduate programs*. Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Reschly, D.J. (2000). The present and future status of school psychology in the United States. *School Psychology Review*, 29(4), 507-522.
- Smith, D.K. (1984). Practicing school psychologists: Their characteristics, activities, and populations served. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, (15)6, 798-810.
- Thomas, A. (1998). *Directory of school psychology graduate programs*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Thomas, A. (2000). School psychology 2000. *Communiqué*, 28. Retrieved September 27, 2004, from [www.nasponline.org/publications/cq282sp2000.html](http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq282sp2000.html)
- Tilly, W. D. (2002). Best practices in school psychology as a problem-solving enterprise. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology IV* (pp. 21-36). Bethesda, MD: NASP Publications.
- Zhou, Z, Bray, M.A., Kehle, T.J., Theodore, L.A., Clark, E., & Jenson, W.R. (2004). Achieving ethnic minority in school psychology. *Psychology in the Schools*, 41(4), 443-450.
- Zins, J.E. & Halsell, A. (1986). Status of ethnic minority group members in school psychology training programs. *School Psychology Review*, 15(1), 76-83.



## APPENDIX

## EXIT TELEPHONE SURVEY – RECORD FORM

*Demographics*

Sex: M      F      1) Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

3.) Level of degree:    Master's      Specialist      Doctorate

3a.) Institution degree is from: \_\_\_\_\_

3b.) In state, why stay in Iowa? \_\_\_\_\_

3c.) If out of state, why practice in Iowa? \_\_\_\_\_

4.) Number of years worked in Iowa: \_\_\_\_\_

5.) Out-of-state: \_\_\_\_\_

5a.) Other states worked in: \_\_\_\_\_

5b.) Years spent practicing in each state: \_\_\_\_\_

6.) Previous work experience in education: \_\_\_\_\_

7.) Professional affiliations:    NASP      APA      ISPA      Other:

8.) Length of employment at most recent AEA: \_\_\_\_\_

9.) Contract length (in days): \_\_\_\_\_

10.) Salary: \_\_\_\_\_

11.) Practitioner to student ratio: \_\_\_\_\_

12.) Number of buildings served: \_\_\_\_\_

13.) School settings worked in: \_\_\_\_\_

14.) Proportion of time spent in each school: \_\_\_\_\_

15.)

a.) How much time is spent in travel from home to work? \_\_\_\_\_

b.) How much time in travel as part of the work day? \_\_\_\_\_

16.) What are your reasons for leaving?

- Retirement
- Move to new AEA ..... Which AEA: \_\_\_\_\_
- Move due to spouse
- Salary
- Move out of state ..... 16a.) Will you practice in that state? Yes No
- 16b.) Already have employment there? Yes No
- 16c.) What is the difference in salary? \_\_\_\_\_
- 16d.) What is the difference in job roles? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Other Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**Actual roles vs. Desired roles**

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 17.) How many hours per week do you spend in:   | 18.) Like to have spent: |
| a.) Standardized (traditional) assessment _____ | a.) _____                |
| b.) CBM (functional) assessment _____           | b.) _____                |
| c.) Direct intervention _____                   | c.) _____                |
| d.) Problem-solving consultation _____          | d.) _____                |
| e.) Systems/organizational consultation _____   | e.) _____                |
| f.) Applied research/program evaluation _____   | f.) _____                |
| g.) Other roles not included _____              | g.) _____                |

**Perceived role expectations vs. Experienced roles**

- 19.) Was your job different than what you expected? If yes, how so?
  
- 20.) Was your actual role what you wanted to do?
  
- 21.) Have your job roles changed over time? How?
  
- 22.) How do you feel about these changes?
  
- 23.) How much control did you feel you had over your own job role?

**Satisfied vs. Dissatisfied**

Rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how satisfied you were with the following areas:

	Very Dissatisfied			Very Satisfied	
24.) Supervision	1	2	3	4	5
25.) Resources	1	2	3	4	5
26.) Community work in	1	2	3	4	5
27.) Community lived in	1	2	3	4	5
28.) Job role	1	2	3	4	5
29.) Collegial support	1	2	3	4	5
30.) Salary	1	2	3	4	5

31.) What will you not miss about your job?

32.) What will you miss most about your job?