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## Understanding the Administrative Role fo School Psychology District Leaders

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*Brigham Young University*

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Understanding the Administrative Role of School Psychology District Leaders

Alivia Nicole Smith

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Educational Specialist

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## ABSTRACT

### Understanding the Administrative Role of School Psychology District Leaders

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Very few articles in the published research literature have considered the clinical supervision of school psychology and even fewer articles explore the administrative supervision of school psychologists. The purpose of this study is to describe the roles, and responsibilities, and challenges faced by district leaders who supervise school psychologists. Using a purposeful sample, participants met criteria for this study if they worked at the district level, supervised at least three school psychologists, and were responsible for hiring and firing school psychologists. Nineteen participants qualified for this study and completed a phone interview that included eight open-ended questions.

Participants shared that they primarily had managerial and leadership roles during their busy and unpredictable work weeks. Participants also reported challenges directly and indirectly related to the national shortage of school psychologists, difficulties with large workloads, the need to advocate for the field of school psychology, and a lack of professional guidance and training in their role.

Implications for practice include developing a professional organization or community of practice for administrative supervisors, establishing best practice guidelines, and providing a defined role for these leaders. By coming to know the roles and challenges that district administrators are facing, the field of school psychology can find ways to support administrative supervision endeavors.

Keywords: management personnel, school administrators, school psychology, leadership, management

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I would like to thank my parents for instilling in me a love of learning and helping me push through the doubts I had while pursuing a higher education. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Brandon Smith, for supporting me during graduate school, helping me remember that I can do hard things, and for celebrating every success with me along the way. I love you!

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## DESCRIPTION OF THESIS STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This thesis, *Understanding the Administrative Role of School Psychology District Leaders* is written in a hybrid format. The hybrid format is a combination of traditional thesis requirements with journal publication formatting. The preliminary pages of the thesis (i.e., pages i-viii) are requirements for submission to the university. In preparation for disseminating this research through publication, the thesis report is presented as a journal article and conforms to length and style requirements for submitting research reports to education journals.

The literature review in its entirety is included in Appendix A. Please refer to the other appendices for the interview materials; Appendix B includes the Interview Questions, Appendix C includes Recruiting Email Templates, Appendix D is the Telephone Protocol, and Appendix E is the Thank You Letter. This thesis format also contains two reference lists. The first reference list contains references included in the journal-ready article. The second list includes all citations used in the Appendix entitled “Review of the Literature.”

## Introduction

School psychologists can receive two types of supervision: clinical supervision and administrative supervision. Clinical supervision, also known as professional supervision, has a focus on professional skills and competencies (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008). A clinical supervisor is required to have training in school psychology since they supervise professional practice and need the relevant knowledge and skills (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Administrative supervision, on the other hand, has a primary focus on the logistics rather than the professional development of its supervisees (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], n.d.a). Clinical and administrative supervision are highlighted as best practice (Simon & Swerdlik, 2016), help with retention of school psychologists (NASP, n.d.a), and lead to positive outcomes for supervisees (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Harrison & Thomas, 2014; NASP, n.d.b.; Silva, Newman, Guiney, Valley-Gray, & Barrett, 2016; Zins, Murphy, & Wess, 1989).

Although guidelines exist for clinical supervision (American Psychological Association [APA], 2014; NASP, 2010a) the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have yet to establish clear guidelines for administrative supervision; likely due to the limited current knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of administrative supervisors, their training, and other issues facing this slice of the profession. With limited knowledge on the implementation of administrative supervision, the topic of supervision is gaining popularity in research. (Angell, 2016; Freeman, 2017; Kaas, 2017; Lopez, 2007). Very few studies have looked into describing the demographic, roles and responsibilities, training, and other issues facing administrative supervisors (Bahr et al., 1996; Chafouleas, Clonana, & Vanauken, 2002; Fischetti & Crespi, 1999; Harvey & Pearrow, 2010; Hunley et al., 2000; Zins et al., 1989).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Adding to the complexity of the challenges of practicing school psychology are the challenges of supervising school psychologists, especially administrative supervisors.

Administrative supervisors play an important role related to how school psychologists function in their schools; however, the research literature currently provides few details about the roles and responsibilities of administrative supervisors, their background and training, and how they describe the challenges they face in the field.

More specifically, the field of school psychology could benefit in understanding more about administrative supervision and the needs of these supervisors. Very few articles in the literature have looked at clinical supervision of school psychology and even fewer articles exist on administrative supervision. McIntosh and Phelps (2000) suggested that qualitative research cannot only help us better understand supervision, but also provide valuable insight into identifying problems related to supervision. Since there are few studies on administrative supervision for school psychology or what these district leaders do, we are consequently limited in understanding the needs of school psychology supervisors and/or district leaders.

## **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the role of administrative supervision of school psychologist and district leaders and the issues they face.

## **Research Questions**

This study will address the following research questions:

1. What training do administrative supervisors of school psychologists have? What training do they have that is specific to being an administrator?
2. What do administrative supervisors of school psychologists do? What are their

- primary responsibilities and roles? How many SPs do they supervise? How many students are in their district? How many buildings?
3. What challenges are district leaders facing?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants in this study included administrative supervisors of school psychologists. Due to the population of administrative supervisors potentially having too broad of a definition, the researchers planned to include individuals who worked at the district administrative level in public schools, supervised at least three school psychologists, and had the primary responsibility of hiring and firing school psychology personnel. This helped us distinguish between administrative supervisors and clinical supervisors who not only need to have experience in school psychology, but also provide professional clinical supervision or have a focus on professional development.

In order to provide a more generalizable sample of administrative supervisors, we selected a purposeful sample of school districts in the states of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Nevada. In order to gather state district information, we first obtained a list of districts in each state by looking at each state's board of education website. Next, we gathered the district's student population information through the National Center for Education Statistics website (NCES, n.d.). We organized districts in each state by size according to their student population. Large, medium, and small districts respectively had 25,000+, 25,000-8,000, and below 8,000 students. By using a stratified sampling procedure, we selected a number of large, medium, and small districts from each state. We chose to target large and medium districts first based on the logic that larger school districts were more likely to have at least three school psychologists.

Next, we used district websites and made phone calls to identify the district administrative leader. As eluded to earlier, we used a purposeful sampling method to select districts that, as reported by the potential participant, had at least three school psychologists in their district. See Table 1 for the district information of the participants.

Charter school districts were not included because they typically have only one school psychologist, and we anticipated that data from charter schools would not be generalizable to the general field of school psychology. After searching for information about how many school psychologists are working in charter schools we were not able to find information on the number of school psychologists working in charter schools or how their roles may be similar or different from school psychologists working in traditional public school settings (NASP, n.d.a).

Table 1

*District Information*

<i>Category</i>	$\bar{x}$	Range	SD
Schools in the District	41	4-87	24
Students in the District	30,112	70-80,000	22,708
School Psychologists Supervised	20	3-56	16
Other Professionals Supervised	59	0-306	72

*Note.* Numbers were rounded to the nearest whole number. Other professions listed include occupational therapists, behavior specialists, paraprofessionals, social workers, speech language pathologists, and physical therapists.

Almost every participant in this study had a different job title. Job titles included Director of Special Services, Lead School Psychologist, Director of Special Programs, Mental Health Specialist, Assistant Director of Student Services, School Psychologist, Special Education Supervisor, Director of Individualized Instructional Programs School Psychology Coordinator,

District Lead Psychologist, Director of Special Education, Executive Director, Related Services Coordinator, Co-lead Psychologist, Program Specialist—Guidance, Exceptional Student Specialist (ESS). The researchers only had knowledge of one district that consisted of having two individuals who fulfilled the role of an administrative supervisor of school psychologist. See Table 2 for the demographic data of the participants.

We contacted 52 individuals who we felt matched the population we were looking at for our study. The 34 individuals who did not end up participating in this study were unable to participate due to failing to return voicemails or emails or not meeting all three criteria. District leaders were more likely to participate when the researchers had a connection to those individuals. The result was a 37% response rate.

### **Settings**

Participants were interviewed over the phone in a location of their choice. The researchers conducting this study completed the phone interviews either on their university campus or at home in a place away from distractions and where interviews could be conducted confidentially.

### **Measures**

The interviews consisted of approximately 15 questions. From start to finish, it took each participant approximately 45 minutes to complete the study.

### **Procedures**

Once we identified the school districts and administrator from their respective district, we called or emailed them as a means of inviting them to participate in our research study. During that first phone contact, participants were asked the participation criteria questions. When a participant met the participation criteria, we either sent them our Qualtrics survey that requested

their consent to participate in the research and to collect their demographic data or completed the survey for them over the phone during the time scheduled for the interview. After explaining the rights of research participants and gaining their consent to be a research participant, we proceeded to interview each participant. Participants typically requested to proceed with the interview at another mutually agreed upon time. The interviews were semi-structured open-ended interviews where the researchers ask the same questions in the order that flowed with the interview. The researchers ensured the Qualtrics survey was completed before conducting the scheduled phone interview. Phone interviews were recorded using a QuickTime Player's audio recording feature and the Voice Recorder iPhone App.

This research study reached saturation at 19 interviews. After interviews were completed, a team of undergraduate research assistants transcribed the phone interviews. Transcribed data was then analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003). In order to reward the valuable time of participating administrative supervisors, each interviewee was mailed a \$50 VISA gift card.

A team of individuals knowledgeable about administration and qualitative research aided in improving the interview questions. As suggested by Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingener, Pugach, and Richardson (2005), member checking is useful because participants can provide critical feedback. Member checking for this study consisted of the researcher asking the first two administrative supervisors who we interviewed for their feedback on our Qualtrics survey and interview questions.

Approval to conduct this study was obtained by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the interviews began. However, upon receiving the IRB application for this study, the IRB determined that it did meet the regulatory definition of human subjects research, thus

official IRB approval was not needed. Despite not needing IRB approval for this study, the researchers still sought to follow ethical guidelines. A potential risk of this study that was identified was that responses could be traced back to the respondent, thus posing a threat to confidentiality. In order to minimize this risk to participants, personally identifiable information was not linked with the respondent. Instead, each respondent was assigned a number. In order to protect participants' self-determination, respondents were also be informed before the interview takes place that they were free to discontinue the interview or not answer a question at any time.

Once the IRB reviewed our research, the researchers performed a purposeful sampling of small, medium, and large school districts in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and Nevada. The researcher identified the administrative supervisor through the district website and contacted them by telephone or email to ask them to complete the interview. To ensure that participants were the population of interest, our screener questions asked if they were first, a district administrator, second, responsible for hiring and firing school psychologists, and third, supervise at least three school psychologists. When these criteria were met, we proceeded to interview the participant. In order to encourage participation, participants will be informed that they would receive a \$50 VISA gift card if they participated in the interview.

### **Research Design**

This study was the first part of a larger study that also explored what administrative supervisors are doing to address the shortage of school psychologists. While this study was primarily qualitative, quantitative formatted questions were included. The phone interview included eight open ended questions, five of the demographic questions were in quantitative format (e.g., "what is your age?"), and there were an additional six quantitative formatted



questions included in the demographic survey that collected categorical or nominal data through questions such as “what is your official job title?”

### **Data Analysis**

Upon collecting and while transcribing data from the interviews, the researcher and a team of research assistants used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), an analysis technique used to analyze individual experiences. This in-depth qualitative analysis technique involved first reading and rereading the script to note emerging themes, secondly, drawing connections between the themes, and thirdly, creating a table of these themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Quantitative responses were analyzed using the analysis feature on Qualtrics.

As suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003), the researchers divided the 19 interview transcripts and created a list of micro and macro level themes from each interview. Interviews were reviewed on a visual and audio level; the researchers read through the transcripts and re-listened to the audio records to capture the nuances in verbal communication. Micro level themes emerged from how the participant responded to each individual research questions while macro level themes summarized the overall message communicated by the participant. The research advisor read through each transcript and provided a second macro level summary of each interview. After each researcher completed micro and macro level analysis, the researchers met as a team to draw connections between the themes of the interviews as a whole. The team organized these themes using a bubble flow chart and discussed which themes were the most pervasive throughout the interviews. Once themes were decided upon, the researchers went back through each interview again to search for supporting evidence of those themes to then support the discovered themes of the research questions.

When reporting the data, the researcher included direct quotes from the qualitative

responses in order to provide evidence for the conclusions and interpretations (Brantlinger et al., 2005). The researchers also used the reporting checklist provided by Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia (2005). Some of these items included reporting how many individuals agreed to participate and the response rate (Kelley et al., 2005).

## **Results**

### **The Training and Credentials of Administrative Supervisors**

The focus of this research question was to gather further information on the training and credentials of administrative supervisors. Through the demographic survey that each participant completed, the data demonstrated that the majority of participants had a Master's degree as their highest earned degree. About a third of participants reported having an Education Specialist degree while the remaining 11% reported having a Ph.D. Additionally, approximately 80% of participants reported holding an administrator license at the time of their interview. The participants who did not have an administrator license worked in districts that were either in the urban or suburban setting. The district setting that participants worked in did not seem to be correlated with whether or not they had an administrative license.

Table 2

*Demographic Data of the Participants*

<i>Category</i>		<i>n</i>	
Gender	Male	68%	13
	Female	32%	6
Mean Age		47	
Race/Ethnicity	Caucasian	79%	15
	Other	21%	4
Highest Earned Degree	Master's	58%	12
	Education Specialist (Ed.S.)	32%	5
	Ph.D.	11%	2
Administrator License?	Yes	79%	15
	No	21%	4
District Setting	Urban	21%	4
	Rural	21%	4
	Suburban	58%	11

*Note.* Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Administrative Supervisors of School Psychologists**

Several themes were identified to address the second research question: What is the role of district leaders who directly supervise school psychologists? Participants shared a wide range of responsibilities and duties given their similar job titles.

**Theme one: I provide a broad range of administrative and managerial tasks.** One of the most prominent themes in response to the first interview question, “how would you describe your responsibilities as an administrative supervisor of school psychologists?” reveals that respondents perform a wide variety of tasks as a part of their role as an administrator. Activities that referred to responsibilities that focused on the needs of the school district was aligned with this theme. Something as simple as being in charge of replacing printer ink at a district building

was mentioned in the interviews. Other administrative activities included being involved with hiring and firing personnel, performing evaluations of school psychologists, overseeing district compliance procedures, supervising other departments (e.g., occupational therapy, speech language pathology, paraprofessionals, etc.), allocating resources (e.g., testing materials, assigning school psychologists to schools, etc.), and planning or attending meetings/trainings.

Below are some examples in response to this interview question and that align with this theme:

**Participant A4:** [My other role is] to support the school psychologist; [Making] sure they have what they need to do their jobs effectively. So making sure they have testing materials supplies, [making] sure their working conditions are adequate with office space, [and] computers. So being a support to all the school psychologists; providing them with anything they might need to do their job effectively.

**Participant A7:** We're in a building with other related servers and behavior specialists and I'm kind of the point person on making sure that we have paper and that the toner gets replaced and that work orders get put in for when little things break, etc. And we help organize trainings for special ed. teachers and other folks as well as some for whole schools. We also did deal with hiring, both for the Behavior Support Team and school psychs [*sic*] and interviewing obviously is part of that.

**Participant R3:** I think the umbrella of all that is my first responsibility as a special ed director is to guarantee that services that are on the IEP are being provided...to make sure that our school psychologists understand their roles and responsibilities in the IEP process and the eligibility determination process. Those are all outlined under IDEA. So I supervise that first and foremost.

**Participant R7:** Describe my responsibilities? I think that the biggest responsibility is helping administrators, principals in schools, and school psychologists work together to best meet the needs on a school wide basis.

**Theme two: I provide leadership.** Participants described their role as being a leader, which incorporates two subthemes: supporting their school psychologists and changing policies or creating structural/organizational changes. In contrast to describing managerial responsibilities that focused on keeping the organization running, as described by theme one, participants described aspects of their job that focused on the needs and development of their employees. These district leaders were concerned about and focused on ways in which they could help their school psychologists set goals and progress as a working professional, emphasized the importance of building relationships with their supervisees, a need for interpersonal skills, and expressing warmth and support for their school psychologists.

Whereas managers are focused on maintaining the current functioning of the organization, leaders seek ways in which to improve an organization and strengthen employees through creativity and innovation (Kotterman, 2006). Themes from the interviews that relate to this subtheme were that participants were involved in changing district policy and helping with structural or organizational changes. Furthermore, a sense of having a vision for their supervisees and for what their roles could be was evident in the responses. In terms of innovation, participants highlighted the need for being a proactive problem solver.

**Participant R4:** I am the one responsible for the continual growth of our school psychologists and building capacity in skills related to the field of school psychology, but also skills related to the bigger vision for learning in our district. I am also responsible for supporting school psychologists and working with teams at their schools and how to

better conduct the responsibilities that they have and impact their roles. I'm also involved in helping school psychologists engage in a professional learning community and supporting that work to increase their understanding of that framework, because they work with teachers and school personnel who also work in professional learning communities and we also engage in our work and collect data to support bigger systems and policies.

**Participant A7:** As school leaders within this school psych [*sic*] area we have some influence on how policy gets shaped and can get policy being response to what the state does. In some respects, despite the many limitations that I all-too-freely shared with you, in many respects it is very nice because we get to influence not just a single student, not just a couple of individual schools, but, in my case, the entire district. We help implement trainings that change the way that special and general educators look at learning.

**Participant A2:** They [school psychologists] come to me for whatever they need. So those relationships can be built, and really everything's built off of relationships anyway, you know you're success comes off of that. If they trust you and I trust them, we're going to get a lot of good work done.

**Theme three: My workload is heavy and unpredictable.** One last major theme in response to the question "how would you describe your responsibilities as an administrative supervisor of school psychologists?" was that participants referenced the heavy, broad, and unpredictable nature of their job. The first theme emphasizes the broad range of administrative and managerial tasks, but this theme describes the nature of the tasks an administrative supervisor is responsible for. Some descriptors that describe nature of these tasks include the

magnitude, intensity, or how much time is involved. Many participants used the word such as “hectic” to describe their day-to-day job as an administrative supervisor. Respondents indicated that they spent many hours at their work, with one respondent reporting his work week was between 50-60 hours a week.

Also included in this theme is the broad role described by participants. When participants were asked “how would you describe your responsibilities as an administrative supervisor of school psychologists?” many of them had to pause and think about how to adequately describe all that their role entails which implied that their jobs were hard to describe without specific probes. Additionally, participants described a variety of tasks that were not always specifically related to school psychology such as coordinating Medicaid billing.

Lastly, participants described the unpredictable nature of their role as administrative supervisors. This theme came through the interviews when participants seemed to be hesitant when asked the follow-up question, “how would you describe your typical workweek?” It turns out that most administrative supervisors do not necessarily have a “typical” workweek that was predictable or consistent.

**Participant A7:** To be honest with you I probably work about 50 or 60 hours a week at this point. That's about enough to get it done.

**Participant R1:** I do actual supervision with three interns this year and I'm supervising two doctoral level interns and one Ed.S. level and specialist level intern. That is something I do weekly. I am a part of the special ed. department in that I am one of the administrators that is involved in looking at special education--their needs, that kind of thing. I participate in their audits every week in the fall and through about January...I participate in the hiring and interviewing of all applicants for school psychology

positions... Every week I also participate in appeal hearings... So in that role--that's supposed to be half my time but it probably takes up about 20% of my time--I will consult with staff as far as determining what kind of classes we're going to offer...I have a staff meeting weekly with my evening coordinators, my education coordinator, and my community-outreach coordinator...I'm also involved with a clinical staffing that occurs every Thursday afternoon where I'm supposed to be going out for that and listening to all the cases that came through the [Family Center]... I also attend a special ed. staff meeting every other week, probably twice a month you could say. I also attend a principals meeting once a month. I'm also part of the district leadership team that's made up of people in curriculum and some administrators... And then I'm supposed to also be a member of the mental health coordination of care court... I haven't been to a meeting in several months because they occur on Wednesday afternoons. Like today, I have two meetings that interfere with this particular assignment. So I go when I'm able to, otherwise I'm unable to attend. I'm also the person that is a liaison with a child psychiatrist that we contact services with...I'm the person that's liaison to set up those evaluations and schedule them and get the testing done...Oh, and I'm also the district 504 coordinator for the entire school district...And I also represent our district in any kind of formal complaints with the state or the office for civil rights. So that's another piece of my job that takes a lot of time.

### **Challenges Facing Administrative Supervisors**

The third research question in this study was intended to identify the issues faced by district administrators. The interview question was intentionally open-ended to limit any possible constraints on responses. The second interview question was simply, "What issues are



you facing?” Similarly, the follow-up question, “Is there anything else I should know to fully understand the role and function of district leaders who supervise school psychologists?” was intended to identify aspects of their position that were not previously addressed.

**Theme one: Shortage of school psychologists.** The predominant challenges alluded to in response to this interview question were directly and indirectly related to the school psychology shortage. Some participants even reported this as the only concern they were currently facing. Many participants described issues related to school psychologist retention and recruitment. Others alluded to the effects the shortage has had on finding less than ideal solutions to the school psychologist shortage. Furthermore, challenges such as burnout and turnover were referenced in the interviews. Given that the potential pool of individuals who can fulfill school psychologist positions is already limited, dealing with school psychologists who leave the field or a position due to burnout or turnover only exacerbates the problem for districts already struggling to recruit and retain school psychologists. Additionally, school psychologists are likely experiencing burnout because they are carrying a workload that should be split amongst more school psychologists. However, since the nation has not yet been able to achieve a greater number of school psychologists, current school psychologists are unfortunately stuck shouldering a less than ideal workload.

**Participant A1:** Turnover is always an issue. There is a fair amount, you know between people leaving and retiring and whatnot.

**Participant A2:** Probably the number one issue is just being able to find them [school psychologists]. We’re struggling; we had positions open for two years, and so [when] we’re not able to find people to fill those, we have to bring our own and then grow them. They have to go back to school and go get those credentials. We have not been able to

fill those with already certified school psychologists, so that would be the number one issue that we have here in a rural setting, being able to find people that are certified to do the job.

**Participant A7:** We are dealing with a little bit of burnout right now. For some folks, not a substantial amount, but things are pretty rough right now. We should be operating with two more psychs [*sic*] in a district this small.

**Participant R3:** The first one is just the fact that we have a shortage of the number of school psychologists available for us to hire in the state and particularly in a large urban-sized district in a rural area. So that probably is one of our more pressing challenges.

**Participant R4:** The big glaring issue for us, which is probably not going to be surprising to you if you've talked to other districts too, is just numbers for us. The idea of having enough school psychologists to meet the needs of our growing district is constantly on my mind.

**Theme two: Heavy workloads.** Not only were heavy workloads a theme of the first research question, but they were also mentioned in response to the questions asking participants about the issues they were facing as an administrative supervisor. Due to having long workweeks and needing to fulfill a variety of responsibilities each week, participants reported that they were spread thin in their jobs. Consequently, participants reported feeling that they did not have enough time to devote to the school psychologists in their district.

In addition to the already heavy workloads was that some participants were facing, the respondents shared that they had to spend their limited time supporting less skilled staff. Some participants reported that they were training and instructing employees that were hired to serve as school psychologists who did not have formal training in school psychology. As a result, these

district leaders had to provide extensive support and guidance to professionals who lacked the training to be school psychologists.

Finally, three participants reported that they were also responsible for providing school psychology services in one or more schools. Although these participants reported enjoying working in schools and providing direct services, they also mentioned that it was something they had to learn to balance with their role as a district administrative supervisor. It is possible that these administrators were not actively seeking a role in leadership, but were nominated for the position.

**Participant A1:** You know we have, I think, 8 or 9 new school psychs [*sic*] this year, so that requires more support and training. I think it's important to understand how much time it does take to support school psychologists, and all related services.

**Participant A8:** I'm over school psychologists, but I'm also over so many other things that I feel like I don't put the time in to every one of the things that need to happen.

**Participant A4:** Our other applicants [for school psychology positions] tend to be in other areas -- social workers, we've hired social workers in the past, and we've hired some school counselors, who have strengths in areas of counseling and intervention, but definite weaknesses in assessment and special education in general. So once we hire these folks, it takes quite a lot of mentoring, supervision, professional development, and hand holding to do the job that a school psychologist - well-trained - is meant to do.

**Theme three: Advocating and educating.** Regarding this topic, participants described educating individuals in the schools and in the community about the role of school psychologists, which involved bringing awareness about what school psychologists could contribute. At other

times this meant that they were advocating for a broader role of school psychologists beyond being just “testers” in the district.

**Participant A5:** So I feel like the biggest thing I do now is advocate for our group and all the skills that we bring to the table because a lot of times people just don't know. You know, I think you ask anybody out of the street: "Do you know what a school psychologist does?" Nine times out of ten no one gets it. So it's part of educating the world about all the skills we have to support kids.

**Participant R4:** Other challenges that I see in this role is really helping and educate other groups about all the skills that a school psychologist can really offer in a general ed setting, not just a special education setting. We're getting there. I think there's been a lot of group over the last couple of years that I've been able to do this and we're continually trying to impact other departments and other people working in general ed to see the validity of school psychologists in the movement to support all students, not just tier three or special ed. students. And one of the ways we're doing that is through social-emotional learning and how that impacts them in tier one instruction and what role a school psychologist can play in that tier one instruction, not just tier three.

**Participant R6:** I've run into is people [who lack] understanding what [what] the role of a psychologist is and how to use that better. So, I feel like we have a lot of different skills, and assets, and interest that we can bring to the table and I think we're viewed very narrowly.

Beyond advocating for the broad role of school psychologists in the district, one individual saw a need to recruit individuals into the field beginning in high school and then

making school psychology more visible at the universities, thus increasing the amount of individuals pursuing a career in school psychology.

**Theme four: Providing adequate supervision is a challenge.** First, participants spoke about the challenge of offering adequate supervision and support to the individuals they supervise. Participants reported being concerned that they were not able to adequately support school psychologists. Multiple participants emphasized the importance of school psychologists being supervised by a school psychologist, and for other professions (e.g., speech language pathology, occupational therapists, etc.) to also be supervised by someone in the respective field. Participants argued that having a background in the area of supervision was paramount to being able to understand how to lead those individuals and for the supervisees to feel understood by their supervisor. Additionally, familiarity with a field also lends itself to having a responsive way of evaluating supervisees. Relatedly, the participants agreed that it was sometimes challenging to provide doctoral level supervision to those who needed supervision at that level.

**Participant A1:** I think this role also requires a firsthand experience with the field of school psychology, we've had some individuals in the past who were administrators over school psychologists and they had great strengths in other ways, but not understanding school psychologists and what they do I think created some challenges in their supervision.

**Participant R7:** I've never been a school psychologist [...] So that's the trickiest thing for me; identifying what's good school psychology without having the necessary training myself to really just know it off the bat.

### **Additional Insights on the Roles and Challenges of Administrative Supervisors**

In addition to the seven primary themes, participants communicated some other important ideas that help provide further understanding about their roles and the challenges they are facing. Since these ideas were not prevalent (i.e., the majority of the interviews did not support them), but had at least two participants mention them, they will be briefly described in this latter section. In response to the first research question, which was intended to capture the roles and responsibilities of the participants, participants provided descriptions beyond being a manager, a leader, and having heavy, unpredictable roles; participants described their role in terms of being a consultant, a liaison, a reactive problem solver, and a school psychologist. Participants who saw themselves as consultants described themselves as being seen as an really knowledgeable in their field, providing supervisees guidance on the concerns or questions they had, and being available for consultation via email, phone calls, and even text messages.

**Participant R2:** So my responsibilities sort of on a day-to-day basis are to be a consultant for any of those school psychologists in the districts that they have any questions about procedures or protocols or if they want to do case consultation.

**Participant R7:** I am the person that they contact when they have questions, comments, concerns, both about a student, about educators, about principals in their buildings, and about teams in their buildings.

Additionally, participants described their role in terms of being a liaison or someone who relayed messages between different departments within the school district.

**Participant A5:** I guess it would probably just be like interfacing with all the principals if there are issues or if there are concerns about someone's performance or even just concerns about what is this person supposed to be doing... I would say that probably the

only other thing is making sure that I can be like a liaison between the psych [*sic*] group and their principals.

**Participant R7:** But mainly I'm a conduit for communication I guess is the best way to put it.

**Participant A7:** Specifically as an administrative supervisor, I am in charge of relaying messages.

Next, participants described being a reactive problem solver who responded to problems rather than proactively seeking potential problems and preventing them.

**Participant R5:** I know this sounds funny, so forgive me. I put out a lot of fires. I'm a fireman, okay?

**Participant R9:** So, a lot of the work is planning and prepping for professional development and support. The other work is attending regular meetings and some of the work is putting out fires.

Lastly, a few participants described being school psychologists in addition to their administrative role. Participants that reported being a school psychologist reported having a student caseload and being responsible for a school or two.

**Participant A5:** I also carry a case of my own just so that I could remember what it's like to be a school psychologist; I am the psychologist for a high school here in town in addition to this other job.

**Participant A7:** Fifty percent [of my work week is] just clinical school psychology kind of work, including assessments, counseling services, etc.

Other ideas also emerged in response to the third research question that sought information on the challenges participants were facing. Some participants described the lack of

professional development in their respective administrative roles and consequently a learning curve. For the participants who were not previously a school psychologist themselves, they mentioned that there was a learning curve because they had to familiarize themselves with the activities and responsibilities of school psychology. A few participants also described not receiving preparatory training in their role of managing, leading, or supervising others. Lastly, one participant mentioned that administrative supervisors lack an established professional development group for school psychology district leaders.

**Participant A3:** We have not established a kind of consortium or work group of school psychologists district leaders. There's probably room and value for maybe creating something like that so that maybe, you know a monthly or every other month basis, we get folks in like kind positions wrestling with the same issues together, quickly just comparing notes doing some of the problem solving, strategizing, you know some of these agendas.

**Participant A6:** For me, and I think that most directors will probably say that if you're not a school psychologist yourself, there's [somewhat] of a learning curve. You have to become familiar with all the tests, all the processes, all the things that a psychologist can and should be doing.

**Participant R2:** I think being a coordinator or a supervisor of the school psychologists isn't something that we're really trained in doing in graduate school... We didn't get into school psychology to manage adults that much, so that's a learning curve that definitely takes place when you switch out of the schools into the district office.

Secondly, some participants reported that one of the important issues they deal with was insufficient resources to cover the needs of students and supervisees, which included testing



materials and funding to support additional school psychologists. Furthermore, a few participants reported that their districts lack the funding to readily pay school psychologists more.

**Participant A1:** You know probably everyone says that [limited resources], but I think limited resources to meet the needs of school psychs [*sic*], as far as you know, tests and protocols, resources and tools they need to do perform their jobs.

**Participant A5:** I think the biggest issue is always I just want more money. I want more funding for schools psychs [*sic*]. Obviously I'm biased, but I feel like we play a really important role for kids and I want that mental health money to go towards school psychs [*sic*] and not other disciplines.

Thirdly, some participants reported having a limited sphere of influence within the siloed realm of education. Participants reported feeling that decisions made in the district were outside of their control.

**Participant A7:** Our budgets are pretty tight right now—At least that's the message that I generally get from top people, that everything is tight.

**Participant R2:** [I try] to be really open to hearing what their concerns [school psychologists] are and either helping them to understand why things are the way they are if they're not things we can change, or help them problem solve through whatever issues that they're with.

Fourth, participants described how the rural location of the district leads to various issues within the district.

**Participant R3:** So I think specifically one of the unique challenges we have, compared to anyone else in Utah is that on the Wasatch Front, we have the three or four major

universities that produce school psychologists. One of the biggest challenges that we have is that we are three hundred miles to the South. So, all the psychologists, when they go through their program up there, typically get picked up by local districts as a part of their practicum. We don't even get the opportunity to do that.

**Participant R6:** I think the ruralness of where we're at and I would say the other two areas as well. I would say the two that I mentioned, and that if we lose people they're going to a more urban area or they're going to a job that has a better benefits package or salary

**Participant A8:** We do have a hard time; we're a rural area. We have between some of our schools about a four-hour drive distance between them. So we have a really challenging time trying to fill our positions, and meet the needs of our students across a very large geographical district.

Lastly, a few participants described addressing specific student needs as a challenge; tough student needs such as behaviors, providing trauma informed practices and meeting social/emotional needs.

**Participant R1:** I think that in terms of challenges, I think that we are dealing with increasingly more severe behavior problems that children are exhibiting.

**Participant R5:** One of the things that were always concerned about is behavior and it's not going away. In fact, it's increasing.

### **Discussion**

The extant professional literature provides little information about the demographic characteristics, roles, responsibilities, and issues facing the administrative supervisors of school psychologists, which was the purpose of this research. Through interviews with current

administrative supervisors, the author sought to explore and describe how these field-based leaders function, what their primary day-to-day activities are, and what challenges they describe.

In the field of school psychology, two different types of supervision are typical: clinical supervision and administrative supervision. Previous research states that not all school psychologists have access to clinical supervision (Zins et al., 1989). However, school psychologists who work in the traditional school setting should theoretically have an administrative supervisor who provides support at the district level, although they may also deliver direct clinical supervision (Curtis, Castillo, & Gelley, 2012). While the field has a limited knowledge of what makes clinical supervision effective (NASP, 2010b; NASP, n.d.a; Silva et al., 2016), the field is even more limited in understanding what administrative supervision practices are in place.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Previous research indicates that more than 80% of school psychology practitioners are women (NASP, n.d.a.). For this small convenience sample, the percentage of males/females in this research study was quite different with almost 70% of the sample being male. However, this sample is very small and not representative of the population, so possible conclusions about gender need to be considered with caution. Given that approximately 80% of the sample reported having an administrator license or endorsement, such licensure appears to be an important prerequisite for an administrative position. However, this educational license has a general focus that it intended to prepare teachers to be building principals, rather than being a district administrative supervisor of school psychologists.

Traditionally, women tend to have more familial responsibility after work (Pew Research Center, 2013), which could mean they do not have time to earn an administrator

endorsement, which can function as a gatekeeper to administrative positions. Or, the cultures of some school districts may not encourage or welcome female administrators. Lastly, in this sample of participants, the demographic characteristics of race and district type mirror what is found in the national studies that describe the field of school psychologists (NASP, n.d.a.).

### **Job Description**

The respondents consistently reported that their positions required a very broad range of activities: ensuring that the printer was working, assigning school psychologists to schools, and then being on-call to respond to urgent questions. While the specific responsibilities of each participant varied, the responses did indicate that these administrators viewed their role as quite expansive, unpredictable, and often reactionary. The variety of job titles that were reported imply that districts view school psychology administrators in different ways and may be a reflection that there is a lack of understanding, at the district level, of what school psychologists do.

While 16 respondents were responsible for supervising a variety of professionals (e.g., occupational therapists, behavior specialists), many participants emphasized how important it is for an individual in the role of supervising school psychologists to have a background in school psychology; “I think this role also requires a firsthand experience with the field of school psychology” (Participant A1). The same opinion was held for other professions; “I think people like the idea of being evaluated by one of their own” (Participant A5).

The respondents also emphasized that part of their job was advocating for the school psychologists in their district. This often involved ensuring that administrators and other educators understood the broad role that school psychologists could have beyond assessing students for special education eligibility. The participants were responsible for evaluating the

performance of school psychologists and facilitating job satisfaction and personal growth for each of their employees. Ensuring that school psychologists in their district had access to quality professional development was another important role.

This extensive job description implied that administrative supervisors could be and often were overwhelmed, needed to have excellent organizational skills, and use effective communication to do their job. Having a deep understanding of the issues facing their school psychologists also seemed especially important in order to respond to frequent questions and advocate for the role of school psychologists.

### **Shortage of School Psychologists**

The interview questions did not directly ask about the shortage of school psychologists; however, almost without exception, the participants indicated that the shortage was the primary issue they faced. More importantly, the shortage influenced how they may function as an administrator. For example, if the district hired less than ideal candidates, then the supervisor may have been responsible for ensuring that these professionals had the support they needed to function competently.

Given that hiring and firing school psychologists is one of the primary responsibilities of administrative supervisors, it is of no surprise that the shortage of school psychologists is at the forefront of their minds; “The idea of having enough school psychologists to meet the needs of our growing district is constantly on my mind” (Participant R4). In addition to having to remain vigilant with recruiting school psychologists, participants also had to cope with the ongoing challenge of retaining school psychologists; “Turnover is always an issue. There is a fair amount, you know between people leaving and retiring and whatnot” (Participant A1).

The challenge of retaining and recruiting school psychologists during the national shortage of school psychologist, as indicated in the interviews, implies that district administrators feel like they are constantly running from behind to secure school psychologists so that it does not become an insurmountable task.

### **Implications for Practice**

Both APA and NASP have established guidelines for clinical supervision (APA, 2014; NASP, 2010a), but there is a lack of guidance on best practice standards for administrative supervision. The administrative supervisors who participated in this study reported that it was difficult to adequately supervise school psychologists in their LEAs, especially when it came to supervising other professionals (e.g., occupational therapists) when they only had a superficial understanding of best practices in that field. The field of school psychology could benefit from establishing best practice standards/ guidelines for administrative supervisors of school psychologists in order for administrative supervisors to ensure that they are providing meaningful and comprehensive support in their organizations. Potentially, professional associations could advocate that district administrative supervisors have graduate training and a current credential in the profession they are supervising. These standards could also identify what administrative training or licensure is needed to ensure the broad variety of tasks (e. g., evaluating school psychologists, planning professional development) are within the scope of training of the administrator.

A finding of this study revealed that participants went by a variety of job titles. The diversity of job titles reflects a lack of for this administrative position. Since a job title tends to summarize the primary role of the employee, diversity in job titles can also be interpreted to mean that there is a lack of information or guidance about how school psychologists are

managed in a district. Therefore, the field may benefit from consistently providing a title for this district level position.

Participants reported heavy, broad, and unpredictable workload. These heavy workloads were often described as “hectic” and the researchers sensed that workload was a major source of job-related stress for these administrative supervisors. Just like school psychologists benefit from having more clearly defined roles, administrative supervisors could benefit from having more clearly defined roles that could reduce the unpredictability of their positions.

Participants reported experiencing a learning curve in their position and brought awareness to the fact that professional development or training opportunities are lacking. In other words, explicit professional development, mentoring, and guidance about how to effectively lead school psychologists in a district seem to be an important and missing component for administrative preparation. Additionally, administrative supervisors could benefit from having an organization specifically for their role either at the regional, state, or country level.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This research study has been a preliminary study to build a foundation for future research about the administrative supervision of school psychologists. The next step would be to investigate this same population in a different region of the country to see how roles and challenges are similar or different than the mountain west, and a national study of administrative supervisors could be conducted in conjunction with NASP’s practitioner survey that is completed every five years. Future research could establish what practices, behaviors, and attributes contribute to effective administrative supervision, and how school psychologists in administrative positions are effectively evaluated and supported in their roles through specific

training or professional development. Future studies could also begin to define what practices contribute to effective administrative supervision and what outcomes are valued.

After data collection and analysis was completed, the researchers thought of additional questions to ask future participants to drilled down even future into learning about the training and background of this target population. For example, future research should ascertain if the participants were previously or currently licensed as school psychologists. Future research could also ask participants if administrative supervisors also provide clinical supervision or are assigned to a school as a school psychologist. Lastly, future research could ask participants how long they have held their role as a district administrator of school psychologists. By asking these more specific questions about district leaders, we will be able to deepen our understanding about their training and credentials.

Additionally, the inclusionary criteria of this study often excluded rural districts from participating given that rural districts often have a smaller student body and consequently fewer school psychologists; only districts with at least three school psychologists were able to proceed in the interview processes. Future research could expand the inclusionary criteria of this study by allowing for districts with fewer than three school psychologists to participate in research.

Many participants included in this study reported few challenges beyond recruiting and retaining school psychologists. While this information is valuable, it limits our understanding of additional challenges that likely exist. In order to create a more exhaustive analysis of the challenges faced by administrative supervisors, future studies of the administrative population could follow up an interview question that asks participants about the challenges they are facing by asking, “in addition to challenges related to recruiting and retaining school psychologists, what other challenges are you facing as an administrative supervisor?” This follow up question



could potentially provide the field with additional insights into the challenges administrative supervisors of school psychologists are facing.

Because a variety of factors may influence participant responses, future research could explore if meaningful differences by state, district size, geographical location (i.e., rural, urban, suburban), and participant gender are evident. This level of analysis could potentially yield further insight into how themes vary dependent on these factors.

Lastly, it would be important to further investigate gender issues in future research because gender distribution in this small sample does not reflect the female majority of the field of school psychology. With fewer women holding administrative positions, it is possible that influences earnings and retirement savings. Future research could also explore the possibility of gender bias in selecting candidates for administrative positions.

### **Limitations**

The first limitation to this study was the nature of the convenience sample. Most of the participants were recruited via word of mouth. The second limitation to this study is the limited generalizability of the results; participants were only selected from the Mountain West states. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other regions of the United States. Additionally, only 19 district administrators participated in this study. Additionally, having completed 19 interviews also limits how generalizable the themes that emerged are to district administrators across the nation. Lastly, urban and rural districts were not as well represented in this study. Consequently, these results do not fully reflect these geographical locations.

One last limitation to this study includes interview bias. Both interviewers were well versed in the research surrounding administrative supervision, which potentially impacted the interpretation of the results. In other words, the analysis of the interviews could be based on the

researchers confirming what they already knew or the hypotheses that were developed during the process of becoming familiar with the research topic.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study was conducted to learn more about the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of district administrators who supervise school psychologists. The results of this study indicate that district administrators of school psychologists fulfill managerial and leadership roles during their busy and unpredictable work weeks. This study also gathered information about the challenges district administrators are facing; these participants reported challenges directly and indirectly related to the national shortage of school psychologists, difficulties with large workloads, the need to advocate for the field of school psychology, and a lack of professional guidance and training in their role. A few possible ways to address the challenges faced by district leaders is to develop a professional organization for administrative supervisors, establish best practice guidelines, and providing a more defined role for these leaders. By coming to know the roles and challenges that district administrators are facing, the field of school psychology can find ways to support administrative supervision endeavors to recruit and retain school psychologists.

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## APPENDIX A

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

School psychologists are invested in helping children succeed in school. In addition to promoting academic success, school psychologists also support the success of a student emotionally, behaviorally, and socially. In the 2014-15 school year, some of the most common professional practices of school psychologists were conducting evaluations for special education eligibility, developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and consulting with a team to determine a student's need for instructional supports (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2016).

The origins of school psychology are found in the 1890s (Taringer, Prywansky & Miller, 2008). Two influential psychologists at the time, Lightner Witmer and G. Stanley Hall, contributed to the study of children and how they develop. The origin of school psychology is closely linked to Lightner Witmer (Fagan, 1981). Witmer established the first psychological clinic in the United States; his work focused on the individual, and often atypical child (Fagan, 1992). Another early influence of school psychology is G. Stanley Hall who was interested in the normative study of children and these efforts led to the founding of child development and educational psychology (Fagan, 1992). The influence of Witmer's study of atypical child development and Hall's study of typical child development still exist in current practices of school psychology (Fagan, 1992). Among those whom Hall trained at Clark University was Arnold Gesell who would later become the first person to hold the title of school psychologist (Fagan, 1992).

During the beginning years of the field, known as the Hybrid Years (1890-1970), universally accepted definitions, training, and credentialing did not really exist (Fagan, 2004). Conversely, from 1970 to the present there have been both internal and external factors contributing to greater professional regulation (Fagan, 2004). An example of internal, or self-imposed, professional regulation is the historic Thayer Conference, which was held in 1954. The Thayer Conference not only brought about a consensus that practitioners would be known by the title “school psychologist,” but also established a standard of training and credentialing for practitioners (Fagan, 2005).

The external factors that have resulted in greater professional regulation of the field of school psychology include federally or state-imposed laws and credentialing requirements (Fagan, 2004). Since the field of school psychology is so closely connected to education, federal law that reforms education heavily impacts the role of school psychologists. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which later became the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (1997), protects the legal rights of children with disabilities and their parents, ensures the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), appropriate evaluation, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), instruction in the least restrictive environment, parent and student involvement in decision making process, and procedural safe. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) further assures children with disabilities and their parents that special education services will meet the unique needs of each student and “prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (p. 851). As a result of special education law, school psychologists play a central role in recommending children for special education services (Taringer et al., 2008). Additionally, the legal requirement to provide special education and related services has resulted in school psychologists spending the majority



of their time providing assessment services (Fagan, 2002). Fagan has argued that the security of the profession of school psychology is due to special education law (Fagan, 2002). However, the current role of school psychologists has expanded beyond assessments that are related to special education eligibility.

### **Evolution of the Role of School Psychologists**

Over the past century, the role of school psychologists has evolved in fairly dramatic ways. In the 1940s, some of the most common activities of school psychologists were conducting individual and group testing, holding discussions with other school personnel regarding individual students, reaching out to parents, and planning and implementing remedial instruction (Cornell, 1942). While all of these activities are still performed by school psychologists today, professional standards and guidelines established and revised by NASP over the years has helped set a national standard of practice based upon the knowledge and skills deemed most important for school psychologists to possess. NASP standards go through a revision process and are finalized every ten years meaning that updated standards are anticipated in 2020 (NASP, n.d.c). Currently, the NASP standards for professional practice state that school psychologists should be proficient in three categories of knowledge and skills: “practices that permeate all aspects of service delivery” (p. 4), “direct and indirect services for children, families, and schools” (p. 5), and “foundations of school psychology service delivery” (p. 7) (NASP, 2010a).

The NASP practice model describes the variety of knowledge and skills school psychologists implement in professional practice (NASP, 2010a). School psychologists implement a variety of practices as they work in schools. Service delivery describes a model of training and practice used to best meet the needs of the communities and students who school

psychologists serve (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). The two domains that describe the practices that impact all aspects of service delivery are first, “data-based decision making and accountability” and second “consultation and collaboration” (NASP, 2010a, p. 4). It is important to make decisions based on data because that is how we can monitor if instructional practices, interventions, and supports are meeting the needs of students and improving student outcomes (Twachtman-Cullen & Twachtman-Bassett, 2011). One way that school psychologists can make decisions based on data is by using evidenced-based practices that produce a desired effect, monitoring the progress of students, and making changes to practices based on the progress monitoring data.

Another characteristic of the field of school psychology is the need to consult and collaborate with other educational professionals. Ethical standard III.3.1 established by NASP states that school psychologists most effectively provide services for students when they cooperate with other professionals (NASP, 2010b). School psychologists collaborate with families, teachers, principals, administrators, special education teams, school counselors, or other school-based mental health providers; they may also collaborate with community professionals (e.g., social workers, community leaders) to improve student outcomes. Working collaboratively to make data-based decisions helps school psychologists meet the specific needs of students, their families, and communities.

Secondly, school psychologists are expected to provide student level services, which includes supporting students’ academic needs and their social emotional well-being (NASP, 2010a). Examples of academic interventions include identifying instructional strategies for reading or other academic areas, promoting study skills, and helping students with disabilities transition to college (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). In addition to helping students succeed

academically, there is an increasing need for school psychologists to provide mental health services for students (NASP, 2013; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). The second domain that addresses student level services is interventions and mental health services to develop social and life skills (NASP, 2010a). Using strategies that enhance mental health and that help develop social and life skills include training in social skills, and group counseling; school psychologists develop interventions for students that are struggling with anxiety and depression or other mental health needs (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a).

Thirdly, school psychologists provide system level services. System level services are school-wide practices to promote learning, preventative and responsive services, and family-school collaboration services (NASP, 2010a). An example of a school-wide practice that promotes learning is an intervention that decreases dropout rates and increases the number of students that complete their high school education (Harrison & Thomas, 2014c). Examples of preventative and responsive services are bullying prevention, crisis intervention, and social skill instruction or other strategies that target emotional well-being (Harrison & Thomas, 2014c). Examples of family-school collaboration services are practices that help bring school staff and parents together for family-school meetings and practices that help families become and stay engaged in education (Harrison & Thomas, 2014c).

Lastly, school psychologists are to practice the foundations of school psychological service delivery by providing culturally competent services. They also engage in research and program evaluation. Furthermore, practicing in ethical ways and within legal guidelines is the expected standard of practice for all school psychologists (NASP, 2010a). An example of diversity in development and learning is the practice of nondiscriminatory assessment and being aware of and sensitive to cultural factors that influence student achievement and well-being

(Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). An example of research and program evaluation is action research, which is research conducted by school psychologists with the intent to improve the way they practice in the schools (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). A few more examples of research and program evaluation is the development of local academic norms that are representative of the students within a district and using multitiered systems of supports (MTSS) to perform school wide prevention programs and early interventions (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). An example of legal, ethical, and professional practice is the professional development activities of school psychologists (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a).

It can be said that the early definition of school psychologist and their roles was simplistic. Over time, however, the role of school psychologists in the schools has evolved to become more comprehensive and is moving beyond individualized assessment to determine special education eligibility. The NASP practice model serves as a guide for the professional practices within school psychology and is revised every ten years to accommodate the discovery of better practices (NASP, n.d.b). The knowledge and skills that stem from the NASP practice model also provides a standard for the training of school psychologists.

### **Required Training**

The required training of school psychologists has also evolved over time. During the early years of the field, which was from 1890-1970, it was common for practitioners to have varying levels of training (Fagan, 2004). This flexibility in training requirements provided an opportunity for more people to enter the field of school psychology (Fagan, 2004), which was beneficial during these early years of the field where there were few school psychology practitioners (Fagan, 1985). After the call for a greater standard of training, a Master's degree, which was roughly 32 semester hours, then became the minimal requirement for an entry-level

position in school psychology (Fagan, 2004; Fagan, 2005; Taringer et al., 2008). Through the advocacy of professional associations such as NASP, an even higher standard of training and preparation of school psychology candidates was established (Taringer et al., 2008). Nowadays, the two graduate degree paths to practicing as a school psychologist include both the specialist degree and doctoral degree (NASP, n.d.a).

Currently, the specialist-level degree is considered the entry-level degree into the field of school psychology (NASP, 2017). Specialist-level and doctoral-level programs in school psychology are eligible for NASP accreditation and doctoral-level programs are eligible for American Psychological Association (APA) accreditation (NASP, 2017). Furthermore, specialist-level and doctoral-level programs prepare graduate student to be competent in the ten domains of the NASP's Practice Model (NASP, 2017). In order to provide candidates with crucial experiences in their education and supervised field experiences, graduate programs offering a specialist level degree must provide at least 60 graduate semester hours and doctorate programs must require 90 graduate semester hours (NASP, 2010c). The final year of such graduate training programs is the internship year. Specialist level internships require a minimum of 1200 clock hours and the doctoral level internships are typically 1200-1500 clock hours (NASP, 2017). Overall, training typically translates into at least three years of full time study for specialist programs and five to six years for doctoral programs (NASP, 2010c). Some additional differences between a specialist degree and a doctoral degree include the career options available; specialist degree professionals typically practice in educational settings, while a doctoral-level degree allows graduates to work in private practice, hospitals, university, and research settings in addition to schools (NASP, 2017). Unlike the specialist and doctoral-level degrees, a masters-level degree typically requires two years of study, an internship is not

required, these programs are not eligible for approval/accreditation, there is no model for masters-level study, and the career options are limited to nonexistent in most states (NASP, 2017).

The extensive training programs for prospective school psychologists require many hours of training making a master's degree in school psychology almost obsolete. Flanagan and Grehan (2011) suggest that even the three-year specialist degree program model may be an insufficient amount of time to master the content of graduate work. An increasing expectation of competency and expertise has and will continue to shape the rigorous training of school psychologists. With education guidelines and practices changing, there is also a constant need to develop and maintain new skills as a school psychologist (Armistead, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, & Cunningham, 2013).

### **Demographics**

In 2009, there was an estimate of 32,300 school psychologists practicing in the United States (Jimerson, Steward, Skokut, Cardenas, & Malone, 2009). While one of the first demographic studies of school psychologists originated in 1914 (Fagan, 2002), NASP began conducting surveys on the nation's school psychologists in 1971 (Ramage, 1979). Between the 1990s and 2010, the mean age of school psychology professionals increased from 38.8 to 47.4 (NASP, 2018). This phenomenon has been appropriately named the "graying of the field" (Curtis et al., 2004, p. 423). The most recent national survey conducted by NASP in 2015 revealed that the average age of the field is decreasing and a mean age of 42.4 was reported (NASP, 2018). Additionally, the most recent survey revealed that 87% of the field identified as Caucasian and 83% of the respondents reported being female (NASP, 2018).

The prevailing demographic of the field is problematic in a number of ways. First, there is a mismatch between the diversity of the professionals who practice in the field compared to the diversity of the students they serve. Starting in 2014, the demographic of our public schools represented a minority majority (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). In other words, our public schools are becoming increasingly diverse and greater than 50% of the public school population consists of children who identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or of two or more races (NCES, 2016). A primarily white demographic of school psychologists is concerning because sensitive issues that relate to diverse populations and settings are underrepresented in the research. For instance, in the years of 2008-2010, only 9.2% of articles published in *School Psychology Review*, *School Psychology Quarterly*, and *Journal of School Psychology* covered race/ethnicity topics (Noltemeyer, Proctor, & Dempsey, 2013). Again, a review by Grunewald et al. (2014) found that a low percentage of articles that focused on issues related to diversity; only 5.5% of articles published in seven of the major journals in school psychology covered topics related to individuals who were English language learners, or from various socioeconomic status, sexual orientations, and ethnic/racial backgrounds (Grunewald et al., 2014).

Secondly, a primarily female workforce presents a problem because women often leave the workforce to raise children (Fagan, 2004). In a study of almost 2,500 women who had a “graduate degree, a professional degree, or a high-honors undergraduate degree” (Hewlett & Luce, 2005, p. 44), 37% of these women reported leaving the workforce voluntarily. Of the 37% of women who reported leaving the workforce at some point in their career, 43% reported that they left their jobs to raise children (Hewlett & Luce, 2005), which amounts to almost 16% of women from this study leaving their professions to raise children. The implications of this study

suggest that 83% of the field school psychology, that represents women, (NASP, 2018) may be subject to similar attrition factors that pose a potential threat to the stability of the workforce. In addition to an admonition to increase the multicultural knowledge (Howard, 2007) and the ethnic and racial diversity of the school psychologists (Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014; Proctor & Romano, 2016) that serve in our schools, is an admonition to recruit more men into the field (Murphy & Monsen, 2008) in order to promote diversity within the field of school psychology.

### **Challenges in the Field of School Psychology**

As with any profession, the field of school psychology has its challenges. A pervasive challenge of the field is the shortage of personnel. In order for school psychologists to provide a broader range of services, NASP recommends a student to school psychologist ratio of 500-700:1 (NASP, 2010a). In the academic year of 2009-2010, the student to school psychologist ratio was estimated to be 1,383:1 (Curtis, Castillo, & Gelley, 2012). This means that the student to school psychologist ratio exceeds NASP's recommendations by almost 700 students. Shortages of school psychologists are detrimental because it affects the ability of school psychologists to deliver more comprehensive services in the schools (Castillo et al., 2014; NASP, 2006). Lower student to school psychologist ratios are associated with greater levels of individual counseling and student groups (Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2002) interventions, and activities not related to special-education (Curtis, Grier, Abshier, Sutton, & Hunley, 2002). On the other hand, "higher ratios are associated with more initial special education evaluations, more re-evaluations and greater percentages of time spent in special education-related activities overall" (Curtis et al., 2004, p. 63). NASP lists that various issues like the shortage of qualified university faculty, the lack of NASP approved graduate programs in some parts of the country, either too few qualified applicants for graduate programs or too many who can be accepted into



the program, limited availability of approved internships and qualified internship supervisors, and difficulty attracting linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse individuals to the field as variables that affect the shortage of school psychologists in the nation (NASP, n.d.a).

Burnout is also a pervasive issue in the field of school psychology. Burnout has been defined as exhaustion and disengagement from work (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003). Various factors contribute to burnout in school psychologists. When comparing school psychologists who work at one school to those who serve two or more schools, those who worked at multiple schools reported greater levels of burnout (Proctor & Steadman, 2003). Another study identified that administrative pressure to practice unethically was also associated with higher levels of perceived burnout (Boccio, Weisz, & Lefkowitz, 2016). According to Silva, Newman, Guiney, Valley-Gray, and Barrett (2016), early career school psychologists are more susceptible to burnout.

Attrition is another challenge that faces school psychology. Attrition is a term used to describe individuals who exit a field (Castillo et al., 2014). While some people leave the field because of retirement, another reason people leave a field is because they have accepted a different position within a school, such as an administrative position (Curtis et al., 2004). Unfortunately, no systematic studies of school psychologist attrition exist in the literature (Reschly, 2000). Attrition may be one contributing factor that exacerbates the already prevalent shortage of school psychology personnel.

In summary, school psychology is a field that has been evolving since its origins in the 1900s. While school psychologists perform many important roles, the field is at risk of decreased quality in services due to the shortage and the inability to retain practicing school psychologists due to burnout and attrition rates. Due to its foundation in education, the field of

school psychology is heavily influenced by changes in education law. Another aspect of the evolving nature of the field is due to changes in professional practices by leading associations such as NASP. School psychologists are held to a high standard of practice and the graduate school years of school psychologists is a crucial time in a professional's career to establish a foundation of invaluable knowledge, skills, and experiences. The field has also experienced various challenges. Although there is a positive force moving the field of school psychology forward the field is nonetheless susceptible to the challenges of shortages, burnout, and attrition.

### **Supervision of School Psychologists**

Supervisors of school psychologist can affect the recruitment, retention, and service delivery of their supervisees (NASP, n.d.a). Understanding supervision of school psychologist is particularly challenging due to the existing variety of definitions and types of supervision (McIntosh & Phelps, 2000). McIntosh and Phelps (2000) defined the current status of supervision in the field of psychology as “an interpersonal interaction between two or more individuals for the purpose of sharing knowledge, assessing professional competencies, and providing objective feedback with the terminal goals of developing new competencies, facilitating effective delivery of psychological services, and maintaining professional competencies” (p. 33-34).

**Types of supervision.** The two types of supervision in the field include clinical and administrative supervision. Clinical supervision, also known as professional supervision, has a focus on professional skills and competencies (Harvey & Struzziero, 2008). A clinical supervisor is required to have training in school psychology since they supervise professional practice and need the relevant knowledge and skills (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Administrative supervision, on the other hand, has a primary focus on the logistics rather than the professional

development of its supervisees (NASP, n.d.a). These logistical tasks “may involve hiring, work assignments, legal compliance with educational mandates and other regulations related to service delivery, compliance with personnel matters including contractual requirements and performance evaluation, and coordination of multidisciplinary staff” (Simon & Swerdlik, 2016, p. 204).

Individuals who are administrators may not necessarily have training in school psychology since it does not have to be degree specific (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). School psychologists can receive supervision on both a clinical and an administrative level.

Clinical supervision serves an important function in school psychology. Graduate students receive clinical supervision through their professors, advisors, and field-based supervisors during practicum, and internship (NASP, 2010c). Clinical supervision during graduate school years helps graduate students reach a basic level of competency before they enter the field and practice independently (NASP, 2010c). School psychology graduate students may be exposed to a vast amount of knowledge and experiences during their 3-5 years of training (NASP, 2010d) but within eight or nine years that previous training becomes out dated (Neimeyer, Taylor, & Rozensky, 2012). The clinical supervisor’s role is then to help keep school psychology professionals up to date with their practices and competencies (NASP, n.d.a; Silva et al., 2016).

Distinctly different supervision usually happens at the school district level where administrative supervisors oversee the school psychologists in the district. Administrative supervisors can “serve in roles such as program directors, department chairpersons, or other school administrators” (Simon & Swerdlik, 2016, p. 204). The primary roles of administrative supervisors are to lead, hire, evaluate, correct, support, and to oversee the job duties and functioning of school personnel (Fischetti, Petry, & Munch, 2012; Harrison & Thomas, 2014b;

NASP, n.d.a). Harvey and Struzziero (2008) have emphasized that an important ingredient to effective administrative supervision is leadership; while managers address the needs and goals of the organization, leaders address the needs and goals of individuals (Kotterman, 2006; Plachy, 1981). Little research has been found that describes the roles and training of these administrative leaders in the field of school psychology. In contrast, we have some ideas about what clinical supervisors do and what contributes to effective clinical supervision (NASP, 2010c; NASP, n.d.a; Silva et al., 2016).

**Best practices in supervision.** Professional guidelines inform us on what the best practices are for clinical supervision. The two major psychology associations, NASP and APA, have set a standard for supervision in school psychology. According to the latest NASP guidelines, supervisors of school psychologists should have a “valid state school psychologist credential” with at least three years of experience in the field (2010a, p. 11). NASP (2010a) also highlights supervision as one of the supports set in place to help practicing school psychologists with their continuing professional development and maintain practices that benefit children, families, and schools.

APA has established a similar set of guidelines for clinical supervision. According to their guidelines, clinical supervisors of a health service professional (i.e., clinical, counseling, and school psychology) should be competent in the knowledge and skills of their supervisees, should maintain competence in supervision, and should work in conjunction with other professionals who are also responsible for the education and training of supervisees (APA, 2014). The professional guidelines established by these associations help guide practice. However, it is important to reiterate that both of these associations have provided detailed guidelines on clinical supervision but not administrative supervision.

**Outcomes of supervision.** Supervision is necessary to help meet the needs of new and veteran school psychologists and to meet district requirements for evaluation of employees (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). Some positive outcomes noted specifically for clinical supervision are that it meets the needs for ongoing professional growth (NASP, n.d.b), can increase self-efficacy (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001), improves skills, increases the variety of school psychological services offered, and increases job enthusiasm (Zins, Murphy, & Wess, 1989). Additional research that does not differentiate between clinical and administrative supervision outcomes states that supervision prevents or abates burnout (Silva et al., 2016) and is a way to manage job related stress (Silva et al., 2016). Negative outcomes from the lack of clinical supervision are pressure to practice outside their scope of competence (Silva et al., 2016) and deterioration of skills (Harrison & Thomas, 2014a). Both administrative and clinical supervision can lead to a number of positive outcomes and can help ameliorate the severity of challenges school psychologists face.

### **Previous Research on Supervision Practices**

There is limited research available on school psychology supervision, especially administrative supervision. In 1996, Bahr et al. performed a database search for available research and they found only 34 entries about school psychology supervision compared to the 468 articles on counselor education supervision. Zins et al. (1989) found that 70.3% of school psychology supervisors had training in school psychology and only 22.9% of their sample of practicing school psychologists reported receiving clinical supervision. A similar study performed in 1999 found that only 10% of the sample of school psychologists was receiving clinical supervision (Fischetti & Crespi, 1999). In terms of administrative supervision, a survey conducted by Curtis et al. (2012) found that 56.2% of school psychologists reported receiving

administrative supervision. The research topic of the supervision of school psychologist has gained traction in the past 10-15 years as evidenced by recently published theses or dissertations (Angell, 2016; Freeman, 2017; Kaas, 2017; Lopez, 2007). One dissertation found that while supervision relationships may be supportive, they are not offering the support needed to manage work related stress (Freeman, 2017), while another found that clinical supervision was not correlated with higher levels of professional development activities (Angell, 2016). Although there is limited available research on supervision for school psychologists, the few results that are available demonstrate that the clinical supervision needs of school psychologists are not being fully met, and we know very little about administrative supervision. More importantly, research that does follow up on supervision practices does not always specify whether or not clinical or administrative supervision was the specific focus of the research.

Three research studies have described the roles and responsibilities of administrative supervisors (Chafouleas, Clonana, & Vanauken, 2002; Harvey & Pearrow, 2010; Hunley et al., 2000). One study found that the administrative supervisors who were typically responsible for evaluating school psychologists were either a district-level or building-level administrator (Chafouleas et al., 2002). Furthermore, this same study (Chafouleas et al., 2002) found that almost 43% of the school psychologists who participated desired to be evaluated by a school psychologist rather than an educator who was not a credentialed school psychologist. About 7% believed that a doctorate-level psychologist could provide qualified supervision (Chafouleas et al., 2002). While the participants in this study desired to be supervised by someone with a background in psychology, the study did not specify what educational background or training these supervisors did have. Additionally, this study did specify what evaluation methods were used to evaluate school psychologists.

As far as describing the comprehensive job duties of administrative supervisors, existing research states (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010; Hunley et al., 2000) that school psychology supervisors provided supervision not only for school psychologists, but may also supervise teachers, special educators, diagnosticians, counselors, clerical staff, interns, social workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, behavior specialists, and physical therapists. District administrative supervisors can also have a broad range of responsibilities as evidenced by the supervisors from this same study having district sizes ranging from 1,300 to 800,000 students resulting in supervising a range of only interns to up to 900 school psychologists (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). The substantial amount of responsibility of these supervisors (e.g., supervising many school psychologists) implicates that the current supply of supervisors is insufficient and makes close supervision nearly impossible (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Furthermore, these studies do not identify specific job descriptions beyond how many personnel they supervise and which professions they might supervise.

Identified activities of administrative supervisors include program administration, personnel issues, developing programs, performing individual supervision for an average of 1.64 hours a week, performing program evaluation, mediating conflict resolution for supervisees and another person, observing and evaluating supervisees, group supervision, reading reports, and developing and managing budgets (Hunley et al., 2000). It should be noted that while the previously cited study does appear to describe administrative supervisors, it does not clearly specify that the group they are describing are indeed administrative supervisors. Additionally, we do not know what the current activities of supervisors include and how the role has evolved since this 2000 publication, nor do we know the training, background, and basic ideas in their job descriptions. Overall, participants of previous studies were school psychologists, often recruited

through NASP membership (Curtis et al., 2012; Fischetti et al., 2012; Hunley et al., 2000), rather than the administrative supervisors themselves. As a result, extant research has yet to describe administrative supervision from the perspective of administrative supervisors.

### **Challenges to Supervision**

There is often an insufficient supply of supervisors, which is sometimes explained by supervisor positions being eliminated due to budget cuts (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). However, Harvey and Pearrow (2010) do not specify whether they are referencing the elimination of clinical, administrative, or both types supervisor positions. Supervising school psychologists can be challenging because evaluations, an administrative task, are not always tailored to school psychology but rather teacher evaluations are loosely adapted to the evaluation of school psychologists (Chafouleas et al., 2002; Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Evaluation procedures can also fall short because they are conducted infrequently, sometimes only every five years (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Furthermore, supervisors often feel that their training in supervision is insufficient (Flanagan & Grehan, 2011; Harvey & Pearrow, 2010; Hunley et al., 2000). In addition to more training in supervision, Harvey and Pearrow (2010) found that an administrative supervisor's lack of training in psychology often leads to conflicts in a supervisee's ethical and professional practices. Furthermore, the administrative supervision of school psychologists presents challenges in conflicting priorities and changes in administrative structure (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010). Additionally, administrative supervisors desire to have the opportunity to network with other supervisors (Hunley et al., 2000). Lastly, supervising school psychologists in a school setting presents unique systemic challenges such as high stakes testing required by state and federal law policies, state department regulations that mandate outdated assessment



procedures, and school and district policies that overlook evidence-based practices (Harvey & Pearrow, 2010).

While there is limited research available on the administrative supervision of school psychology personnel we can gain insight into this issue by looking at the research on administrative supervision of related service providers in schools; however, after searching the research literature only studies on the administrative supervision of school counselors was readily available. Similar to the research on administrative supervision of school psychologists, Unal, Surcucu, and Yavuz (2013) concluded that the supervisors of school counselors often have limited knowledge about this profession (Unal et al., 2013). Luke, Ellis, and Bernard (2011) suggest that there is a need for some form of training specific to those who supervise school counselors in the K-12 setting, which creates a challenge when administrative supervisors frequently supervise more than one profession within the school setting. Although these findings are consistent with the research found on the administrative supervision of school psychologists, it does not help us understand what administrative supervisors of school psychologists do, how they describe themselves, and what challenges they feel like they are facing in supervision.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

The need for retaining school psychologist is great, especially when burnout and stress contribute to how effectively school psychologists are able to meet the needs of students, schools, and communities. Clinical and administrative supervision are supported as best practice, can help with retention of school psychologists, and lead to positive outcomes for supervisees. Although guidelines exist for clinical supervision, NASP and APA have yet to establish clear guidelines for administrative supervision; likely because we have limited current knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of administrative supervisors, their training, and

other issues facing this slice of the profession. With limited knowledge on the implementation of administrative supervision, the topic of supervision is gaining popularity in research. Very few studies have looked into describing the demographic, roles and responsibilities, training, and other issues facing administrative supervisors.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Adding to the complexity of the challenges of practicing school psychology are the challenges of supervising school psychologists, especially administrative supervisors. While administrative supervisors may serve an important role of providing for the needs of their supervisees, we also need to address the needs of supervisors; however, the research literature currently provides few current details about the roles and responsibilities of administrative supervisors, their background and training, and how they describe the challenges they face in the field.

More specifically, the field of school psychology could benefit in understanding more about administrative supervision and the needs of these supervisors. Very few articles in the literature have looked at clinical supervision of school psychology and even fewer articles exist on administrative supervision. McIntosh and Phelps (2000) suggest that qualitative research cannot only help us better understand supervision, but also provide valuable insight into identifying problems related to supervision. Since there is a limited amount of studies on administrative supervision for school psychology or what these district leaders do, we are consequently limited in understanding the needs of school psychology supervisors and/or district leaders. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to learn more about the administrative supervision of school psychologist and district leaders.

**Research Questions**

1. What training do administrative supervisors of school psychologists have? What training do they have that is specific to being an administrator?
2. What do administrative supervisors of school psychologists do? What are their primary responsibilities and roles? How many SPs do they supervise? How many students are in their district? How many buildings?
3. What challenges are district leaders facing?

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## APPENDIX B

**Interview Questions**

1. Participation criteria questions: (Asked during initial contact)
  - a. Do you work at the district level as an administrator?
  - b. Are you responsible for hiring and firing school psychologists?
  - c. Do you have at least 3 school psychologists in your district?
2. Demographic questions (Asked via Qualtrics survey)
  - a. What is your age?
  - b. What is your gender?
  - c. What is your ethnicity?
  - d. What is your highest earned degree?
  - e. Do you have an administrator endorsement/ license?
  - f. Which of the following best describes the school district where you are employed?
    - i. Primarily Urban
    - ii. Primarily Rural
    - iii. Primarily Suburban
    - iv. Other
  - g. How many school buildings are in your district?
  - h. How many students are in your district?
  - i. What is your official job title?
  - j. How many school psychologists do you supervise?
  - k. How many other licensed/credentialed educators do you supervise?
    - i. Follow-up: Please name the other professions you supervise.
  - l. In order to send your VISA gift card, we will need the following information:
    - i. Name
    - ii. Phone number
    - iii. Address you would like the VISA gift card mailed to

Asked During Official Telephone Interview

3. What is the role of district leaders who directly supervise school psychologists?
  - a. Q1: How would you describe your responsibilities as an administrative supervisor of school psychologists?
    - i. Follow-up: What are your primary roles and responsibilities?
    - ii. Follow-up: How would you describe your typical work week?
4. What issues are they facing?
  - a. Q2: What issues are you facing as an administrative supervisor of school psychologists?
  - b. Q3: What else do I need to know to fully understand the role and function of district leaders who supervise school psychologists?

5. How would they describe current staffing needs?
  - a. Q4: What challenges, if any, do you face in recruiting school psychologists?
  - b. Q5: What challenges, if any, do you face in retaining school psychologists?
6. How do they recruit and retain school psychologists?
  - a. Q6: Do you use any methods to **recruit** school psychologists?
    - i. Follow up: What methods do you use?
    - ii. Follow up: What specific policies or benefits are offered?
    - iii. Follow up: Is there anything distinctive about your school district that is highly effective at hiring school psychologists?
  - b. Q7: Do you use any methods to **retain** school psychologists?
    - i. Follow up: What methods do you use?
    - ii. Follow up: What specific policies or benefits are offered?
  - c. Q8: What would you need to better recruit and retain school psychologists?

## APPENDIX C

**Letter from the Institutional Review Board**

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS

**Memorandum**

To: Alivia Smith, Graduate Student  
Department: CPSE

College: EDUC  
From: Sandee Aina, IRB Administrator  
Date: August 10, 2018  
IRB#: A 18-369  
Subject: *Understanding the Administrative Role of School Psychology District Leaders*

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The protocol referenced in the subject heading has been reviewed by Brigham Young University's Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB). The IRB has determined that this scholarly activity does not meet the regulatory definition of human subjects research 45 CFR 46.102(f).

Most research in the social and behavioral sciences involves gathering information **about** individuals. However, this research will involve the collection of data from administrative supervisors of school psychologists. The professional will contribute information about some aspect of the external world primarily from the perspective of their special expertise, rather than their personal opinions, preferences, perceptions or experiences.

**Please remove BYU IRB's contact information from the consent statement.**

Cordially,

**Sandee M.P. Aina, MPA**

Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects, Administrator

*Office of Research & Creative Activities*

Brigham Young University

A-285 ASB Campus Drive

Provo, UT 84602

Ph: [REDACTED] | <http://orca.byu.edu/irb/>

**BYU**

## APPENDIX D

**Recruiting Email Templates**

First email contact

Dear (administrative supervisor),

My name is (researcher), and I am a research assistant working with Dr. Ellie Young at Brigham Young University. We are conducting a study about the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of district administrators who supervise school psychologists. I am emailing to ask if you would like to participate in a 25-45 minute phone interview about your work experiences. Participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. Participants also receive a \$50 VISA gift card. If interested, please reply to this email with times that you may be available. If you have any questions, please contact me at (email). Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

(researcher)

Brigham Young University

Note: BYU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the research and determined that IRB approval was not needed because research participants will be sharing information about some aspect of the external world primarily from the perspective of their special expertise, rather than their personal opinions, preferences, perceptions or experiences.



Research advisor contacted already:

Dear (administrative supervisor),

My name is (researcher), and I am a research assistant working with Dr. Ellie Young at Brigham Young University. We are conducting a study about the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of district administrators who supervise school psychologists. I am emailing you because you previously indicated an interest to participate in a 25-45 minute phone interview about your work experiences. Participation is completely voluntary, and your responses will remain anonymous. Below are some times and dates when I am available. Is there a time that works best for you?

Best regards,

(Researcher)

Brigham Young University

Note: BYU's IRB reviewed the research and determined that IRB approval was not needed because research participants will be sharing information about some aspect of the external world primarily from the perspective of their special expertise, rather than their personal opinions, preferences, perceptions or experiences.

Participant responded with a time and date:

I will call you on (day and time indicated). Included below is a link to a consent form and short demographic survey that can be completed anytime before the interview. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

[https://byu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_79Wr9xwZcWRNjP7](https://byu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_79Wr9xwZcWRNjP7)

-Researcher

## APPENDIX E

**Telephone Protocol**

Hello, I'm calling from Brigham Young University. My name is [caller's name]. We are conducting a study designed to describe the district administrative supervisors of school psychologists, their educational backgrounds, job roles, and their descriptions of the important issues they face as leaders. The interview we will be conducting is voluntary and will take about 25-45 minutes total to complete. To show our appreciation for your time, we will send a \$50 VISA gift card. Your perspective is very important to us and all responses are confidential. May we proceed?

[If yes,]

In order to make sure you meet the criteria for our study, would you be willing to answer a few questions?

1. Are you an administrator who works with school psychologists across the district?
2. Do you supervise at least three school psychologists in your district?
3. Are you responsible for hiring and firing school psychologists?

[If participant meets the criteria (must answer yes to each question), proceed with the rest of the interview]

Great! You meet the criteria for our study. Would we be able to schedule a later and more convenient time for the phone interview or do you have time now?

Scenario A: They have time for the interview on the spot

I have a Qualtrics demographic survey that I can fill out for you over the phone before we begin the interview portion.

[proceed to fill out the Qualtrics survey and then continue to the interview questions]

Scenario B: Interview scheduled for a later time

I have a brief demographic survey that I will need you to fill out before I can conduct the interview. May I have an email address that I can send that to?

Scenario C: Day of the interview

Hi, [participant's name]. This is [caller's name]. We spoke earlier about an interview on your perspective as an administrative supervisor. Is right now still a good time for the interview?

## APPENDIX F

**Thank You Letter**

January XX, 2019

Dear [insert name here],

On the behalf of our research team, we hope you will accept this \$50 VISA gift card as a means of thanking you for participating in our research study on the District Level Administrative Supervision of School Psychologists. We are dedicated to using this research to make a difference in the field of school psychology and how we recruit and retain our school psychology personnel. With the help of the experiences you shared with us, we will be able to explore the challenges that surround this subject and propose ways to ameliorate them.

Thank you again for your time and for sharing your insights as a district administrator of school psychologists.

Kind regards,

Ellie Young, Ph.D.

Rachel Butler, BYU School Psychology Student

Alivia Smith, BYU School Psychology Student