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Honors Reflection Paper
Exploration of the Legal, Ethical and Cultural Practices Present in School Psychology
Through Analysis of Job Descriptions
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Reflection Paper

The three main findings were 1) the districts that were considered highly diverse had more culturally responsive practices present in their job descriptions. Yet despite this finding, both highly diverse and low diversity districts had, on average, less than one reference to culturally responsive practices. 2) Both high and low diversity districts were more likely to include reference to legal and/or ethical practices when compared to references to culturally responsive practice. However, there were differences between low and high diversity districts. Low diversity districts were most likely to mention the importance of practicing in accordance with federal and state laws and policies. High diversity districts, on the other hand, were most likely to mention the ethical practice to engage in supervision, mentoring, and peer consultation. And 3.) Across all job descriptions, there was a lack of presence of language that supported the idea of a school psychologist being an advocate for students.

Because of the lack of study in this area, not much could have been known about diversity & ethics in job descriptions. Only one other study has looked at school psychologists' job descriptions, but it did not look at ethics or culturally responsive practices. The research has been sparse and thus the findings from this study begins to provide additional understanding into school psychologists job descriptions. But our findings relate to the article "Why didn't – Why doesn't – School psychology realize its promise?" published in 1995 by Terry Gutkin and Jane Conoley. This study gave the field of school psychology critiques and expectations of where the field should be in the future. Our findings relate to this article because we are also calling for school districts to be more attentive to the needs and requirements of school psychologists. Relative to Gutkin and Conoley article in 1995, there is still a lack of engagement in certain

types of job activities for school psychologists. In 2020, Conoley et. al, produced another article in which the authors applaud the field for making big strides in the past 2 and a half decades but still draw attention to the way the field is still struggling with advocacy. NASP's standards compel school psychologists to be advocates but our findings show a lack of focus on being an advocate in their job descriptions.

The implication of our findings points to the call for school psychologists' job descriptions being updated. Even though districts with higher diversity were found to have more culturally responsive practices included in their job descriptions, more can still be done to ensure these districts are setting an expectation and equipping school psychologists to serve their diverse population. In addition to the legal and ethical practices emphasized in the job descriptions for low diversity districts, an emphasis on the implementation of best practices should also be present to ensure that the population is benefiting from past research that explored the most helpful techniques for working with families. Lastly, school psychologists also take on the role of advocacy in their work. A school psychologist is hired by a school county, meaning that they must serve the best interests of the county. Coexisting with this, school psychologists are still expected to work for the best interest of the child. Sometimes, this may cause a conflict of interest in terms of who & what to advocate for. Being an advocate for the students means pursuing and promoting the rights of the students that promote change on the individual and systemic level. It can also mean fighting for more roles that enhance the learning and mental health of the child. Given that these are the type of ideas that can come with advocacy, an inclusion of such works/said expectation should be found more often in school psychologist job descriptions. School psychology was created with the goal to make outcomes better for kids and families; if the gap between NASP's standards and what school districts perceive as important

widens, this will lead to school psychologists continuing to not realize their potential/impact on children's learning, mental health, and future.

The weaknesses of our study were 1) our sample size and 2) our statistical analysis. Our project only analyzed fifty districts total for their job descriptions. So even though our statistical analysis was significant, the difference was slight. This also limits generalizing our findings to other school districts. For future study, including at least one hundred districts would be ideal. This would strengthen the findings and give a clearer idea of how much the National Association for School Psychologists' standards are being represented in school psychologists' job descriptions.

In conclusion, this project taught me a lot about the field of school psychology. I learned about the schooling qualification needed for the field, what is expected nationally from school psychologists, and even the tightrope school psychologist walks as trying to serve the best interest of the families and public-school districts. I also learned about the importance of ethics and diversity that is needed to be successful in this field. Even though I plan to go into a different field. I really appreciated the exploration of this subject!

References

- Conoley, J. C., & Gutkin, T. G. (1995). Why didn't—why doesn't—school psychology realize its promise? *Journal of School Psychology, 33*, 209–217. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405\(95\)00009-B](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0022-4405(95)00009-B)
- Conoley, J. C., Powers, K., & Gutkin, T. B. (2020). How is school psychology doing: Why hasn't school psychology realized its promise? *School Psychology, 35*(6), 367–374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000404>