AN INVESTIGATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PRACTICE OF
SCHOOL-BASED PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

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Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology

March, 2006
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and does not contain any work that has been previously submitted for a degree at any institution, except where due reference is made in the text. To the best of my knowledge this dissertation contains no material published by another person, except where due reference has been made. The ethical principles for research as stipulated by the Australian Psychological Society and Swinburne University of Technology have been adhered to in this research.

Several papers have been presented at conferences and published during the process of completing this thesis. These papers have used parts of the data analysed in the thesis. A list of the published papers is included for interest in Appendix C.

Monica Thielking
17 March 2006
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ABSTRACT

The provision of school based psychological services in Victorian primary and secondary schools dates back to well before the Second World War. Since then, however, the activities that make up the role of school psychologists have changed substantially. School psychologists’ roles have become more varied than the original psychometric focus and reflect a more systemic approach to the conceptualization of student problems. Within Australia, school psychologists can be found servicing single or multiple schools in the government, independent and Catholic school sectors, fulfilling a range of functions and dealing with a diversity of student issues. However, Australian academic research into the professional practice issues associated with the provision of school-based psychological services is rare. Therefore, this thesis sought to investigate a range of professional issues associated with the provision of school-based psychological services for Victorian school psychologists working in single and multiple schools in the government and non-government primary and secondary school sectors. In addition to surveying Victorian school psychologists, principals and teachers were also surveyed in order to ascertain their attitudes towards school-based psychological services.

The sample consisted of 81 school psychologists, 21 principals and 86 teachers. The results revealed that school psychologists participate in a variety of activities, including a number of activities that reflect a systemic model of service delivery. They also deal with a broad range of student issues, some of which are quite serious in nature. However, the study also revealed a number of professional issues that were in need of improvement. Some of these included a lack of participation in regular supervision for school psychologists, school psychologists’ dissatisfaction with some industrial and professional conditions associated with their role and differences in attitudes between psychologists, principals and teachers regarding the activities and responsibilities of school psychologists. Results from the study provide plausible evidence for the need to support school psychologists in the valuable work that they do within schools through improved industrial conditions, appropriate professional development, and regular supervision. Furthermore the results also reveal a need to educate and participate in dialogue with the educational community in order to increase understanding of school psychologists’ roles and professional responsibilities.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Within our community, psychologists can be found in a variety of independent and organisational settings. Each setting provides its own distinct set of challenges associated with the provision of a psychological service. One particular setting where the expertise and skills of psychologists are becoming increasingly utilised is in schools. Within this unique area of psychological practice, psychologists can be found working with children and/or adolescents in and across both primary and secondary schools.

It appears that more and more Australian schools are employing psychologists to work in counselling roles with students (Farrell & Care, 2000). This reflects a world wide trend which has seen a significant increase in the number of school psychologists employed in schools (Jimerson et al., 2004; Oakland & Cunningham, 1992). On the whole, research reveals that school psychologists have a highly valued role by all members of the school community (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Gibson, 1990). However, Australian research pertaining to this area of psychological practice is rare. Many of the studies that explore the professional issues associated with the role of school psychologists originate from the United States (US) (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002). Although these studies provide insight into the issues that Australian school psychologists may also face, they may not always translate into the Australian context, and so there is a genuine need for more Australian research in this area.

One aim of this thesis is to provide an Australian contribution to the existing limited body of knowledge concerning the profession of school psychology. This thesis surveyed a Victorian sample of school psychologists on a variety of professional and psychological variables associated with their role in schools. Furthermore, it also surveyed principals and teachers on their attitudes towards school psychologists’ role activities and responsibilities. The results and discussion are preceded by chapters which review the relevant literature pertaining to the delivery of a school psychological service and which relate to the aims of the current study.

The introduction section of the thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the reader to the main area of investigation in the current study: the professional issues associated with the role of school psychologists. Chapter Two describes the historical origins of (government) school psychology in Australia, the
current system for the employment of Australian school psychologists, a review of the deployment of school psychologists in Catholic and independent schools, qualifications of school psychologists and a discussion about whether or not school psychologists should also have teacher training in order to work effectively within schools. Chapter Three addresses the literature around child and adolescent mental health issues, the growing need for psychologists to be working in schools, the types of student issues that psychologists deal with in their role as school counsellors, other activities (besides student counselling) that comprise school psychologists’ roles, and the types of activities that school psychologists have indicated that they prefer to be engaged in. Chapter Four is a more detailed investigation of the professional issues associated with the provision of a school psychological service, including stakeholders’ perceptions of the role of school psychologists, the role of confidentiality within a school setting and other ethical dilemmas that school psychologists may face, the provision of supervision to school psychologists, school psychologists’ reported levels of job satisfaction and experiences of stress and burnout. Chapter Five reviews the literature concerning the traditional client-centred model of service delivery for school psychologists and the various issues associated with working from a theoretically promoted systemic model of service delivery within schools. Finally, Chapter Six outlines in detail the aims of the current study. Subsequent chapters present the study methodology, results, and discussion of these results.

**Definition of school psychology**

What is a school psychologist? In 2000, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) released a document titled *Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* for both psychologists and employers to use as a guide for the effective and professional delivery of psychological services within schools (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). In this document, the APS described school psychologists as “employed to apply their psychological and their educational expertise to assist students, parents and siblings, teachers and school administrators to achieve the most beneficial outcomes for students” (p. 1). Inherent in this definition is firstly, the assumption that the student is the primary client of the school psychologist, and therefore, the school psychologist must work towards the best interests of students - but within the particular ethos or philosophy of the school setting. This task may not always be so straight forward, especially when school management has expectations of the psychologist which conflict
with the expectations of their profession. This topic is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Secondly, the APS definition highlights school psychologists’ need to work with a variety of stakeholders within a school setting, for example teachers, parents and even outside agencies, to achieve the best outcome for the student/client. Furthermore, working systemically with a variety of stakeholders presents school psychologists with a number of challenges, and these are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The education system is one of the main employers of psychologists in Australia (Khan, 1983). However, within Australia, there are a variety of occupational labels given to the practice of school psychology. Labels include ‘educational psychologist’ (Australian Psychological Society, 2000), ‘guidance officer’ (Bramston & Rice, 2000; McMahon & Patton, 2000) and ‘school counsellor’ (Barletta, 1997; Humes, 1990). Within Victoria, school employed psychologists are usually called ‘school counsellors’. However, not all school counsellors working in Victoria are registered psychologists. In fact, “nationally and internationally there is no consistency in the meaning of the title ‘school counsellor’ or qualification requirements” (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003, p. 46). For example, some schools employ teachers who have completed additional training in student welfare (Luk-Fong & Lung, 2003) or social workers (Reamer, 2005). In some Catholic schools, the role is carried out by a member of a religious order, usually a nun, who has completed additional training in counselling or welfare. Psychologists working for the Victorian Education Department, and who may be servicing multiple schools, are now known occupationally as ‘school psychologists’, however, both historically and recently, the term ‘guidance officer’ was employed in Victoria and this may still be used by some professionals.

One of the aims of this thesis was to examine differences in psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of the role of school psychologists, and consider how these differences may contribute to ethical dilemmas for the school psychologist. Therefore, rather than survey school counsellors from all occupational disciplines, the focus of this thesis is on probationary and registered psychologists working in schools. The term ‘school psychologist’, which is used by the Australian Psychological Society (2000) is employed, including “all of those psychologists working in school settings providing psychological services to students, their parents, and members of the school community” (p.1).

Finally, as mentioned previously, there is a lack of Australian data that investigates the professional issues and activities that make up the role of school
psychologist and much of the literature originates from the US. In the US both school psychologists and school counsellors work in welfare roles within schools. Although they are distinct professions, it appears that the activities that make up their roles have considerable overlap. In order to better understand and incorporate the US literature into the Australian context, this section will briefly define the role of school psychologists and school counsellors in the US.

*United States school psychologists and school counsellors*

In the US, school psychologists have their own professional body: the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). NASP defines the role of school psychologists as “helping children and youth succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. They collaborate with educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for all students that strengthen connections between home and school” (National Association of School Psychologists, 2003, para. 1). School psychologists in the US work with both kindergarten children and adolescents in high schools (S. Jimerson, personal communication, September 28, 2005). The activities that make up the role of school psychologists are extensive. They include: consultation with teachers, parents and administrators; evaluation and assessment of students for eligibility to special services; counselling and intervention with students and families; crisis intervention; prevention through the implementation of workshops and programs; collaboration with outside agencies; and research and planning (National Association of School Psychologists, 2003). Nevertheless, the US literature consistently suggests that school psychologists tend to spend over fifty percent of their time in assessment related tasks, especially in the area of student learning disabilities and special education (Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker, 1999; Lowry, 1998; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Smith, 1984).

In the past, US school psychologists were required to be trained in both psychology and education. However, now neither school counsellors nor school psychologists are required to complete teacher training. Most school counsellors have completed a Masters level of education, whilst school psychologists complete either a Masters or PhD, with most having a Masters level of education in School Psychology (S. Jimerson, personal communication, September 28, 2005).

School counsellors in the US also have their own professional body: The American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Although accreditation as a school
counsellor varies between states, the general consensus is that they have a Masters level of training in school counselling or the substantial equivalent. ASCA defines school counsellors’ role as “to address all students’ academic, personal/social and career development needs” (American School Counselor Association, 2004, para. 1). School counsellors in the US mostly work with high school aged students and their activities largely centre on vocational guidance (S. Jimerson, personal communication, September 28, 2005). However, other activities that make up their role include teaching a school guidance curriculum, implementing individual student planning related to their personal and academic goals, individual and group counselling, consultation with parents, teachers and other educators, referrals to other school supports and outside agencies and providing system support to enhance the school counselling program (American School Counselor Association, 2004).

From the definitions given by the two professional bodies it appears that their roles are relatively similar and that there is a large degree of overlap. In fact, a study which examined the activities of Western Australian school psychologists and how they compare to school psychologists in the US and Britain found that the activities of Australian school psychologists were comparative to those of their US and British counterparts. Similarly, on a visit to Australia from the US, Humes (1990) an American school counsellor, researched school counselling in Australia. He wrote about the Australian profession as “a combination of a counselor-psychologist model” (p. 250). Therefore, it appears that the primary differences between school psychologists and school counsellors in the US are that school psychologists are able to conduct psychometric assessments and they engage in increased participation in implementing mental health interventions for students.

The literature review for the present thesis will explore many US studies. As the role of US school counsellors and school psychologists appear to be relatively similar to both each other and to Australian school psychologists, research from both US school counsellors and school psychologists will be described.
CHAPTER TWO: SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY IN AUSTRALIA:
THEN AND NOW

Overview of Chapter Two

Historical changes in the role of Victorian school psychologists are very much connected with the policies of the leading governments of the time (Faulkner, 1999). In the Australian government school system, school psychological services are the responsibility of state governments and government policy determines the number of school psychologist positions available as well as the nature of the role (Whitla, Walker, & Drent, 1992). This chapter examines the history of school psychological services within the Victorian Department of Education, which is said to be not dissimilar to the history of school psychological services in the US and the United Kingdom (UK), with many of our educational polices and practices reflecting those of these countries (Barletta, 1997; Ritchie, 1985). Furthermore, the chapter provides a brief overview of the system today for government, Catholic and independent school employed psychologists, before describing the qualifications of school psychologists and the debate around whether or not school psychologists should have a teaching qualification.

History of school psychology in the Victorian Department of Education

It is important to ‘look back’ to the origins of school psychology in Victoria in order to be able to ‘look forward’ and to understand the forces which have led to the current system of school psychological services which is very much shaped by the political context of the times. A review of the history also reveals organisational stressors which are likely to impact on the morale and occupational health and wellbeing of school psychologists – stressors which may be still occurring today. The education system is one that is designed to be economically accountable whilst balancing the educational and professional needs of a diversity of stakeholders. A review of the history of school psychological services reveals that school psychologists’ needs (and the needs of students who benefit from the expertise of psychologists) have not always been the foremost priority. The subsequent historical account is divided into pre and post Second World War periods, as these two periods of psychological practice in Victorian schools differed significantly (Oakland, Faulkner, & Annan, 2005); especially in regard to the model of service delivery for school psychologists.
Pre-second world war era (1890 – 1939). The initial need for Victorian school psychologists was recognised in 1890 when ‘special schools for handicapped children’ were authorised by the Victorian Education Department. Psychologists were predominately required to perform a psychometric role, testing children for academic deficits for possible placement in these special settings. In 1909 school medical inspections began and in 1913 the first special school was opened on Bell Street in Fitzroy. In the early 1920’s the Psychological Laboratory was established at Melbourne Teachers’ College and in 1930, the Australian Council of Education Research (ACER) opened in Melbourne, providing the educational community with, amongst other things, a broad range of psychological and educational tests. During the 20’s and 30’s, the primary role of school psychologists continued to be the administration of psychometric tests to children and young people (Faulkner, 2000; Oakland et al., 2005; Ritchie, 1985; The Education History Research Centre, 2003).

Post-second world war era (1945 – present). The following historical account of school psychological services is partially derived from an article written by Faulkner (2000), which outlines the history of school psychology in Victoria based on his comprehensive interviews with one of the first appointed school psychologists in the Psychology and Guidance Branch in 1947: J.R. McLeod. Furthermore, this section has been read and endorsed by Peter Ryan and Betty Levy. Peter Ryan, is a school psychologist who worked for the Department of Education Victoria from 1976-1992, and some of the material in this account is derived from an interview with him on the 9th November, 2005. Betty Levy is a school psychologist who worked for the Department of Education Victoria as a guidance officer from 1973-2005 and some of the material is derived from email contact with her on 14th January, 2006.

In 1945 the Australian Branch of the British Psychological Society established itself in Australia and later became known as the Australian Psychological Society. Shortly after, in 1946, the University of Melbourne opened its School of Psychology. In 1947, the Psychology Branch within the Primary Division of the Victorian Education Department was established, replacing the Psychological Laboratory. The Psychology Branch was staffed by psychologists (guidance officers), social workers and support teachers, and was later known, in 1955, as the Psychology and Guidance Branch (Jacobs, 1986). The establishment of the Psychology and Guidance Branch was the first formal recognition of the specialist role of psychologists in Victorian schools and school psychologists became to be known professionally as ‘guidance officers’. This is
an uniquely Australian term and was chosen as it seemed a more neutral and acceptable term than ‘school psychologist’. This is because during the war psychologists were known typically for their involvement in testing and selection procedures of Australian servicemen and women and this was not always viewed positively by the general public (Faulkner, 2000). In fact, the initial school psychologists employed in the Psychology and Guidance Branch were returned servicemen, who were also university graduates and in some cases ex-teachers who had completed additional training. It is also said that at this time most psychologists completed their training in either the US or in the UK (Ritchie, 1985). Furthermore, the term guidance officer became an acceptable and convenient name for probationary school psychologists who were under the supervision of a senior psychologist (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005). In 1949, there were five psychologists in the Psychology and Guidance Branch, including the first graduates from the School of Psychology at Melbourne University. Their skills and expertise were in high demand (Jacobs, 1986).

In the early 1950’s, the Psychology and Guidance Branch instructed its guidance officers to have a strong psychometric focus. This was in response to the educational policy at that time which required students to be classified or ‘streamed’ into suitable areas of academic ability. However, in the late 1950’s new policy initiatives within the Australian education system encouraged all capable adolescents of varying academic abilities access to mainstream secondary education. Therefore, rather than testing for streamed education, results were used to provide more remedial support to students. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) testing was removed from group testing programs and school psychologists began working proactively with ‘underachieving’ young people through the employment of differential teaching techniques and counselling. However, individual IQ testing still continued to dominate school psychologists’ work (Jacobs, 1986).

School psychologists’ model of service delivery changed in the 1960’s. The view that children’s lack of academic success was a result of purely innate deficiencies was abandoned and replaced with a more ecological and systemic view of the child. Underachievement was viewed as being a symptom of a variety of factors, including the child’s social world. As a result, as well as providing direct services to students, school psychologists started to work more systemically within schools, increasingly providing an indirect service through consultation with teachers, parents and to the school system itself (Jacobs, 1986).
By the late 1960’s, school psychologists were valued highly for the innovative strategies that they brought to students’ various educational, social or developmental difficulties. Social changes within the community meant that schools were increasingly providing custodial and welfare functions which had previously been the responsibility of the family. Schools took on a more pastoral care focus, and with the assistance of the Psychology and Guidance Branch, implemented many programs which aimed to increase interaction between students and teachers (Department of Education Victoria, 1970). The activities that made up the role of school psychologists expanded and included: individual and group testing of children with learning problems; providing advice on the educational requirements of children with physical handicaps; individual counselling of students with social-emotional difficulties; the development and/or implementation of group programs for students with social-emotional difficulties; the provision of direct consultation and advice to teachers; the provision of in-service training and workshops to teachers on guidance techniques and practices; research on student welfare and educational issues; and presentations at various student welfare and educational conferences and parent support group meetings (Jacobs, 1986).

The Report of the Minister of Education for 1970-71 (Department of Education and Victoria, 1971) revealed, however, that a staffing problem was evident. A combination of staff resignations coupled with a role that was both challenging and in high demand, meant that there were not enough school psychologists to meet the increasing number of referrals from schools, as outlined in the following passage written by the then Minister for Education:

The demand on the staff is therefore incessant and insistent. In the face of this demand and with the diminishing manpower resources available to meet it, staff morale has suffered and job satisfaction has undoubtedly been reduced. This has certainly been a factor in the staff losses already suffered, and each loss of an experienced staff member worsens the position for those who remain. If this worsening staffing position is to be arrested, immediate and urgent action is necessary to restore and increase the career prospects of those who come into this demanding work, and, even then, it will take some time to recover the ground that has been lost since 1968 (p. 77).
In 1973 the situation remained the same, if not worse – now described by the Minister as a ‘staffing crisis’. The following excerpt is from the Report of the Minister of Education for 1972-73:

In the face of growing and changing needs, the Branch is at present able to provide only minimum services to schools – particularly to the post-primary schools. It is of particular concern also to note the marked decrease in the number of country cases that our increasingly overburdened metropolitan centres are able to handle. There is clear evidence that the social structure around the schools have become deeper and more intractable. The social consequences, such as an increase in overall violence and aggression, can be expected to increase unless supportive services within and around the schools are developed (Department of Education Victoria, 1973, p. 64).

The recommendations in the 1972-73 report were: to increase psychologist numbers to at least 400; to employ non-teachers as educational consultants; to become more supportive to psychological staff and to create a more attractive career structure and salary rate in order to retain existing staff. (Department of Education Victoria, 1973). However, these recommendations were not followed through.

In 1974, the Psychology and Guidance Branch and the Speech Therapy Branch merged to form the new ‘Counselling, Guidance and Clinical Services’ unit in the Special Services Division. This was staffed by guidance officers, psychology officers (psychologists without teaching experience), social workers, welfare officers, support teachers and, after 1976, interpreters. The central administration of these services still remained in the Victorian Department of Education (Jacobs, 1986). Changes in the pastoral care structure within schools meant that in 1976, Pupil Welfare Coordinator roles were established. Initially, one teacher from eight different secondary schools was trained in student welfare issues and then released from full classroom duties to be responsible for the coordination of pupil welfare in their school. This later became the norm for all secondary schools. This meant that Pupil Welfare Coordinators began doing some of the welfare work that school psychologists were feeling pressured to undertake in the limited time available to them. It also meant that more students were
'picked-up’ and referred to school psychologists for assistance (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005).

Changes to the industrial conditions of school psychologists were enforced in 1978. Department of Education employed school psychologists were no longer able to have similar hours and conditions to teachers (i.e., school holidays) and were put on a public service scale of pay which was less than their previous rates. This meant that many school psychologists chose to leave the Department for school employed positions (in Catholic or independent sector schools) or went back to teaching. In the early 80’s, in order to attract more psychologists to the profession, the requirement to possess a teaching qualification was removed (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005).

In 1982, organisational change within the Victorian Education Department increased with the election of a Labor government after 29 years in opposition. At this time, there were 330 school psychologists servicing Victorian schools (mostly in metropolitan Melbourne) in which 530,000 students were enrolled. In 1983, corporal punishment in schools was abolished and this is said to have generated more proactive consultancy and therapeutic work for psychologists (Faulkner, 1999). However, in 1984, Victoria was the first state in Australia to experience the loss of a centralised education department school psychology structure – i.e. the Psychology and Guidance Branch. This centralised system had had statewide responsibility for the staffing, training, professional development, resourcing, research, policy development, publications and innovations in the area of school psychological services and was managed by senior psychologists. From 1984 to 1986, local centres, called Student Services Centres were opened, and psychologists who had previously worked under the leadership of the centralised branch continued their work within these multi-specialist centres. Management was now staffed by senior educational officers who were not psychologists. Further restructuring of the service continued with the release of the Collins Report ‘Integration in Victorian Education’ (Collins, 1984). This influenced a change in the psychologists’ role, both administratively and professionally, to now principally include the management of special education issues (Faulkner, 1999). The then Director of the Integration Unit was also given the additional portfolio of Acting Director of Student Services (Jacobs, 1986) which meant that he was responsible for the work of school psychologists on a statewide basis.
In 1987/8 School Support Centres were established which replaced Student Services Centres. School Support Centres were again made up of a team of multi-disciplinary professionals who were required to support schools on a range of student and curriculum matters. Now, however, psychologists were placed within the ‘Integration Unit’ (Faulkner, 1999). Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the centres, coupled with the inadequate number of professionals employed to respond to the demand for their services, roles became blurred and often staff were used to perform tasks which were outside their professional area. Australian school psychologists were reported as experiencing low morale during this period and felt that their professional skills were seriously undervalued (Burden, 1988).

In 1991, the statewide Guidance Officer Training Coordinator’s position was made redundant. Therefore, the preparation and training of future school psychologists was no longer the responsibility of the Education Department and specialised training in school guidance ceased to exist within the Department of Education. The election of the Kennett government in 1992 spurred even more changes to the profession. School Support Centres were dismantled and psychologists were relocated to separate school locations and placed on two year contracts. This relocation is said to have significantly reduced psychologists’ opportunities for collegial support and many felt professionally isolated – thus further lowering staff morale (Whitla et al., 1992).

In 1992, Whitla, Walker and Drent (1992) published a paper which gave an overview of Victorian Department of Education school psychological services. Whitla et al. described the state of psychological services in Victorian public schools as highly unsatisfactory. They describe a system with stretched services resulting from the abolition of the centralised psychology branch and years of government cost-cutting. There was deprofessionalisation and reduction of psychological services within each of the nine geographic regions, and only one senior psychologist position remained. Whitla et al. claim that many of the government decisions which affected the role and service delivery of school psychologists were made in the absence of any consultation with psychologists themselves. Psychologists were used increasingly for administrative and policy implementing activities rather than much needed direct service provision. In fact, the Victorian government service delivery priorities for school psychologists were at that time: 1) Services to the integration program; 2) Consultancy to support Student Welfare Coordinators; and 3) Implementation of government policies. This was very much a model of service delivery which de-emphasised individual student counselling.
However, Whitla et al. conducted a survey which explored school psychologists’ role activities and found that school psychologists were still engaged in a broad range of functions. These included: consulting with teachers and parents to facilitate integration; consulting with teachers and parents to develop educational and behavioural programs for students; and providing direct services to individuals and groups. They also found that the ratio for Victorian school psychologists to school students was unrealistically low with approximately one school psychologist for every 2,783 students. These authors asserted that schools and families were forced to access community mental health services instead of Education Department school psychologists. However, community mental health services were also faced with decreased staff numbers and therefore had lengthy waiting lists – not an ideal situation for young people in ‘crisis’, needing urgent attention. The result was that many student problems were not being contained or supported immediately and the multiplying effects of this delay or absence of support was evident in many schools, especially in the increasing rate or diagnosis of mental illness amongst children and young people. In addition, a further strain on the student support system was the Kennett Government’s reduction and in some cases removal of Pupil Welfare Coordinators within schools (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005).

By 1997, school psychologists who were working for the Department of Education were still housed at separate school locations whilst servicing multiple schools, but became responsible to district management committees headed by school principals. They were required to ‘meet pre-determined sets of performance criteria’ (Faulkner, 1999, p. 97). By this stage, the ‘330’ figure quoted in 1982 (Faulkner), for the number of school psychologists working in Victorian schools was seriously reduced to only 130. This meant that Victoria now had the lowest ratio of psychologists to students in Australia. In fact, Faulkner describes one country region in Victoria during this time as a ‘psychologist-free zone’ (p. 98). It was around this time that principals began using their school’s funds to employ psychologists to work as part of their own school community – especially schools that no longer had the resources to allocate teachers to the student welfare role (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005). Paradoxically, in the same year, the Victorian government’s own report: *Victorian Task Force Report on Suicide Prevention* recommended that a measure to deal with the rising tragedy of teenage suicide in Victoria was to allocate a school counsellor to every secondary college in Victoria:
The Victorian Government support the Department of Education to expand the number of professional counsellors available to support at-risk students. Ideally, one professional counsellor should be located in each government secondary school who would be responsible for providing professional counselling services to students at the secondary school and its feeder primary schools, and for making direct links with the mental health promotion officer in each Department of Human Services region (Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce, 1997, p. 124).

In response to the *Victorian Task Force Report on Suicide Prevention* (Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce, 1997), the Education Department (now called the Department of Education, Employment and Training: DEET.) released a report titled ‘*The Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools*’ (Department of Education Victoria, 1998). This document outlined how additional state government funding ($12.08 million) would be spent, amongst other things, to “strengthen existing counselling support and referral services” (p.5). Some of the results of this policy included increased funding for student welfare coordinators, increasing the number of school nurses in secondary schools and the establishment of the School Focused Youth Service (SFYS). The SFYS was formed in order to link clusters of local schools with their regional community agencies and services, specifically addressing the needs of students who were in any way ‘at risk’. The SFYS was a Victorian initiative, which has since received much interest and support from other states (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). A further aim of the Framework was to fund additional service provision for young people in areas where there were identified gaps. In regards to school psychologists (as well as social workers and student services officers), the framework recommended a considerably broader and more systemic role. For example, the Framework stated that they were required to:

- Provide advice and support to schools, especially in the development of programs, procedures and policies aimed at increasing the wellbeing of students at risk;
- Implement programs for students that foster resiliency and respond to identified social, emotional and educational needs;
• Provide professional development programs for schools that focus on primary prevention strategies and skills in the identification, monitoring, management and referral of students at risk as well as on the development of supportive school environments;
• Provide counselling to students at risk and where appropriate to their families and/or caregivers;
• Establish and maintain links with community agencies and services;
• Provide advice to the General Manager on issues around student welfare; and
• Provide quarterly reports to the General Manager on a number of performance indicators, namely, their performance on primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention.

Psychologists became accountable to the General Manager (Schools) within their region, who monitored their performance. Their performance was evaluated on the degree of responsiveness between the time taken from initial request to the provision of service, school community satisfaction through the dissemination of surveys, cost of service provision and the number of participants accessed through professional development programs (Department of Education Victoria, 1998, p.12-13). Thus, an effective school psychologist was one who responded quickly to a school’s request for assistance, received satisfactory evaluations from school staff, used limited resources that saved the Department money and potentially accessed a greater number of students through the implementation of programs and workshops.

A further alteration was the establishment of school networks. These comprised a group of principals (and sometimes other school staff) from primary and secondary schools in the same geographic area who met on a regular basis to discuss student issues pertinent to their local area. Staff from local community and welfare agencies could also attend these meetings. It was hoped that through regular communication between local schools and agencies, resources and ideas could be shared across schools and therefore school-community partnerships would be enhanced (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a).

The Public Education: The Next Generation (PENG) report was commissioned by the Department of Education in 2000, inviting the public to submit their views on the education system and future educational policy for the 21st century (Department of
Education Employment and Training Victoria, 2000). A recommendation of the PENG Report was that a review of student support services in Victorian government schools was needed. This initiated the release of a consultation paper in 2002, titled the Review of the Delivery of Student Support Services (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b). This consultation paper revealed that the largest proportion of funding allocated to student support services went to the employment of psychologists (39%). This was followed by social workers (11%), visiting teachers (13%), speech pathologists (15%) and curriculum consultants (11%). One of the aims of the consultation paper was to put forward for consideration three alternative funding models for the delivery of student support services. These were: 1) funds are allocated directly to networks, and principals are collectively given sole responsibility for the distribution and sharing of those funds; 2) funds are directed to networks, but some are retained by the region to facilitate cross-network distribution of services; and 3) funds are directed only to individual schools in each network. Each model was considered as having advantages and disadvantages; however, the most favourable model was thought to be option 1, in which networks of principals decide on the equitable distribution and sharing of student support services funding for schools in their network. A further recommendation was that the Department of Education and Training develop guidelines on the employment, role and location of Student Support Services Officers (including psychologists) and that particular attention is given to appropriate collegial support, professional development and supervision of these professionals, as well as the development of induction processes for new staff. An evaluation of the professional development and support needs of Student Support Services Officers as well as the development of a professional standards document for each of the disciplines within Student Support Services was also recommended. However, to date, it appears that these recommendations have not been implemented.

Finally, another important policy document, which again mentioned the value of school counsellors / psychologists, was released in 2003 by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and addressed the increasing number of student issues pertaining to bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect. The policy framework, titled the National Safe Schools Framework, was to be implemented by all schools, including government, Catholic and independent schools by 2005. The primary aim of the framework was to assist schools to “promote and provide a supportive learning environment in which all students can expect to feel
safe” (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2003, p.4). One of the key elements of the framework was that school policies should be “proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention” (p. 5) and that ‘safe and supportive schools’ provide “an environment that protects the emotional, psychological and physical well-being of students” (p.12). The framework suggested that one way of doing this was to provide counselling and support to students who are involved in ‘bullying, harassment and violence and who have experienced abuse or neglect’. However, the framework does not limit counselling and support to students only. It states that schools should also “provide specialist support, including for teachers who encounter or report abuse and who work with students who are persistently aggressive, such as behaviour teachers and consultants, anti-harassment officers, school counsellors, psychological consultants [italics added] and school based police constables” (p. 3). Thus by 2005, although school welfare needs had been well and truly delineated, adequate services to satisfactorily address those needs had not developed.

**The system today.** To date, in Victoria the ratio of school psychologists to government school students is estimated at 1:5,000 which is “the lowest in the nation, [and is] the result of the macro-educational policies of successive governments through the 1980s and 1990s” (Oakland et al., 2005, p. 1086). Regional control over the distribution of school psychologists’ services to schools has largely diminished. Now, individual networks (of which there are eight) comprising a nominated convener, principal, psychologist and other allied health representatives determine the nature of the services required in their local area of schools. Some government schools have opted to employ their own psychologist through the use of their ‘global budget’ and/or other sources of funding. Some have not and rely on the services of psychologists from their local network. The amount of a psychologist’s time given to a school is based on a formula that takes into account the population of students in a given school. Notably, the recommendations in the *Victorian Task Force Report on Suicide Prevention* (Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce, 1997) ‘that one professional counsellor should be located in each government secondary school who would be responsible for providing professional counselling services to students at the secondary school and its feeder primary schools’ (p. 124) has not been implemented. Although some regions appear to be currently developing guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of their student support services staff (Department of Education personnel, personal
communication, 17 August, 2005\textsuperscript{1}), many of the other recommendations, specific to the needs of Student Support Services Officers, made in the Review of the Delivery of Student Support Services (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002b) have not yet been implemented.

Drent (2005) recently conducted an informal survey of Department of Education employed school psychologists from each Australian state in order to gain an overall idea about their occupational conditions and status. In contrast to Oakland et al.’s (2005) estimates, Drent found that the Victorian school psychologist to student ratio was, for primary schools, 1:1600, and for secondary schools, 1:800. This indicates an increase in school psychologist numbers since 1992’s apparent 1:2,783 ratio (Whitla et al., 1992), and is not as high as Oakland et al.’s 1:5000 calculation, but is still high in regards to the number of students that school psychologists are responsible for. The results also revealed that there was a concerning lack of career advancement for Victorian school psychologists, that most school psychologists work in five or six different schools, that physical resources were identified as ‘manageable’ but professional resources (such as available tests) were considered inadequate. Furthermore, Drent found that in regard to professional development and supervision, both were minimal, with supervision only offered to school psychologists on an \textit{ad hoc} basis and only if requested. The main activities that Drent found made up the school psychologists’ role were counselling, assessments, and consultation with staff and parents, indicating that a more systemic model of service delivery continues to be performed. Finally, Drent found that staff morale was good in regard to collegial support, but very low in regard to school psychologists’ attitudes towards the Department of Education.

\textit{Prevalence of psychologists working in Victorian schools}

There is no data that comprehensively shows the total number of psychologists currently working within schools in Victoria. The Psychologists Registration Board of Victoria does not collect data of this kind (D. Collier, personal communication, August 15, 2005\textsuperscript{2}). However, the Australian Psychological Society (APS) does collect occupational data of its members and includes school psychology in its list of psychological occupations. According to the APS there are 291 psychologists employed

\begin{footnotesize}\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} This individual wished to remain anonymous
\item \textsuperscript{2} D. Collier is the Chief Executive Officer of the Psychologists Registration Board of Victoria
\end{itemize}\end{footnotesize}
in Victorian government primary and secondary schools and 161 psychologists employed in Victorian Catholic and independent primary and secondary schools. According to the total number of APS members in Victoria (N = 4,591), the number of APS members who are working in school settings represent a substantial 10% of the overall membership (Australian Psychological Society, 2004-2005). This group, however, does not include Victorian school psychologists who are not APS members, of whom the number is unknown.

The Catholic and independent school sector

APS statistics reveal that Victorian Catholic and independent schools also employ a considerable number of psychologists to work in counselling and assessment roles within schools (Australian Psychological Society, 2004-2005). Many of the psychologists working in the non-government school sector are employed by individual schools and service just that one school. Typically, psychologists working in Catholic or independent schools are called ‘school counsellors’. Similar to the government sector where a principal may use funds to employ a school counsellor to work exclusively for their school, the principal of a Catholic or independent school may choose to employ counselling staff from another discipline, such as, for example, social work.

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) has a Student Wellbeing Team which is similar to the Department of Education’s Student Support Services unit. It is made up of a multi-disciplinary team of allied health workers and specialised teachers (called visiting teachers), including psychologists. Psychologists from the Student Wellbeing Team are available to schools within each of the regions, for consultation, intervention and assessment (Catholic Education Office Melbourne, 2005). The 2004 annual report of the CEOM revealed that in regards to the need for student services from the Student Wellbeing Team: “demands in 2004 continued to increase in comparison to previous years, both in terms of the number of the referrals received as well as the complexity of support being sought by schools. More than 12,000 students accessed varying levels of service support….while staff worked with school personnel on programs that have a primary prevention approach, the majority of time was spent working at the intervention level with students” (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004a, p.20).

The CEOM’s chief response to the Victorian Government Suicide Prevention Taskforce Report (1997) was the development of a ‘Youth Services Strategy’ which, by
the end of 2004, had financially supported “700 selected teachers in more than 270 Catholic primary and secondary schools across Victoria who have either completed or will be enrolled in the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Student Welfare)” (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004a, p. 21) at the University of Melbourne.

In regard to the independent school sector, personal communication with Deborah Maher (Coordinator Student Wellbeing) from the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV) revealed that the AISV does not have a ‘pool’ of psychologists in a centralised branch like the Department of Education or CEOM. In contrast, they have a division, called Student Wellbeing (which is staffed solely by Maher), who is responsible for the development and implementation of student welfare policy, professional development for teachers in the area of student wellbeing and the dissemination of financial resources that benefit students with additional needs. In addition, Maher coordinates a state-wide ‘Wellbeing Network’ for school psychologists and other counsellors to meet and discuss issues pertinent to their work in schools. Maher revealed that since 2003, the AISV has had an agreement with the Department of Education Victoria to share resources in the areas of drug education and primary prevention. This has resulted in a sharing of policy resources and training of staff to implement comparable student wellbeing policy and teaching across AISV and government schools. Recently, the AISV developed a ‘Social Justice’ policy which incorporates the work of Student Wellbeing and other relevant individuals or groups within the AISV, for which one of its key roles is to “strengthen student welfare and curriculum support in schools, to maximize all students’ access to teaching and learning and help them to develop as healthy, secure and resilient people” (Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, 2005, p. 1). Interestingly, Maher revealed that the majority of AISV schools employ a school counsellor and the counsellor is generally a registered psychologist. Furthermore, similar to school networks in the Department of Education, in cases where funds are limited, schools may pool funds and employ a psychologist to work across multiple schools (D. Maher, personal communication, August 29, 2005).

**Qualifications of school psychologists**

Historically, there was once a requirement that school psychologists working in Australian government schools must also have a teaching qualification (Barletta, 1997;
Khan, 1983). In fact, up until the early 1980’s (P. Ryan, personal communication, November 9, 2005), the criteria for employment as a guidance officer, was a teaching qualification, teaching experience, three to four years training in psychology, as well as either additional postgraduate psychology training at a university or professional supervision which was usually provided by the Department of Education (Whitla et al., 1992). This is no longer the case. Verbal communication with the student Wellbeing Team Leader of the Northern Metropolitan Department of Education and Training Region revealed that within the government sector, the term ‘guidance officer’ is no longer being used when recruiting regional school psychologists and that in its place the term ‘psychologist’ is utilised. This ensures that all applicants are registered psychologists or working towards becoming registered psychologists. Teacher training is also no longer a requirement and the job role is categorised under the umbrella of ‘allied health’ which also includes school social workers, youth workers and speech pathologists. (J. Roberts, personal communication, July 11, 2005).

**Should school psychologists also be teachers?**

For many years, there has been considerable debate concerning whether psychologists and counsellors who work in schools should have a teaching qualification in addition to their training in psychology (eg., Baker & Herr, 1976; Farwell, 1961). The rationale behind recommendation of a teaching qualification for the provision of a school psychological service was the belief that “teachers were considered by some to have the advantage of understanding school policies and procedures” (Olson & Allen, 1993, p. 10). Not surprisingly, a survey of 282 Virginian school psychologists found that school psychologists who had a teaching degree saw a combination of both teaching and psychology qualifications more important to the work of school psychological services than school psychologists who had no teaching experience (Lowry, 1998). In contrast, Wilczenski (1997) surveyed 720 United States school psychologists and found that although nearly half of the sample had a teaching qualification, 75% indicated that they identified their professional practice with the field of psychology rather than with education.

An informative qualitative study conducted by Sunde Peterson, Goodman, Keller and McCauley (2004) revealed that in regard to the professional and organisational challenges faced by beginning school counsellors with and without teaching experience, those with teaching experience appeared to face more challenges
and difficulties adjusting to their new role within schools (i.e., evidence of role strain and role confusion) than those without teaching experience. Furthermore, they found that for all school counsellors, regardless of whether they had teaching experience or not, school counselling presented them with a significant adjustment process - especially to the school environment and culture, as well as other challenges and difficulties unique to a school setting.

Contrary to the belief that school counsellors with teaching experience find work easier due to their prior experience in schools, Sunde et al. (2004) also found that this group seemed to struggle the most with adjustment to a new role within schools which is considerably different from the previous and familiar role as a teacher. The authors classified former teachers’ responses as representing a lack of ‘role clarity, credibility and closure’. That is, “former teachers may feel they have relinquished a clear place in the school hierarchy as well as clarity of role and function. They may also sense that they must earn credibility in their new role – with students, faculty, administrators, and parents” (p. 242). A particular concern of former teachers was their difficulty with maintaining clients’ confidentiality within a school setting as they felt that other teachers perceived them as no longer ‘being on their side’.

The majority of research in this area overwhelmingly indicates that a teaching qualification is not critical to the professional success of a school psychologist. In most cases, there is no difference in the performance, effectiveness or the appraisal (usually principal ratings) of school counsellors and psychologists who have or have not got a teaching qualification (Baker & Herr, 1976; Dilley, Foster, & Bowers, 1973; Olson & Allen, 1993; White & Parsons, 1974). Interestingly, in a Western Australian study which surveyed 58 principals and 231 teachers, the majority of respondents reported that they were unsure about whether or not their school psychologist actually had a teaching qualification. The reality was that all school psychologists at that time had teacher training, and the authors concluded that such training was obviously not showing through in their work (Leach, 1989).

More recently, and in light of the empirical evidence, counsellor educators in the United States have affirmed that a teaching qualification is not necessary to the effective delivery of school psychological services (Smith, Crutchfield, & Culbreth, 2001). As one author eloquently suggested: “they should not select chemistry teachers for counselors but chemistry teachers to instruct in chemistry” (Farwell, 1961, p. 40). Therefore, neither school psychologists nor school counsellors in the United States are
required to have completed teacher training (S.R. Jimerson, personal communication, September 28, 2005). This is also the case in Victoria.
CHAPTER THREE: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Overview of Chapter Three

Chapter Three examines the various issues that school psychologists come across in their daily work. Firstly, this section describes the types of concerns that children and young people are experiencing. Secondly it explores literature examining the need for school psychologists, the types of student issues that school psychologists deal with and the range of activities that make up school psychologists’ role. Thirdly, it discusses school psychologists’ reports about their preferred role activities.

Issues facing young people

Childhood and adolescence are two distinct stages of the lifespan with unique developmental milestones. Problems related to the mental health, development, behaviour and academic progress of children and adolescents may sometimes require psychological intervention. In fact, some authors claim that the need for psychological support significantly increases during adolescence as not only does this period contain inherent difficulties associated with increased risk-taking behaviours and other behavioural and emotional difficulties, it is also the time when symptoms of more severe adult mental disturbances may become noticeable (e.g., Offer, Howard, Schonert, & Ostrov, 1991). In contrast, recent research has found that mental health problems are equally prevalent amongst children and adolescents (Sawyer et al., 2000) and therefore the need for the professional skills of psychologists may be comparable during both these stages of the lifespan. In fact, research concerning the issues affecting Australian young people reveals that a significant number of children and adolescents experience concerning levels of stress, mental health problems and other difficulties that require the need for specialised psychological intervention and support (Sawyer et al).

The Mental Health and Special Programs Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care commissioned the University of Adelaide to investigate the rate of mental health problems (conceptualised as internalising and externalising problems) and mental health disorders (Depressive Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Conduct Disorder) in Australian young people. They found that out of the randomly selected 4,500 children and adolescents aged 4 to 17 years who participated, 14% were identified as having mental health problems. Across all of the age groups, 4% had a Depressive Disorder, 3% had Conduct Disorder and 11% had ADHD. The prevalence of mental health problems was similar
across all age and gender groups, however, some age and gender differences were found in the prevalence of various mental disorders (Sawyer et al., 2000).

Sawyer et al. (2000) also found that 23% of children and young people who had symptoms which met the criteria for one of the tested mental disorders also had symptoms of another disorder. This suggests that comorbidity is relatively high amongst this group. For all groups, the prevalence of mental health problems was higher for those living in low income, step/blended and sole-parent families. Those with mental health problems experienced a poorer quality of life than their peers (e.g., lower rates of participation in physical activities, weaker self-esteem, and less family cohesion) and reported more suicidal ideation and health-risk behaviours (e.g., smoking, drinking alcohol, drug use). It was a matter of concern that only one out of every four respondents identified as having mental health problems received professional help (Sawyer et al., 2000).

Each year Kids Help Line, a free and confidential telephone and internet counselling service for children and young people, release an information sheet on the number of callers and types of issues that callers are reporting in each state in Australia. In Victoria in 2004, 229,152 calls were made, of which 46% were from rural and remote areas. The top ten concerns that accounted for over 75% of the calls in Victoria were, in order of frequency: family relationships (e.g., family conflict and breakdown); relationships with friends and peers (e.g., friendship problems, concern for a friend’s wellbeing); relationships with partners (e.g., relationship difficulties and breakdown, assistance in starting a relationship); bullying (e.g., episodic bullying, harassment, concern for a friend); emotional / behavioural management (e.g., difficulty managing emotions or behaviour); mental health (e.g., clinically diagnosed mental health issue, symptoms or concerns, caring for someone with a mental illness); child abuse (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect); pregnancy (e.g., unsure if pregnant, worried about pregnant friend or partner, distressed about telling significant others, pregnancy options); leaving home and homelessness; and grief and loss. Of interest to this study was the finding that 11% of the callers were referred to other support services such as their school counsellor (Kids Help Line, 2004).

Similarly, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) commissioned a research report in 2003 on the nature, range and impact of welfare issues that school principals faced in their role as school leaders. The results revealed that the key issues for principals were: learning difficulties particularly in the area of
literacy and numeracy impacting on students’ wellbeing; student mental health issues, particularly affective disorders such as depression and anxiety; conduct-related mental health issues such as ADHD, autism, Aspergers syndrome and conduct disorders; family problems, especially family breakup and family mental health problems including suicide, gambling, violence and drug and alcohol problems; social health, especially bullying and negative or defiant classroom behaviours; and finally, staff wellbeing, especially staff mental health and burnout. Staff wellbeing issues also included poor class management skills, poor interpersonal relationship skills, and the potential impact of these issues on students. A recommendation of the report was to improve teachers’ welfare skills by funding more teachers to complete a Post Graduate Diploma in Student Welfare. However, the following excerpt from the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria 2005 Annual Report shows that merely trying to improve teachers’ skills to deal with the more problematic or high need students is not considered adequate by the Commission and that they also recommend the employment of counsellors and psychologists:

Through State Government funding the CECV has already committed considerable funds to the credentialing of teachers in a Post Graduate Diploma in Student Welfare (since 1997, 700 teachers in over 300 Victorian primary and secondary schools). However, simply improving teacher skills, or re-doubling the efforts of those already at the helm, are not in themselves enough to address the wave of change affecting families, young people and schools. Additional access to counsellors and psychologists is needed [italics added] (Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004b, p. 4)

Since 2002, Mission Australia has conducted an Australia wide study (the National Youth Survey) of young people’s views on the issues that are most important to them (from a list of issues in the survey) and where they would turn to for advice and support. In 2004, 1,794 Victorian young people, primarily between the ages of 11 and 19 years participated. Respondents indicated that the issues that were most important to them were (in order of importance): alcohol and other drugs; bullying and emotional abuse; suicide and self-harm; coping with stress; family conflict; school or study problems; depression; physical and sexual abuse; discrimination; and issues around
sexuality. Interestingly, in regards to where young people turn to for advice and support, Mission Australia’s study revealed that the ‘school counsellor’, was sixth on the list (13%), with friend/s (85%), parent/s (70%), relative or family friend (62%), internet (15%) and magazines (14%) being rated before the school counsellor in order of importance. This was a marked change from previous surveys, conducted in 2003 and 2004, where in both of these years the school counsellor was rated fourth on the list: after friends; parents; and relatives/family friends. Of concern was the finding that community agencies, teachers, someone else in the community (e.g., doctor or church minister) and telephone helpline services were the least important people or services to which young people would go to for advice and support (Mission Australia, 2004). This trend however, shows the importance of the peer group during the adolescent life phase, the rise in acceptance of internet usage amongst young people as a source of information and support, as well as the availability of magazines aimed at the youth market that deal with some of the issues about which young people are concerned.

Finally, it is a great matter of concern that not all young people are able to be helped, and for whatever reason feel that life is too difficult to cope. Some of these young people choose to commit suicide in an attempt to end their pain. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) reported that in 2003 suicide accounted for 20% of total male deaths and 13% of total female deaths among young people aged 15-19 years.

The need for school psychologists

Children and young people spend a significant share of their time at school. Whilst the family is the primary and most influential social setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000), school is the second most important social setting in which children and young people partake (Kids Help Line, 1996). There is no doubt that there is “a growing prevalence of internalizing problems in children (e.g., anxiety and depression) and the high level of disability associated with them, presents a unique opportunity for school psychologists to participate in efforts to prevent and treat these problems” (Herman, Merrell, Reinke, & Tucker, 2004, p. 763). In 1999, the Ministerial Council on Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs endorsed a statement which outlined a set of national goals for schooling in the 21st century. Implicit in goal 1.2 of the national goals was that schools should provide an education that caters for the ‘whole’ student, including their psychological and welfare needs, that is, by the time students leave school they should “have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high
self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members” (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999, p.3.15). School psychologists are significant professionals who work to support the development of such qualities in young people.

In a review of the literature pertaining to the role of schools in providing mental health services and youth outcomes, Farmer and Farmer (1999) concluded that “schools play an important role in delivering services to children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems” (p. 377). Furthermore, various reports have identified school counsellors and school psychologists as playing a fundamental role in identifying and intervening in the prevention and treatment of early onset mental illness in children and adolescents (eg., Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004b; Herman et al., 2004; Riggs & Cheng, 1988; Victorian Suicide Prevention Taskforce, 1997).

When considering the high prevalence of students experiencing mental health and other educational and behavioural issues, it is not surprising that school psychologists are in high demand and their work is extremely appreciated by all members of the educational community (Sawyer et al., 2000). Teachers have indicated a strong desire for school psychologists to be more available within schools to support them with problematic student issues that come their way (Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin, & Shwery, 2004; Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2001). In fact, there is a broad trend that schools would like to have more funding to utilise the professional expertise of psychologists (Farrell & Kalambouka, 2000). In the ACT, school counsellors are required to submit annual reports on their activities. An analysis of these reports reveals that “counsellors are busy, that caseloads are reasonably consistent across mainstream settings and that students, families and teachers are actively seeking counselling services” (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003, p.36). In fact, the review revealed that on average, one in five students in the ACT access a school counsellor each year, with the number of dedicated counselling hours for each student ranging between zero and five. This does not include the additional hours that school counsellors must spend in consultation with other school staff and/or families of students.

Cooper, Hough and Loynd (2005) reviewed a series of Scottish studies (some unpublished) concerning the benefits that teachers perceived in having a counsellor at school. They found that teachers frequently reported that they valued: the presence of an
‘independent’ professional in the school for students to seek support from (i.e., not a parent or teacher); having an ‘expert’ at school who is trained in children and young people’s developmental and welfare needs; the ‘confidentiality’ of the counselling service; and having a professional in the school who actually had time to listen to students.

Studies have generally found that many adolescents perceive their school counsellor as the most preferred ‘professional’ contact for assistance. For example, Offer et al. (1991) found that from a list of available mental health services and supports, young people rated the school counsellor as the most accepted professional to go to for support. Similarly, the Child and Adolescent Component of the National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being (Sawyer et al., 2000) found that “parents identified counselling in schools as one of the services most frequently used by children and adolescents” (p. 33) and that while “4-12 year old children with mental health problems most frequently attended paediatricians and family doctors…school based counselling was the service most frequently used by adolescents” (p. 28).

The school as a primary site for mental health intervention for children and young people is a concept that has received a great deal of empirical and academic support (e.g., American Academy of Pediatrics, 2004; Cooper, Hough, & Loynd, 2005; Dwyer & Bernstein, 1998; Offer et al., 1991; Power, Eiraldi, Clarke, & Krain, 2005). For example, a study of 1,015 children aged 9 to13 years in North Carolina found that between 70 and 80% of children who received professional support for their mental health difficulties received it from within the education sector, namely from guidance officers and school psychologists. However, similar to the Australian findings of Sawyer et al. (2000), it was a matter of concern that 27% of the sample had mental health impairments and 20% of the sample met the criteria for a mental disorder - yet 60% of children with more serious mental health difficulties had not received any professional support (Burns et al., 1995). Burns et al. concluded that major policy change was needed so that the location of mental health services to children and young people could be reorganised and positioned in schools.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2004) released a policy statement in 2004 which outlined the key reasons why they believed mental health services should be located primarily within schools. Benefits included that: young people are more likely to access school-based psychological services than other settings; it would increase student and family ‘connectedness’ with the school; school-based psychological
services are more convenient; these services encourage more communication across key stakeholders helping to improve the accuracy of diagnosis; and may reduce the stigma associated with accessing a more clinical and unfamiliar mental health setting.

**The types of student issues dealt with by school psychologists**

There is a lack of data within the school psychological literature that explores the types of student issues that school psychologists are faced with in their work within schools (Bramlett et al., 2002). This is particularly evident when reviewing the literature pertaining to the experience of Australian school psychologists. From the Australian research that is available, most comes from Queensland and concerns the issues faced by ‘guidance officers’. In Queensland, guidance officers, are mostly trained teachers who also have additional training (the majority at Master’s level) in either psychology or guidance and counselling (Barletta, 1997).

In 2000, Bramston and Rice (2000) investigated the types of student issues that Queensland guidance officers deal with in their work. One hundred and fifty-five guidance officers were surveyed and were asked to record their daily tasks over three working days. Over a three day period, guidance officers’ responses revealed a difference in student issues depending on whether they were in a primary or secondary school. For primary school guidance officers, student issues were largely assessment related. However, for secondary school counsellors, issues were mainly counselling related.

Regardless of whether guidance officers worked in primary or secondary schools, Bramston and Rice (2000) found that the types of issues that they were counselling students for were quite serious and clinical in nature. These included mental health issues such as depression, suicide intent, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, conduct disorders, ADHD, and autism. Behavioural issues such as bullying, harassment, aggression, and truancy were also reported. Also, emotional issues associated with sexual assault, post-abuse, family dysfunction, violence, participation in cults, drugs and death of a significant other were also not unknown. Bramston and Rice remarked that most counsellors who are working with such problems in the community would receive specialised training and extended supervision and would work in only one or a few of these areas of concern. However, they state that guidance officers are required to assist students with a range of extremely
complex issues and are also expected to perform an array of other tasks as part of their role.

Bramston and Rice (2000) asked guidance officers to report on the most difficult aspects of their job. In order of difficulty, most guidance officers reported that mental illness in students was the most difficult, followed by student emotional problems due to negative life experiences, behavioural problems in students, and family trauma due to divorce and domestic violence. Interestingly, guidance officers also noted that workplaces stresses, such as low morale, overwhelming workloads, dealing with the placement of expelled students, dissatisfied parents, a lack of resources and agencies to refer to and poor links with mental health services were perceived by guidance officers as contributing to a difficult job role.

The differences in student issues between primary and secondary school counsellors revealed by Bramston and Rice (2000) was consistent with the findings of Kahn (1983) who wrote that the Australian Department of Education had fewer psychologists employed in primary schools than in secondary schools and that the roles were dissimilar. In primary schools, psychologists are usually assigned to a number of schools and their function is mostly to undertake psychological testing of children for the purpose of diagnosis for educational support and/or placement in appropriate educational or welfare services. In comparison, school psychologists who are assigned to secondary schools are involved in a somewhat broader range of activities. As well as fulfilling a diagnostic function, they also consult with teachers and parents and participate in personal counselling with students.

Ashman, Gillies and Beavers (1993) describe the differences in counsellors’ roles between primary and secondary schools as centering around different models of prevention. Whereas secondary school counsellors may focus more on preventative measures for individuals (through counselling, program delivery and consultations with parents and teachers), primary school counsellors provide individual and group assessment reports that focus on a more systemic level of prevention, at the school and home level.

A sex difference in the types of issues that school psychologists deal with has also been found. The Review of the Provision of Counselling Services in ACT Government Schools and Colleges revealed that within primary schools more male students were being referred for behavioural issues while more female students were referred for interpersonal issues or for dealing with dysfunctional family relationships.
Within secondary schools issues were more diverse and included health, mental health and behaviour management at home. More female students self-referred in secondary school and issues pertaining to relationships, health and mental health were more common for females than for male students (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). To date, there is no research that explores whether the frequency or type of student issues change depending on whether the school psychologist is male or female.

Overseas research, such as from the US, appears to reflect the Australian experience in regards to the complexity and diversity of student issues that school psychologists work with (e.g., Kendrick & Chandler, 1994). In fact, due to the complexity of student issues that arise in school psychology, Crespi and Politikos (2004) describe their role as overlapping with the role of clinical psychologists. Bramlett et al. (2002) investigated the types of student issues that school psychologists in the US are commonly referred. Surveys were sent to a randomly selected group of National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members, resulting in a sample size of 391. The majority of school psychologists’ referrals comprised students with academic difficulties, for example, learning disorders, poor reading, writing and/or mathematics skills and poor task completion. Other issues that school psychologists were dealing with, but to a lesser extent, were conduct problems, peer relationships, truancy and violence. What the authors labeled as ‘internalising problems’, such as depression, anxiety, shyness/withdrawal and suicidal ideation were also present, but were referred less frequently. It was unclear whether this was because there was a lower incidence of internalising problems amongst this population of students, or because they were referred to other agencies or support people, or because they are less disruptive to school routine than externalizing problems.

Critical issues that have also received a lot of attention in the US are crisis preparedness and crisis intervention. This has been brought about by the increase in school shootings committed by students over the last few years as well as events involving natural disasters. Dealing with the effects of actual or potential school violence, preventing such instances from occurring and dealing with children and adolescents’ responses to natural disasters have been incorporated into the job description of US school psychologists (Crepeau-Hobson, Filaccio, & Gottfried, 2005; Jimerson, 2005; Lowry, 1998).
Role diversity

The previous discussion of student issues faced by school psychologists focuses primarily on only one aspect of their role: as providing direct intervention to students themselves, usually in the form of face-to-face counselling. However, a wide range of activities make up their role (e.g., Hill, 1961). That said, there is no standard measure within this area of study to identify all the activities that make up school psychologists’ role and which could be used across studies for comparison (Idsoe, 2003). What is apparent however, from the literature that is available, is that the activities that make up the role of school psychologists extend far further than the provision of a counselling service to students. In fact, research has revealed that psychologists’ roles within schools are broad and varied (eg., Ashman et al., 1993) and that they are working in an environment that demands of them to be ‘multi-specialists’ (Bramston & Rice, 2000).

The ACT Review found that the activities that make up the role of ACT school counsellors were numerous. They stated that this may be partly due to the somewhat ‘universal’ and ‘ambiguous’ mission statement given in the Procedures and Practices Manual for School Counsellors published by the ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services (DEYFS) which they said tends to be “activity focused and descriptive of tasks rather than achievements or purpose” (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). The mission statement posits that:

Guidance and Counselling aims to maximise the educational potential of students by providing quality school counselling services and related educational programs. The objectives of the service are:

1. To provide direct therapeutic input to students with psychological, educational, behavioural, social and emotional needs.
2. To identify students with special needs.
3. To provide psychological and educational consultancy to parents, teachers, school and system administrators in respect of students with special needs.
4. To intervene proactively in factors which may impede student development.
5. To facilitate organisational health.
6. To provide specialist resources responsive to social and system initiatives.
7. To advocate on behalf of students.
8. To liaise with other agencies on behalf of students

The ACT review of counselling services required school counsellors to report on how frequently they performed each of their professional activities. They found that the activities most frequently reported were student counselling, casework on behalf of students, referrals to other agencies, program development, individual classroom interventions and assistance to teachers, and psychometric testing. The activities that school counsellors reported that they performed on a monthly or term basis included individual education planning reviews and conducting teacher education or professional development programs. The activities that they performed rarely to never were small group programs, whole class group programs and school wide program delivery (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003).

Although the review found strong patterns among school counsellors in the frequency of activities reported, they also found evidence of ‘considerable’ differences in activities performed by some individual school counsellors (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). These individual differences may be attributed to the specific role expectations of school administrators or to the unique needs of a particular student population. In contrast, differences may also reflect the individual working style of the school counsellor. More research is needed which considers the impact of school psychologists’ characteristics (e.g., values, theoretical orientations and/or qualifications) on the types of professional activities that they perform.

In two other Australian studies conducted by Barletta (1996a) and Bramston and Rice (2000), Queensland guidance officers were asked to simply identify the types of activities that make up their role. Both Barletta and Bramston and Rice found that their “responses clearly reflect the broad, complex, and multifaceted role of the school counsellor and indicates their particular professional identity” (Barletta, p. 8). In both studies, guidance officers indicated that their activities included consultation and
education, program development and evaluation, career counselling, counselling interventions, assessment and administrative duties. In addition, Bramston and Rice also found that guidance officers participated in training, supervision and research.

Similarly, Ashman, Gillies and Beavers (1993) surveyed 236 primary and secondary school counsellors employed by the Queensland Department of Education on the types and perceived importance of activities that formed part of their work as school counsellors. Results were used by the authors to evaluate the relevance of the curriculum taught in their state’s school counsellor education program. They found that school counsellors participated in a range of activities that served the needs of both students and the wider school community. These were individual and group counselling, trauma and crisis counselling, preventative guidance programs, assessment and report writing activities, behaviour management, psycho-educational programs such as social skills training, consultations with teachers and parents about students’ progress, case management and referrals, inservice of school staff, school organisation and administration, and career counselling. All counsellors, regardless of whether they worked in primary or secondary schools, perceived each of the activities as important functions that made up their role, indicating that “there are common dimensions to school counselling regardless of setting” (p. 11).

Role differences were also evident between school psychologists servicing just one school and school psychologists servicing multiple schools (as is often the case for government sector school psychologists or for those working part-time). The Kids Help Line study, conducted in 1996, found that “counsellors responsible for several schools found the quality of service they could deliver adversely affected” (Kids Help Line, 1996, p. 9). They found that multiple-school or part-time school counsellors participated in considerably less networking and consultation activities with teachers and families of students. They also found that multiple-school or part-time school counsellors participated in significantly more direct intervention activities such as student counselling, however, this was achieved through shorter counselling sessions in order to fit in more students.

Furthermore, Kids Help Line (1996) found that multiple-school counsellors often had different roles in different schools. These counsellors may be expected to alternate between personal counselling, behaviour management procedures, testing, academic assessments, guidance counselling and teaching. Many counsellors, regardless of whether they were servicing a single school or multiple schools indicated that they
felt time pressured by the many professional activities they were expected to perform and the significant demands for their services.

Literature from the US reveals that another factor that affects the types of activities that school psychologists are engaged in is the student-to-school psychologist ratio. Smith (1984) found in his study of 877 school psychologists that school psychologists who served fewer students (ratio at or below 1500:1) participated in significantly less assessment and report writing activities than school psychologists with higher student to school psychologist ratios. Smith also found that school psychologists who had lower student to school psychologist ratios spent significantly more time on student observation after testing and participated in significantly more student counselling than school psychologists where ratios were higher. Smith concluded that a possible reason for this finding may be that school psychologists who are responsible for more students and who are more time-pressured may not have the time or opportunity to expand or change their traditional assessment-related role activities in order to meet the needs of all the students that they serve.

The US has a professional body for school psychologists called the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). In order to promote quality psychological service delivery in schools, NASP strongly recommends that the student-to-school psychologist ratio should be no more than 1000:1 (National Association of School Psychologists, 2000). However, reality differs as Curtis et al. (1999) found in their study of 1,922 NASP registered school psychologists where only one in four full-time school psychologists worked in schools where the ratio was at or below 1000:1, with one third of the sample working in schools where the ratio exceeded 2000:1.

Using the same data set as Curtis et al. (1999), Curtis, Hunley and Chesno Grier (2002) re-evaluated the sample characteristics but this time considered the impact of student-to-school psychologist ratios on the types of activities that school psychologists performed. Supporting the earlier findings of Smith (1984) school psychologists who reported student-to-school psychologist ratios of less than 1500:1 were found to participate in more individual and group counselling activities and less assessment activities than psychologists with higher student-to-school psychologist ratios. They concluded that the student-to-school psychologist ratio “is an important factor that is associated with the types of professional practice activities in which school psychologists engage” (p. 40). Smaller student-to-school psychologist ratios allow psychologists to “participate in more activities that are not related to special education,
including more intervention-and–prevention-oriented services. A lower ratio seems to allow the school psychologist to make choices about engagement in preferred professional practices” (p. 40).

In summary, based on the research findings presented, it appears that school psychologists participate in a range of activities in their work in schools. The variety of activities increases and become less traditional in nature when school psychologists service fewer students and fewer schools. School psychologists’ activities may include:

- Counselling and/or casework of students with a wide range of mental health, educational, behavioural, social, familial and personal issues.
- Trauma and crisis counselling of students.
- Career counselling of students.
- Consultation with parents regarding students’ issues and/or family issues and/or parenting issues.
- Referral of students and parents to outside agencies.
- Maintaining links with outside mental health services.
- Psychometric testing of students displaying learning difficulties or giftedness.
- Report writing related to psychometric assessments.
- Consultation and advocating with teachers and school administrators regarding individual students.
- Consultation with teachers and school administrators regarding school programs and procedures that enhance the mental health of its students.
- Development, implementation and evaluation of school-based programs and professional development workshops for both students and staff.
- Implementation of classroom interventions.
- Administrative duties related to role (including scheduling counselling appointments with students).
- Conducting research on issues relevant to school and student population.
- Supervision for self.
- Supervision of other school psychologists.

If school psychologists fulfill only some of the above activities, then they can be described as needing to be, in Bramston and Rice’s (2000) terms: ‘multi-specialised’.
With this in mind, the next section reports the literature that has examined school psychologists’ attitudes towards their preferred or ideal role activities.

**School psychologists’ preferred role activities**

Again, research pertaining to school psychologists’ actual and preferred role activities largely originates from the US. The literature suggests that there is a difference between the amount of time school psychologists spend on their actual activities and the amount of time they would ideally like to spend on particular activities that make up their role. It appears that, within the US, testing continues to dominate the role of school psychologists (Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Miller & Leyden, 1999). However, when they are asked about their ideal role functions school psychologists indicate that they would actually desire a reduction in the amount of time they spend on psychometric assessment activities and an increase in student counselling, consultation activities (e.g., Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Roberts & Rust, 1994; Smith, 1984), development and delivery of group programs (Curtis et al., 2002) and research (Levinson, 1990; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

Partin (1993) surveyed 210 US school counsellors regarding the professional activities that they perceived as their greatest ‘time wasters’ as well as their actual and ideal allocation of time to various activities. He found that school counsellors perceived paperwork (reports, correspondence and records) as their greatest time wasters, followed by scheduling appointments for students, administrative tasks, talking on the telephone, attending meetings and listening to complaints (other than student complaints). In regard to their ideal allocation of time, school counsellors reported that they would ideally like to spend significantly more time counselling students (both individual and group) and attending professional development activities. They desired spending significantly less time in testing activities and administrative and clerical duties. Partin discusses the inappropriate use of school counsellors in the U.S for duties not related to their role, such as supervising restrooms and substituting for absent teachers. He concludes that “Administrators, students, faculty, and legislators must be persuaded that the school’s resources are best used and students best served when counselors’ time is safeguarded from clerical, administrative, and menial duties and preserved for those professional functions for which they have specialized training….whenever counselors are requested to take on an additional non-counseling duty, the following question should be posed: ‘In place of what?’” (p. 280-281).
Recently, Agresta (2004) examined the actual/ideal discrepancy in activities that make up school psychologists’ role. One hundred and thirty-seven school psychologists who were members of NASP were included in the sample. Similar to the results of other studies (e.g., Curtis et al., 1999) she found that school psychologists spend most of their time conducting psychometric tests and report writing. However, they reported that they would ideally like to spend less time testing and more time on individual and group counselling. Agresta concluded that perhaps psychologists’ unique training in psychometric testing means that they are habitually called upon to conduct student assessments; however, this appears to be at the expense of fulfilling a more preferred therapeutic role within the school.

To summarise, research suggests that school psychologists are working with a broad and complex range of student issues (Bramston & Rice, 2000). This is partly due to the high prevalence of mental health problems facing children and young people (Sawyer et al., 2000) as well as the nature of the population that they serve (Offer et al., 1991). As a result, school psychologists are highly valued by the educational community for the work that they undertake in schools (Cooper et al., 2005) and their services are in high demand (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). However, student counselling is not the only activity that school psychologists carry out, with many fulfilling a number of other functions as part of their role (Ashman et al., 1993). These include consultation, assessment, program development, program delivery and administrative duties (Barletta, 1996a) to name but a few. The literature from the US repeatedly suggests that school psychologists have a desire to participate in fewer assessment related tasks and more student counselling and consultation type activities (Reschly & Wilson, 1995); more development and delivery of group programs (Curtis et al., 2002); and more research (Levinson, 1990).

The next chapter reports on research examining the numerous professional issues that arise in relation to the implementation of a psychological service within a school environment.
CHAPTER FOUR: CURRENT ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRACTICE OF SCHOOL-BASED PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

Overview of Chapter Four

Whilst Chapter One through to Chapter Three focused on the history of school psychology, the activities that make up the role of school psychologists, the need for psychological services in schools, and the types of student issues that school psychologists deal with, Chapter Four discusses the literature regarding some of the professional issues which have been found to be associated with providing a school-based psychological service. It begins by examining the literature pertaining to teachers’, principals’ and students’ perceptions and (mis)understandings of the role of school psychologists. It then discusses the issues associated with providing a ‘confidential’ counselling service within a school, as well as commonly identified ethical dilemmas faced by school psychologists. Finally, it considers the need for school psychologists to receive clinical supervision, as well as research on job satisfaction and burnout among this group of professionals.

School community perceptions of school psychologists

As discussed in Chapter Three, research overwhelmingly suggests that school psychologists play a much needed role within schools and that their work is highly valued by the educational community. Furthermore, principals have reported that they recognise the important and often decisive work that school counsellors undertake (Zalaquett, 2005). The fact that school psychologists seem so highly valued for the work that they do is pleasing. However, so that psychologists can continue to work effectively within schools, it is also important that the educational community, and in particular teachers and principals understand their unique role, the challenges that they face in their work and need for school psychologists to uphold their professional code of ethics: “It is vital for school counselors and school principals to understand and appreciate their different roles, responsibilities, and paradigms so that they can engage in collaborative work that addresses student development and learning goals” (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000, p. 132).

It is believed by some that the “confusion and lack of role clarity regarding the role and function of counselors in schools has been highly visible and problematic in the educational field for years” (Lieberman, 2004, p. 553). There has been mixed results
within the research which has explored levels of agreement between school psychologists’ (or school counsellors’) beliefs and teachers’ and principals’ beliefs about activities and work practices (Arbuckle, 1963; Boller, 1973; Dickinson, 1995; Gibson, 1990; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Ibrahim, Helms, & Thompson, 1983; Mustaine & La Fountain, 1983; Valine, Higgins, & Hatcher, 1982). Nevertheless, some studies have found evidence of role confusion by other stakeholders. For example, a qualitative study conducted by Miller, Witt and Finley (1981) found that school psychologists felt a moderate degree of dissatisfaction with unrealistic expectations that school administrators and other school staff had towards their role. One school psychologist in their study stated: “teachers’ and principals’ expectations are not realistic in terms of what school psychologists can and cannot do” (p. 2).

In a Queensland study which investigated the difference between principals’ and school counsellors’ perceptions of the amount of time school counsellors spend on present and preferred role activities, Dickinson (1995) found evidence of a high level of agreement between the two groups. However, school principals indicated that they would like school counsellors to spend significantly more time participating in consultation activities, behaviour management, professional development activities and contributing to school publications than school counsellors indicated.

Using the American School Counselor Association (1990, cited in Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001) role statement as a guide, Fitch et al. (2001) identified a list of functions that are common to school counsellors in the United States and categorised them into either role congruent or role incongruent activities. Role congruent activities included counselling, consulting, and coordination. Role incongruent activities included course scheduling, disciplinary functions and clerical duties.

Fitch et al. (2001) then surveyed 86 future school-administrators (principals in training) on their perceptions of the role of school counsellors. The survey items included role congruent and role-incongruent statements. The majority of respondents rated counselling, consultation and coordination as highly significant activities that make up the school counsellor’s role. However, a substantial number of future school-administrators also rated role-incongruent activities, such as administrative and disciplinary duties, as significant functions of the school counsellor. School principals may expect school counsellors to perform activities that are outside of the school counsellor’s job description. It is a matter of concern that one of the role-incongruent
activities pertained to disciplining students, an inappropriate activity for a school counsellor or school psychologist.

Similarly, in a recent and similar study conducted by Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) strong agreement was found amongst principals and school counsellors towards activities that were congruent with the counsellor’s role, such as ‘providing a safe and confidential setting for students to talk’ (p.15) and ‘consulting with teachers and parents to enhance student goals’ (p.15). However, principals were more likely than school counsellors to endorse non-congruent activities, including school counsellors being involved in disciplinary interventions with students and fulfilling more administrative roles within schools, such as course scheduling or maintaining school records and files.

Studies that have investigated teachers’, principals’ and even students’ attitudes about school psychological services have revealed a significant degree of role confusion and even dissatisfaction (e.g., Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). For example, Cooper, Hough and Loynd (2005) investigated teachers’ attitudes towards their school’s counselling service. A total of 104 teachers from four Scottish secondary schools were surveyed. Similar to previous research (e.g., Farrell & Kalambouka, 2000), the majority of teachers reported strong agreement and support for the presence of counsellors in schools. However, a number of teachers expressed concern about students’ use (or abuse) of school counselling and the school counsellor’s model of service delivery. The main themes were the possibility of students attending counselling only to miss or to be late for certain classes, inadequate communication between school counsellors and teachers regarding the issues of students attending counselling, counsellors duplicating or replacing the work of guidance teachers, and teachers not having a ‘clear-cut job description’ of the school counsellor. Furthermore, when asked to write three words that described their perception of counselling, a large percentage of teachers described the school counsellor as giving students ‘advice’.

Cooper et al. (2005) concluded that their findings reflect teachers’ desire for school counsellors to be more integrated into the school community through increased communication, as well as having an obvious job role which is separate from the role of teachers. Furthermore, Cooper et al. found possible differences between teachers’ and school counsellors’ understanding of counselling, with teachers’ views of counselling being a form of “social control rather than liberation and personal transformation” (p.209).
Kids Help Line perceive school counsellors as “the most visible and accessible professional help for young people, being present within that school environment…the school counsellor becomes a critical first point for intervention and prevention for those students who choose to seek help” (p. 1). They therefore decided to explore young people’s perceptions and experiences of school counselling because their telephone counsellors often received mixed responses from young people when they identified school counsellors to their young callers as a possible source of support or referral. Kids Help Line (1996) surveyed 150 young people who were callers to their service, aged 8-18 years, from all states in Australia on their perceptions and experiences of school counselling.

Their findings revealed that half of the young people in the sample had been to see a school counsellor with the majority seeking this support voluntarily. The majority of these students indicated that they had seen the school counsellor about personal problems rather than academic problems. However, it is a matter of concern that half of the respondents who had seen their school counsellor expressed dissatisfaction with the experience. In order of frequency, the following dot points list the reasons given by young people as to why they were dissatisfied with their school counselling experience:

- The school counsellor had breached confidentiality by sharing information with their parents, teachers or other members of the school without gaining the student’s permission;
- The school counsellor had failed to take the time to build trust and rapport with the student;
- The school counsellor had failed to address the young person’s problem;
- The school counsellor was uncomfortable with or ignored difficult emotions;
- The school counsellor did not take action or took action that was ineffective or inappropriate;
- The school counsellor gave unsolicited advice; and
- Student felt blamed, disbelieved or disliked and felt like a nuisance or a burden to the counsellor.

Fortunately, half the respondents who had seen a school counsellor also expressed strong satisfaction with the service. These students identified the following factors as helpful:

- The school counsellor was a good listener and was easy to talk to;
• The school counsellor showed respect towards the student and treated the student as an equal;
• The school counsellor identified and validated the student’s feelings;
• The school counsellor explained things clearly and gave appropriate information;
• The school counsellor took appropriate further action;
• The school counsellor had the ability to explore the client’s world; and
• The school counsellor made an appropriate referral (p. 5).

The main source of dissatisfaction identified by the majority of young people involved a perception that the school counsellor did breach or would potentially breach confidentiality. Disturbingly, the majority of students reported that their school counsellor had not explained to them the limits to confidentiality. However, those who had the limits to confidentiality explained to them reported greater satisfaction with the counselling service and the majority of these respondents said that they would see the school counsellor again. In the cases where the school counsellor had not explained confidentiality, only 13% of young people expressed that they would see the school counsellor again.

Half of the respondents in the Kids Help Line study had never seen their school counsellor. A slight majority of these students reported that they did not intend to see the school counsellor in the future. When questioned why, the majority of responses pertained to “concern and mistrust of the counsellor as a result of perceived breaches of confidentiality. Other concerns included: the perceived competency and attitude of the counsellor; the student’s feelings of embarrassment; the lack of anonymity; and the lack of privacy of the counsellor’s office” (p. 6). The results highlight that young people clearly value confidentiality and privacy when seeing the school counsellor. Furthermore, the actual location of counselling within the school and whether or not it is private or clearly visible to other teachers or students is understandably a major factor as to whether or not a student would feel comfortable attending the service. Kids Help Line found that:

While 80% of counsellors had their own office, only half of these locations were perceived by students as being private. Students could be seen either entering and leaving the counsellor’s office or there was high
visibility of the actual counselling session, because [of] the windows or the office being adjacent to other areas of activity within the school. The 20% of counsellors without their own office used either the administration area, staff room, library or shared an office with other school staff (p. 7).

It is not surprising that Kids Help Line found that only 14% of students indicated that they would return to the school counsellor when the office was perceived as lacking in privacy. This was compared to 29% of students indicating that they would return when the office was perceived as private (Kids Help Line, 1996). This finding supports previous research conducted by Riggs and Cheng (1988) who found in their survey of 635 American young people aged 10 to 20 years that the majority of young people who were experiencing some type of emotional distress (e.g., suicidal thoughts) or risk-taking behaviour (e.g., sexual intercourse without contraception) indicated that they would attend a school-based clinic only if confidentiality was guaranteed.

The next section reviews some of the professional issues associated with the provision of school psychological services as identified by school psychologists and school counsellors. In particular, the literature pertaining to ethical dilemmas is presented.

**Professional issues associated with the role as perceived by school psychologists**

Occupationally and in general, there are a number of ‘special’ settings where psychologists work which are thought to be “especially likely to evoke ethical quandaries. Examples of such settings include the military, government agencies, medical centers, prisons, and schools” (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1988, p. 319). Jacob-Timm (Jacob-Timm, 1999) asked 226 US school psychologists to identify situations that they or a colleague had encountered in the last two years that could be described as an ‘ethical tug’. The results were overwhelming with the sample identifying 222 ethically challenging incidents. The three most frequently identified issues pertained to administrative pressure to act unethically, unethical assessment and diagnostic procedures and confidentiality dilemmas. An ethical dilemma or quandary can be described as:
A situation in which a counsellor experiences conflict in deciding on an appropriate decision. The counsellor usually feels pulled in several directions, and at times, is confronted with a situation that seems to place professional ethics in direct opposition to the expressed desires of others or with the legal system that requires certain activities be reported to the police or to social service units. The counsellor may also be faced with determining an appropriate standard of conduct while considering obligations to two or more constituencies (e.g., the student, parent, teacher, professional ethical standards and the law). Many school counsellors face these issues and confront difficult decisions daily (Davis & Mickelson, 1994, p.6).

The first issue that has been raised as significant to both students and counsellors is the need to maintain and promote a confidential counselling service.

Confidentiality. Confidentiality can be defined as “the secrecy of information obtained in a relationship of trust between a psychologist and a client” (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b, p.15). It has been found that the most common ethically challenging incidents faced by psychologists relate to the issue of confidentiality (Pope & Vetter, 1992) and this is certainly the case for school psychologists as well (Colnerud, 1997; Pope & Vetter, 1992; Tyron, 2001):

Managing confidentiality when counseling minors, however, is more complex than when counseling adults. School counselors must balance their ethical and legal responsibilities to their clients, clients’ parents, and school systems. This complex balancing act [italics added] is one reason that the topic of maintaining the confidences of student clients is raised in virtually every discussion of ethical and legal issues in school counseling (Glosoff & Pate, 2002, p. 20).

Maintaining a student’s right to confidentiality is challenging because of the various stakeholders that may have an interest in the information presented by the student/client (Humphreys, 2000). School psychologists are said to have not one client, but multiple clients; however, their most important client is the student (Australian
Glosoff and Pate (2002) concur with this view and assert that school psychologists’ clients are all members of the school community, however, their primary client is the student and any consultation performed with other stakeholders is performed on behalf of the student.

Confidentiality in a school setting is fundamental to both the counselling relationship and to student trust in their school counselling service (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Kids Help Line, 1996). If confidentiality was not assured, especially in a secondary school population, then students most probably would not choose to speak to the psychologist about their problems. Or, they may see the psychologist, but perhaps not speak honestly or openly and therefore choose to leave the embarrassing or uncomfortable parts out of their discussions.

Research has also shown that it is not just students who are concerned about the confidentiality of the school counselling service. In a study of Israeli mothers’ attitudes towards seeking help for their children from school and private psychologists, Raviv, Raviv, Propper and Schachter Fink (2003) found that mothers had significantly greater concerns about referring their child to a school psychologist than to a private psychologist. Reasons included fear of their child being stigmatised at school for accessing the school psychologist and fear of the school psychologist breaching confidentiality and sharing private family issues with other school professionals. Raviv et al. concluded that school psychologists need to be proactive in educating parents about the confidential nature of the counselling relationship within schools.

Confidentiality does not only relate to the counselling relationship. It also extends to the practice of record keeping and file storage (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1988). In a school, rigid mechanisms must be in place in regards to the location, ownership and access to the psychologist’s files (Tompkins & Mehring, 1993). Standard 19.2 of the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) provides clear direction around the secure storage of client files and asserts that “the school psychologist’s client files are accessible only by other psychologists, and then only when it is professionally appropriate for the other psychologist to have access to that information” (p. 8).

School counsellors who participated in the Review of the Provision of Counselling Services in ACT Government Schools and Colleges (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) revealed a high degree of dissatisfaction with the security of their confidential counselling files as well as the protocols around
access to their files. The review found that protocols were largely determined by individual schools and that there was a lack of direction about who had the right to access counselling files. Furthermore, there were differences in opinion amongst school counsellors concerning the degree to which information gained in counselling could be shared among school staff, with some strictly abiding by their Code of Ethics and others being more relaxed about sharing such information with teachers if they believed it would contribute to the pastoral care of the student. It was a matter of concern, however, that the review’s survey of ACT students found that some indicated that they would not see the school counsellor because they believed that the school counsellor would breach confidentiality.

It is commonly understood that unlimited confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a counselling relationship and that any limits should be communicated to the student at the onset of counselling (Australian Psychological Society, 2002a). For example, confidentiality must be broken when there is clear or imminent danger to the client or to others (Glossoff & Pate, 2002). However, “beyond these primary instances where confidentiality must be broken, there is ambiguity relative to who has the right to information provided by minors in counseling sessions” (Mitchell, Disque, & Robertson, 2002, p. 157). This is confounded by the degree of ambiguity that surrounds complex decisions about what constitutes danger or harm to the client or to others. An example may be the student who presents to the school psychologist with superficial cuts on their arm from self-harm – but without any suicidal intent. The degree of seriousness and the need to inform may be viewed differently by different stakeholders and different psychologists. On the one hand, decisions to inform may be influenced by the school psychologist’s own personal or professional values (Isaacs, 1999). On the other hand, ‘harm’ may also be viewed differently in the eyes of various stakeholders, such as parents and teachers. Students, on the other hand, may expect the school psychologist to keep their disclosure confidential and to work with them on how to implement more productive coping styles to their internal dilemmas. Therefore, school psychologists are often faced with the dilemma of having to make difficult decisions about whether or not they should meet the sometimes conflicting legal and ethical obligations of important stakeholders in a school community by sharing information about a young person gained in a counselling relationship (Barletta, 1995; Isaacs & Stone, 2001) without “destroying the confidence of the child in the psychologist” (Colnerud, 1997, p. 168).
Another example of an ‘ethically challenging incident’ (Jacob-Timm, 1999) is when either the school or a parent requests to know certain information about a student or their child which has been gained in a counselling relationship (Davis & Mickelson, 1994). Research has shown that teachers regularly request or desire the school psychologist to inform them about confidential student information (Cooper et al., 2005). Kids Help Line (1996) found in their survey of 50 school counsellors from across Australia that many had experienced a role conflict in this area: “some counsellors also were torn between keeping confidentiality and the demands of principals and teachers who felt that they had a right to know what was bothering particular students” (p. 8).

Similarly, a parental request for information about their child can also be difficult for school psychologists and studies have shown that school psychologists and school counsellors are often unclear about who has the right to such information (e.g., Davis & Mickelson, 1994). In an Australian study of community attitudes towards confidentiality and the psychologist-client relationship, Knowles and McMahon (1995) found that parents believed they should be able to access their child’s counselling records (without the child’s permission) if their child is under thirteen years of age. There was, however, general agreement amongst parents that confidentiality should not be broken if the child is a teenager (thirteen years and over).

Isaacs (1999) surveyed 627 US school counsellors on their perceptions of the type issues under which they would break confidentiality. They found that the age and degree of maturity of the adolescent strongly predicted whether or not a counsellor would breach confidentiality. The second factor which Isaacs found counsellors considered when choosing whether or not to break confidentiality was the counsellors’ evaluation of the seriousness of the issue. This factor was fairly consistent across the sample. Examples of incidents (rated in descending order of the percentage of school counsellors who would breach confidentiality) were: impending suicide or suicide pact, harm to others, use of crack cocaine, sexual intercourse with multiple partners when HIV positive, armed robbery, depression, abortion and marijuana use. Interestingly, only 12% of school counsellors agreed with the statement that ‘I have a greater responsibility to the parents of my minor clients than to my minor clients for confidentiality’. This suggests that the majority of school counsellors aligned their professional responsibility towards their student clients.
An unexpected research opportunity arose for Stone and Isaacs (2003) when in April 1999 the horrific Columbine High School shootings occurred. Just prior to this highly publicised event of school violence, Stone and Isaacs had just surveyed 502 school counsellors on their attitudes to a number of student issues and when it is or is not appropriate to breach confidentiality. When the Columbine shootings occurred, Stone and Isaacs saw this as an opportunity to explore whether this event had any effect on the attitudes of school counsellors towards confidentiality. Therefore, immediately after the shootings, Stone and Isaacs mailed out additional surveys to an expanded sample. The results showed that the Columbine shootings had a significant effect on school counsellors’ attitudes. They found that school counsellors surveyed after the Columbine shootings were significantly less likely to breach confidentiality for a number of issues presented in the survey (e.g., giving contraception and abortion advice) than school counsellors surveyed before the shootings. Furthermore, school counsellors surveyed after the shooting expressed significantly less responsibility to parents and more responsibility to students than school counsellors surveyed before the shootings. Stone and Issacs concluded that “the research clearly indicates counselors’ preference after the shootings to protect the relationship with students by breaching less…the differences would seem to predict greater trust among students and promote more opportunities for counselors to intervene in serious situations” (p.149).

Australian school employed psychologists seeking professional direction on the topic of confidentiality and informed consent would most likely consult the Australian Psychological Society’s (APS) Code of Ethics (Australian Psychological Society, 2002a) and/or the APS Guidelines on Confidentiality (including when Working with Minors) (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b) and/or the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). The Standards assert that school psychologists should also be cognisant of relevant legislation that may impact on their work as school psychologists (e.g., Family Law Act) (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). However, little research exists around the types of opportunities available for school psychologists to familiarise themselves with such legislation.

The APS Code, as well as the other APS documents, were developed to ensure that the safety and well being of those that use the services of a psychologist are maintained and that the overall integrity and accountability of the profession is upheld (Australian Psychological Society, 2002a). However, there appears to be a general
consensus within the literature that school psychologists who are hoping to seek explicit and unambiguous direction from the Code about an issue involving confidentiality may not receive the concrete answers to their ethical question that they expect (McNiff, 1979). The following exploration of the APS directives on confidentiality and informed consent is considered in light of the following question: should secondary students, regardless of age, be able to access a confidential school counselling service without prior permission from their parents to use this service? Or put another way, should secondary students need parental permission to see the school psychologist?

The Australian Psychological Society’s Code of Ethics (Australian Psychological Society, 2002a) states that: “when working with young persons or other clients who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, psychologists must protect these clients’ best interests and will regard their responsibilities as being directed to the parents, next of kin or guardians ” (p. 3). Implicit in this directive is the assumption that young persons are unable to give ‘voluntary informed consent’ (Collins & Knowles, 1995). Collins and Knowles (1995) argue that this specific APS statement is somewhat flawed. This is because it does not differentiate between children and adolescents and therefore assumes that all minors, regardless of age, are unable to give informed consent. Therefore, when considering this statement, the answer to the query about whether or not a secondary student can have access to a confidential counselling service without prior permission from their parents would be ‘no’. School psychologists would therefore assume that all students, regardless of age, must have prior parental consent before they can access the school counselling service.

In their discussion of this topic, however, Collins and Knowles (1995) present literature that reveals that in other professional domains, such as in the medical arena, adolescents, especially those aged 14 and over, are treated as having the ability to give informed consent and are therefore able to seek confidential advice and treatment without parental consent (such as medical assistance for substance abuse, pregnancy or sexual abuse). Collins and Knowles question why, in the provision of psychological services to minors, young people are not able to give voluntary informed consent? Furthermore, Collins and Knowles assert that cognitive developmental theory (e.g., Piaget, 1953) as well as published research (e.g., Kaser-Boyd et al., 1981) suggests that adolescents “aged 15 and over may make adult-like decisions” (p.180) and that “there is not a great deal of support for the assumption, inherent in the APS Code, that minors 15 years and over cannot provide valid consent” (p. 180).
To test their hypothesis, Collins and Knowles (1995) surveyed 303 males and 254 females aged 13 to 18 years from three secondary schools in Melbourne on their attitudes about confidentiality and school counselling. Similar to other findings (e.g., Kids Help Line, 1996), they found a high degree of support among adolescents for the idea that absolute confidentiality was an essential or important component of the school counselling service. Notably, they found that the sample exhibited beliefs about confidentiality that were quite sophisticated and adult-like in nature. For example, the majority of students indicated that it was appropriate for confidentiality to be breached for cases that involve clear danger to self or others, and expected confidentiality to be maintained for other issues that were less ‘serious’ in nature. Another important finding was that there were no age differences between older and younger adolescents in attitudes about confidentiality and school counselling, thus, the authors concluded that:

This study has produced evidence that adolescents [regardless of age] strongly desire respect for their autonomy as clients in a school counselling relationship…the provisions of the APS Code regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and minors should be re-evaluated. Currently the APS Code does not differentiate between clients aged 7 and clients aged 17 years; this is in accord neither with the practice of many other professions and organisations dealing with adolescents, nor with the findings of empirical research (p.182).

Similarly, when consulting the *Australian Psychological Society (APS)* *Guidelines on Confidentiality (including when Working with Minors)* (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b) and the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (Australian Psychological Society, 2000), the situation regarding confidentiality and minors is again open to interpretation. Standard 16 states that “school psychologists respect and actively foster the right of each participant [italics added] in the educational process to confidentiality of information” (Australian Psychological Society, 2000, p. 7). Does this mean that students, regardless of age have a right to a confidential counselling service – even if they have not received prior parental consent? Or, does it mean that parents have a right to access confidential information that is divulged by their child in counselling? The APS Standards give no suggestions around the issues of informed consent and how school psychologists can
balance the rights of students to a confidential school psychological service (and the extent to which they are able to have one) with those of other ‘participants in the educational process’.

The APS Guidelines (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b) offers further opportunity for some debate regarding this issue by referring to common law definition of a minor as having the ability to give informed consent if the professional judges them as possessing ‘sufficient maturity’: “‘Maturity’ is a professional judgement but around 14 or 15 years is generally regarded as a good ‘rule of thumb’” (p. 16). The APS goes on to suggest that “in providing professional services, psychologists may obtain consent from a minor and that confidentiality should then be respected” (p.16). Therefore, based on the findings of prior research (e.g., Collins & Knowles, 1995) and the school psychologist’s professional judgement of the student, perhaps some students are able to seek the services of the school psychologist without prior parental consent if they are deemed as possessing sufficient maturity.

A reference to school psychological services in the Guidelines states that: “in places such as schools, there may be other legal requirements and obligations that limit the extent to which a minor may be regarded as mature or autonomous. These include the principal’s duty of care, parental payment of fees and dues, and the psychologist’s responsibilities to the school, the parents and the minor. Opportunities should be provided for the minor to understand the limits of confidentiality in such circumstances” (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b, p. 16). However, this reference only describes the number of stakeholders that school psychologists must be cognisant of when working with their student / client and provides little direction on how school psychologists should work within these difficult parameters. Furthermore, it also places limits around the extent to which school psychologists can classify a young person as possessing sufficient maturity. Therefore, a review of the various APS directives may leave the school psychologist, who is seeking a plain answer to the question about parental permission and school counselling, no closer to the answer than when they began!

However, in support of the APS and their directives, is the recognition that Codes and Guidelines cannot possibly give specific answers to all ethical questions that arise in the practice of school psychology. For example, Koocher and Kieth-Spiegel (1985) assert that “ethics codes are fairly blunt instruments and may create conceptual confusion in their attempt to be all things to all people” and that it is “easy to find fault
with a code that attempts to do so much” (Clouser, 1975, cited in Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1985, p.2). In fact, when school psychologists are faced with ethical questions or dilemmas, it is because of the issue’s degree of complexity that they rarely have a clear-cut answer (Jacob-Timm, 1999). In addition to consulting Codes and Guidelines, finding answers requires a number of systematic steps, including thorough reflection of the issue at hand, consulting with colleagues, recognising related legal issues, identifying all possible courses of action and identifying the consequences of each action on all affected stakeholders (Kaczmarek, 2000).

Furthermore, as already discussed in Chapter Three, young people often present school psychologists with complex issues (Bramston & Rice, 2000). The degree of ambiguity and ‘abstract’ wording in the Code perhaps gives school psychologists enough ‘room to move’ when making ethical decisions involving young people – especially decisions about issues which are multifaceted and that have no clear-cut solution. Having a Code that is too prescriptive may limit the extent to which school psychologists feel that they can make professional decisions that are in the clients’ best interests. However, the previous discussion regarding whether or not a young person needs parental permission to see the school psychologist indicates that school psychologists are often faced with difficult decisions that rely on sound professional judgement. Further ethical dilemmas that school psychologists come across in their work will be discussed in the next section.

Other ethical dilemmas

There are a host of other ethical dilemmas that have been found to occur in the practice of school-based psychological services. Jacob-Timm (1999) asked school psychologists from the US to identify the types of ethically challenging incidents that they or their colleagues come across in their daily work. Two hundred and twenty-six school psychologists were included in the sample. From the 222 ethically troubling incidents that were revealed by participants, 19 categories were established. Jacob-Timm found that most of the ethically troubling incidents described by school psychologists were complex and in no way straight-forward in regards to a solution.

Dilemmas involving administrative pressure to act unethically. The most common ethically challenging incident reported in Jacob-Timm’s (Jacob-Timm, 1999) study involved administrative pressure to act in a way that is outside the school psychologist’s professional boundaries. Some examples of such administrative
pressures included: a principal wanting a school psychologist to discipline students; a school psychologist being told that they weren’t a ‘team player’ if they did not diagnose a student a certain way which was in the school’s rather than the child’s best interests; a school psychologist being pressured to alter test results so that students qualify for special education assistance; and a school psychologist being told by administrative staff to place psychological assessment results in a non-confidential student file rather than a confidential psychological file.

Other studies have also found that school psychologists and school counsellors report pressure from school administrators to act unethically (e.g., Jann, 1991; Pope & Vetter, 1992) or to engage in tasks that they do not have the time or training to deal with (e.g., Kendrick & Chandler, 1994). This may be in part due to a lack of understanding amongst school administrators about the school psychologist’s role and ethical obligations (e.g., Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). One such example of a lack of role understanding is a school scheduling a psychologist to teach as well as counsel. Kids Help Line (1996) found evidence of such a dual-relationship in their survey of Australian school counsellors: “in those schools where counsellors are required [italics added] to teach, students may be uncomfortable to talk to someone who is later going to see them in a classroom situation” (p. 9). An unfortunate consequence of this lack of role clarity between school psychologists and school administrators may be that school psychologists feel professionally compromised to perform an activity outside of what they believe constitutes their professional role - in order to remain employed.

Providing school psychologists and principals with opportunities to collaborate and discuss role expectations, such as through seminars and workshops, has been shown to significantly improve role congruency between the two professions (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Establishing such positive working relationships can only benefit the school psychological profession and the schools and students that they serve. It is particularly important for school principals to realise that school psychologists are often involved in a ‘complex balancing act’ as they try to maintain their professional standards when meeting the needs of their clients whilst working within an educational setting and meeting the needs of teachers and families of students (Glosoff & Pate, 2002). Furthermore, Beesley (2004) asserts that rather than applying an ‘us and them’ approach, school psychologists should conceptualise their role as functioning as part of a multi-disciplinary team. In contrast, there may be a need for school psychologists to become more cognisant of the roles and responsibilities of
teachers and principals as well (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000) and to understand how the legal and professional obligations of teachers and principals can impact on their decision making within schools (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005).

**Dilemmas involving assessment and report writing.** The second most common ethically challenging incident found by Jacob-Timm (1999) involved issues around assessment. This may reflect the high degree of academic assessments that US school psychologists undertake (Curtis et al., 1999). Some examples of ethically challenging incidents related to assessment included: a school psychologist inappropriately including students in a gifted program; unintentional and intentional misdiagnosis of students; giving non-age appropriate tests to students (e.g., administering a WAIS-R to a student under age 16); poor quality psychological reports (e.g., one report consisted of a photocopy of the WISC-III protocol); teaching test examinees correct responses to tests; and testing in unsatisfactory testing environments.

Ethical transgressions associated with test administration have been found to be a problem in other studies. Davis and Mickelson (1994) surveyed 165 US school counsellors and found that over half of the sample indicated that they would administer a test to a student that they were not trained to use. This clearly deviates from the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (American Counseling Association, 2005) which states: “Counselors utilise only those testing and assessment services for which they have been trained and are competent” (p. 12).

Although most of the examples of ethically challenging incidents given in Jacob-Timm’s (1999) study concerned difficult situations or questions faced by school psychologists, it is a matter of concern that some of the incidents included serious ethical transgressions on the part of the school psychologist themselves. Perhaps this finding can be partly explained, but not excused, by school psychologists’ and school counsellors’ reports that they feel extremely pressured to fulfill multiple tasks in limited time (Kendrick & Chandler, 1994; Kids Help Line, 1996). Therefore, the degree of care and quality of work that would normally be given to tasks is reduced. However, this by no means justifies some of the reports given by school psychologists in the study, and Jacob Timm’s research has strongly highlighted the need for school psychologists to receive adequate training in ethical practice (Colnerud, 1997; Tyron, 2001). In fact, in a study of 233 US school psychology doctoral students, it was found that those who had received ethical training were significantly more prepared to deal with ethical dilemmas.
associated with the role of school psychology than those who had not received ethical training in their undergraduate courses (Tyron, 2001).

Jacob-Timm’s study also highlights the need for school psychologists to have opportunities to participate in ongoing professional development, contact with other school psychologists and supervision (Kaczmarek, 2000). Furthermore, unless school psychologists are familiar with relevant legislation (McNiff, 1979) and have a universally agreed upon school policy in place which defines the limits to confidentiality for the school psychological service (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Glosoff & Pate, 2002; Tompkins & Mehring, 1993), school psychologists may be faced with having to make some tough decisions in a setting which lacks “clearly defined parameters” (McNiff, 1979, p.307).

**Need for supervision**

The need for more regular and improved supervision for school psychologists and school counsellors has been a topic of discussion in the school psychological literature for a number of years. For example, Boyd and Walter (1975) likened a school counsellor’s career to that of a cactus: “both survive on a minimum of nutrients from the environment[!]” (p. 103). Jimerson et al. (2004) investigated the percentage of school psychologists who receive supervision in Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Northern England. They found that participation in supervision varied between countries and on the whole did not meet professional standards which advocate regular supervision. Only 14% of Estonian school psychologists received supervision, while 80% of Albanian school psychologists did so. This seemingly high rate in Albania was attributed to the fact that school psychology is a relatively new profession in Albania, with most school psychologists being young and inexperienced – not because of high quality industry standards within that country.

Two types of supervision arrangements have been identified as relevant to the practice of school psychology. The first type is known as ‘administrative supervision’ (Barletta, 1995). Administrative supervision typically refers to the supervision given by line management – most often the principal (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001). The focus of supervision usually pertains to “setting goals, activity planning, resource allocation, performance appraisal, problem solving etc.” (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). The second type of supervision relevant to the practice of school psychology is ‘clinical supervision’ (Barletta, 1995; Zins, Murphy, & Wess,
1989). “Clinical supervision deals with issues related to counselling practices and refers to ongoing intervention and enhancement of counselling skills” (Barletta, 1996b). This type of supervision is usually provided by a senior psychologist or senior counsellor and can occur through either a one-to-one or group basis (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Page et al., 2001).

Due to the complexity of student issues, the role of school psychologists has been noted as being quite clinical in nature (Crespi & Politikos, 2004). This is compounded by the fact that, due to the need to maintain confidentiality and the requirement to work within a private office, many school psychologists work in isolation within schools, unable to share their professional experiences with other school-employed colleagues (McMahon & Patton, 2000). Therefore, effective and regular supervision is particularly important. Pierson-Hubeney and Archambault (1987) found in their study of 209 US school psychologists that many experienced high levels of role ambiguity and role conflict which significantly contributed to stress. Furthermore, in a recent study of 512 US school counsellors, Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson and Solomon (2005) found that participation in clinical supervision was a significant predictor of reduced role stress among primary and secondary school counsellors. The APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) recommend that probationary school psychologists should receive a minimum of one-hour per week of supervision and if a school psychologist has met compulsory registration requirements they are advised to continue supervision on a regular basis.

McMahon and Solas (1996) investigated Queensland school counsellors’ frequency of participation in supervision and found that the majority either did not receive supervision at all or if they did, it often occurred irregularly. In another Queensland study, Bramston and Rice (2000) found that many school counsellors reported that they felt inadequately trained and / or supervised to deal with the demands of their role. This was supported by later findings of McMahon and Patton (2000) who interviewed Queensland school counsellors and found that although there was overwhelming support for the importance and practice of supervision, the majority of participants believed that the time devoted to their own clinical supervision was insufficient. Finally, McMahon and Patton (2001) again surveyed 227 Queensland school counsellors and found that almost a quarter of the sample indicated that they did not receive supervision with nearly half of those who did stating that they only
participated in supervision twice a year or less. Again, McMahon and Patton found an overwhelming majority (93%) felt dissatisfied with the lack of supervision that they received.

These inadequate supervision arrangements are not only limited to school counsellors practicing in the state of Queensland. The *ACT Review of the Provision of Counselling Services in ACT Government Schools and Colleges* (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) found that “individually and collectively counsellors have expressed considerable dissatisfaction with current supervisory arrangements” (p. 50). Reasons for school counsellors’ dissatisfaction included: differing views among principals and school counsellors about the school counsellor’s role; limited and infrequent opportunities for school counsellors to discuss issues that arise in their day-to-day work; senior counsellors were seen as difficult to contact when needed; and advice given by senior counsellors was reported as being unhelpful. ACT school counsellors also reported strong dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities, particularly in regard to the relevance of professional development training to the issues associated with their role (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003).

The *Kids Help Line* (1996) research into the professional issues of school counsellors from across Australia reported that the lack of opportunities for school counsellors to participate in clinical supervision was a matter of great concern. They found that across Australia, the majority of school counsellors reported that their participation in supervision was either irregular or non-existent, with some school counsellors choosing to attend supervision in their own time, paying for it themselves. Similarly, Drent’s (2005) recent informal study of Victorian government employed school psychologists (mentioned in Chapter Two) revealed that school psychologists participated in minimal supervision and profession development activities.

Overseas research seems to reflect the less than adequate Australian experience in regard to supervision (e.g., Page et al., 2001). Borders and Usher (1992) surveyed 357 US counsellors from a wide variety of counselling settings (e.g., schools, private practice, university clinics, community mental health agencies, hospitals) and found that school counsellors were participating in significantly less supervision than all of the other settings and were also more likely to be receiving no supervision than counsellors from other settings.
Zins, Murphy and Wess (1989) surveyed a large sample of US school psychologists and found that although 95% believed that supervision was an essential component to their work, less than a quarter participated in either individual or group supervision. Furthermore, nearly one third of respondents who were being supervised indicated that they were dissatisfied with the quality of the supervision that they received, particularly because they were receiving supervision from individuals who had no training in school psychology. Zins et al. asked respondents to report on why they were not participating in supervision and many indicated that it was because it was not available as there were no other school psychologists in their district. Others indicated that they could not spare the time for supervision. Similar results relating to the school psychologists’ dissatisfaction with supervisory arrangements and quality was found in a qualitative study conducted by Miller et al. (1981). Likewise, Ross and Goh (1993) surveyed 331 US school psychologists and found that while the majority also believed that supervision was important to very important, only one third indicated that they participated in supervision, with a small component of school psychologists paying for supervision themselves. Furthermore, the majority who received supervision did so infrequently (less than one hour per month). Finally, the previous findings were again supported in a recent study conducted by Chafouleas, Clonan and Vanaucen (2002). Chafouleas et al. found in their survey of 189 US school psychologists that one third of the sample received no supervision and the majority who did participate in supervision did so irregularly. Most indicated that they would prefer more time to engage in supervision.

Regular supervision for school psychologists is a necessity (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) and has a variety of benefits. Some of the benefits of supervision reported by Queensland school counsellors include (in order of frequency): an opportunity to learn new ideas and strategies; an opportunity to receive support; a forum for personal growth; an opportunity to debrief; and a means of getting professional feedback on the work that they do (McMahon & Patton, 2001). Other reported benefits of supervision are that it provides an opportunity for school counsellors to obtain advice about procedural or legal obligations and issues (Chafouleas et al., 2002), increases confidence and reduces the feeling of isolation associated with the role (Agnew, Cole Vaught, & Getz, 2000); and increases usage of quality assurance and evaluation procedures in their work and increases involvement in relevant professional organisations (Zins et al., 1989). Therefore, in light of these very
important benefits of supervision and due to the fact that the school psychologist’s role
is challenging and multifaceted it is disappointing that both the Australian and
international research in this area suggest that school psychologists are receiving far less
than adequate supervision, both in the amount of supervision in which they participate
(e.g., Chafouleas et al., 2002) and in the quality of supervision that they receive (e.g.,
ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003):

School counselors are frequently the only mental health professionals
available to assist students who are struggling with alcoholic parents,
suicide, incest, grief, child abuse, stress, or other difficult situations. It is
indefensible that these professionals find themselves counseling in such
critical areas without support of regular supervision from a qualified
professional. Until the profession addresses this issue there is little hope
that the public will understand and value the work of practicing
counselors in the schools (Barret & Schmidt, 1986, p. 54).

**Job satisfaction**

The previous discussion of supervision arrangements for school psychologists
reveals that in general, school psychologists are unsatisfied with the frequency and
quality of supervision that they receive. As mentioned previously, good quality and
regular supervision contributes to the professional wellbeing of school psychologists
(Culbreth et al., 2005). However, in addition to participation in supervision, another
measure of school psychologists’ professional wellbeing is their level of job satisfaction
(Williams & Williams, 1990). Levinson (1990) investigated the literature pertaining to
job satisfaction and found that this factor is significantly associated with increased self-
esteeem, personal and general life adjustment, physical and mental health, professional
attitudes, job performance and productivity, and decreased absenteeism and turnover.

Studies that have investigated the overall job satisfaction of school psychologists
reveal that when all variables are taken into account, on the whole school psychologists
report moderate to high levels of job satisfaction (Brown, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1998;
Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Levinson, 1991; Levinson, Fetchkan,
& Hohenshil, 1988; Proctor & Steadman, 2003; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Wilezenski,
1997; Williams & Williams, 1990). School psychologists enjoy their work despite the
challenges and limited degree of professional support that they receive. Reasons why
school psychologists choose to work in this profession despite difficulties inherent in the role may relate to job satisfaction. Wilczenski (1997) surveyed 720 US school psychologists on the reasons why they initially chose to work as a school psychologist. She found that the reasons included (in order of frequency): a general interest in the actual content of the work of school psychologists; an interest in working with children and young people; an interest in working with the challenges that the position entails; and an interest in modifying and challenging educational policy. Wilczenski interpreted the results as highlighting intrinsic rather than extrinsic values of school psychologists, that is, respondents became school psychologists because they wanted to make a difference and be personally challenged by their work rather than, for example, for status and authority. Wiczenski also found that most school psychologists indicated that if they could choose their profession again, they would still choose to work as school psychologists. This indicates that perhaps, for these psychologists, the practice of school psychology lives up to their initial expectations of the profession. School psychologists’ reported satisfaction and acceptance with their choice of career has been reported in other studies (e.g., Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Brown et al., 1998).

A number of researchers have asked school psychologists to report on the aspects of their job with which they are most satisfied. The results compliment the findings of Wilczenski (1997) in regard to the reasons why school psychologists chose it as a career. School psychologists report high satisfaction with: the autonomous nature of the role and the opportunity to make independent decisions based on their own professional judgement; an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students; an opportunity to work with like-minded colleagues; the high degree of responsibility associated with the role; the experience of being supervised by supportive and helpful supervisors; and the general nature of activities that make up the role (Brown et al., 1998; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Jimerson et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1981; Reschly & Wilson, 1995).

In contrast, key areas of dissatisfaction emerge, when investigating school psychologists’ level of satisfaction with other specific functions or issues associated with their role. For example, as mentioned previously, US school psychologists commonly report a strong desire to shift from a traditional role which predominantly involves psychometric testing to a more diverse and expanded role which includes more counselling, consultation and research activities (e.g., Reschly & Wilson, 1995). Furthermore, psychologist to student ratios have been found to be less than satisfactory
and contribute to decreased job satisfaction for school psychologists as they try to meet the increasing demands of the high number of students that they serve (Curtis et al., 2002; Smith, 1984). A further already mentioned factor that would contribute to lowered job satisfaction is inappropriate office space and physical resources to practice as a school psychologist (e.g., Kids Help Line, 1996).

Two other issues that school psychologists in the US have repeatedly reported dissatisfaction with are a lack of opportunity for career advancement and low pay rates (Brown et al., 1998; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Reschly & Wilson, 1995). Similarly, in Australia, it appears that this situation has not changed at all since the early 1970’s when Victorian school psychologists were dissatisfied with the then lack of career structure and poor salary (Department of Education and Victoria, 1971; Department of Education Victoria, 1973). The Review of the Provision of Counselling Services in ACT Government Schools and Colleges (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) also found that school counsellors were particularly dissatisfied with their level of pay and the lack of career pathways available to them, especially to the more senior levels where there are only limited positions available. It is also a matter of concern that the review found ACT school counsellors experience “low morale and feel that their work is not valued” (p. 53). Furthermore, they were dissatisfied with the lack of opportunity to participate in decision making about the activities that make up their role and the increasing lack of time to do all that was expected of them. Lack of opportunities for career advancement in the field of school psychology have been found to be the reason why some school psychologists choose to leave the profession entirely (Levinson et al., 1988; Wilczenski, 1997).

Levinson (1990) attempted to identify the occupational variables that predict school psychologists’ job satisfaction using a multiple regression analysis. He found that the variables which were associated with high job satisfaction among school psychologists were: participation in more research activities; increased perceived control and autonomy over their job functions; less discrepancy between the amount of time spent on actual and ideal job functions; more training in school psychology; fewer colleagues; less absenteeism; and higher salaries. Levinson (1990) argued that in order for school psychologists to be more satisfied at work it was important that they participate in a diversity of job tasks.

Proctor and Steadman (2003) investigated the differences in job satisfaction and burnout of school psychologists who worked in multiple schools and school
psychologists who serviced just one single school. They named these two types of work situations as ‘traditional’ (multiple-school) and ‘in-house’ (single-school). They found that school psychologists who serviced just one-school reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction than those who serviced multiple schools. They also found that single-service school psychologists had lower levels of burnout and perceived themselves as more effective in their roles. Interestingly, school psychologists servicing just one school indicated significantly higher satisfaction with: the amount of role diversity; the manageability of their caseloads; the level of familiarity that other school staff have with the school psychologist and their abilities; and level of participation in other school activities, than school psychologists who service multiple schools. Thus, Proctor and Steadman’s study highlights problematic differences between school psychologists who work in one school compared to those who service multiple schools and provides support for a model of service delivery where school psychologists service fewer rather than more schools. This finding is supported by the ACT Review (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) which found that:

Currently, school counsellor deployment has some counsellors working across multiple locations that are not geographically or logically linked, creating inefficiencies resulting from time spent traveling between sites and adjusting to disparate settings and student populations. Reducing the number of settings to no more than two and ensuring that they are geographically close or logically linked has the potential to considerably increase efficiency (p. 42).

Finally, a qualitative study which investigated sources of professional dissatisfaction amongst a group of forty US school psychologists found that the majority of dissatisfactions were related to: feeling time pressured – especially in regard to the high demand for their services; too many assessments and reports to write and the associated boredom with these tasks; inappropriate expectations from educational departments regarding special education; feeling professionally isolated; receiving little recognition for the work that they do; unsatisfactory supervision arrangements; and unsatisfactory evaluation arrangements – for example, one school psychologist said: “I dislike being evaluated by someone who doesn’t know about or understand the work of psychologists” (Miller et al., 1981, p. 2). As mentioned in Chapter Two, this latter point
has been a source of dissatisfaction for Victorian government employed school psychologists who are evaluated by school principals or other managers who are not psychology trained (Faulkner, 1999). This practice of evaluation still continues to be carried out today.

**Burnout**

Related to job satisfaction is the construct of burnout (Huebner, 1994; Huebner & Mills, 1994). Burnout is said to have been first termed by Freudenberger (1975) “to describe the emotional and physical exhaustion displayed by some human service workers in health care agencies” (cited in Huebner & Mills, 1994, p. 54). Later, Maslach and Jackson surveyed helping professionals on their experiences of job satisfaction and role stress and found that a significant number were “withdrawing from their work because of excessive and accumulated stress and dissatisfaction” (Pierson-Hubeney & Archambault, 1987, p. 244). They then developed a survey which they called the Maslach Burnout Inventory (or MBI) based on a theoretical model of burnout specifically for those who work in “people work” (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p.1). The measure is made up of three interrelated constructs, these being: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Reduced Personal Accomplishment. Emotional Exhaustion occurs when workers feel that they are emotionally over-extended and strained by their work and thus may feel that it is difficult to give at an emotional level. Depersonalisation is the term used to describe the worker who has become negative and cynical about their clients or people that they work with. They may think that in some way their clients deserve the predicament that they are in and may perceive them in a disparaging manner. Finally, Reduced Personal Accomplishment refers to the feeling of being dissatisfied and uninspired by the work that one does as well as a reduced feeling of personal achievement and passion for the role. The MBI is now widely used as a measure of burnout in the human services field (Huebner & Mills, 1994), such as in nursing, teaching, counselling, social work (Butler & Constantine, 2005) and school psychology.

Overall, studies that have used the MBI to measure burnout in school psychologists have found that many experience some symptoms of burnout, usually in the form of Emotional Exhaustion. For example, in a sample of 90 US school

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3 For ease of understanding Reduced Personal Accomplishment will be referred to as ‘Personal Accomplishment’ in the present study.
psychologists, Huebner and Mills (1994) found that a third of the sample scored high on Emotional Exhaustion, nearly a third scored low on Personal Accomplishment and 13% scored high on Depersonalisation. In a later study, using a much larger sample of US school psychologists, Mills and Huebner (1998) found that 40% scored high on Emotional Exhaustion, 19% scored low on Personal Accomplishment and 10% had high Depersonalisation symptoms. In a recent study of burnout in a sample of 533 US school counsellors, Butler and Constantine (2005) found that whilst some of the sample experienced some symptoms of burnout, similar to the previous two studies only a small percentage scored low in Personal Accomplishment. And finally, Pierson-Hubeney and Archambault (1987) surveyed 209 US school psychologists and found that they experienced moderate levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment. These studies show that although a substantial number of school psychologists are feeling somewhat overworked and exhausted by their roles; many are still sympathetic and responsive to the needs of their student clients and “experience a positive sense of professional pride and accomplishment in the workplace” (p. 60).

There have been a number of studies which have attempted to identify the variables that school psychologists perceive as contributing to job stress. Using a pre-developed list of potential job-related stressors, Burden (1988) surveyed school psychologists from Australia, England and the United States and asked them to rate how stressful each situation was to them. He found that Australian school psychologists perceived being told by school administrators that they were not performing satisfactorily as the greatest potential stressor. The other most highly rated potential stressful events (in order of most to least stressful) by Australian school psychologists were: working with incompetent and/or inflexible superiors; being threatened with legal action; working with uncooperative principals and other school administrators; consulting with teachers who are resistant to the school psychologists’ ideas and practices; feeling that there is not enough time to meet the demands of the role in a satisfactory manner; and feeling pressured to meet conflicting needs of the student client and the school. These results clearly indicate that in order for school psychologists to feel less stressed in carrying out the duties of their role it is important that school psychologists perceive school management and other school staff as supportive, open-

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4 Low scores on Personal Accomplishment correspond to feelings of professional dissatisfaction and a perceived lack of achievement, whereas high scores on Personal Accomplishment indicates feelings of professional satisfaction, achievement and reward.
minded and knowledgeable about the school psychologist’s role and ethical obligations. On the other hand, it is also important for school psychologists to be aware of the considerable legal and ethical responsibility that school managers have towards their students, staff and parents. Therefore, a positive and open working relationship between the school psychologist and school management should be cultivated.

In a mammoth study conducted by Oakland and Cunningham (1992), school psychologists from 54 countries were surveyed on their identified sources of stress. The most frequently identified stressor was having a lack of time to fulfill all the activities that were demanded of them. This appears to be an issue that is repeatedly identified in the literature regarding school psychologists’ stressors. Other identified stressors included (in order of frequency): lack of career structure and advancement; being supervised by people who have no or little expertise in school psychology; receiving inadequate pay; feeling ethically compromised between meeting the demands of the school and balancing this with professional ethical obligations; being required to work outside of their professional competencies or duties; not being included in decision making that affects students; feeling undervalued by the educational community, the public and the psychological profession; experiencing difficulty managing the demands of both family and professional duties; being professionally isolated from other school psychologists; and having overly high personal aspirations and expectations.

Kendrick and Chandler (1994) surveyed 176 US school counsellors and asked them to list the three most significant stressors that they had experienced in the past year. The overwhelming majority of school counsellors indicated that they had been stressed by overly-high job expectations and demands, especially in regard to meeting the high demand for counselling and testing. The next most commonly identified stressful event was conflict with administrative and other school staff, followed by: dealing with students in crisis, especially suicidal students; dealing with difficult parents and families; dealing with mandatory reporting issues; and time management. In another study, Kaplan and Wishner (1999) surveyed 68 US school psychologists and 161 school psychology academic staff on what they perceived were the greatest job-related stressors for school psychologist practitioners. Results revealed a generally high level of agreement between the two groups, indicating that the sample of academics were cognisant of the types of stressors faced by school psychologists, which Kaplan and Wishner asserted, would hopefully translate into the school psychology training program. School psychology practitioners perceived the greatest job-related stressors as:
not having enough educational alternatives to special education; dealing with complex student issues that lack clearly identifiable solutions; having to complete too many administrative duties; dealing with a school philosophy that a child with learning difficulties belongs in special education; unsatisfactory physical working space; a lack of time to do counselling and activities other than assessment; and dealing with a backlog of work.

The geographic location of the school may also have a significant impact on the job satisfaction and burnout of school psychologists. For example, Willis (Willis, 2000) conducted a qualitative study of a small group of inner-urban US school psychologists and found that the sample was “overworked and overwrought” (Abstract section, para. 1). One of the key identified reasons for this was the type of students that the school psychologists were working with, all of whom came from the same inner-urban location. The students were particularly troublesome and displayed many kinds of at-risk behaviours. Secondly, the school psychologists had a weekly testing quota where they were required to assess a certain number of students each week as part of their role. Many felt extremely time-pressured to meet this expectation and indicated that they wanted to take on a more therapeutic and consultative role.

Another study that investigated the effect of location on school counsellors’ level of burnout found that school counsellors working in urban schools scored significantly higher in Depersonalisation and Emotional Exhaustion than school counsellors working in suburban and rural schools (Butler & Constantine, 2005). Butler and Constantine attributed this difference in burnout levels to the location of the school counsellor. They asserted that urban schools present the school counsellor with more complex and difficult student issues related to cultural diversity, increased crime rates, increased poverty and increased mental health issues.

Finally, personnel factors may also influence whether or not a school psychologist experiences burnout. Using Costa and McCrae’s (1986) five-factor model of personality, Heubner and Mills (1994) studied the personality of 90 school psychologists and then attempted to predict their experience of burnout based on their reported levels of the five personality traits (i.e. extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness). They found that personality variables accounted for a significant percentage of the variance in burnout over and above demographic and occupational variables (such as student to school psychologist ratio and job-related stressors). Overall, low scores on agreeableness and extraversion
significantly predicted high scores in Depersonalisation. Furthermore, low scores on conscientiousness and extraversion significantly predicted low scores in Personal Accomplishment. In a later study, Mills and Heubner (1998) again found that personality variables significantly predicted the experience of burnout in school psychologists. Again, low agreeableness predicted Depersonalisation and in this study, low extraversion predicted Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment. Mills and Heubner described the results as possibly highlighting a ‘bi-directional’ or ‘state or trait’ component to burnout, where personality variables may predict whether or not a school psychologist experiences burnout, or alternatively, the experience of burnout influences certain types of behaviours in the school psychologist, such as being careless, inattentive or disordered if they are feeling a reduced sense of personal accomplishment at work. Therefore, although studies have shown that school psychologist burnout is influenced by job-related stressors (e.g., Butler & Constantine, 2005), personality characteristics of the school psychologist may also be an influential factor.

**Conclusion to Chapter Four**

In summary, a review of the literature in Chapter Four revealed that teachers and principals are not always cognisant of the role of school psychologists and may sometimes expect them to perform duties that deviate from their professional code of ethics. Furthermore, due to the complex nature of the role, school psychologists are often faced with ethical dilemmas or quandaries where they must make decisions regarding a student client based on their own professional judgement. Consulting the Code of Ethics can be helpful but is also often ambiguous when applied to particular circumstances. Therefore, it is imperative that school psychologists receive regular and good quality supervision; however, in reality, this is not occurring as much as it should be, with many school psychologists not receiving supervision, or receiving it irregularly and paying for it themselves. Although school psychologists report overall moderate levels of job satisfaction, areas of job dissatisfaction are apparent – particularly in regard to feeling overworked and pressured to meet the demands of the role within limited available time. Furthermore, school psychologists report that they are experiencing some symptoms of burnout, especially Emotional Exhaustion. This indicates that the school psychological profession has much room for improvement and that there is a need for more rigorous debate regarding best practice when implementing a psychological service in schools. The next chapter will explore the literature
pertaining to a much promoted theoretical model of service delivery for school psychologists.
CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL MODEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY

“Since World War II, psychologists and other mental health specialists have played an increasingly important role in education” (Meyers, Parsons, & Martin, 1979, p. 1). The exploration of the history of school psychological services in the Department of Education Victoria in Ch. 2 revealed that during the time of the Second World War school psychologists’ model of service delivery was based on a medical or clinical approach, where the primary role of psychologists was to test students for cognitive deficits and to then make recommendations for placement in educational programs based on the results of these cognitive assessments (Minor, 1977). This limited model of service delivery was expanded in the late 1950’s when school psychologists took on more counselling and consultation activities. Then, in the 1960’s school psychologists’ model of service delivery diversified as they began working proactively within schools from a systemic model of service delivery, where the student was viewed as being part of an interconnecting network of influences, including school, home, and the community. In addition, school psychologists provided workshops and information sessions to teachers in an attempt to indirectly influence the lives of students through the increased knowledge and skills of teachers. However, by the late 1980’s, school psychologists’ model of service delivery was again changing. As a result of government cost-cutting exercises, their numbers were reduced, the role became narrower and their time became stretched as they became again associated with testing for special education.

Today, from the literature that is available, Australian school psychologists report that their role is multifaceted and includes activities such as counselling, assessment and consultation (Ashman et al., 1993; Barletta, 1996a; Bramston & Rice, 2000; Drent, 2005). A difference has also been found between school psychologists who service just one school and school psychologists who service multiple schools: single-service school psychologists participate in more networking and consultation activities with teachers and families of students than school psychologists servicing multiple schools (Kids Help Line, 1996). However, school psychologist to student ratios have been associated with less traditional roles and more variety in job tasks (Curtis et al., 2002). Therefore, not surprisingly, school psychologists who service multiple schools may be bound to a more traditional type of service due to the lack of time to participate in broader roles such as consultation and program delivery.
There is overwhelming support within the literature that school psychologists should broaden the traditional client-centred model of service delivery, which mainly involves assessment and one-to-one counselling, and include more integrated or systemic types of activities into the role (e.g., Brown, 1987; Dickinson & Bradshaw, 1992; Idsoe, 2003; Meyers, 1995; Minor, 1977; Nastasi, 2003; Ogilvy, 1994). In fact, a study of 522 US teachers found that the majority of the sample would like their school psychologist to participate in a broad range of activities, including: assessment, special education input, consultation, counselling, crisis intervention and behaviour management roles (Watkins et al., 2001). The traditional client-centred model of service delivery is based on a medical view that pathology lies within an individual and therefore the school psychologists’ role is to only treat the individual (the student) with the diagnosed pathology (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The client-centred model has been since conceptualised as entailing an overly narrow and reactive response to client problems - rather than being more broad minded and focused on mental health and prevention (Idsoe, 2003; Nastasi, 2003; Ogilvy, 1994). It is the ‘medical’ model that has largely influenced the strong psychometric focus which is characteristic of the role of US school psychologists and that dominated the work of Victorian government employed school psychologists in their earlier years of service, and which still plays an important part of their role today. However, it is believed that this method of practice ignores important environmental factors that, in addition to the students’ method of coping and intrapsychic factors, also have a significant influence on the overall mental health and educational wellbeing of students (Meyers, 1995):

Teachers, parents, peers, school administrators, community leaders, legislators, and other adults have a vital role in creating the environments that either foster or suppress the emergence of children’s problems. Even more importantly, our ability to ‘cure’, reduce, or prevent children’s educational, mental health, and health difficulties almost always requires us to influence the behaviors of people other than, or in addition to, referred children themselves. It is simply not possible for school psychologists to serve children effectively without focusing much of their professional attention upon the important adults in children’s lives. The medical model provides an inadequate working metaphor for the future (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000, p. 486).
One of the most recent Victorian government reports: *The Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools* (Department of Education Victoria, 1998) recommends that the professional activities that Student Services Officers (including school psychologists) participate in should reflect a more diverse and systemic model of service delivery. For example, the report recommends that Student Services Officers should be: consulting and advising schools on the welfare and educational needs of their students; developing and implementing student programs; developing and implementing professional development programs for teachers; providing counselling to students and their families; establishing and maintaining links with relevant community mental health agencies and services; and providing advice to the General Manager (p. 12-13). Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter One, the Australian Psychological Society (2000) defines the role of school psychologists as “employed to apply their psychological and their educational expertise to assist students, parents and siblings, teachers and school administrators to achieve the most beneficial outcomes for students” (p.1). Thus the APS inherently promotes a wholistic and systemic approach to the psychological management of student issues. This expanded model of service delivery that the Framework is explicitly recommending and that the APS is implicitly recommending is one that has received extensive support within the school psychological literature, particularly from within the US.

*Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework*

Bronfenbrenner’s ‘ecological framework’ (1977) has been frequently mentioned by authors who promote a more systemic model of service delivery (e.g., Fine, 1985; Nastasi, 2000, 2003; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Bronfenbrenner wrote extensively about the inseparable relationship between individuals and their environment. He challenged psychologists to do away with the view that their clients exist within a vacuum, separated or isolated from others. Instead, he urged viewing them as existing within and being influenced by the “physical, social, and cultural features of the immediate settings in which human beings live (e.g., family, school, and neighborhood), as well as the still broader contemporary and historical contexts in which these settings are embedded (e.g., the society and times into which an individual is born)” (Moen, 1995, p. 1).
Bronfenbrenner proposed that the ecological environment which contains and influences an individual is made up of four interconnected structures or systems, these being the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. He used the example of a school-aged child to demonstrate the key features of each of these systems. Firstly, the microsystem “is the complex of relations between the developing person and environment in an immediate setting containing that person (e.g., home, school, workplace, etc.) (p. 514). The settings within the microsystem have particular physical features (e.g., bedroom, classroom) and the individual engages in particular roles and activities within that setting (e.g., daughter/son, pupil/friend) for particular periods of time (school days versus weekends or day time versus night time). The second system proposed by Bronfenbrenner is the mesosystem. The mesosystem “comprises the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life” (p. 515). Therefore the interrelationships between the family, school and child’s peer group are examples of factors that may comprise the mesosystem for a particular student. Thirdly, the exosystem “is an extension of the mesosystem embracing other specific social structures, both formal and informal, that do not themselves contain the developing person but impinge upon or encompass the immediate settings in which that person is found, and thereby influence, delimit, or even determine what goes on there” (p. 515). The neighbourhood, the mass media, agencies of government and access to goods and services are some examples that Bronfenbrenner gave of features that may make up the exosystem. Finally, the macrosystem “refers to the overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems, of which micro-, meso-, exo-, systems are the concrete manifestations” (p.515).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) asserted that the degree of importance and value that a society places on children and on those that work for the improved welfare of children, will have a significant impact on the types of services that are available to children. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model is not a linear model, but rather a cyclical and interactional model that views an individual’s experience as influencing and as being influenced by the world around them (Brown, 1987; Fine & Holt, 1983; Moen, 1995; Nastasi, 2000). This interactional and broadened conceptualisation of how to work with students has received strong theoretical (rather than empirical) support within the school psychology literature (e.g., Fine & Holt, 1983; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The lack of empirical evidence exploring the effects of implementing
such a model within schools has been noted as a limitation by some authors (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Fine & Holt, 1983; Ogilvy, 1994).

**A systemic model of service delivery for school psychologists.** Brown (1987), an Australian author, provided a strong conceptual argument for the application of a more systemic model of service delivery to school psychology. Brown argued, in his description of how such a model could be implemented in schools, that the essential purpose behind the role of school psychologists is to encourage positive change in the behavioural, emotional and educational outcomes of students. However, in order to achieve this purpose, Brown asserts that “change is facilitated when the wider system which directly influences and is influenced by the student is considered” (p. 114). This latter quote emphasises the ‘interactional’ or ‘circular’ nature of problems, as not only emerging from an individual but as being influenced by and influencing the systems around that individual. This is especially true for children and adolescents who are in a period of the lifespan that is greatly influenced by the family and educational and social systems to which they belong (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Furthermore, Brown argues that in order to consider the factors which may be helping to maintain a problem, school psychologists should attempt to discover the ‘meaning’ behind a problem or the role that the problem plays within each of the different contexts in which an individual is involved, as well as the beliefs that key people or systems have regarding the problem. It is then the school psychologists’ role to challenge those beliefs and dynamics that are considered to be maintaining or perpetuating the problem. Therefore, the target of intervention may not be the student *per se*, but it may be the school or family system if they are thought to be significantly contributing to the continuation or expression of a particular problem.

Nastasi (2000) also argues for a more comprehensive model of service delivery for school psychologists using Bronfenbrenner’s (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) ecological theory as a basis for her proposed model of service delivery. She argues that the school psychologist must consider the effects of and relationship between each of the relevant systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem) when dealing with student issues and promoting the overall wellbeing of students. Rather than conceptualising schools as purely educational settings, Nastasi views them as having the potential to be comprehensive health settings, where education is but one of the purposes. Nastasi’s conceptualisation of a school as a comprehensive health setting is not dissimilar to the American Academy of Pediatrics’ (2004) and other authors’ (e.g.,
Cooper et al., 2005) views that schools should deliver mental health services that are usually based in community or clinical settings. However, Nastasi does not go as far as recommending that all mental health services should be located in schools, but asserts that school psychologists should practice as one of the various ‘health-care providers’ that are available to support students and their families. She emphasises the need for school psychologists to work closely with other health-care providers who also have a vested interest in the psychological, physical, behavioural and educational wellbeing of students. Furthermore, Nastasi declares that the school psychologist is the most important professional in this hypothetical model as he or she would play a pivotal role in coordinating and managing the various services that are assisting a particular student and must ensure that open communication between the various service providers takes place.

Other authors have conceptualised the systemic model of service delivery as being on a continuum, ranging from the school psychologist working directly with the student to the school psychologist working indirectly for the student through other people or systems (such as through teachers, the family, the school system or through influencing policy and training) (e.g., Fine & Tyler, 1977; Gonzalez et al., 2004). The term ‘consultation’ is often used to describe the broad range of ‘indirect’ activities that school psychologists undertake with other key stakeholders or systems (Gutkin & Curtis, 1982). Caplan (1970) has written extensively on the topic of consultation and is referred to frequently within the school psychological literature. He defines consultation as:

A process of interaction between two professional persons – the consultant, who is a specialist, and the consultee, who invokes the consultant’s help in regard to a current work problem with which he is having some difficulty and which he has decided is within the other’s area of specialized competence. The work problem involves the management or treatment of one or more clients of the consultee, or the planning or implementation of a program to cater to such clients (p. 19).

Caplan’s definition of consultation is somewhat restrictive when used for the purpose of describing school psychologists’ consultation activities, in that it only assumes a dyadic relationship between two professionals. It does not, for example, allow for a consultative relationship between a school psychologist and parent.
However, it does highlight that the consultant needs to be easily identified by others who may be seeking the services of the consultant. It also identifies that others must perceive the consultant as proficient and competent in the area of practice in which they are giving advice. This is an important factor for school psychologists and their relationship with other professionals and stakeholders in a school. In general, the empirical literature has shown that teachers, principals and parents highly value the skills and expertise of school psychologists (Farrell & Kalambouka, 2000).

Although limited to the immediate school environment, Meyers (1995) is one author who has conceptualised the systemic model of service delivery in a consultative way. He proposes a model (which he terms ‘consultative model’) with four levels of intervention. They are: direct service to the child; indirect service to the child; direct service to the teacher; and service to the school system. The first level: ‘direct service to the child’, requires the school psychologist to participate in professional activities such as student counselling, diagnosis and assessment. The second level: ‘indirect service to the child’, requires the school psychologist to work with teachers on helping them to change a student’s observable classroom behaviour in order to assist a student’s development. Also at this level, a school psychologist could work with teachers on curriculum development that would indirectly promote student wellbeing. Group testing procedures would also be included in this level. The third level: ‘direct service to the teacher’, is different to level one and two, in that school psychologists’ “primary goal is to change the teacher’s behavior rather than the child’s behavior” (p. 65). Meyers borrows the theoretical recommendations of Caplan (1970) which requires the school psychologist to “determine whether or not the problem was relevant to any of four major categories: [teacher’s] lack of understanding, [teacher’s] lack of skill, lack of self-confidence, or [teacher’s] lack of objectivity” (Meyers, p. 65). The final level: ‘service to the school system’, is concerned with modifying the behaviours, attitudes or skills of certain sub-groups within the school (such as school management, a group of teaching staff, or both). Activities may also include group or organisational testing, evaluation of school procedures, development of school policy and implementing in-service programs and workshops. Improving communication between sub-groups within a school is also an activity that Meyers includes in this level of intervention.

Contrary to Meyer’s (1995) somewhat limited definition of school psychologist consultation activities as being restricted to consultations with individual teachers or groups of teachers, other authors have recommended working with the families of
students and this is a much mentioned component of the systemic model of service delivery. There is evidence to suggest that family functioning significantly influences children’s behaviour and achievement at school (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Deal, Wampler, & Halverson, 1998). Therefore, as Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) state: “school psychologists are in pivotal positions to serve as liaisons between home and school systems to forge meaningful connections” (p. 493). It is hoped that by working with families as well as students, school psychologists can help to influence better parenting techniques, improved relationships, both within a family and between the family and school, and teach new strategies to families so that they can better cope with problematic behaviours. (Fine & Holt, 1983). Having a more transparent school psychological service, where parents are cognisant of the school psychologist’s role and purpose within a school, may also help to reduce the perceived stigma or perceived threat to a family’s privacy which some parents have reported as reasons why they do not feel comfortable accessing their child’s school psychologist for assistance (Raviv et al., 2003).

Another recommended feature of the systemic model is for school psychologists to become what some authors have termed: ‘youth advocates’ (Bemak & Chi-Ying Chung, 2005; Meyers et al., 1979) in order to influence educational and social policies that have an effect on the psychological wellbeing of children and adolescents, such as at the levels of the exosystem and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). However, it appears that few opportunities for school psychologists to participate in this type of youth advocacy are available (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). This is because school psychologists’ opinions are rarely sought by policy makers. As discussed in Ch.2, the lack of representation of school psychologists’ input in policy decision making has been a longstanding identified problem for the profession in Victorian. In 1992 (and most likely earlier), Whitta, Walker and Drent (1992) found that many school psychologists felt excluded from the decision making that occurred at a government level which greatly impacted on their roles and resultant model of service delivery. Sheridan and Gutkin assert that school psychologists are “the most highly trained mental health experts in schools” (p. 488), and so they are in a prime position to influence and inform policy makers about social issues that have an impact on the students that they serve (such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy). In fact, they assert that school psychologists actually have an ethical obligation to do so.
Brown (1987) and Gonzales et al. (2004) declare that a systemic model of service delivery would give the school psychologist more time to positively influence a greater number of students. However, when considering the broader range of tasks that such a model entails, this prediction is somewhat debatable. For example, some authors who theoretically recommend this model of service delivery argue that school psychologists’ activities should include: student counselling, assessment and report writing activities, interagency collaboration and coordination, collaboration and consultation with parents, program development and delivery, provision of in-service programs for teachers and other school staff, curriculum development and advice, implementation of quality assurance procedures and evaluation in schools, data collection and research to promote evidence based-practice, supervision of other school psychologists, and informing and advising policy makers on issues that affect children and young people (Brown, 1987; Dwyer & Bernstein, 1998; Meyers, 1995; Miller & Leyden, 1999; Nastasi, 2000; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000) - to name but a few!

From the limited Australian research that is available, it appears that school psychologists are already engaged in a diversity of roles, are dealing with a multiplicity of issues and are unfortunately feeling overworked and overburdened by the complexity of issues and high workload associated with their roles (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Bramston & Rice, 2000). Given that most of the papers in this area come from the US, it remains questionable whether a systemic model of service delivery, which de-emphasises direct services to students, such as counselling and assessment (Meyers, 1995), and emphasises more consultation and systems intervention, would translate easily or be readily acceptable within the Australian context. In contrast, it may be that Australian school psychologists are already participating in activities that could be identified as being systemic in nature, in addition to more client-centred activities (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Ashman et al., 1993; Barletta, 1996a; Bramston & Rice, 2000; Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 1999). Evidence of this was also found in the Ashman et al. (1993) Queensland study which found that secondary school counsellors participated in more systemic types of activities than primary school counsellors.

**Limitations of a systemic model of service delivery.** Certain limitations of this model have been identified. For example, in order for the model to work it requires an acceptance and willingness on behalf of certain stakeholders (such as teachers or
parents) to participate and become involved in the interventions that a school psychologist implements (Nastasi, 2003). However, some stakeholders within the system (such as teachers) may feel uncomfortable or professionally threatened with being the ‘target of intervention’ (Brown, 1987) - as recommended in the third level of Meyers’ (1995) ‘consultative’ model of service delivery. Meyers admits in his discussion that there may be a potential problem with this approach especially when school psychologists are working with teachers to change their teaching behaviours or attitudes towards a student. He says that not only would this require ‘sophisticated interviewing techniques’ on the part of the school psychologist but it would also require a degree of flexibility (or security) on behalf of the teacher to discuss areas of their own professional practice or attitudes that are deemed unsuitable or in need of modification. In his discussion of the systemic model, Brown, considers the prior arguments of Fine and Holt (1983) and their description of the ‘homeostatic’ nature of systems which, they profess, contain an inherent resistance to change – which is the very thing that school psychologists are working towards within this model (Ogilvy, 1994). In addition, this approach to service delivery actually puts teachers (or parents) in the role of client and Brown suggests that school psychologists may need to fully inform and explain their rationale to the identified stakeholders (such as teachers) in order to alleviate any resistance or misconceptions about the approach (and to obtain informed consent).

Another important issue is the perception of teachers and other stakeholders around what activities constitute the role of school psychologists. As discussed in Chapter Four, research has shown that teachers and school administrators may not always have an accurate perception of the school psychologist’s role (e.g., Fitch et al., 2001). Some teachers view the school counselling service as a place where students go to be ‘fixed’ and then to be returned to the classroom with as little disruption as possible and with “minimal needs” (Farrell & Care, 2000, p. 23). Other research has shown strong agreement amongst school principals towards a more consultative approach to school counselling (Dickinson, 1995), while another Australian study showed that principals and teachers preferred school psychologists to engage in more traditional activities such as cognitive testing (Leach, 1989). Therefore, whether or not teachers would welcome a more consultative approach to the delivery of school-based psychological services remains questionable. Gonzalez, et al. (2004) surveyed 403 US teachers on the factors associated with their acceptance or resistance to consultation with the school psychologist. They found that the only factor that correlated
significantly with teachers’ acceptance of consultation with the school psychologist was
the school psychologist working more hours at their school. This suggests that if a
school psychologist is more available or accessible within a school, then teachers may
consult with them more often or feel more comfortable doing so. It may also mean that
increased hours at a school results in more time for the school psychologist to be out of
their office and therefore teachers are aware that they actually exist!

In addition, there is an issue related to competence with this approach (Fine &
Holt, 1983). Leach (1989) surveyed Western Australian principals and teachers on their
attitudes towards how well school psychologists’ implemented traditional versus
systemic activities. The results revealed that “system-centred interventions and
preventative strategies were considered [by principals and teachers as] least competently
done when they were carried out” (p. 369). Leach concluded that there needs to be more
attention given to the application of systemic and consultation activities in training for
school psychologists.

Given that in Australia there is no formal training in school psychology, besides
training in educational psychology (and not all Australian school psychologists come
from an educational psychology background), the following US study is interesting.
Lucas, Blazek, Raley and Washington (2005) recently explored the percentage of
coverage of educational and school psychology material in fifty-seven introductory
psychology textbooks. They found that the content pertaining to both educational and
school psychology was negligible (less than .29% of total content). This is most likely
similar to the textbooks read by Australian introductory psychology students. One
wonders on what information do psychology students decide to choose school
psychology as a career? It is a matter of concern when we consider that school
psychologists make up a substantial 10% of the overall membership of the Australian
Psychological Society (Australian Psychological Society, 2004-2005), yet this area of
practice receives such little recognition within training courses and texts. It also
provides some food for thought in regard to whether or not school psychologists feel
comfortable or proficient in applying a systemic model to their work, based on the skills
learnt in their training prior to entering the profession.

The issue of professional competency also relates to the skills needed of school
psychologists to deal with a multitude of stakeholders who all have an interest in their
student or child, and who all have varying personalities and working styles. For
example, as mentioned previously, it requires considerable skill on the part of the
school psychologist to work with teachers on ways to deal with student problems within
the classroom (Meyers, 1995). Furthermore, working within and across various
subsystems and with various people within a school requires a high level of culture
specific knowledge (Nastasi, 2003) especially in schools that service a multicultural
population of students. It appears that the training of school psychologists does not
sufficiently cover such issues as system dynamics as well as educational and
‘interprofessional collaboration’ (Shoffner & Briggs, 2001). Furthermore, in addition to
the need for cultural sensitivity, the model’s strong focus on working with families of
students requires good quality training in family therapy. This type of therapy requires
specialised knowledge and sophisticated techniques. Appropriate training and high
quality supervision is essential if such a model of service delivery was expected of
school psychologists (Brown, 1987; Fine & Holt, 1983; Meyers et al., 1979). It is
interesting to note that Curtis et al. (2002) found that in their study of a large sample of
US school psychologists, increased participation in consultation activities was
associated with more years of experience and higher levels of training.

Related to the discussion of whether or not school psychologists feel competent
or willing to apply a systemic model of service delivery to their work is a Norwegian
study conducted by Idsoe (2003). Similar to the US and Australia (e.g., Department of
Education Victoria, 1998), a more systemic model of service delivery has also been
promoted for school psychologists in Norway. Idsoe was interested in testing whether or
not Norwegian school psychologists favoured a more individual level (client-centred)
way of working over a more systemic way of working, as well as whether or not they
favoured treatment (e.g., counselling, assessment) over prevention (e.g., providing
workshops to teachers or families). The findings revealed that the majority of the large
sample of school psychologists favoured working at the individual level with students
and favoured activities related to treatment over activities related to prevention. Idsoe
hypothesised that perhaps school psychologists feel comfortable and secure continuing
to work within a traditional client-centred or individual model of service delivery and
therefore are resistant to change to a more systemic model which has been promoted
both within the literature and by the Norwegian Education Department.

Similarly, a recent unpublished study of Victorian school psychologists and
school staff (principals and teachers) investigated whether or not the systemic nature of
service delivery which was advocated in the Framework for Student Support Services
(Department of Education Victoria, 1998) has been accepted by school psychologists
and school staff alike. The results revealed that although all participants believed that each activity (both systemic and client-centred) was important, Victorian school psychologists from both government and independent schools favoured and also spent more time involved in counselling and assessment activities over more systemic activities such as community liaison, evaluation or research. The author concluded that “those involved in school psychology services at all levels seem to be caught in a model that sees the emphasis still on direct service provision” (Kenney, 2005, p.2). This very much reflects the findings of Idsoe (2003). Furthermore, it is unclear whether this points to a choice on behalf of school psychologists or is a result of not having enough time in the working day to broaden their professional activities due to the pressure of meeting the immediate demands of a full caseload.

The issue of maintaining a students’ right to confidentiality is a topic that has surprisingly not been mentioned in the literature pertaining to this subject. The confidentiality of a school counselling service is highly valued by students and, as discussed previously, is one of the most important factors that students consider when contemplating whether or not to access the school counselling service (e.g., Kids Help Line, 1996; Riggs & Cheng, 1988). However, a model of service delivery which emphasises more consultation and communication between the school psychologist and teachers and parents regarding student problems would most likely cause some concern for students. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that this issue, as well as the issues of informed consent, dual relationships, who is the client and other ethical considerations, is taken very seriously when implementing a model of service delivery for the provision of psychological services in schools. More research and debate about the consequences of such a model on students’ perceptions and use of the school counselling service is imperative in order to protect students’ rights to privacy and ensure that students trust and continue to utilise the school counselling service.

Limitations aside, it is generally agreed that a more systemic model of service delivery would help to revolutionise the traditional view that school psychologists should be predominantly conducting psychological and educational assessments of students (Meyers, 1995). Particularly within the US, school psychologists have repeatedly indicated that they desire to do less of this activity and would like to do more student counselling and consultation activities (Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Roberts & Rust, 1994; Smith, 1984). This desire may be translating into reality, as a study of 1,922 school psychologists from across the US revealed that the
vast majority of the sample were engaging in consultation activities not related to special education (Curtis et al., 1999).

Other projected advantages of the systemic approach include: it may save time for the school psychologist as it requires fewer one-to-one meetings with students as emphasised in a client-centred model; it increases awareness amongst stakeholders about a problem and therefore multiple people may be working towards a possible solution; and it may allow the school psychologist to work on increased numbers of cases as stakeholders begin to learn new ways of relating or working with others and therefore begin applying newly acquired skills into other situations with other people (Brown, 1987).

Furthermore, it also appears that school administrators prefer school psychologists to participate in more consultation type of activities with other school staff and with students’ families. Interestingly, Thomas et al. (1992) surveyed 512 school administrators in the US and found that school administrators were significantly more satisfied when they perceived their school psychologist as participating in more consultation types of activities. This links with Cooper et al.’s (2005) study which found that Scottish teachers wanted their school counsellor to be more open about their role and desired increased communication from school psychologists about student issues. A systemic or consultative model of service delivery would certainly increase communication between school psychologists and other school staff (Meyers, 1995). This increased communication would occur in ways other than the traditional cognitive or psychological assessment report containing a list of recommendations and instructions for teachers and parents (Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000) - a method that has received little support from the teaching community, in that studies show that teachers find such reports difficult to understand and also do not often follow the school psychologist’s recommendations (e.g., Farrell & Care, 2000; Leach, 1989).

**Conclusion to Chapter Five**

In summary, a systemic model of service delivery is one that is strongly promoted in the literature, but appears to have a number of limitations if the school psychologist is not supported adequately with training, given sufficient time allocation to fulfill the variety of tasks that such a model encourages, and if policies and guidelines are not developed that support such a model within schools. As Nastasi (2003) asserts:
“the realization of a model with these elements presents challenges for researchers, practitioners, and those responsible for preparing future psychologists” (p. 48).
CHAPTER SIX: AIMS OF CURRENT STUDY

Overall purpose

The overall purpose of the present study was to provide an Australian contribution to the available literature concerning the professional issues associated with the role of school psychologists. In particular, this study sought data concerning school psychologists’ attitudes and experiences associated with the provision of a school-based psychological service. In addition, it obtained teachers’ and principals’ attitudes towards school psychology. Therefore, it surveyed a sample of school psychologists, principals and teachers from a number of Victorian government, Catholic and independent primary and secondary schools.

Variables included for analyses in this study are numerous as the study is designed to provide a descriptive overview of the range of activities in which Victorian school psychologists participate, as well as the range of professional issues that school psychologists believe are associated with this profession. The next section outlines in detail each of the specific aims and hypotheses as they relate to the twelve themes which are explored in the present study. The final section provides a concise summary of the research aims and hypotheses.

Specific aims and research questions

Firstly, this section presents each of the specific aims and research questions for the data collated from school psychologists. Each specific aim and research question was analysed for the sample as a whole. In addition analyses were carried out comparing different groupings of school psychologists. Examples are comparisons between psychologists working in government and non-government schools (i.e., Catholic and independent), and those working in one (single-service) or multiple school settings, primary and secondary schools, and analyses related to years of experience in school psychology, gender and probationary versus registered psychologists.

Secondly, aims related to the data pertaining to school psychologists and/or principals and/or teachers are presented in the next section. Differences in teachers’ and principals’ attitudes to various groups were sought. The various comparisons related to each aim are presented in the Results section in Chapter Eight.
School psychologist research questions

Role activities. The activities which make up the role of school psychologists have been found to be numerous and diverse (e.g., Bramston & Rice, 2000). In fact, based on the available literature, the role of school psychologists can be divided into five broad categories: assessment, counselling, program development and delivery and consultation. The first aim of the present study was to determine how often Victorian school psychologists participate in each of the activities that make up their role. In addition, it sought school psychologists’ attitudes towards whether or not they would like to do more or less of each role activity.

Student issues. A multitude of studies have revealed that a significant number of children and young people experience mental health problems (e.g., Sawyer et al., 2000). Furthermore, research pertaining to the types of student issues that school psychologists and school counsellors deal with suggests that in addition to mental health problems, student issues are varied and complex (e.g., Kendrick & Chandler, 1994) and can be divided into six broad categories: mental health issues, external negative factors (such as sexual abuse), student issues (such as student drug issues); relationship issues, educational issues and behavioural problems. The second aim of the present study was to explore the types of student issues that Victorian school psychologists deal with in their work within schools, as well as the frequency of presentation of each of the listed student issues.

Supervision. The findings in the literature related to the supervision experiences of school psychologists have repeatedly shown that it is less than adequate (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). The third aim of the present study was to explore the current supervision arrangements and experiences of Victorian school psychologists, and to ascertain how many school psychologists had read the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). Based on previous findings, it was hypothesised that a substantial number of school psychologists would not be participating in supervision. Furthermore, it was also hypothesised that a significant portion of the sample who participated in supervision would do so irregularly and would be paying for it themselves. It was also hypothesised that satisfaction in supervision would be low.

Professional development. Related to supervision is school psychologists’ participation in professional development activities. The fourth aim was related to this topic. The author was interested to determine how often school psychologists participate
in professional development and whether or not school psychologists believed that their professional development opportunities were relevant and useful to the issues that arise within the profession. Furthermore, as the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) recommends that school psychologists should be cognisant of legislation related to the practice of school psychology, this study examined knowledge of such legislation (as outlined in the Standards).

**Job satisfaction.** Studies show that on the whole, school psychologists report moderate to high levels of job satisfaction (e.g., Brown et al., 1998). However, some studies have also revealed that school psychologists are not satisfied with all aspects of their role (Hosp & Reschly, 2002). The fifth aim of the present study was to explore Victorian school psychologists’ overall level of job satisfaction. Based on previous findings, it hypothesised that school psychologists’ overall level of job satisfaction would be moderate to high. Furthermore, it examined analyses of job satisfaction related to specific aspects of the school psychologist’s role. It hypothesised that a more thorough investigation of individual job satisfaction items would reveal areas of dissatisfaction.

**Ethical dilemmas.** Due to the complex and sometimes ambiguous nature of the role, studies have shown that school psychologists often experience ethical dilemmas or challenges throughout their professional life (e.g., Jacob-Timm, 1999). Therefore, a sixth aim of the present study was to investigate how often Victorian school psychologists experience various ethical dilemmas in their work (such as those involving confidentiality, boundary issues, who is the client, informed consent, competence issues and dual relationships).

**Systemic model of service delivery.** There is strong argument within the school psychological literature that school psychologists should modify and broaden the traditional client-centred model of service delivery and work more systemically within schools (e.g., Brown, 1987). The seventh aim of the present study was to examine Victorian school psychologists’ current level of participation in activities which reflect a systemic model of service delivery. Furthermore, it investigated school psychologists’ level of adherence to a systemic model of service delivery through measurement of how much they believed these activities were important to their role.

**Burnout.** In general, studies have shown that school psychologists experience some symptoms of burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)
(Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Using the MBI, results have revealed that school psychologists generally report moderate to high levels of Emotional Exhaustion; low levels of Personal Accomplishment; and low levels of Depersonalisation (e.g., Mills & Huebner, 1998). The eighth aim was to explore Victorian school psychologists’ experiences of burnout. Similar to previous findings, it hypothesised that on average, the current sample of school psychologists would report moderate to high levels of Emotional Exhaustion, low levels of Depersonalisation and high levels of Personal Accomplishment.

In addition to exploring school psychologists’ levels of burnout, the present study also investigated whether or not burnout in school psychologists could be predicted from a number of variables tested in the present study. It posed the following two research questions: can burnout in school psychologists be predicted from school psychologists’ level of participation in various roles, specifically assessment, counselling, program development and delivery and consultation. Secondly, can burnout in school psychologists be predicted from school psychologists’ level of job satisfaction, frequency of supervision, level of adherence to a systemic model of service delivery, frequency of ethical dilemmas and whether or not they are working in just one school (single-service) or for more than one school (multi-service).

School psychologist, principal and teacher research questions

Responsibilities of school psychologists. There have been mixed findings within the literature pertaining to school psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ attitudes towards what activities should make up the role of school psychologists (e.g., Fitch et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have shown that principals and teachers sometimes expect certain practices of the school psychologist which may lead to ethical dilemmas (e.g., Jacob-Timm, 1999). The ninth aim of the present study was to compare school psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ attitudes towards what activities they believed should be the role of school psychologists. In addition, it analysed differences in opinions between school psychologists, principals and teachers in regard to how these differences may contribute to ethical concerns relating to school psychologists’ role.

Teachers’ understanding of school psychologists’ role. Cooper et al. (2005) found in their study of 104 Scottish teachers that some teachers reported that they do not fully understand what it is that school counsellors do. Therefore, the tenth aim of the
study examined teachers’ understanding of the role of the school psychologist, their training and qualifications.

**Teachers’ expressed need for school psychological services.** Studies repeatedly show that teachers highly value the presence of school psychologists, both to support them in their own work with students and to refer to when student issues seem bigger than what the teacher can handle independently (e.g., Watkins et al., 2001). The eleventh aim examined teachers’ attitudes towards the need for school psychologists. It hypothesised that teachers would strongly support the presence of a school-based psychological service.

**Principals’ attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery.** Although limited research is available on the topic of principals’ attitudes towards a systemic model of service delivery for school psychologists, Dickinson (1995) found a strong level of agreement amongst a sample of Australian school principals towards a more consultation approach. The twelfth aim explored whether or not Victorian school principals believe that their school psychologist should participate in systemic types of activities as part of their role within schools.

**Summary of aims and hypotheses**

Using a sample of Victorian school psychologists, principals and teachers, the present study aimed to explore:

1. **The activities which make up the role of school psychologists**
   (a) How often school psychologists participate in each of the activities that make up their role.
   (b) School psychologists’ attitudes towards whether or not they would like to do more or less of each role activity.

2. **Student issues**
   (a) The types of student issues that school psychologists deal with.

3. **The supervision experiences of school psychologists**
   (a) School psychologists’ frequency of participation in supervision.
   (b) School psychologists’ satisfaction with their supervision arrangements.
   (c) Whether or not school psychologists pay for supervision themselves.
   (d) The number of school psychologists who have read the APS Standards
4. **The professional development experiences of school psychologists**
   (a) School psychologists’ frequency of participation in professional development.
   (b) Whether or not school psychologists’ believe that their professional development opportunities are relevant and useful.
   (c) School psychologists reported level of knowledge about relevant legislation.

5. **Job satisfaction**
   (a) School psychologists’ overall level of job satisfaction
   (b) School psychologists’ level of job satisfaction to specific professional issues.

6. **Ethical dilemmas**
   (a) How often school psychologists experience various ethical dilemmas

7. **Adherence to a systemic model of service delivery**
   (a) School psychologists’ frequency of participation in systemic types of activities
   (b) School psychologists’ beliefs about how important systemic activities are to the school psychologists’ role.

8. **Burnout**
   (a) School psychologists’ level of burnout as measured by the MBI
   (b) Whether or not school psychologists’ level of participation in assessment, counselling, program delivery, consultation and administrative duties predict school psychologists’ experience of burnout.
   (c) Whether or not school psychologists’ level of job satisfaction, frequency of supervision, level of adherence to a systemic model of service delivery; frequency of ethical dilemmas and single versus multi-service school psychologists predict school psychologists’ experience of burnout.

9. **School psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perspectives on the responsibilities of school psychologists**
   (a) Differences in opinion of school psychologists, principals and teachers regarding the responsibilities of school psychologists and how these differences may contribute to ethical dilemmas or challenges.
10. *Teachers’ understanding of the school psychologist’s role*
   (a) Whether or not teachers believe that they understand their school psychologist’s role, their training and qualifications.

11. *Teachers’ need for a school psychological service*
   (a) Teachers’ opinions regarding how much they perceive the school psychological service to be useful and needed.

12. *Principals attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery*

The present study predicted that:

13. *Supervision*
   (a) A substantial number of school psychologists would not be participating in supervision.
   (b) A significant portion of the sample who participates in supervision would do so irregularly.
   (c) A significant portion of the sample who participated in supervision would be paying for it themselves.

14. *Job satisfaction*
   (a) School psychologists’ overall level of job satisfaction would be moderate to high.
   (b) A more thorough investigation of job satisfaction items would reveal areas of dissatisfaction.

15. *Burnout*
   (a) On average, school psychologists would report moderate to high levels of Emotional Exhaustion, low levels of Depersonalisation and high levels of Personal Accomplishment.

16. *Teachers’ need for a school psychological service*
   (a) Teachers would strongly support the presence of a school-based psychological service

Finally, differences between various groups of school psychologists (e.g., government versus non-government school psychologists) on variables related to several of the above aims were also explored.
CHAPTER SEVEN: METHOD

Participants

The school psychologist sample (N = 81) consisted of 13 males and 67 females (one psychologist failed to disclose gender). Psychologists’ ages ranged from 25 to 63 with a mean age of 40.7 years (SD = 10.52). Fifty-nine percent of psychologists worked full time, 38% part-time and 3% worked on a casual / contract basis. Forty-one percent were government school psychologists, 14% were independent school psychologists and 46% were Catholic school psychologists. Fifty-one psychologists worked in one school only and 30 psychologists serviced more than one school, with 63% servicing only one school, 23% servicing 2 to 10 schools, 5% servicing 11 to 19 schools, 4% servicing 21 to 28 schools and 5% servicing more than 30. Interestingly, 78% of government school psychologists worked in more than one school (n = 25), while only 10% of non-government school psychologists worked in more than one school (n = 5). The average number of students served by school psychologists working in only one school was 863, and for those working in more than one school the average number of students served was 1,918. In total, 70% of schools were classified by psychologists as metropolitan and 30% were classified as rural. Furthermore, 18% of psychologists worked with primary students only, 39% with both primary and secondary students (P-12) and 42% with secondary students only.

In regards to the number of years of experience school psychologists had in their role, the distribution showed a negative skew with the majority of psychologists having between 3 months and 11 years of experience. Overall, experience ranged from only 3 months to up to 26 years and 3 months, (M = 7 years and 1 month, SD = 6 years and 2 months). Sixty-one psychologists (75%) were members of the Australian Psychological Society (APS). Eight participants were probationary psychologists. In regards to highest qualification attained, 44% of psychologists had completed a post-first degree fourth year (Honours or Graduate Diploma) as their highest qualification, 52% had a Masters and 4% had completed a Doctorate as their highest qualification. For those psychologists who had completed a Masters or Doctorate, 29% had specialised in counselling psychology, 8% in clinical psychology, 2% in organisational psychology, 52% in educational psychology and 8% had a specialisation in an ‘other’ area, including Health Psychology, Family Therapy or Developmental Psychology. Finally, while 36%
of psychologists were also trained teachers, only one psychologist taught subjects as well.

**Principal demographics.** The principal sample \((N = 21)\) consisted of 11 males and 10 females. The majority of principals worked in secondary schools \((n= 17)\), with three working in P-12 schools and one working in a primary school. Twelve principals worked for a Catholic school, five for a government school and four principals worked for an independent school.

**Teacher demographics.** The teacher sample \((N = 86)\) consisted of 24 males and 62 females. The majority of teachers worked in secondary schools \((n= 65)\), with 12 working in P-12 schools and seven working in a primary school. Fifty-three teachers worked for a Catholic school, 17 for a government school and 16 teachers worked for an independent school. Fifty-three percent of the teachers were year level coordinators.

**Materials**

**Questionnaire development.** The School Psychology Survey (and related surveys: the Principal Survey and Teacher Survey) were developed by the author after a thorough search of the literature. Various authors of publications were contacted and requests made to have their original questionnaires sent for possible use in the present study. For example, a questionnaire was sent by Bramlett, Murphy and Johnson from the US which was used in their publication titled: *Contemporary practices in school psychology: A national survey of roles and referral problems* (Bramlett et al., 2002). However, this questionnaire was somewhat brief and did not adequately address the broader aims of the current study. The author also received a questionnaire from Bramston and Rice from the University of Southern Queensland, which was used in their publications titled: *Generalists or specialists? Guidance officers in Queensland schools* (Bramston & Rice, 2000); and, *Stress, burnout and self-efficacy in guidance officers* (Bramston & Robertson, 2001). It was from this questionnaire that the author formed the idea to study burnout using the MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) in the current study. Attempts to contact other authors were not successful due to a variety of reasons (i.e., one author had left an academic department and was non-contactable, one author was deceased, while others did not respond to the initial contact).

In addition to attempting to review questionnaires already used in school psychology research, the author needed to gain a thorough understanding of the current system or structure for the employment and deployment of school psychologists in
Victoria so that the School Psychology Survey was relevant and so that it adequately reflected their experiences. Many phone calls were made to key professionals within the Department of Education and Training Victoria, Association of Independent Schools Victoria and Catholic Education Office Melbourne to gain an understanding of the current system. Through these conversations, several issues that were perceived to be affecting the delivery of school psychological services were revealed (e.g., lack of supervision, burnout, poor career structure), and this information complimented the theoretical findings in the literature.

The author finally decided that the majority of the scales used in the present study would be developed by the author in order to fulfill the major aim which was to adequately describe the Australian experience by examining the broad range of issues affecting the delivery of school psychological services in Victoria. Therefore, from a thorough review of the literature, from many conversations with both key professionals within education and with school psychologists, and from a review of scales already used in school psychology research, the School Psychologist Survey was developed. Specific details of its structure are described below.

School Psychologist Survey

The School Psychologist Survey consists of nine sections. The sections include items pertaining to psychologist and school demographics, professional supervision, professional development, the school psychologist’s daily role and responsibilities, the types of student issues with which school psychologists work, job satisfaction, ethical dilemmas, model of service delivery and the experience of burnout. Most items were closed-answer and used a Likert scale for responses; however, some open-ended questions were also included. An analysis of open-ended items was beyond the scope of the thesis.

Psychologist demographics. Psychologist demographic variables included gender, age, professional membership and registration, qualifications, number of years working as a school psychologist, employment status (i.e., full-time, part-time or casual), whether or not they had teaching qualifications and if so, whether or not they taught as well as counselled at the school. School demographic variables included the type of school the psychologist worked in, the year level of the students that the psychologist worked with and the geographic location (i.e. metropolitan or rural) of the school. In addition, there were items regarding whether or not the psychologist received
administrative support, whether or not they had a budget, and the psychologist to student ratio.

**Supervision.** Six items examined the professional supervision arrangements for school psychologists. First, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had a supervisor and if so, what type of supervisor (i.e., an APS accredited supervisor or a supervisor who is not a psychologist). Respondents were also asked to indicate who paid for their supervision, the type of supervision that they participated in (i.e., one to one or group) and the frequency of their supervision arrangements. A one-item measurement of frequency of supervision was created in which respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale whether they were: 0 = not receiving supervision; 1 = receiving infrequent supervision; 2 = receiving supervision once a month; 3 = receiving supervision once a fortnight or 4 = receiving supervision once a week. The item was used as a scale in some further analyses.

**Professional development.** Professional development was assessed by asking school psychologists to indicate their frequency of participation in professional development activities such as courses, workshops and seminars. A Likert type scale was used, in which: 0 = never; 1 = infrequent; 2 = once every two years; 3 = annually; 4 = twice a year; 5 = once every three months; 6 = once a month; through to 7 = once a week.

Respondents were also asked to indicate how useful they had found professional development activities to be (1 = extremely relevant and useful, 4 = not at all relevant and useful), whether or not they had read the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) (1 = yes, 2 = no) and to indicate whether they had received training in legislation highlighted in the APS Standards, such as: the Family Law Act; Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Procedures; Freedom of Information Legislation; and Anti-discrimination Legislation (1 = yes, 2 = no).

**Role of school psychologist.** A 19-item measure was included in the survey to explore the types of issues that make up school psychologists’ roles. A review of the literature in this area revealed that the activities which make up the role of school psychologists are broad and varied (e.g., Ashman et al., 1993). Therefore, items included in the role measure were largely derived from past research which had attempted to determine the various activities that together constitute the role of school psychologists (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003;
Barletta, 1996a, 1996b; Bramston & Rice, 2000; Partin, 1993). Once the measure was established it was then shown to three different practicing school psychologists to check if the items adequately represented their experience and to check whether or not additional items should be included. All school psychologists reported that the measure adequately represented the types of activities that made up their role.

The list of activities was divided into four sub-categories. Each sub-category represented a sub-scale. These were the Role Assessment Scale (4 items: RAS, e.g., ‘how often do you participate in the administration of tests’); the Role Counselling Scale (4 items: RCOS, e.g., how often do you counsel students’); the Role Programs Scale (2 items: RPS, e.g., ‘how often do you participate in the development of group programs for students’); and the Role Consultation Scale (4 items: RCS, e.g., ‘how often do you provide advice or information to school management staff’). Respondents indicated on a 4-point scale the degree to which they participated in each of the listed activities, ranging from 1 = I never do this activity to 4 = I often do this activity. Sub-scale scores comprised the sum of the ratings of the relevant items.

The list was then repeated in the questionnaire and respondents were asked to indicate on a 3-point scale whether they would prefer to do less of the stated activity, whether they were satisfied with the amount of time they spent on the given activity or whether they would prefer more time for the given activity. Further, respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on each of the five sub-categories in their role as school psychologists, with the total amount of time adding up to 100%.

School Psychologist Responsibilities Measure. In order to test school psychologists’ beliefs about what activities or practices should constitute their role, a 30–item School Psychologist Responsibilities Measure (SPRM) was developed. This measure was also designed to assess principals’ and teachers’ beliefs about the school psychologist’s role and how differences in beliefs may contribute to ethical dilemmas or challenges for the school psychologist. Therefore, the author included items that were both ‘role congruent’ and ‘role-incongruent’ (Fitch et al., 2001), allowing an exploration of role ambiguity amongst school psychologists and also amongst principals and teachers. The scale was developed from published research that explored school psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ attitudes about what activities should constitute the school psychologist’s role (e.g., Dickinson, 1995; Fitch et al., 2001; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Partin, 1993) as well as published research on the topic of ethical dilemmas, in particular, studies that have investigated certain expectations of principals
and other school staff that may result in the school psychologist feeling ethically compromised (e.g., Colnerud, 1997; Jacob-Timm, 1999; Pope & Vetter, 1992). In addition to consulting a substantial number of studies to assist in scale development, the measure was piloted with three practicing school psychologists. The school psychologists were asked to judge the measure for relevance to their professional experience, for ease of understanding and they could add any items that they believed the measure needed. One school psychologist added a note that the measure should include an item which questions the expectation that school psychologists should be able to charge a fee to teachers for personal counselling (outside of school hours) as she knew of some school psychologists who were doing this.

Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, their level of agreement with each of the given statements, some of them being general statements about their role or ‘role congruent’ statements (e.g., ‘school psychologists should provide counselling and therapy to students’) while others being statements that if supported may lead to ethical dilemmas or ‘role incongruent’ statements (e.g., ‘school psychologists should administer discipline to students if it is necessary’). The level of response to each item was of interest for this measure and no scale was developed from the items. The choice of the word ‘should’ in most statements was used in order to determine respondents’ beliefs about each statement.

**Student issues.** The types of student issues that school psychologists deal with were assessed by asking respondents to indicate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0 = never through to 4 = very often, how often they see students who present with the stated issues. The list of 44 issues was developed from past research which investigated youth mental health and welfare (e.g., Bramston & Rice, 2000; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 2004b; Kids Help Line, 2004; Sawyer et al., 2000), and divided in to 6 sub-categories, which included mental health issues (e.g., depression; 6 items, scores range from 0-24), external negative factors (e.g., sexual abuse; 8 items, scores range from 0-32), student issues (e.g., student drug issues; 8 items, scores range from 0-32), relationship issues (e.g., romantic relationship conflict or break-up; 7 items, scores range from 0-28), educational difficulties (e.g., learning difficulties; 7 items, scores range from 0-28), and behavioural problems (e.g., victim of bullying; 4 items, scores range from 0-16). The student issues measure was scored by assessing the frequency of responses to each given category as well as calculating the score for each
sub-category, with low scores suggesting a low presentation of the sub-categories issues and high scores suggesting a high presentation of the sub-categories issues.

**Job satisfaction.** A number of studies have investigated various professional issues or conditions of employment with which school psychologists report being either unsatisfied or satisfied (e.g., Brown et al., 1998; Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Huebner, 1994; Kids Help Line, 1996; Levinson, 1990; Levinson et al., 1988; Proctor & Steadman, 2003; Reschly & Wilson, 1995; Williams & Williams, 1990). A review of these studies led to the development of a job satisfaction scale. The scale was designed to cover most areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction presented in the literature, therefore providing a good description of job satisfaction / dissatisfaction among Victorian school psychologists. The scale was piloted with three school psychologists, to check for relevance to their professional experience, ease of understanding and comment regarding areas that were added. One school psychologist mentioned dissatisfaction associated with having no budget allocation, and so an item about budget was added to the scale.

An 18-item scale was created in which respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the degree to which they were either ‘very unsatisfied’ to ‘very satisfied’ with each of the given items. The areas of job satisfaction that were canvassed included the physical aspects of the job (e.g., ‘your office location in the school’); resource aspects (e.g., ‘your department’s budget allocation’); professional support aspects (e.g., ‘the support for your role that you receive from school management’); professional development aspects (e.g., ‘the number of professional development opportunities available’); task aspects (e.g., ‘the nature of activities that you perform in your role’); a time aspect (e.g., ‘the amount of time you have to do various activities in your role’); and career aspects (e.g., ‘the pay and promotion activities that you receive for your work). Scale scores ranged between 0 and 72, with low scores indicating low job satisfaction and high scores indicating high job satisfaction.

**Ethical dilemmas.** An Ethical Dilemmas Scale (EDS) was developed, which included definitions of six ethical dilemmas that could occur within a school setting. These included dilemmas that highlight ‘confidentiality’ issues (e.g., a conflict between your professional responsibility to keep information confidential and pressure to tell others’); ‘boundary’ issues (e.g., ‘the school or client asks you to perform an activity that is outside of your usual role’); ‘who is the client?’ issues (e.g., confusion is evident regarding primary responsibility: student, teacher, principal or parent?’); ‘informed
consent’ issues (e.g., respecting student’s competence and right to make choices in regards to entering counselling clashes with respecting the rights of others to make decisions regarding their student or child); ‘competence’ issues (e.g., ‘when the demands of your role exceeds your ability, training, qualifications or experience to provide the most suitable advice or treatment’); and ‘dual relationship’ issues (e.g., ‘when you share more than one relationship with your client/s, for example you both counsel and teach a student’). Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale the degree to which they had experienced the listed dilemmas in their roles as school psychologists, with 0 = never through to 4 = very often. The scale score ranged from 0-24, with low scores suggesting infrequent experiences of ethical dilemmas and high scores suggesting frequent experiences of ethical dilemmas.

**Model of service delivery.** A Model of Service Delivery Scale (MSDS) was developed, based principally on theoretical literature including: Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological theory; the consultative model (Dickinson & Bradshaw, 1992; Meyers, 1995); the systemic model of service delivery (Brown, 1987); child-centred work versus prevention and systems intervention (Idsoe, 2003); and other studies that promoted a broader and more systemic approach to the role of school psychologists (e.g., Bemak & Chi-Ying Chung, 2005). Although largely discursive and not research-based, the literature generally promotes a more systemic model of service delivery for school psychologists. Furthermore, this systemic way of working for school psychologists has also been promoted by the Department of Education and Training in Victoria (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002a). A review of the literature pertaining to this subject revealed that there were a number of activities that represent a model of service delivery for school psychologists that are more systemic in nature – such as working indirectly with students’ families to achieve positive change (e.g., Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). Borrowing from the work of Idsoe (2003), the present study conceptualised a model of service delivery as being on a continuum and labeled the two extreme types of service delivery as the ‘individual’ model (indicating mainly counselling and assessment activities) and the ‘systemic’ model (indicating more consultation, program delivery, systems change), and created a scale based on the activities mentioned in the literature that corresponded to a systemic model of service delivery.

Respondents were asked to indicate, by ticking yes or no, whether they participated in any of the 21 listed activities that represented the ‘systemic’ model of
service delivery. The MSDS was scored by totaling the number of yes and no responses, with low scores suggesting that school psychologists work from more of an individual model of service delivery and high scores suggesting that they work more from a systemic model of service delivery.

**Importance of model of service delivery.** To test school psychologists’ opinions about the importance of working from either an individual or systemic model of service delivery, the same 21 items from the MSDS were re-presented, however, respondents were then asked to indicate on a 4-point scale how important they viewed each activity (0 = not important to 3 = extremely important). Participants could receive a score between 0 and 63, with low scores suggesting low importance given to the systemic model of service delivery and high scores suggesting high importance given to the systemic model of service delivery. Finally, respondents were presented with a definition of both the individual (labelled ‘client-centred approach’ on survey) and systemic (labelled ‘systems approach’ on survey) models of service delivery and asked to indicate whether they worked from one or both models, as well as indicate how often they worked from either approach (e.g., ‘mainly systems approach/partly client-centred approach’ by ticking the category that best described them.

**Burnout.** The final scale included in the School Psychologist Survey was the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) which is a 22-item scale that can be divided into three subscales or components of the burnout syndrome. These are Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation, and Personal Accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). The original scale used the term ‘recipients’ to identify clients; however the author used the word ‘clients’ instead of recipients as a more familiar term of reference. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (ranging from 0 = never, to 6 = every day) how often they experienced each of the feelings encapsulated in the statements in their work as school psychologists (e.g., ‘I feel I treat some clients as if they were impersonal objects’). The MBI-HSS was scored by totalling item ratings for each subscale, high scores indicating higher levels of the named variable. Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1997) found alpha coefficients of the MBI-HSS subscales of .90 for Emotional Exhaustion; .79 for Depersonalisation; and .71 for Personal Accomplishment.
**Principal Survey**

The Principal Survey consisted of four sections which primarily examined principals’ attitudes about the role of psychologists working in schools. The first section involved questions about principals’ demographics (gender; school level, i.e., primary or secondary; and type of school, i.e., government, independent or Catholic).

The second section asked principals what they believed should comprise the school psychologists’ role. The School Psychologist Responsibilities (SPR) scale was administered, which is the same scale used in the School Psychologist Survey. Principals were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, their level of agreement to each of the 30 statements, some of them being general statements about the school psychologists’ role (e.g., ‘school psychologists should conduct psychological assessments of students to test for certain disorders’) and others being statements that if supported may lead to ethical dilemmas (e.g., ‘school psychologists should let the teacher know about the attitudes students have towards that teacher’).

The third section explored principals’ attitudes to how they believed school psychologists should work in their role, thus assessing their attitudes towards an ‘individual’ versus ‘systemic’ model of service delivery. Again, the scale administered was the same scale used in the School Psychologist Survey. Principals were asked to indicate, by ticking yes or no, whether they believed school psychologists should participate in any of the 21 listed activities that represent a systemic model of service delivery. The MSDS was scored by totaling the number of yes and no responses, with low scores suggesting that principals believed school psychologists should work from more of an individual model of service delivery and high scores suggesting principals believe that school psychologists should work from more of a systemic model of service delivery.

**Teacher Survey**

The Teacher Survey consisted of four sections which primarily examined attitudes towards the role of psychologists working in schools. The first section assessed teachers’ demographics (gender, school level and school type), the type of school that they work for (i.e., government, independent or Catholic) and whether or not they held a leadership role within a school (i.e., year level coordinator).
The second section examined teachers’ understanding of the school psychologist role, and referral procedures within their school. Teachers were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, their level of agreement to each of five statements (e.g., ‘I could confidently tell a new student about the counselling and guidance service available at our school’).

The third section explored teachers’ attitudes about how much they believed that they need a psychologist at school. Again, teachers were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, their level of agreement to each of three given statements (e.g., ‘At times I question the need for psychologists in schools’).

Finally, the fourth section asked teachers about what they believed should be the responsibilities of school psychologists. The scale administered was the School Psychologist Responsibilities (SPR) scale which was the same one used in the School Psychologist Survey and Principal Survey.

**Procedure**

The Human Research Ethics Committee at Swinburne University, the Department of Education and Training Victoria and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne gave their permission to conduct the study. Additionally, the principal of each primary and secondary school where the study was being conducted gave their permission.

Prior to the final version of the questionnaire being printed, three pilot School Psychologist Surveys and five pilot Teacher Surveys were given to a small group of school psychologists and teachers to comment on the suitability of the measure for this sample. As a result, some of the items were modified or deleted from the questionnaire.

In regards to data collection, for each school the school psychologist was contacted by telephone and the study was explained before sending them a School Psychologist Survey for completion. Principals were contacted separately and sent a Principal Survey and six Teacher Surveys, which they were asked to distribute to relevant teachers (i.e., year level coordinators or teachers who usually refer students to see the school psychologist). In some cases, principals preferred that all surveys were sent directly to the school psychologist, and then if the school psychologist agreed, they became responsible for disseminating the surveys to teachers and the principal. A time limit of two weeks was given to school psychologists, principals and teachers to fill out
the questionnaires and postage paid envelopes were supplied for all participants for return. Follow-up calls and letters were sent to participants who had not returned back their questionnaires in the specified time. Sample copies of the questionnaires are attached as Appendix A. The following paragraph outlines the process of data collection in more detail.

**Recruitment**

*School psychologist data collection.* The initial aim of the study was to only survey ‘school-employed’ or single-service school psychologists who worked in Victoria, rather than school psychologists who serviced multiple schools (usually employed by the Department of Education). However this initial aim was modified to include multi-service school psychologist for two reasons. Firstly, initial conversations with personnel from the Catholic Education Office Melbourne and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria about obtaining a list of schools in Victoria that employed school psychologists proved to be unsuccessful – there were no such lists available. Furthermore, particularly within the Catholic system, certain staff members expressed strong doubt about the feasibility of the research, stating that there were not many schools that employed psychologists and therefore perceived that obtaining a large enough sample to conduct the study was going to be a problem. Secondly, conversations with personnel from the Department of Education revealed a strong desire on their part to be involved in the study. It appeared that many government employed school psychologists were experiencing professional issues that very much related to the topics to be examined. Therefore it was decided to modify the original aim and include multi-service school psychologists to give voice to school psychologists employed to work in a number of schools and to potentially increase the likelihood of having a larger sample.

For the most part, recruitment occurred through the use of a snowball sampling technique, in which “each person in the sample is asked to provide the names of several other persons, who are then added to the sample, etc.” (Reber, 1995, p. 683). Initially, when contact details of school psychologists were obtained, the author then attempted to contact principals by telephone or email (or both) in order to gain approval for participation in the study, both for themselves and their school staff (including the school psychologist). However, this proved to be nearly impossible, as most principals did not reply to emails or to telephone calls. So again, the recruitment plan changed, and
school psychologists instead were contacted directly, usually by telephone and sometimes by email.

Once the school psychologist agreed to participate, it was stated clearly that before the school psychologist gave out surveys to teachers, he or she had to first gain permission from the principal, as well as gain principal permission for their own participation in the study. Most school psychologists felt that they did not need their principal’s permission for their own participation. However, all agreed to the condition that they first needed principal permission before surveys were disseminated to teachers (and of course, the principal). Principals and teachers were only recruited by this method, thus only principals who had a school psychologist employed or allocated to their school participated in the study.

School psychologists already recruited were asked if they knew of other school psychologists who they thought might want to participate in the study. The majority of school psychologists said that they did know of others. In consideration of privacy legislation (Australian Government, 1998), participating psychologists were given the option to pass on an information sheet about the study or to forward an email to their colleagues, requesting them to contact the author directly if they wished to participate. A copy of the departmental and university ethics approval and a statement of informed consent were always sent with any correspondence to psychologists when requesting participation.

For Department of Education psychologists who were employed within a network and who worked in multiple schools, individual network managers were telephoned and emailed in order to gain permission to disseminate questionnaires to psychologists (and to ascertain how many school psychologists worked within each network). Two networks required a formal letter written to the Regional Director of Student Wellbeing asking for permission to conduct the research (even though Department of Education approval had already been granted). Overall, six networks agreed to participate and questionnaires were then sent either by post or by email as some networks published the contact details of their psychologists on their website and therefore, those psychologists could be contacted directly by telephone and sent a questionnaire. The two networks that did not agree to participate did not state any reasons for their refusal.

A number of other sampling techniques were also attempted. The first included attending and advertising at an annual Catholic School Support Services Conference
attended by approximately sixty student welfare and counselling staff, of which at least half were school psychologists. Information flyers about the research were placed in each conference pack and the author of the study made an announcement at the start of the conference to all conference delegates about the research and requested school psychologist participation. Approximately fifteen school psychologists took questionnaires.

Secondly all Australian Psychological Society (APS) Peer Supervision and Support Networks were contacted. APS Peer Supervision and Support Networks are locally situated peer supervision groups for psychologists and these are advertised in the APS newsletter, with approximately twenty networks scattered across Victoria. All APS Peer Supervision network coordinators were contacted by email regarding the study. The author asked if the coordinator could read out the information sheet about the present study in their next network meeting, which asked psychologists to email other school psychologists known to them about the research who could then contact the author. All network coordinators were very supportive of the study and approximately fifteen school psychologists were recruited for participation from this method. Some network coordinators emailed the author their ideas on recruitment (such as calling independent schools directly or calling the Department of Education regional networks).

Thirdly, a small number of Catholic Education Office Melbourne school psychologists who work in multiple schools across Melbourne were contacted. Furthermore, Centacare was also contacted. This is a Catholic welfare agency and employs twenty-two psychologists who work within various schools in Melbourne. Completed questionnaires were received from four school psychologists from the Catholic Education Office and three school psychologists from Centacare.

Fourthly, approximately twenty independent schools were contacted by telephone, which were chosen from the AISV website. When each school was contacted the author of the present study asked to speak to ‘the school counsellor’. Some stated that they did not have a school counsellor, and in some schools the school counsellor was not a psychologist (i.e., social worker, teacher). However, approximately, six questionnaires were returned using this method.

The final recruitment method included emailing the principal of each independent school about the study and requesting their school’s participation (email addresses were derived from the AISV website). This occurred towards the end of the data collection process and only two principals agreed to participate using this method.
However, three principals responded by stating that they did not have a school psychologist employed, but wished that they did!

Overall, one hundred and twenty-seven psychologists working in schools from across Victoria were approached for participation in the study and sent a questionnaire. Unfortunately, two psychologists (from the same school) who were willing to participate were unable to as their school principal rejected their involvement in the study, the principal’s reasons given for both cases was a lack of time. In total, 81 psychologist questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 64%.

On completion of the study, feedback on the results of the research was sent to both principals and school psychologists in the form of a booklet.

**Principal data collection.** Forty-three principals from 42 schools were approached for participation in the study and sent a questionnaire. A total of 21 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 49%.

**Teacher data collection.** In regards to teachers, 256 teachers from 42 schools were sent questionnaires, of which 88 were returned, representing a response rate of 34%.

**Analyses**

A number of statistical methods were employed to analyse the quantitative data gained from the sample of school psychologists, principals and teachers. Firstly, the data was checked for: reliability (through obtaining internal consistency coefficients for each of the scales); convergent and discriminant validity (through obtaining correlation coefficients of each of the scales with each of the other scales); and normality (by screening for outliers, generating skewness and kurtosis statistics, and transforming variables). Secondly, demographic information was gained by calculating frequencies of responses to each of the demographic questions in the surveys (e.g., gender of participants, type of school etc.). Finally, exploring the aims of the study required a number of statistical techniques, such as: frequency analyses; comparisons of group means using one way and two way ANOVAs and independent-samples t-tests; comparisons of categorical variables using chi-square analyses; exploring relationships between variables using correlation; and prediction of variables related to burnout using correlation and multiple regression. A more detailed discussion of the methodology used to examine the aims of the present study is presented in the Results section.
CHAPTER EIGHT: RESULTS

Data were analysed using the SPSS for Windows statistical package Version 12.

Preliminary Analyses

Reliability analyses for scales used in the present study. In order to assess the reliability of the eleven scales used in the present study, internal consistency coefficients were obtained. Table 1 shows the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the multi-item scales (along with scale acronyms). Most of the scales had a Cronbach alpha above .70, which is the agreed upon lower limit for most types of statistical analyses (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Two scales, the Role Counselling Scale and Model of Service Delivery Scale, had Cronbach alphas slightly below .70, however, in exploratory research, it may be acceptable for the limit to be as low as .60 (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

Table 1

Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients for Multi-Item Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$\bar{A}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role of School Psychologist</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Assessment (RAS)</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Counselling (RCOS)</td>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Programs (RPS)</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Consultation (RCS)</td>
<td>0-72</td>
<td>42.51</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction (JSS)</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Dilemmas (EDS)</td>
<td>0-48</td>
<td>39.98</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Service Delivery (MSDS)</td>
<td>0-63</td>
<td>48.21</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Model of Service Delivery (IMSDS)</td>
<td>0-30</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two other measures that were used in the analyses were the Frequency of Supervision Scale (FSS) and Professional Development Scale (PDS), both of which are one item measures. Normality checks of these and all of the other scales are presented in the following section.
**Validity analyses**

Validity refers to the extent to which a test is measuring what it purports to measure (Gravetter & Wallnau, 1988). One way to assess the validity of a scale is to explore the strengths of the relationship between the scale and other related or unrelated constructs to ascertain whether the scale demonstrates adequate convergent or discriminant validity. Measures which are conceptually unrelated should have a weak or non-significant correlation, thus demonstrating discriminant validity. Measures that are indirectly related should have a weak to moderate strength correlation and measures that are highly related conceptually should have a moderate to moderately strong relationship, thus demonstrating convergent validity (DeVellis, 2003). It is suggested that correlations between .10 and .29 are considered low or weak; .30 and .49 are considered moderate; and between .50 and 1 are considered large or strong (Cohen, 1988).

Table 2

**Intercorrelations among the Scales**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.27*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. RCOS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.40**</td>
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<td>.31**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. RPS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. RCS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>5. JSS</td>
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<td>.20</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.25*</td>
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</tr>
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<td>6. EDS</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. MSDS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. IMSDS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. EES</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. RPAS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. DPS</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>.18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. FSS</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.07</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. PDS</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p* <.05 **p* <.01.

RASS = Role Assessment Scale; RCOS = Role Counselling Scale; RPOS = Role Programs scale; RCS = Role Consultation Scale; JSS = Job Satisfaction Scale; EDS = Ethical Dilemmas Scale; MSDS = Model of Service Delivery Scale; IMSDS = Importance of Model of Service Delivery Scale; EES = Emotional Exhaustion Subscale; RPAS = Reduced Personal Accomplishment Scale; DPS = Depersonalisation Subscale; FSS = Frequency of Supervision Scale; PDS = Professional Development Scale.

There were only four scales in the present study that were related or attempted to measure a similar construct. These were the MSDS and IMSDS, which both relate to
model of service delivery; and the RPAS, DPS and EES which all indirectly measure burnout. The correlation between MSDS and IMSDS was .60 which shows a moderately-strong relationship thus demonstrating that they are not so highly correlated that they are measuring the same thing but still correlated enough to demonstrate convergent validity. However, the correlations between RPAS and DPS (.12) and RPAS and EES (.16) were very low, thus indicating that although RPAS is a measure of burnout, it is measuring a separate construct to both the DPS and EES. In contrast, there was a moderate strength correlation between DPS and EES which shows adequate convergent validity. One way that Maslach and Jackson (1986) demonstrated discriminant validity of the MBI-II was to correlate the subscales of the MBI-II with an overall measure of job satisfaction in order to demonstrate that increased burnout should result in lowered levels of job satisfaction. The correlations between the MBI-II subscales and the JSS in the present study replicated their findings in that JSS had a negative correlation with both EES (-.25) and DPS (-.15) and a positive correlation with RPAS (.35). Finally, all of the other scales in the present study are conceptually unrelated and as the correlations amongst these scales were not extreme and only in the very low to moderate ranges, it demonstrates adequate discriminant validity.

Normality analyses for measures used in the present study

For most multivariate analyses using parametric statistics, a normally distributed variable is an underlying assumption in the use of such statistics, especially in small samples (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore, it is important to screen continuous variables for normality before conducting analyses. In addition, extreme outliers can affect a variables distribution (Pallant, 2005). Normality analyses were conducted by generating skewness and kurtosis statistics for each of the scales (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) statistic is one way of testing whether the skewness and kurtosis values are significantly different from zero. A non-significant KS result indicates normality while a significant result indicates that the distribution of scores for that scale is not normally distributed (Pallant, 2005). Another available method is to calculate a $z$ score for the skewness and kurtosis values of each variable and then test them against the null hypothesis of zero. Following the advice of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), it was decided to employ this latter method and to use alpha levels of .01 and .001 to evaluate the significance of skewness and kurtosis. The results of the normality checks (i.e., skewness, kurtosis and corresponding $z$ scores) for
each of the scales used in the present study are presented in Table 3. The significance levels which appear in bold indicate that the distribution of scores for this scale violate the normality assumption at the .01 or .001 levels.

Table 3

*Normality Check for Each of the Scales Used in the Present Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>z Score</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>z Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Assessment</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.87</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role Counselling</strong></td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td><strong>4.61</strong>*</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td><strong>4.04</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Programs</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Consultation</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>-.27</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Dilemmas</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of Service Delivery</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Model of Service Delivery</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>-.48</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Exhaustion</strong></td>
<td>.74</td>
<td><strong>2.72</strong></td>
<td>-.34</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Accomplishment</td>
<td>-.55</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depersonalisation</strong></td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td><strong>8.47</strong>*</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td><strong>12.71</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong></td>
<td>-1.34</td>
<td><strong>5.01</strong>*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Supervision</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>-1.26</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Four measures violated the normality assumption of parametric statistical tests. These were the Role Counselling Scale (RCOS), Emotional Exhaustion Subscale (EES), Depersonalisation Subscale (DPS) and Professional Development Scale (PDS). The following section discusses the attempts made to transform each of the variables in order to create skewness and kurtosis z distribution scores that are closer to zero. Table 4 outlines both the direction of skewness and results of the various transformations that were attempted on each of the above variables. The results that are in bold indicate the transformation that was chosen for further analyses when that analysis assumed normally distributed variables. Table 4 also includes the minimum, maximum and mean scores for the chosen transformed variables. Decision making about which transformed variable to use for analyses was based on assessing each outcome for the most normal distribution and the outcome that was easiest to interpret (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).
Table 4

Results of Transformations of Non-Normally Distributed Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Distribution (Skewness)</th>
<th>RCOS</th>
<th>EES</th>
<th>DPS</th>
<th>PDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution NEG POS POS NEG</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square Root (SR)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>5.93***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>5.93***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.97***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logarithm (L)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>3.92***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.97***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<td>.93</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.73</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverse (I)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.36</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td>-.98</td>
<td>-.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect and Square Root (RSR)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>1.83</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Reflect and Logarithm (RL)</td>
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<td>Skewness</td>
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<td>-.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>$z$ score</td>
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<td>Kurtosis</td>
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<td>Reflect and Inverse (RI)</td>
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<td>7.60***</td>
<td>7.07***</td>
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<td>7.60***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurtosis</td>
<td>3.77</td>
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<td>6.46***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
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<td>.85</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>5.08</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** p<.01. ***p<.001. 
NEG = negative skewness; POS = positive skewness. 
RCOS = Role Counselling Scale; EES = Emotional Exhaustion Subscale; DPS = Depersonalisation Subscale; PDS = Professional Development Scale.
Reducing the risk of committing a Type 1 or Type 2 error

For some analyses of the school psychologist data, multiple dependent variables are included in a statistical test. Due to the sample size (N=81) and the number of dependent variables included in some tests it was not always possible to use a MANOVA as this test requires more cases in each cell than the number of dependent variables (Pallant, 2005). Furthermore, in order to reduce the risk of committing a Type 1 error in analyses such as independent-samples t-tests, a Bonferroni correction was considered (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001), however, for tests with a large number of dependent variables, this method proved ultra-conservative and inflated the risk of committing a Type 2 error (i.e. failing to recognize significant differences when they exist). Therefore, a judgment was made to apply an alpha coefficient significance level of .01 to all tests that have a large number of dependent variables.

Descriptive analyses and hypothesis testing

School psychologists’ role. School psychologists’ roles were assessed by asking psychologists to indicate how often they participated in a range of activities outlined in the School Psychologist Activities (SPA) scale. Table 5 shows how often school psychologists indicated that they engaged in each of the listed activities. The percentages which appear in bold indicate the highest percentage of cases for each item.

The activities that the majority of school psychologists most ‘often’ participated in were (in order of frequency): counselling students; administrative and clerical duties related to their role; providing advice to school management; meeting with teachers about individual students; report writing related to assessments; administering tests, providing advice to parents; and counselling parents. The activities that the majority of psychologists ‘rarely’ participated in were: assisting teachers in curriculum development; classroom based assessment; and classroom interventions.
Table 5

*Percentage of Psychologists Who Never, Rarely, Sometimes or Often Participate in Each Activity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of tests</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom intervention</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom based assessment</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counselling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel students</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel parents</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel teachers</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group counselling</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programs and workshops</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of student programs</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of student programs</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and clerical duties related to role</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advice to school management</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with teachers about individual student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advice to parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meetings with other school counsellors</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend supervision meetings for self</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meetings with outside agencies</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist teachers in curriculum development</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration and clerical duties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and clerical duties related to role</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 81*

Psychologists were also asked to indicate on a 3-point scale whether they would prefer to do less or more of each of the activities presented in the SPA scale. Table 6 shows the percentage of psychologists who would like to participate in less of each activity, who are satisfied with the amount of time that they spend on each activity and who would like more time to do each activity. Again, the percentages which appear in bold indicate the highest percentage of cases for each item.
Table 6

Percentage of Psychologists Who Would Like to do Less of Each Activity, Who Would Like More Time to do Each Activity, As Well As Those Who Are Satisfied With the Amount of Time They Spend on Each Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Prefer less of this activity</th>
<th>Satisfied with time</th>
<th>Prefer more time to do this activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom based assessment</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom intervention</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of tests</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counselling</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel teachers</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel parents</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel students</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group counselling</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of student programs</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of student programs</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meetings with other school counsellors</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend supervision meetings for self</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend meetings with outside agencies</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advice to school management</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with teachers about individual student</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide advice to parents</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist teachers in curriculum development</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administration and clerical duties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and clerical duties related to role</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 81

For the most part, school psychologists were satisfied with the amount of time that they spent on activities. There were, however, some activities that psychologists would like to have more time to do. These were to develop and deliver student programs, attend more meetings with other school counsellors and outside agencies and attend more supervision sessions. The majority of psychologists preferred to do fewer administrative and clerical duties related to their role.

Are there any differences in activities for psychologists working in government and non-government schools? In order to compare government and non-government school psychologists’ responses, psychologists from Catholic and independent schools
were combined to create a ‘non-government school psychologist’ category and this allowed comparison between the two groups.

Two-tailed independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare role scale scores for government and non-government school psychologists. Table 7 shows the mean scores of government and non-government psychologists for each of the four role scales. The role scales are made up of a total of the individual items that relate to each activity (see method).

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Non-Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Assessment Scale</td>
<td>8.94</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Programs Scale</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Counselling Scale</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Consultation Scale</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the t-tests showed that there was a significant difference in the amount of time that government and non-government school psychologists participated in assessment related tasks ($t(79) = 4.87, p < .001$, with government school psychologists participating in significantly more assessment activities ($M = 8.94, SD = 2.15$) than non-government school psychologists ($M = 6.02, SD = 2.90$). There was no significant difference in the amount of time government and non-government school psychologists participated in counselling, program development or delivery and consultation related activities.

Are there any differences in activities for psychologists working in single and multi-service schools? In order to test for possible role differences between single and multi-service school psychologists, two-tailed independent samples t-tests were conducted. Table 8 shows the mean scores of single and multi-service school psychologists for each of the four role scales.
Table 8

Mean Scores of Single and Multi-Service School Psychologists for Each of the Four Role Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Single-Service</th>
<th></th>
<th>Multi-Service</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Assessment Scale</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Programs Scale</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Counselling Scale</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Consultation Scale</td>
<td>8.45</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the t-tests showed that there was a significant difference in the amount of time that single and multi-service school psychologists participated in assessment related tasks, \( t(79) = 4.87, p < .001 \) and the development and delivery of programs, \( t(79) = 3.02, p < .01 \) with multi-service school psychologists participating in significantly more assessment activities than single-service school psychologists and significantly less program development and delivery than single-service school psychologists. There was no significant difference in the amount of time single and multi-service school psychologists participated in counselling and consultation related activities.

In order to test for possible role differences between school psychologists who work in primary schools, schools that have both primary and secondary students, and in secondary schools, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was carried out for each of the four role scales. Results showed that for the Role Assessment Scale there was a significant difference in the mean scores between school psychologists working in primary, primary / secondary and secondary schools, \( F(2, 78) = 6.70, p < .01 \). School psychologists working in secondary schools participated in significantly fewer assessment related activities \( (M = 5.85, SD = 2.54) \) than psychologists working in both primary schools \( (M = 8.47, SD = 3.29) \) and primary / secondary schools \( (M = 7.97, SD = 2.81) \). There were no significant differences in mean scores for psychologists on any of the other role scales (RCOS; RPS; or RCS).

**Student issues.** In order to assess how often school psychologists’ work with various student issues in their roles, frequency analyses of their responses to the items in the student issues measure were conducted. Student issues were divided into subcategories, these being: mental health issues; external negative factors; student
issues; relationship issues; educational difficulties; and behavioural problems. Table 9 shows the frequency of psychologists who rarely, sometimes or often worked with students who presented with the stated issue. The frequencies which appear in bold indicate the majority of cases for that item.

School psychologists reported twelve issues that they rarely or never came across in their work with students. These were issues around sexual assault, parental or family drug use and gambling, refugee and migration, student drug taking, student gambling, homelessness, gender-role issues within romantic relationships, sexual identity and same-sex attraction, contraception and safe-sex, pregnancy, and providing career advice. Apart from these twelve issues, the majority of school psychologists sometimes or often dealt with a wide range of student issues including a diversity of student mental health issues, external negative factors such as sexual abuse and family trauma, developmental and cultural issues, issues around grief and bereavement, issues associated with dealing with physical illness or impairment, a wide range of educational difficulties, and behavioural and social difficulties.

In addition to presenting school psychologists with a list of student issues, space was provided so that respondents could add any other issues. A wide variety of additional issues were reported. These were (in order of frequency): psychotic disorders \((n = 14)\); obsessive compulsive disorder \((n = 12)\); conduct disorders \((n = 12)\); self-harm \((n = 7)\); autism spectrum disorders \((n = 5)\); low self-esteem \((n = 5)\); personality disorders \((n = 4)\); language disorder \((n = 3)\); post traumatic stress disorder \((n = 3)\); bipolar disorder \((n = 3)\); issues around living with a parent who has a mental illness \((n = 3)\); and sexually transmitted infections \((n = 2)\). Examples of less mentioned student issues were pyromania, at-risk sexual behaviour, poverty, peer pressure, body image issues, giftedness and phobias.
Table 9

Types of Student Issues that School Psychologists Work With and Frequency of Presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>rarely / never</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental health issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other anxiety disorder</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social anxiety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention deficit disorder</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide ideation or attempt</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorder</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External negative factors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family trauma due to divorce or separation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental physical abuse of student</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental emotional/verbal abuse of student</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family trauma due to domestic violence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental or family drug taking</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental or family gambling issues</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault (eg. rape)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief due to death of a close friend or relative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed developmental issues</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with physical illness or disability</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues associated with cultural background of student</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student gambling issues</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugee and migration issues</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student drug issues</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict between friends or within friendship group</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other friendship issues</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship conflict or break-up</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception and safe-sex</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues around sexual identity and same-sex attraction</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-role issues within romantic relationships</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational difficulties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation towards learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with teacher/s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress management related to educational pressures</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study skills and organisation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career advice</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioural problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of bullying</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator of bullying</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal behaviour</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 81

In order to test whether there were any significant differences in how often school psychologists from government and non-government schools reported that they
deal with each of the student issues, independent-samples t-tests were conducted for each of the issues. In order to reduce the chance of committing a Type 1 error, only alpha levels below $p = .01$ were considered significant. Table 10 shows the mean scores and t-test results for the issues that were found to be significantly different for school psychologists from government and non-government schools. For all other issues, there were no significant differences in the frequency of occurrence between school psychologists from government and non-government schools.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Non-Government</th>
<th>$t$ ($df = 79$) $p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attentention deficit disorder</td>
<td>2.78 .42</td>
<td>2.00 .76</td>
<td>5.92**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental emotional abuse</td>
<td>2.59 .61</td>
<td>2.10 .63</td>
<td>3.45**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental or family drug taking</td>
<td>2.22 .75</td>
<td>1.61 .70</td>
<td>3.70**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>2.34 .70</td>
<td>1.82 .70</td>
<td>3.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed developmental issues</td>
<td>2.69 .64</td>
<td>2.24 .75</td>
<td>2.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>2.91 .30</td>
<td>2.57 .68</td>
<td>3.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truancy</td>
<td>2.56 .56</td>
<td>1.96 .73</td>
<td>3.94**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress management</td>
<td>2.34 .74</td>
<td>2.76 .56</td>
<td>2.67*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger management</td>
<td>2.94 .25</td>
<td>2.53 .54</td>
<td>4.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal behaviour</td>
<td>1.65 .61</td>
<td>1.24 .43</td>
<td>3.19*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$

School psychologists from government schools reported that they came across students with attention deficit disorder, parental emotional abuse, parental or family drug taking, domestic violence, students with delayed developmental and learning difficulties, truancy, anger management and criminal behaviour significantly more often than school psychologists from non-government schools. In contrast, school psychologists from non-government schools reported that they participated in significantly more student stress management issues related to educational pressures than school psychologists from government schools.

In order to test whether there were any significant differences in how often school psychologists from single and multi-service schools reported that they deal with
each of the student issues, independent-samples t-test were conducted as for the
previous analyses.

Table 11

**Mean Scores for Psychologists from Single and Multi-Service Schools and the T-Test Outcome for Each of the Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Single-Service M</th>
<th>Single-Service SD</th>
<th>Multi-Service M</th>
<th>Multi-Service SD</th>
<th>t (df = 79)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social anxiety</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>2.88*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention deficit disorder</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>4.64**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental or family drug taking</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>2.58*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed developmental issues</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>3.13*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship group conflict</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.74**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3.15*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001

Table 11 shows the mean scores and t-test results for the issues that were found to be significantly different for school psychologists from single and multi-service schools. For all other issues, there were no significant differences in the frequency of occurrence between school psychologists from single and multi-service schools.

School psychologists from multi-service schools reported that they came across students with attention deficit disorder, parental or family drug taking, delayed developmental and learning difficulties significantly more often than school psychologists from single-service schools. In contrast, school psychologists from single-service schools reported that they came across significantly more social anxiety and friendship group conflict than school psychologists from multi-service schools.

In order to test whether there were any significant differences in how often school psychologists from primary, P-12 and secondary schools reported that they dealt with each of the student issues, one-way between-groups ANOVAs were carried out for each of the issues. Again, in order to reduce the chance of committing a Type 1 error, only alpha levels below \( p = .01 \) were considered significant. Table 12 shows the mean scores and ANOVA results for the issues that were found to be significantly different for school psychologists from primary, P-12 and secondary schools. For all other issues,
there were no significant differences in the frequency of occurrence between school psychologists from the three types of schools.

Table 12

Mean Scores for Psychologists from Primary, P-12 and Secondary Schools and the ANOVA Outcome for Each of the Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Primary M</th>
<th>Primary SD</th>
<th>P-12 M</th>
<th>P-12 SD</th>
<th>Secondary M</th>
<th>Secondary SD</th>
<th>ANOVA F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention deficit disorder</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>14.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed development</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>8.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>7.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student drug issues</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>7.49**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship conflict</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>14.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-role issues</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>6.94*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality / same-sex attraction</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>4.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception and safe-sex</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>7.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>4.73*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. degrees of freedom for all ANOVA analyses is (2,78); ** = \( p < .01 \), *** = \( p < .001 \)

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test revealed that school psychologists working in secondary schools reported that they worked significantly less often with students who have attention deficit disorder and delayed developmental issues than school psychologists from both primary and P-12 schools. Furthermore, school psychologists from secondary schools reported that they worked significantly less often with students who have learning difficulties than school psychologists from primary schools. Post-hoc comparisons also revealed that school psychologists from primary schools reported that they worked significantly less often with students who have drug taking issues, issues around romantic relationship conflict or break-up and gender-role issues within romantic relationships than school psychologists from both P-12 and secondary schools. Also, school psychologists from primary schools reported that they worked significantly less often with students who have issues around sexual identity and same-sex attraction and issues around contraception and safe-sex than school psychologists from secondary schools. Finally, school psychologists from primary schools reported that they worked significantly less often with students who have pregnancy issues than school psychologists from P-12 schools.
Psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perspectives on the responsibilities of school psychologists. As indicated in the Method section, the School Psychologists Responsibilities Measure (SPRM) is made up of 30 statements which test respondents’ opinions about what they believe should be the responsibilities of school psychologists. Psychologists, principals and teachers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements. Table 13 shows the mean scores for psychologists, teachers and principals and the one-way between-groups ANOVA outcome for each of the SPRM items. In order to reduce the chance of committing a Type 1 error only alpha levels of \( p = .01 \) and below were considered significant. The items which appear in bold indicate that there was a significant difference between psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perceptions of what they believed should be the school psychologists’ responsibilities.

In order to isolate where the significant differences were, post-hoc comparisons were conducted on bolded items using the Tukey HSD test. The significant differences between school psychologists, principals and teachers were then considered in relation to how they might contribute to ethical concerns for the school psychologist. There were four categories of ethical concerns stemming from the differences in opinions, and these concerns related to role boundaries, dual relationships, confidentiality and informed consent, discussed below. Items were also analysed to explore psychologists’, teachers’ and principals’ level of agreement with each item and the percentage of psychologists, principals and teachers who agreed with each of the statements in the SPRM is included in Appendix B.
### Table 13

Mean Scores for Psychologists, Teachers and Principals and the One-Way Between-Groups ANOVA Outcome for Each of the SPRM Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Psychologist</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Assist teachers in handling discipline</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Administer discipline to students</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Conduct research on school issues</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Be up to date on relevant research</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conduct psychological assessments</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Provide counselling to students</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Be the main contact for student problems</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Provide career guidance to students</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Counsel teachers</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Counsel students’ families</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Organise group programs for students</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Provide workshops to teachers</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Provide general information to teachers</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Be the referral agent within the school</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Let referring teacher know about student</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Allow teachers to access counselling records</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Inform teachers of student’s attitudes about them</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Make IQ reports available to relevant teachers</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Teach subjects as well as counsel</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Charge a fee to teachers for counselling</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Inform teachers of students’ receiving counselling</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>p&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Inform primary student’s parents of counselling</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Inform secondary student’s parents of counselling</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Mandate counselling for some students</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Include counselling in disciplinary procedures</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>p&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. ‘Fudge’ IQ results to receive funding for student</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Not give advice to sec. student against school</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Not give advice to secondary student against parents</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Inform parents of student’s behaviour</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. NS = Not significant, indicating agreement between psychologist teachers and principals. Statements have been modified to fit in to the table. For a full list of items please see the questionnaire in Appendix A. df’s = 2, 185.

### Role boundaries.

For the first two items concerning school psychologists assisting with or administering discipline, there were quite strong between group differences. For item 1, psychologists were more likely than teachers and principals to agree with the statement that psychologists should assist teachers in handling discipline \((F= 7.18)\). However for item 2, although all three groups indicated low agreement with this item, school psychologists were more likely than teachers and principals to disagree with the statement that psychologists should be involved in administering discipline \((F = 13.77)\). The issue of school psychologists administering discipline raises the question about the role of school psychologists and the boundaries around what is and is not part of school psychologists’ role.
**Dual relationship.** For items 10 and 21, concerning school psychologists providing a counselling service to teachers, psychologists were more likely than teachers and principals to disagree with these statements ($F = 4.19$, $F = 8.77$, respectively). For items 11 and 20, concerning school psychologists providing therapy to the families of students and being a teacher as well as a school counsellor, school psychologists were more likely than teachers to disagree with these statements ($F = 4.40$, $F = 6.06$, respectively). However, although there was a significant difference between psychologists and teachers for Item 20, both psychologists and teachers indicated very low agreement with this item, meaning that teachers on the whole believed that psychologists should not teach subjects as well as counsel. The issues of school psychologists providing a counselling service to students, teachers and students’ families; and being both the students’ teacher and counsellor raises the ethical issue of dual relationships.

**Confidentiality.** For items 16, 17 and 22, concerning informing the referring teacher about how the student is progressing in counselling, providing counselling records to teachers and informing teachers of which students are receiving counselling, school psychologists were more likely than teachers to disagree with these statements ($F = 6.70$, $F = 31.90$, $F = 9.09$, respectively). For item 18, concerning informing teachers about the attitudes students have towards that teacher, school psychologists were more likely than teachers and principals to disagree with this statement ($F = 20.60$). The question about whether or not to inform teachers of the student issues that arise in a counselling relationship highlights the ethical issue of confidentiality within a school setting.

**Informed consent.** For items 25 and 26, concerning mandating students to see the school psychologist for counselling even if the student is reluctant and including counselling in disciplinary procedures, school psychologists were more likely than teachers to disagree with these statements ($F = 6.07$, $F = 5.95$, respectively). These statements pertain to mandatory counselling for students and highlight the issue of informed consent and challenge the notion of the ‘voluntary’ nature of a counselling relationship.

In order to examine the overall level of agreement with each of the statements in the SPRM, frequency analyses of the item responses were conducted. ‘Agree’ and strongly agree’ responses were added to form an agree category, and ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses were added to form a disagree category (Appendix B).
Although, as described previously, there were some significant group differences in opinions about what should be the role of school psychologists, there was also a good deal of general agreement among psychologists, principals and teachers regarding this role. The majority of psychologists, principals and teachers agreed that school psychologists should: conduct research on issues relevant to the school; be up to date on relevant research; conduct IQ and psychological assessments; provide counselling to students; organise group programs for students; organise workshops for teachers on issues concerning students’ welfare; and inform primary student’s parents of their child’s participation in counselling. Overall, the majority of school psychologists, principals and teachers disagreed that school psychologists should: administer discipline; be the main contact for student problems; provide career guidance to students; allow teachers to access counselling records; teach subjects as well as counsel; fudge IQ results to receive funding for students; and not give advice to secondary students which is against the values of the student’s parents.

**Teachers’ understanding of school psychologists’ role.** Teachers’ understanding of school psychologists’ roles within schools were also examined. Table 14 shows teachers’ level of agreement with each of the statements pertaining to school psychologists’ role understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could confidently tell a new student about the counselling and guidance service available at our school</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand my school’s procedure for referring a student to see the school psychologist</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school psychologist has a clear and obvious role in our school</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school psychologist’s role has been explained to me clearly</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am generally aware of the training and qualifications gained by school psychologists</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 88*
The vast majority of teachers indicated that they had a clear understanding of the school psychologist’s role, were aware of their school’s referral procedures and had some understanding of the training and qualifications gained by their school psychologist.

**Teachers’ need for school psychologists.** Table 15 outlines teachers’ level of agreement with each of the statements pertaining to the need for school psychologists within schools.

Table 15

*The Percentage of Teachers Who Agreed With Statements Pertaining to the Need for School Psychologists in Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is important for students to have a school psychologist on staff</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my teaching is supported by having a school psychologist on staff</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times I question the need for psychologists in schools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 88*

The majority of teachers asserted that school psychologists play a needed and important role within schools.

**Supervision experiences of school psychologists.** With respect to supervision arrangements, 64% of school psychologists participated in supervision (n = 52) and 36% of school psychologists did not (n = 29).

Table 16 shows the percentage of government and non-government, single and multi-service and metropolitan and rural school psychologists according to whether they received or did not receive supervision.
Table 16

*The Percentage of Government and Non-Government and Metropolitan and Rural School Psychologists Who Receive Supervision*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School Psychologist</th>
<th>Supervision</th>
<th>No supervision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-service</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-service</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 81*

A chi-square analysis revealed that non-government school psychologists were significantly more likely to receive supervision than government school psychologists, $\chi^2(1, N = 81) = 5.72, p = .05$. Fifty-three percent of government school psychologists compared to 25% of non-government school psychologists did not receive supervision. Furthermore, single-service school psychologists were significantly more likely to receive supervision than multi-service school psychologists $\chi^2(1, N = 81) = 12.14, p = .001$. Twenty-two percent of single-service school psychologists compared to 60% of multi-service school psychologists did not receive supervision. There were no significant differences in the receipt of supervision between metropolitan and rural school psychologists.

*Years of experience and supervision.* In order to test whether supervised and non-supervised psychologists differed in their number of years’ experience an independent samples t-test was conducted. Results of the t-test revealed that school psychologists who were not being supervised had significantly more years of experience ($M = 9.53, SD = 7.50$) than school psychologists who were being supervised ($M = 5.74, SD = 4.81$), $t(41) = 2.45, p<.05$ (two-tailed).

*Type and frequency of supervision.* Of those who were supervised 18% participated in group supervision, 46% participated in 1:1 or individual supervision and 36% participated in both group and 1:1 supervision. Of those who participated in group supervision, 15% participated in group supervision once a fortnight, 38% participated in group supervision once a month and 48% participated in group supervision infrequently. Of those who participated in 1:1 or individual supervision, 14% participated in
individual supervision once a week, 32% participated in individual supervision once a
fortnight, 19% participated in individual supervision once a month and 36% participated
in individual supervision infrequently.

An analysis of the eight probationary psychologists alone revealed that they all
participated in individual supervision either fortnightly \( (n = 4) \), weekly \( (n = 3) \) or
monthly \( (n = 1) \). In regards to group supervision, one probationary psychologist
participated once a fortnight in group supervision and two participated infrequently.
Five out of the eight probationary psychologists paid for supervision themselves.

Forty-one percent of psychologists, including six of the eight probationary
psychologists, had not read the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological
Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). A chi-square analyses revealed that
significantly more government school psychologists had read the APS Standards (69%)
than non-government school psychologists (44%), \( \chi^2(1, N = 81) = 4.26, p = <.05 \).

Who pays for supervision? For those who received supervision, 56% of school
psychologists stated that their school (or department) paid for their supervision and 44%
of school psychologists stated that they paid for supervision themselves. A chi-square
analysis comparing government and non-government school psychologists with respect
to who pays for supervision showed that those in government schools were more likely
to pay for supervision themselves, \( \chi^2(1, N = 59) = 17.91, p = <.001 \). Eighty-two percent
of government school psychologists compared to 22% of non-government school
psychologists paid for their own supervision.

A chi-square analysis comparing single and multi-service school psychologists
with respect to who pays for supervision showed that those servicing multiple schools
were more likely to pay for supervision themselves than those servicing just one school,
\( \chi^2(1, N = 81) = 16.20, p = <.001 \). Twenty-seven percent of single-service school
psychologists compared to 84% of multi-service school psychologists paid for their own
supervision.

Satisfaction with supervision. Forty-six percent of school psychologists
indicated that they were either very unsatisfied \( (n = 22) \) or unsatisfied \( (n = 15) \) with the
professional supervision that they received. Twenty-six percent were satisfied \( (n = 21) \)
and 17% were very satisfied \( (n = 14) \). Five probationary psychologists indicated that
they were satisfied with the professional supervision that they received, with two
indicating that they were unsatisfied and one indicating a neutral response.
**Professional development.** The majority of school psychologists attended professional development activities once every three months (47%), with moderate percentages attending once a month (24%) or twice a year (24%). A few rarely attended (annually 3%; infrequently 3%) One attended weekly. Sixty-three percent of school psychologists found the professional development activities ‘somewhat relevant and useful’; with 23% indicating that professional development activities are ‘extremely relevant’, followed by ‘slightly relevant’ (13%) and ‘not relevant’ (1%). An independent-samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in attendance at professional development activities for government and non-government school psychologists.

An independent-samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference in attendance at professional development activities for single and multi-service school psychologists.

**Knowledge of relevant legislation.** Table 17 shows the percentage of school psychologists who indicated that they were ‘not well-informed’ in each of the areas of legislation most relevant to their profession.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Not Well-Informed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Law Act</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Procedures</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Information Legislation</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Discrimination Legislation</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 81*

The majority of school psychologists indicated that they were well informed or had received training in mandatory reporting legislation; however, most were not informed about the Family Law Act and anti-discrimination legislation. Approximately half of school psychologists indicated that they were well-informed or had received training in freedom of information legislation. Chi-square analyses revealed that there were no significant differences in knowledge of legislation for government and non-government school psychologists, or for single and multi-service school psychologists.
Job satisfaction. On average, school psychologists reported moderate overall job satisfaction ($M = 42.51, SD = 12.38$). Table 18 shows the percentage of psychologists who indicated that they were either ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with each Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) item. Percentages of scores for the total sample of school psychologists, government and non-government school psychologists, and single and multi-service school psychologists are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Satisfaction Item</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>GS $n = 32$</th>
<th>NGS $n = 49$</th>
<th>SS $n = 51$</th>
<th>MS $n = 30$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General satisfaction</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of activities in role</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of activities</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security of files</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from teachers</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from school management</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from school community</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office location in school</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological resources</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of office space</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of professional development</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological resources</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency professional development</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with other psychologists</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional supervision</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget allocation</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay and promotion</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to do various activities</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. GS = Government school psychologist. NGS = Non-government school psychologist. SS = Single-service school psychologist. MS = Multi-service school psychologist.

The majority of psychologists, regardless of whether they worked in government or non-government schools, or whether they worked for just one or for more than one school, were satisfied with their office location, security of their files, support they received from teachers, the school community and school management, the quality of professional development activities and the nature and variety of activities in their role. There was a low percentage of government and non-government psychologists and single and multi-service school psychologists who indicated that they were satisfied.
with their budget allocation, the time they had to do various activities in their role and their pay and promotion opportunities.

In order to explore whether there were any significant differences in government and non-government school psychologists’ job satisfaction scores, a series of independent samples t-tests were conducted. In order to reduce the chance of committing a Type 1 error only alpha levels below $p = .01$ were considered significant. All of the following reported t-tests were two-tailed. Results of the t-tests revealed that government school psychologists were significantly less satisfied with the amount of office space that they had, $t(56) = 2.88, p<.01$; the security of confidential files in their offices, $t(44) = 2.74, p<.01$; the technological resources they had access to, $t(58) = 2.96, p<.01$; their psychological resources, $t(79) = 3.04, p<.01$; their department’s budget, $t(79) = 2.52, p<.01$; and the professional supervision that they received, $t(79) = 5.28, p<.001$, than non-government school psychologists.

Overall, psychologists working in government schools scored significantly lower on the total score of the Job Satisfaction Scale ($M = 38.75, SD = 10.73$) than psychologists working in non-government schools ($M = 45.02, SD = 12.87$), $t(78) = 2.28, p<.05$.

In order to explore whether there were any significant differences in single and multi-service school psychologists’ job satisfaction scores, a series of independent samples t-test were conducted. As with previous analyses only alpha levels below $p = .01$ were considered significant. T-tests were two-tailed. Results of the t-tests revealed that multi-service school psychologists were significantly less satisfied with the professional supervision that they receive, $t(79) = 4.09, p<.001$, than single-service school psychologists. There was no significant difference in the overall job satisfaction scores between single and multi-service school psychologists.

**Ethical dilemmas.** The Ethical Dilemmas Scale (EDS) included a number of items that asked school psychologists to indicate how often they dealt with certain ethical dilemmas in their role. Table 19 outlines the frequency of responses to each ethical dilemma. For ease of understanding, responses were grouped as follows; ‘never’ and ‘almost never’ were added to form a ‘rarely’ category; and ‘fairly often’ and very often’ were added to form an ‘often’ category. The percentages that appear in bold indicate the majority of responses for that ethical dilemma.
Table 19

Percentage of School Psychologists Who Indicated That They Rarely, Sometimes and Often Dealt with Each Ethical Dilemma in Their Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Dilemma</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Who is the Client?' Issues</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Boundary' Issues</td>
<td>35</td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Confidentiality' Issues</td>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Informed Consent' Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Competence' Issues</td>
<td>42</td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Dual Relationship' Issues</td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For ‘confidentiality’, ‘boundary’ issues, ‘informed consent’, and ‘competence’ issues, the majority of school psychologists indicated that they sometimes dealt with them in their roles. In regards to ‘who is the client?’ types of ethical dilemmas, the majority of school psychologists indicated that they often dealt with this issue. Most school psychologists indicated that they rarely came across ethical dilemmas that highlighted a ‘dual relationship’.

An analysis of ‘government and non-government’ and ‘single and multi-service’ school psychologists’ responses to the individual items revealed that although there were no significant differences in responses to ‘confidentiality’, ‘boundary, ‘who is the client?’ , ‘informed consent’ and ‘dual relationship’ issues, there were, however, significant differences in mean scores for ‘competence’ issues, for both government and non-government school psychologists’ $t(79) = 2.84, p<.01$ (two-tailed) and single and multi-service school psychologists, $t(79) = 2.04, p<.05$ (two-tailed). Government and multi-service school psychologists were significantly more likely to report experiencing ethical dilemmas that highlighted ‘competence’ issues ($M = 1.97, SD = .93; M = 1.90, SD = .84$, respectively) than non-government and single-service school psychologists ($M = 1.47, SD = .65; M= 1.53, SD = .76$, respectively).

**Model of service delivery.** The Model of Service Delivery Scale (MSDS) contained 21 activities that represent aspects of a systemic model of service delivery. School psychologists were asked to indicate whether or not they participated in each of the activities. Following from this, the Importance of Model of Service Delivery Scale (IMSDS) contained the same 21 activities, but asked school psychologists to indicate on a 4-point scale how important they perceived each activity was to the role of school
psychologists, regardless of whether they participated in the activity or not. For ease of interpretation, scores for both ‘not important’ and ‘small importance’ were summed to form a ‘low importance’ category, and scores for both ‘moderately important’ and ‘extremely important’ were summed to form a ‘high importance’ category. Table 20 shows the percentage of school psychologists who indicated that they participated in each of the activities in the MSDS; and the percentage of school psychologists who indicated that each activity in the IMSDS had ‘low importance’ or ‘high importance’. In the interests of brevity, scale items have been abridged for inclusion in the table. For a full list of items in each of the scales, please refer to Q.42 and Q.43 of the School Psychologist Survey in Appendix A.

Table 20  
Percentage of School Psychologists’ Responses to the MSDS and IMSDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes (do this)</th>
<th>Low Importance</th>
<th>High Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consult with others in school</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational or welfare discussions</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with parents</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with staff to effect school change</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as welfare consultant to teachers and SL</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate community services for students</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as welfare consultant to families</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend student level meetings with teachers</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend professional meetings with other SPs.</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with local services</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice to school leadership regarding welfare</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate community services for school</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information sessions to families</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group therapy and info sessions for students</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as an educational consultant to teachers and SL</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in SL decision making</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the school psychology profession</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct quality assurance procedures</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for students through policy change</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and implement research projects</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SL = school leadership. SP = school psychologist.  
N = 80

Except for conducting quality assurance procedures, advocating for students through policy change and designing and implementing research projects in the school,
the majority of psychologists indicated that they participated in each of the activities
related to a systemic model of service delivery. This indicates that school psychologists
tend to work in a collaborative and holistic way within schools, with students, teachers,
school leadership, families and the wider community.

In regards to how important school psychologists perceived each of the systemic
activities were to school psychologists’ role in general, the majority of psychologists
indicated that they believed that all activities were highly important to the school
psychologists’ role.

In order to test whether there were any differences between government and
non-government school psychologists’ mean scores on the MSDS and IMSDS,
independent-samples t-tests were conducted. Results of the t-tests revealed that there
were no significant differences between government and non-government school
psychologists’ scores on either the MSDS or the IMSDS. Similarly, there were no
significant differences between single and multi-service school psychologists’ scores on
either the MSDS or the IMSDS.

To test whether there was any relationship between school psychologists’ years
of experience and scores on the MSDS, a Pearson product-moment correlation
coefficient was conducted. To ensure that there was no violation of the assumption of
linearity, normality and homoscedasticity, preliminary analyses were performed and
results indicated no violation of these assumptions. There was a medium strength,
positive relationship between years of experience and scores on the MSDS, $r = -.33$, $n = 81$, $p < .01$ (2-tailed), indicating that schools psychologists with more years of experience
were more likely to participate in a more systemic model of service delivery.
Calculating the coefficient of determination revealed that the two variables shared 11%
of their variance.

School psychologists were asked to indicate how often they worked from a
‘systems’ model of service delivery and also how often they worked from a purely
‘client-centred’ (individual) approach. Results showed that 36% of school psychologists
indicated that they *sometimes* worked systemically while the majority (64%) indicated
that they *often* worked systemically. In regards to a client-centred approach, 3%
indicated that they *never* worked in this way, 5% indicated that they *rarely* worked in
this way, 29% indicated that they *sometimes* worked in this way, while the majority
(63%) indicated that they *often* worked in this way.
When school psychologists were asked to indicate the approach that they used the most in their work, 10% indicated that they predominantly used a systems approach; 9% indicated that they mainly used a systems / partly client-centred approach; the majority, 41% indicated that they equally used a systems / client centred approaches; 34% indicated that they mainly used a client-centred / partly systems approach; and 6% indicated that they predominantly used a client-centred approach.

**Principals’ attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery.** Principals were given the MSDS and were asked to indicate whether or not they believed their school psychologist should participate in the activities. Table 21 reports the percentage of principals who believed their school psychologists should participate in each activity.

Table 21

*Percentage of Principals Who Believed Their School Psychologist Should Participate in Each Activity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct quality assurance procedures</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with others in school</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational or welfare discussions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with parents</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate with local services</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with staff to effect school change</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as welfare consultant to teachers and school leadership</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend student level meetings with teachers</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate community services for students</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate community services for school</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and implement research projects</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend professional meetings with other school psychologists</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice to school leadership regarding welfare</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as welfare consultant to families</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide information sessions to families</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group therapy and info sessions for students</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act as an educational consultant to teachers and school leadership</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved in school leadership decision making</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop the school psychology profession</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for students through policy change</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* SL = school leadership. SP = school psychologist.  
*N* = 21
All principals indicated that they would like their school psychologist to ‘consult with others in the school to discuss and decide on the reasons for an identified problem and plan and or/evaluate interventions’, to ‘participate in educational or welfare decision-making discussions with teachers or school management for students with specific learning needs’, and ‘participate in quality assurance procedures within the school’. The majority of principals (75%) believed that their school psychologist should not ‘act as an advocate for students by trying to influence change at a political or community level’. There were mixed opinions for some items, with nearly half of principals indicating that their school psychologist should not ‘participate in external activities that work towards positive change and development for the school psychology profession’ (49%) or ‘be involved in school leadership and decision making processes relating to curriculum, teaching methods, behaviour management and/or organisational structure’ (46%). For the remaining items, the majority of principals indicated that their school psychologist should participate in these activities.

**Burnout.** In order to test school psychologists’ levels of burnout, respondents were administered the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach et al., 1996). The MBI-HSS is made up of three subscales; Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalisation and Personal Accomplishment. A high degree of burnout is associated with high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation subscales and low scores on the Personal Accomplishment subscale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). School psychologists experienced moderate levels of Emotional Exhaustion ($M = 17.73$, $SD = 10.06$); low levels of Depersonalisation ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 3.50$); and high levels of Personal Accomplishment ($M = 39.58$, $SD = 5.71$). This indicates that the school psychologist sample on the whole were moderately “emotionally overextended and exhausted by their work”, were not “unfeeling and impersonal” in their response to their clients; and had a high level of “feelings of competence and successful achievement” (p.2) in their work within schools (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Table 22 shows the differences in levels of burnout for government and non-government, single and multi-service, male and female, and probationary and registered school psychologists.
Table 22

Levels of Burnout for School Psychologists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Depersonalisation M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government (n = 32)</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>39.19</td>
<td>5.89</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government (n = 47)</td>
<td>17.96</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>39.85</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-service (n = 49)</td>
<td>17.41</td>
<td>10.85</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>40.06</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-service (n = 30)</td>
<td>18.27</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>38.76</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (n = 12)</td>
<td>15.33</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>41.25</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (n = 65)</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>39.23</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probationary (n = 7)</td>
<td>13.86</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>40.43</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered (n = 72)</td>
<td>18.11</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>39.49</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the most part there were no differences in levels of burnout between school psychologists according to gender, type of school, number of schools serviced or registration status. There were, however, differences in Emotional Exhaustion between males and females and probationary and registered psychologists. Males experienced lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion than females and probationary psychologists experienced lower levels of Emotional Exhaustion than registered school psychologists. Independent samples t-tests were conducted to test for significant differences between the groups, however, the differences were not statistically significant.

In order to test for relationships between the subscales of the Burnout scale (MBI-HSS) and variables potentially related to burnout, including single or multi-service school psychologists, model of service delivery (measured by the MSDS), role taken within the school (measured by the four role scales, RASS, RCOS, RPS and RCS), job satisfaction (measured by the JSS), experience of ethical dilemmas (measured by the EDS), and frequency of supervision, the variables were first correlated (two-tailed), then entered into regression equations to attempt to predict the three aspects of burnout. The correlation matrix revealed that none of the potential predictor variables of burnout were correlated at greater than .7, indicating that the measures were suitable as independent variables in a multiple regression (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Personal Accomplishment was significantly positively correlated with the Role Consultation Scale (RCS), $r = .30, n = 78, p < .01$; the MSDS, $r = .31, n = 78, p < .01$; the FSS, $r = .23, n = 78, p < .05$; and the JSS, $r = -.35, n = 77, p < .01$. There was a significant
negative relationship between Personal Accomplishment and the Role Counselling Scale (RCOS), $r = -.37, n = 77, p < .01$. This indicated that school psychologists who scored higher in the Personal Accomplishment Subscale (i.e., felt more competent and successful in their work with clients) were also more likely to participate in consultation activities, work from an systemic model of service delivery, have more frequent supervision sessions, have higher levels of job satisfaction and be less likely to participate in counselling activities.

Depersonalisation was significantly correlated with one variable only, the EDS, $r = -.22, n = 79, p < .05$. This indicated that higher Depersonalisation (i.e., being more unfeeling and unresponsive in work with clients) was associated with experiencing fewer ethical dilemmas.

Emotional Exhaustion was significantly correlated with the EDS, $r = -.23, n = 79, p < .05$; and the JSS, $r = -.27, n = 78, p < .01$. This indicated that school psychologists who scored higher on the Emotional Exhaustion Subscale (i.e. felt more overextended and exhausted by their work) tended to experience more ethical dilemmas and were less satisfied in their job.

**What are the predictors of burnout?** A further aim of the study was to explore burnout. The following regressions were designed to test whether any measured aspects of role predicted burnout, or any measures aspects of working conditions predicted burnout. Two separate regressions were conducted due to the sample size.

In order to test the predictability of burnout, two standard multiple regressions were carried out for each of the three aspects of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment, Depersonalisation). An analysis of the residuals scatterplot and normal probability plot of the regression standardised residuals indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were met and few outliers were detected. The first regression included the role scales as independent variables (RASS, RCOS, RPS, RCS). The findings of the multiple regression analyses can be viewed in Table 23. The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation and the set of predictors. There was, however, a significant relationship between Personal Accomplishment and the set of predictors. Table 23 shows that participation in counselling and consultation activities were significant independent predictors of Personal Accomplishment (unique
variance of each variable was 9% and 5%, respectively\(^5\). School psychologists who participated in fewer counselling related tasks and more consultation activities were more likely to experience feelings of personal accomplishment in their roles. Participation in assessment and program development and delivery provided no significant independent predictive contributions. Twenty percent of the variance in Personal Accomplishment was accounted for by this model.

Table 23

Standard Multiple Regression 1: Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion Beta Weight</th>
<th>Depersonalisation Beta Weight</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment Beta Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Assessment</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Counselling</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Programs</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Consultation</td>
<td>-.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R(^2)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emotional Exhaustion (\(n = 79\)): \(F(4,73) = .16, p > .05\)
Depersonalisation (\(n = 79\)): \(F(4,73) = .51, p > .05\)
Personal Accomplishment (\(n = 78\)): \(F(4,72) = 4.53, p < .01\)

*Note. * = significant at \(p < .05\), two-tailed. ** = significant at \(p < .01\), two-tailed.

The second regression included single and multiple-school working conditions, Job Satisfaction (JSS), Frequency of Supervision (FSS), Model of Service Delivery (MSDS) and Ethical Dilemmas (EDS) as independent variables. The findings of the multiple regression analyses can be viewed in Table 24

The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalisation and the set of predictors. There was, however, a significant relationship between Personal Accomplishment and the set of predictors. Table 24 shows that job satisfaction and model of service delivery were significant independent predictors of Personal Accomplishment (unique variance of each variable was 5% and 7%, respectively). School psychologists who were more satisfied in their roles and who worked from a more systemic model of service delivery

\(^5\) Unique variance obtained by squaring Part Correlation Coefficient
were more likely to experience feelings of personal accomplishment in their roles. Being a single-service or multi-service school psychologist, frequency of supervision and number of ethical dilemmas were not significant independent predictors. Twenty-two percent of the variance in Personal Accomplishment was accounted for by this model.

Table 24

*Standard Multiple Regression 2: Single-Multiple School, Job Satisfaction, Frequency of Supervision, Model of Service Delivery and Ethical Dilemmas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Emotional Exhaustion</th>
<th>Depersonalisation</th>
<th>Personal Accomplishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta Weight</td>
<td>Beta Weight</td>
<td>Beta Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-multi school</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of supervision</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model of service delivery</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical dilemmas</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emotional Exhaustion ($n = 79$): $F(5,72) = 1.95, p > .05$
Depersonalisation ($n = 79$): $F(5,73) = 2.06, p > .05$
Personal Accomplishment ($n = 78$): $F(5,71) = 4.05, p < .01$

*Note. * = significant at $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** = significant at $p < .01$, two-tailed.*

*Conclusion to Chapter Eight*

The results have highlighted that school psychologists in Victoria deal with a wide range of student issues, participate in a diversity of activities, and are highly valued by teachers. However the results have also revealed that school psychologists experience a variety of challenges associated with the provision of a school psychological service, some of which include dissatisfaction with a number of industrial and professional issues and differences in beliefs about the school psychologists’ role amongst various stakeholders (i.e., teachers and principals). The next section will discuss the results of the present study in more detail, particularly how they relate to previous research as well as the implications of the present study’s findings for school psychology in general.
CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

Summary of findings

A major aim of the present study was to provide an Australian contribution to the available literature concerning the school psychological profession and to collect data concerning school psychologists’ attitudes and experiences. Therefore, the present study considered a broad and varied range of professional issues associated with the role of school psychologists. In summary, aims of the present study related to the following twelve themes: the activities which make up the role of school psychologists, school psychologists’ attitudes towards whether or not they would like to do more or less of each activity, the types of student issues that school psychologists deal with, the supervision and professional development experiences of school psychologists, school psychologists’ levels of job satisfaction, the types and frequency of ethical dilemmas that school psychologists come across, school psychologists’ adherence to a systemic versus individual model of service delivery, school psychologists’ experiences of burnout, the differences between school psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perspectives on what they believe should be the role of school psychologists, teachers’ perceived understanding of the school psychologists’ role and their attitudes towards the value and usefulness of a school psychological service, and finally, principals’ attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery. As well as being largely an explorative study, certain predictions or hypotheses were formulated based on the findings of past research. The following section presents a summary of the findings from the sample of Victorian school psychologists, principals and teachers. Findings are presented in relation to each of the twelve themes of investigation.

Role activities. School psychologists participated in a wide range of activities related to their role, including counselling students, administrative and clerical duties related to their role, providing advice to school management, meeting with teachers about individual students, report writing related to assessments, administering psychological or cognitive tests, providing advice to parents, and counselling parents. Similar to the findings of the ACT Review (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003), the activities that school psychologists ‘rarely’ participated in were assisting teachers in curriculum development, classroom based assessment and classroom interventions. Overall, these results are consistent with the findings of
previous Australian research which has also found that the roles of school psychologists (or school counsellors) are multifaceted and include a combination of broad and varied activities (e.g., Barletta, 1996a). These results show that not only do school psychologists participate in individual level activities, such as counselling and assessment, but they are also participating in more systemic activities, such as providing advice to parents. However, the systemic activities that they are not pursuing are those that appear to overlap with the role of teachers, such as curriculum development or classroom intervention. Perhaps this means that there are certain activities that make up the roles of teachers and psychologists in schools which remain separate and provide a distinction between the two professions. School psychologists may feel that these activities are not in their ‘territory’ so to speak, or perhaps teachers prefer that school psychologists’ duties should not involve the classroom and teaching environment, as such activities are what identifies them as teachers.

Differences in activities were found between school psychologists working in government and non-government schools and between school psychologists servicing single and multiple schools. For example, both government and multi-service school psychologists participated in more assessment related activities than non-government and single-service school psychologists. Furthermore, single-service school psychologists participated in more program development and delivery than multi-service school psychologists. Perhaps this result can be partly explained by the US findings of Curtis et al. (2002) and Smith (1984), and the Australian findings from the Kids Help Line (1996) study which all found that school psychologists who had higher student-to-school psychologist ratios tended to participate in more traditional roles largely involving assessments, whilst smaller student-to-school psychologist ratios allowed school psychologists to participate in a broader range of tasks including those that are more preventative in nature. In the present study, it was found that multi-service school psychologists serviced significantly more students than single-service school psychologists and government employed school psychologists were more likely to be servicing multiple schools. This may mean that these two groups of school psychologists are more time pressured due to the higher number of students for which they are responsible. Therefore they may have fewer opportunities to diversify and expand their roles to include activities of a more systemic or preventative nature.

There was also a difference between school psychologists working in primary and P-12 schools and those working in secondary schools, with primary and P-12
school psychologists participating in more assessment related activities than secondary school psychologists. This also reflects the findings of previous research (e.g., Ashman et al., 1993) and is likely to relate to the developmental needs of students at the different school levels.

The second aim related to school psychologists’ work preferences. Ashman et al. (1993) found that their sample of Queensland school counsellors perceived a wide range of activities as important to their role, regardless of whether they worked in primary or secondary schools. This was also the case for Victorian school psychologists in the present study who revealed that, for the most part, they were generally satisfied with the amount of time that they spent on activities related to their role. However, in the present study, school psychologists reported that they would like to have more time to develop and deliver student programs, attend more meetings with other school psychologists and outside agencies, and participate in more supervision. In addition, school psychologists indicated that they would like to do less administrative and clerical duties related to their role. Differences between the amount of time school psychologists (or school counsellors) spend on actual and ideal role activities has been established in previous research, especially in relation to wanting more time to develop and deliver student programs (e.g., Agresta, 2004), a desire for more contact with other school psychologists and less administrative duties (e.g., Partin, 1993), and a desire to participate in more supervision (e.g., McMahon & Patton, 2000). These desired roles appear to relate to taking a more systemic approach, for example working with other professionals and within the system on preventative strategies rather than (always) focusing on treatment.

Student issues. A substantial number of Australian children and adolescents have significant levels of stress, mental health problems and other personal difficulties (e.g., Sawyer et al., 2000). In the present study it was found that school psychologists dealt with a diversity of student problems, including some very serious clinical issues, as well as normal developmental stresses. The majority of school psychologists reported that they sometimes or often dealt with numerous mental health issues in children and adolescents such as depression, anxiety and ADHD. Furthermore, a range of external negative factors impacting upon children and adolescents were also reported, such as sexual abuse and other issues relating to family dysfunction or trauma. Developmental and cultural issues, grief and bereavement, issues associated with dealing with physical illness or impairment, and a wide range of educational, behavioural and social
difficulties were frequently dealt with by school psychologists. In fact, the findings fully support Bramston and Rice’s (2000) previous research conducted in Queensland which also found that school counsellors were counselling students for issues that were quite serious and clinical in nature.

Overall, school psychologists working in primary schools reported that they dealt more often with students who had attention deficit disorder, delayed developmental issues, and learning difficulties than school psychologists working in P-12 schools and/or secondary schools, who dealt more often with students with drug taking issues, romantic relationship conflict or break-up, sexual identity problems, same-sex attraction, contraception and safe-sex, pregnancy and gender role issues. These differences relate to developmental stages, as with the previously reported finding that school psychologists working in primary schools participated in more assessment related tasks. Furthermore, these results add support to Offer et al.’s (1991) argument that the need for psychological support increases with age because adolescent issues tend to be more complex than those of younger children. Adolescence is the time when more symptoms of severe adult mental disturbances become noticeable, risk-taking increases, and the transition to adulthood brings many stresses and conflicts. The present findings reflected adolescence as a time for increased risk-taking, identity development and experimentation, as well as romantic and sexual relationship development.

School psychologists in government schools reported that they dealt significantly more often with students with attention deficit disorder, parental emotional abuse, parental or family drug taking issues, domestic violence, delayed developmental disorders, learning difficulties, truancy, anger management and criminal behaviour than school psychologists working in non-government schools. These findings indicate that school psychologists servicing government schools are dealing with more complex or a wider range of student issues. In contrast, school psychologists from non-government schools reported that they dealt significantly more often with student stress management related to educational pressures, perhaps reflecting the higher emphasis often placed on student academic achievement in non-government schools.

Multi-service school psychologists also reported that they dealt significantly more often with students with attention deficit disorder, parental or family drug taking issues, delayed developmental disorders, and learning difficulties than school psychologists from single-service schools. This is likely to be a reflection of the
considerable overlap between those working in government schools and those who must service more than one school. Interestingly, school psychologists from single-service schools reported that they dealt significantly more often with social anxiety and friendship group conflict than school psychologists from multi-service schools. This indicates that these psychologists are perhaps more likely to deal with a more diverse range of students, rather than only seeing students with severe disorders or for crisis management. That is, perhaps single-service school psychologists have increased opportunities to help psychologically healthy students cope better with every day hassles or dilemmas.

**Supervision.** The third aim of the study was to explore the supervision experiences of school psychologists. The hypothesis that a substantial number of school psychologists would not be participating in supervision was supported. More than a third of school psychologists did not participate in supervision, with more experienced school psychologists being less likely to participate in supervision than less experienced school psychologists. This may suggest that more experienced school psychologists feel that they do not need to have supervision. However, because of the challenging and confidential nature of the role, it is important that all school psychologists, regardless of what stage they are at in their career, participate in regular supervision. This means that school psychologists are not making decisions in isolation due to the confidential nature of their role. Furthermore, supervision has been found to be associated with a host of benefits for school psychologists and school counsellors including reduced role stress (Culbreth et al., 2005) and an opportunity to debrief and gain professional feedback on the work that they do (McMahon & Patton, 2001). For school psychologists who participated in either group or individual supervision, more than a third did so infrequently, again supporting the hypothesis that a significant portion of the sample who participated in supervision would do so irregularly. These results reflect the findings of previous research showing unsatisfactory levels of school psychologist participation in supervision both in Australia (e.g., McMahon & Solas, 1996) and overseas (e.g., Jimerson et al., 2004). It appears to be world-wide problem that school psychologists are not participating in regular supervision as advocated and required by industry standards and guidelines (Australian Psychological Society, 2002b). Furthermore, although the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (2000) explicitly states that all school psychologists should participate in
regular supervision, it is a matter of concern that school psychologists with more years of experience were not participating in regular supervision.

Government school psychologists participated in significantly less supervision than those in non-government schools. Additionally, multi-service school psychologists participated in less supervision than single-service school psychologists. The reduced supervision of these professionals was clearly not by choice in that significantly more government school psychologists and multi-service school psychologists wanted more time to engage in professional supervision than non-government and single-service school psychologists, which is not surprising when one considers the increased seriousness of student issues that these school psychologists reported that they deal with.

Nearly half of the sample of school psychologists had not read the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (Australian Psychological Society, 2000). However, more non-government school psychologists had read the APS Standards than government school psychologists. Perhaps school psychologists in general are just not receiving industry information that relates to their profession because of the absence of a list of psychologists who are working in schools in Victoria, as highlighted in the recruitment stage of the present study. Therefore, the ability to disseminate relevant information which benefits and is of interest to psychologists working in schools (such as the APS Standards) is not occurring. This may also not be occurring because there is a lack of leadership from within the industry itself which advocates on behalf of school psychologists particularly in relation to the concerns highlighted in this study, such as the need for regular supervision and the seemingly inferior professional experiences of government employed school psychologists.

Notably, nearly half of the school psychologists in the sample who were receiving supervision were unsatisfied with the supervision that they received. This is similar to the results of the ACT Review which found that counsellors expressed overwhelming dissatisfaction with their current supervision arrangements (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). The reasons why such a substantial number of school psychologists reported dissatisfaction was not explored in the present study. However, perhaps their dissatisfaction stems from the fact that they are not engaging in enough supervision. Additionally, there are a number of attributes related to good quality supervision, including having an accessible supervisor who is knowledgeable about the role and who is perceived by supervisees as competent and
helpful (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services). Further research which explores reasons for school psychologists’ reported dissatisfaction is warranted.

Similar to the findings of Ross & Goh (1993), nearly half of the school psychologists in the sample paid for their own supervision. This finding supports the third hypothesis that a significant portion of the sample who participated in supervision would be paying for it themselves. Additionally, more non-government school psychologists and more multi-service school psychologists paid for their own supervision than government and single-service school psychologists. This finding invites consideration regarding whether or not school psychologists or employers (such as the school or Department of Education) should be paying for their supervision. If employers pay for school psychologists’ supervision it suggests that they value the challenging and complex nature of the role and the need for school psychologists to engage in dialogue with other psychologists who are knowledgeable about the profession. It also suggests that employers see supervision as not only beneficial to the professional practice and wellbeing of their school psychologist, but that it benefits their organisation as a whole through outcomes such as better decision making and improved service. In contrast, school psychologists paying for supervision themselves reveal a high degree of commitment on their behalf to their professional requirements to engage in supervision and to nurture and expand their professional competencies.

**Professional development.** The fourth aim of the present study was to explore the professional development experiences of school psychologists. Most school psychologists participated in professional development activities once every three months and most indicated that their professional development activities were somewhat relevant and useful to the profession of school psychological services. Professional development is important because it provides an opportunity to network with other school psychologists, to discuss various professional issues and receive information specific to the practice of school psychological services, to learn new skills, to gain new contacts with other colleagues and referral services (Kaczmarek, 2000). It should not, however, substitute for supervision. Supervision is more focused and personal and allows the school psychologist to discuss confidential client information in a safe and supportive environment in order to both debrief and enhance their professional practices and counselling skills (Barletta, 1996b).

As mentioned, dissemination of information or guidelines related to the field of school psychology should be one aim of professional development. For example, in
addition to disseminating and discussing the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (Australian Psychological Society, 2000), workshops could be developed which provide information to school psychologists about legislation that is relevant to their area of practice. This is particularly important due to the number of ethical dilemmas involved when working therapeutically with minors within a school environment (Kaczmarek, 2000). Therefore, a further aim was to explore how many school psychologists felt that they were knowledgeable about certain legislation which the *APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services* (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) expect school psychologists to know. Overall, the majority of school psychologists reported that they were knowledgeable about mandatory reporting legislation. This is probably due to the fact that Victorian teachers are mandated to report cases of child abuse to government child protection bodies (National Child Protection Clearinghouse, 2005) and therefore extensive training on this issue has most likely occurred within schools. In regard to Freedom of Information, half the sample reported that they were knowledgeable about this legislation. However, most reported that they were not informed about the Family Law Act and about Anti-Discrimination legislation. Therefore, the present study revealed that school psychologists may not be fully “cognisant of, and adhere to [all] relevant legal requirements” (Australian Psychological Society, 2000, p. 7) as knowledge about the Family Law Act and Anti-Discrimination legislation were relatively low. Perhaps if school psychologists participated in more supervision with supervisors who were cognisant of such legislation, or attended professional development activities that adequately explained the effects of such Acts on their work within schools, school psychologists may feel more confident that they are working in a way that adheres to legal requirements.

**Job satisfaction.** The fifth aim of the present study was to examine school psychologists’ overall levels of job satisfaction, and to test how satisfied school psychologists were about specific professional issues related to their role. The hypothesis that school psychologists’ overall level of job satisfaction would be moderate to high was supported in the present study. Previous research on school psychologists’ levels of overall job satisfaction has found school psychologists are, in general, professionally satisfied with their work activities and experiences (e.g., Hosp & Reschly, 2002). The two areas where Victorian school psychologists reported greatest satisfaction with were the support that they received from teachers, the school
community and school management, and the nature and variety of activities that make up their role. This latter finding has also been found in previous research (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003; Hosp & Reschly, 2002). Despite the complex nature of the role and the lack of professional supervision that they receive, school psychologists are saying that they do in fact like their occupation. Other studies have found that school psychologists enjoy their work because of the personal reward that they gain from making a difference in the lives of students and because the role is intellectually challenging and largely autonomous (e.g., Wiczenski, 1997). These may be significant reasons why Victorian school psychologists choose to work in this profession and why they report that they are happy with the general activities that make up their role.

Comparisons between government and non-government school psychologists’ overall levels of job satisfaction revealed that government school psychologists were significantly less professionally satisfied than non-government school psychologists. This result is not surprising when considering the other results relating to government and non-government differences in the present study which would certainly have an impact on job satisfaction, such as less supervision, more complex issues and higher student to school psychologist ratios.

The hypothesis that the job satisfaction scale would reveal areas of dissatisfaction amongst school psychologists was supported. Areas of dissatisfaction were budget allocation, time allocated to various activities, and pay and promotion opportunities. These findings very much reflect past research. Many studies have reported that school psychologists feel time pressured to meet the demands for their service (e.g., Miller et al., 1981), and are highly unsatisfied with their opportunities for advancement, lack of career structure and perceived low pay rates (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). This appears to be a historical yet continuing problem in that the Minister for Education in 1970 called for immediate improvements in these areas (as discussed in Chapter Two) (Department of Education and Victoria, 1971), however, it appears that little change has actually occurred.

Differences between government and non-government schools and multi-service and single-service school psychologists were again apparent. Government school psychologists were less satisfied with their amount of office space, the security of their files, their technological and psychological resources, their department’s budget
allocation, and their supervision. Multi-service school psychologists were less satisfied with the professional supervision they received. Proctor and Steadman (2003) also found that multi-service school psychologists had lower job satisfaction scores than single-service school psychologists. Furthermore, the ACT review (2003)(which was a review of government employed school counsellors) found that school counsellors were dissatisfied with their computer facilities, privacy of office space and phone access, security of confidential files and inadequate assessment and testing materials. It appears that these identified resource and facility problems have also been experienced by Victorian government employed school psychologists. Clearly, these findings are undesirable and of a matter of considerable concern needing rectification in order to protect the privacy and confidentiality of students, to uphold the standards of the psychological profession and to maintain and promote public trust in school psychology.

**Ethical dilemmas.** The sixth aim of the present study related to the frequency by which school psychologists experienced ethical dilemmas. School psychologists reported that they *often* dealt with ethical issues pertaining to ‘who is the client?’ In addition, they *sometimes* dealt with ‘confidentiality’ issues, ‘boundary issues’, ‘informed consent’, and ‘competence’ issues. School psychologists reported that they rarely dealt with issues pertaining to ‘dual relationships’.

In the present study, ‘who is the client?’ was conceptualised on the survey as ‘*some confusion is apparent between who you are primarily responsible towards, the student, teacher, principal or parent*’. As discussed in Chapter Four, research conducted by Jacob-Timm (1999) in the US revealed that the most ethically troubling incident reported by school psychologists was ‘administrative pressure to act unethically’. School administrators are not always fully cognisant or supportive of the school psychologists’ role or professional code of ethics. There are also stakeholders within a school who have varying interests in the information given by a student in a counselling relationship or who may have conflicting legal or ethical obligations, which may result in differing beliefs about what the school psychologist should do in a given scenario. For example, in a Catholic secondary school consider the hypothetical example of a student who presents to the school psychologist saying that she is pregnant and that she has decided to terminate, but is adamant that she does not want anyone else to know and that she does not want to see an outside counsellor. The school psychologist may then decide to counsel the student on this issue and to keep this information confidential.
However, the principal and/or the student’s parents may have different ideas on how this issue should be handled and may believe that they have a legal right to know about their student’s or child’s situation.

Kids Help Line (1996) found in their study of fifty Australian school counsellors that they often felt confused about whether they should either keep information confidential or meet the demands of principals and teachers to divulge student information that they had gained in counselling. Collins and Knowles (1995) highlighted this dilemma for school psychologists and argued that the high degree of ambiguity inherent in the APS Code of Ethics (2002a) further exacerbates the confusion for school psychologists regarding informed consent and working with minors. The fact that most school psychologists in the sample reported that the most frequently experienced ethical dilemma related to ‘who is the client?’ means that clear direction on this issue in the form of more explicit guidelines would be helpful in order to assist school psychologists and to reduce the high degree of ambiguity and confusion associated with having to make decisions when so many stakeholders have an interest in the information that the school psychologist receives. Furthermore, professional development or ethical training for school psychologists that specifically deals with issues unique to the provision of school-based psychological services would be beneficial. In addition, engaging in dialogue and professional information sharing with school administrators, teachers and families on the ethical requirements of school psychologists would increase understanding about the role and would hopefully reduce the pressure felt by school psychologists to make decisions that may not be professionally appropriate.

An interesting finding was that government and multi-service school psychologists reported that they experienced ethical dilemmas pertaining to ‘competence’ issues more often than non-government school psychologists and those servicing just one school. This was conceptualised as: “*when the demands of your role exceed your ability, training, qualifications or experience to provide the most suitable advice or treatment*”. This finding may possibly reflect the broad range of student issues that government or multi-service school psychologists come across from working in more than one school and from having to deal with higher student to school psychologist ratios. It may also link with another finding in the present study that they tend to participate in less supervision and are less satisfied with their supervision than single-service school psychologists. Therefore, government or multi-service school
psychologists may not be receiving adequate feedback or support for the difficult and complex work that they are doing and hence this may be leading to feelings of incompetence.

**Systemic model of service delivery.** Participation in a systemic model of service delivery has been promoted both within the school psychological literature (e.g., Brown, 1987) and within the Department of Education Victoria (1998). For the most part school psychologists participated in a variety of activities related to a systemic model of service delivery, with more experienced school psychologists being more likely to participate in these than the less experienced. These findings compliment and extend the findings of other Australian research that have also found that school psychologists’ (or school counsellors’) roles are multi faceted and include a variety of activities, such as consultation, program delivery and family work, which can be conceptualised as fitting into a systemic framework (e.g., Ashman et al., 1993).

These findings imply that Victorian school psychologists are not always hidden away in their office, counselling or conducting assessments, but can often be seen outside of their office, perhaps within the staffroom, discussing strategies or issues with teachers, having meetings with parents and participating in school decision making in order to positively effect a student population. For example, the majority of school psychologists indicated that they consult with other school staff and families, participate in educational or welfare decision making discussions with school management or teachers, provide advice to school leadership, implement information sessions for families of students, provide group therapy and information sessions to students, and integrate and collaborate with outside community welfare services (to name a few). The latter is a systemic activity which is much advocated within the literature (e.g., Nastasi, 2000). In summary, school psychologists act as links between schools and communities, a relationship that is circular in design, thus allowing students to be referred to the best possible services to meet their needs whilst services are able to educate schools on pertinent community issues that may be effecting students (such as high rates of gambling, or incidents of adolescent binge-drinking on weekends). Increased communication with schools allows agencies to tailor their service to meet the needs of local schools.

There were a number of systemic activities that the majority of school psychologists reported that they did not participate in. These were conducting quality assurance procedures, advocating for changes in policy which have a detrimental effect
on children and young people, and designing and implementing research projects in the school. Perhaps, the nature of the psychology profession (as usually involving therapeutic work with individuals and groups) has not expanded enough to include systemic activities like advocating for policy change, and so school psychologists may not believe or realise that this is an activity that could be included as part of their role. Alternatively, perhaps in consideration of school psychologists’ responses to the types of activities that make up their role, which included a combination of both systemic and individual level activities, they may just lack the time to fit any other activities into their working day.

In support of the findings that indicated a variety of activities make up school psychologists’ roles, the majority of school psychologists indicated that they work from a model which combines both systemic and individual level (or client-centred) activities. This was conceptualised on the survey as viewing a student / client as being influenced by: a) a systems approach: ‘in regards to student counselling issues, you believe in a ‘systems approach’, in that the environment, (i.e. the home, school or even the community), may be part of, or contributing to, the student’s problem, and when helping the student, you actively work to effect change both in the student and in their environment (i.e. home, school or community)’; and b) a client-centred approach: ‘in regards to student counselling issues, you believe in a client-centred approach, in that change will result from working directly with students’ internal beliefs and attitudes and by providing intensive skills training to the student alone’. Thus, whilst Victorian school psychologists would most likely agree with the themes and ideas posed in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Framework (1977), they would probably not abandon traditional client-centred activities either. School psychologists in the present study were essentially reporting that systemic activities are important elements of their role, in addition to individual counselling and assessments. This is in contrast to the Norwegian study conducted by Idsoe (2003) who found that the majority of school psychologists preferred to work from just an individual model of service delivery.

Both approaches have difficulties and rewards. A systemic model of service delivery allows the school psychologist to be more integrated into the school community, is preventative in focus and is less isolating. However, training of psychologists is mostly related to client-centred work, so school psychologists may not feel competent applying a systemic approach. Additionally, working systemically with a variety of stakeholders means dealing with a variety of personality styles and opinions
regarding strategies for individual students. This may not always be an easy task and
requires flexibility and good communication skills on behalf of the psychologist, not to
mention the skill required to balance confidential student issues with the requests for
information from others, which would inevitably arise in such an approach. In contrast,
an individual model of service delivery may fit more comfortably with the training and
expertise of school psychologists, and with such high caseloads, may be all that
psychologists have time for in schools. Furthermore, client-centred work may leave less
room for dual relationships and issues around ‘who is the client?’ as school
psychologists’ roles are clearly defined. However, this approach may be isolating,
especially if the psychologist is the sole counsellor, and may also lack the variety of
activities associated with a more systemic model of service delivery.

The majority of school psychologists in the present study believed that all the
systemic activities listed were highly important to the school psychologists’ role. This
was also found in Kenney’s (2005) study in which Victorian school psychologists
reported that systemic activities (as well as client-centred more traditional activities)
were important to their role. The results of the present study thus provide some further
empirical support from within the profession for a model of service delivery that does
not only include traditional activities (i.e., assessment and counselling), but that also
includes more broader and systemic activities as well (i.e., more consultation, programs
and workshops). It also raises questions about the efficacy of training programs for
school psychologists and how much time one professional has in a day to participate in
all of these roles.

**Burnout.** The eighth aim of the present study was to explore Victorian school
psychologists’ levels of burnout. The hypothesis that school psychologists would report
moderate to high levels of Emotional Exhaustion and low levels of Depersonalisation
and high levels of Personal Accomplishment was supported. In the present study and as
predicted, school psychologists’ experienced moderate levels of Emotional Exhaustion,
low levels of Depersonalisation and high levels of Personal Accomplishment. Other
research on this topic also suggests that a substantial number of school psychologists are
somewhat emotionally exhausted and over-extended by their work, whilst still
demonstrating empathy and sensitivity to the needs of their clients, and experiencing
professional satisfaction and a sense of reward from the work that they do (e.g., Mills &
Huebner, 1998). Interestingly, males and probationary psychologists experienced lower
levels of Emotional Exhaustion than females and registered psychologists. Perhaps
probationary school psychologists are newer to the field and therefore have not yet had enough time in the profession to experience emotional exhaustion, or they may have lower caseloads. On the other hand, males may not have as many work commitments, professionally and personally, to the same extent that some female school psychologists are doing (i.e., balancing work and family commitments).

Contrary to what may have been expected, especially when considering some of the other findings in the present study related to supervision and job satisfaction, there were no differences in levels of burnout for school psychologists from government and non-government schools, nor between single-service and multi-service school psychologists. This is in partial contrast to the findings of Proctor and Steadman (2003) who found that single-service school psychologists in the US had lower global burnout scores than multi-service school psychologists. However, Proctor and Steadman’s study did not use the MBI (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) to measure burnout, therefore findings may not be entirely comparable to the present study. Nevertheless, it appears that school psychologists across the various school systems in Victoria were experiencing similar levels of burnout in the domain of Emotional Exhaustion.

Another aim related to school psychologists’ burnout was to investigate whether there were any relationships between a number of job-related factors tested in the present study and school psychologists’ experiences of burnout. The results revealed that school psychologists who participated in more consultation activities, worked from more of a systemic model of service delivery, who had more frequent supervision sessions, who had higher job satisfaction scores, and who participated in fewer counselling activities were significantly more likely to feel competent and successful in their work with clients (higher levels of Personal Accomplishment). In addition, school psychologists who were less satisfied in their roles were more likely to score higher on Emotionally Exhaustion than those who were more professionally satisfied. Interestingly, those who reported experiencing fewer ethical dilemmas were not only more likely to be unfeeling and unresponsive in their work with clients (higher levels of Depersonalisation) but were also less emotionally exhausted than school psychologists who reported experiencing more ethical dilemmas.

School psychologists’ level of Personal Accomplishment was significantly predicted by four of the above job-related variables. Participation in counselling explained 9% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment scores, participation in consultation activities explained 7% of the variance, and job satisfaction and model of
service delivery each explained 5% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment. This means that school psychologists who participated in less counselling activities, more consultation activities, who were more satisfied in their roles and who worked from more of a systemic model of service delivery were more likely to experience feelings of personal accomplishment in their roles. Therefore, these findings provide further empirical support for modifying the traditional model of service delivery, which tends to only include counselling and assessment activities, by including more systemic related activities into the role as it appears to result in increased professional and personal satisfaction of school psychologists.

The finding that a higher level of Personal Accomplishment was related to less participation in counselling related tasks may be partly explained by another finding in the present study that many of the student problems that school psychologists are dealing with in their counselling relationships are complex and challenging. Therefore, higher counselling loads most likely present psychologists with more student problems, some of which are quite clinical in nature. However, this is occurring in a climate where school psychologists have reported that they are dissatisfied with the amount of available time that they have to undertake their roles as well a lack of adequate supervisory support. Furthermore, if school psychologists’ time is dedicated mostly to student counselling duties, they may have less time to engage in other tasks which are more systemic in nature and which have been shown to predict increased levels of Personal Accomplishment. Feeling time pressured, dealing with complex student issues, dealing with students in crisis and trying to meet high demands for counselling and assessment are factors that have been identified as significant stressors for school psychologists in previous studies (e.g., Kendrick & Chandler, 1994).

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that by increasing the variety of professional activities that school psychologists engage in, reducing the counselling caseload, coupled with providing appropriate supervision and support, and improving workplace conditions (leading to increased job satisfaction) will likely result in school psychologists’ feeling professionally satisfied and successful at work. Most likely this would also translate into a better quality service for students and the wider school community.

It was not surprising that increased frequency of ethical dilemmas and reduced job satisfaction were related to higher levels of Emotional Exhaustion. An ethical dilemma occurs when there is conflict between what the school psychologist believes is
the right thing to do in a given situation and what others may believe the school psychologist should do. It also occurs when the school psychologist finds it difficult to make a decision about a course of action which is professionally and ethically appropriate (Davis & Mickelson, 1994). Previous studies have found that the ‘complex balancing act’ (Glosoff & Pate, 2002) of trying to meet the needs and legal obligations of a variety of stakeholders whilst doing what is in the best interests of clients is stressful. Furthermore, dealing with poor industrial conditions, inadequate professional resources and a lack of career structure and advancement have also been identified sources of stress for school psychologists (e.g., Oakland and Cunningham, 1992). There is a need for better ethical training specific to the role of school psychology, more education of and dialogue with the educational community on the unique roles and professional requirements of school psychologists, and improved industrial conditions. Only then can school psychologists continue to do the work that is so highly valued by those that they serve.

An unusual finding was that school psychologists who experienced fewer ethical dilemmas were more likely to have higher levels of Depersonalisation. Perhaps school psychologists who are feeling separated or less involved on an emotional level with their clients may not be absorbing the inner conflicts associated with having to make critical decisions that affect students welfare and therefore tend to report fewer ethical dilemmas due to their degree of ‘depersonalisation’. In contrast, perhaps school psychologists who are higher in Depersonalisation are more structured and less flexible in their approach to both clients and their work in general which may in fact lead to less ethical dilemmas occurring. Further research is needed in order to shed light on this finding.

**School psychologists’, principals’ and teachers’ perspectives on the responsibilities of school psychologists.** Overall, the majority of psychologists, principals and teachers agreed on many issues. All agreed that it was part of the school psychologist’s role to conduct research on issues relevant to the school, be up to date on relevant research, conduct IQ and psychological assessments, provide counselling to students, organise group programs for students, organise workshops for teachers on issues concerning students’ welfare, and inform primary student’s parents of their child’s participation in counselling. It is a matter of interest that these areas of agreement relate to a model of service delivery that involves a combination of both
individual and systemic activities, and might suggest that school psychologists, principals and teachers all support such a model.

The results also revealed that there were differences in opinion between school psychologists, principals and teachers regarding some of the perceived responsibilities of school psychologists. Some of these differences might contribute to ethical dilemmas or challenges for psychologists within the school working environment. One of the differences was found on the topic of handling discipline. School psychologists were more likely than principals and teachers to believe they should assist teachers in handling discipline, but less likely to believe they should actually administer it. Other studies (e.g., Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005) have also shown that teachers and principals sometimes expect school psychologists to undertake this task which is inappropriate to their role.

It appears that psychologists in the present study want to give advice or assistance to teachers about discipline; however, it seems that principals and teachers are not necessarily going to accept such advice. Perhaps psychologists feel they can provide an educative role within schools by assisting staff with information and skill development on effective and non-effective disciplinary procedures or perhaps they are counselling certain students who are ‘acting out’ and they want to assist teachers on how to work with such challenging behaviours. The idea that school psychologists should administer discipline is not highly supported by any group but is more strongly rejected by psychologists. Administering discipline has a powerful potential to break down counselling relationships with students and clearly should be avoided. These differences in opinion, however, can be classified as possibly leading to ethical challenges involving ‘role boundaries’.

Additionally, school psychologists were more likely than principals and teachers to agree that they should not provide a counselling service to teachers, should not provide therapy to students’ families, and should not teach as well as counsel. It is possible that these differences in opinion may lead to ethical challenges involving ‘dual relationships’. For example, nearly half of the teachers agreed with the item: ‘it is acceptable for the school psychologist to charge a fee to teachers that want to see them for counselling outside of working hours’. This suggests a lack of understanding about the dilemmas which can result from dual relationships and how this can impact on the integrity of a psychological service. For instance, consider the professional dilemma that could result from a dual relationship if a teacher, who is being counselled by a
school psychologist, reveals in therapy that he or she has an addiction to alcohol and is soon going on school camp. The fact that 21% of school psychologists also agreed with this statement provides evidence that there is a concerning lack of role clarity amongst psychologists themselves, as shown in some previous research (Jacob-Timm, 1999). Again, this highlights a need for regular supervision, opportunities for collegial support and discussion and high quality ethical training and professional development for school psychologists.

The third finding regarding differences was that school psychologists were more likely than principals and teachers to agree that they should not inform the referring teacher about how a student is progressing in counselling, should not provide counselling records to teachers, and should not inform teachers of the attitudes students have towards them. These differences in opinion may lead to ethical challenges involving ‘confidentiality’, an ethical issue that has been regularly mentioned in the school psychological literature (Pope & Vetter, 1992). The few studies that have surveyed students’ attitudes regarding school psychological services reveal that students want a guaranteed confidential counselling service (e.g., Riggs & Cheng, 1988). However, Cooper et al. (2005) found in their Scottish study that teachers wanted school counsellors to inform them more about student issues. Australian school counsellors have reported conflict between maintaining confidentiality and / or surrendering to stakeholders’ requests for student information (Kids Help Line, 1996). The ACT Review revealed that school counsellors were concerned about the lack of protocols regarding who should have access to confidential student information (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003). In order to protect students there is a need for psychologists and school staff alike to be cognisant and supportive of students’ right to confidentiality. Information should only be shared with the consent of the client and / or the client’s parents on a “need to know” basis, with client files only accessed by the psychologist unless statutory or legal obligations prevail (Australian Psychological Society, 2000, p. 8). There is also a need for adequate and agreed upon guidelines and policies regarding confidentiality and informed consent in order to inform and protect school psychologists when they are making professional judgments around complex student issues, so that they do not feel pressured to divulge confidential student information to others who have no right to have such information. This perhaps requires more education of and dialogue between all stakeholders about privacy, confidentiality and informed consent.
Finally, school psychologists were more likely than teachers to believe that they should not mandate students to see the school counsellor and should not include counselling in disciplinary procedures, thus expressing that counselling should be a voluntary and therapeutic activity. These differences in opinion may lead to ethical challenges involving ‘informed consent’ and challenge the notion of the ‘voluntary’ nature of a counselling relationship. Perhaps some teachers view counselling as a beneficial means to ‘fix’ certain student issues (Farrell & Care, 2000), such as for misbehaviour, however counselling is both a therapeutic tool and an educational process for students, especially for those who have never been to counselling before and for those who may consider counselling in the future. Including counselling in disciplinary procedures may teach young people that counselling is a punitive measure. This may interfere with the therapeutic alliance and also prevent young people from seeking counselling later on in life.

There were some mixed opinions amongst school psychologists themselves regarding certain functions related to their role, providing further evidence for role ambiguity within the profession. Some of these mixed opinions related to assisting teachers in handling discipline, providing career guidance to students, counselling teachers as well as students, counselling students’ families and letting teachers know about how a student is progressing in counselling. This finding supports previous research which has also shown a high degree of role ambiguity and confusion amongst school psychologists themselves (e.g., Pierson-Hubeny & Archambault, 1987).

**Teachers’ understanding of school psychologists’ role.** The tenth aim was to explore Victorian teachers’ understanding of the role, training and qualifications of school psychologists. Teachers reported that they possessed a clear understanding of the school psychologist’s role, were aware of their school’s referral procedures and had some understanding of school psychologists’ training and qualifications. This is in contrast to the findings of Cooper et al. (2005) who found that teachers wanted a ‘clear-cut job description’ of the school counsellor in order to reduce confusion about the role. However, while teachers in the current study felt they understood what school psychologists do, the previous findings regarding psychologist-teacher differences in beliefs about certain activities suggests these understandings are not always accurate. As discussed previously, this has the potential to lead to job stress and ethical dilemmas for the psychologist, and, potentially, frustrations for teachers.
**Teachers’ need for a school psychological service.** The eleventh aim was to explore teachers’ opinions regarding whether or not they perceived the school psychological service as useful and needed. As predicted, the present study found that teachers overwhelmingly supported the presence of psychologists in schools and reported that school psychologists play a much needed and important role. This finding supports that of numerous other studies which report that school psychologists are highly valued by all members of the educational community (e.g., Farrell & Kalambouka, 2000). It seems that the potential stress and dilemmas discussed previously are not so evident in the school situation to cause a reduction of confidence in the school psychology profession. Perhaps teachers believe that the benefits of having a school psychologist on staff far outweigh any frustrations caused by differences in opinions regarding their role – if in fact they are aware that such differences exist.

**Principals’ attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery.** The twelfth and final aim was to explore principals’ attitudes towards school psychologists’ participation in a systemic model of service delivery. Overall, the results revealed general support amongst principals for the majority of activities that reflect such a model. Therefore, the present study provides some additional support to previous studies which have also revealed principal support for a more consultative and systemic approach by school psychologists (e.g., Thomas et al., 1992). However, perhaps this finding reflects a general attitude by principals that they want all staff to do as many tasks as possible. If this is the case, this finding is not surprising. A systemic model of service delivery offers a school psychologist variety, integration into the school community and can be highly rewarding. Additionally, schools benefit from the added skills that a school psychologist brings with this model, such as program development and delivery, workshops to teachers and parents, and information and advice about student welfare issues. On the flipside, an expectation to do too many things when there is not enough time, inadequate resources and insufficient support has the potential to lead to stress and burnout in the school psychologist as they try to successfully meet the demands for their services.

In regards to systemic activities that principals believed that school psychologists should not participate in, there was only one that received an overwhelming lack of support from principals. That is, the majority of principals believed that their school psychologist should not: ‘act as an advocate for students by trying to influence change at a political or community level’. Perhaps, principals feel a
degree of caution about their school staff speaking out at a public level. They may believe that school psychologists should comply or fit in with educational policies and systems that they are part of, as well as with the directions and policies of their school. School psychologists becoming ‘youth advocates’ at a political level may be viewed as highly disruptive or may be viewed as leading to bad publicity for the school. It may also place the school psychologist in an awkward position regarding their relationships with key stakeholders such as teachers and parents. For example, a school psychologist who controversially advocates at a political or public level for easier access for young women to the morning-after-pill may be faced with much scrutiny and opposition from stakeholders who they must serve on a daily basis and may act as a barrier to creating public trust in their service and professional values. However, not acting as ‘youth advocates’ at a public level is in contrast with the ideas integral to Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Framework (1977) which is so influential to the development of a systemic model of service delivery for school psychologists. Bronfenbrenner’s framework recommends that human services professionals should also advocate for change at the exosystem level (i.e., community, media, policies) as the exosystem also has a strong influence on children and young people’s experiences and general welfare, in addition to school and family influences (Moen, 1995; Nastasi, 2000).

Finally, there were mixed opinions amongst principals regarding some of the activities that constitute a systemic model of service delivery. For example, principals reported mixed levels of support towards school psychologists’: ‘participation in external activities that work towards positive change and development for the school psychology profession’; and ‘being involved in school leadership and decision making processes relating to curriculum, teaching methods, behaviour management and / or organisational structure’. School psychologists’ participation in decision making within schools about issues related to the professional roles and activities of teachers may be difficult to some individuals or organisations as it may be perceived as challenging the ‘homeostatic’ nature of a school (Fine & Holt, 1983). Perhaps, this is viewed as not being part of school psychologists’ professional territory and principals who disagreed may have thought that activities such as curriculum development or teaching methods should be left up to those trained in education. However, perhaps principals who indicated support for such activities desire to utilise the skills of psychologists in schools in as many ways as possible or see the school psychologist as contributing a fresh and alternative approach to organisational issues and decision making. They may
believe that the differing perspectives of school psychologists, which reflects their interests in the mental health and welfare needs of students, helps to contribute to a wholistic and inclusive approach to education that also caters for the psychological needs of students - an approach which is now strongly advocated by various educational policies (e.g., Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999).

**Discussion and implications of findings**

The findings of the present study reveal that school psychology is a fascinating, unique and dynamic area of psychological practice. It is also a challenging profession and school psychologists need to be highly professional and multi-skilled as they apply their expertise and knowledge to assist their student-clients, who present with a multitude of problems and concerns. From the results of the present study, it would seem that a day in the life of a school psychologist would never be dreary!

Student issues are wide-ranging and can very much reflect the developmental stage that they are at, therefore, school psychologists must have a good grasp of developmental theory as it relates to these earlier stages of the lifespan. Furthermore, student issues concerning problematic academic or social skills are also common, as are issues related to deeper concerns, some of which are diagnosed mental disorders or traumas related to difficult or tragic life experiences, or negative or dysfunctional family influences. As a result, school psychologists are required to possess extensive knowledge and understanding of child and adolescent disorders and issues as well as an ability to engage with children and young people in a positive and relaxed way. Furthermore, good local knowledge of appropriate referral sources is also required.

The findings of the present study also revealed that school psychologists are expected to work as part of a team within a school, to provide workshops to teachers and parents, to give one-on-one advice to teachers and school management and to assist families with issues that affect their child. Therefore, school psychologists also need to have excellent communication skills. They need to be knowledgeable about parenting styles and strategies, able to work with a broad range of people and personality styles, confident to present in front of a group and to run group programs and possess strong leadership qualities especially in regard to challenging existing practices in order to better the overall mental health of students and provide advice to teachers parents and school management. They also need to be effective crisis managers as they are called
upon to deal with students in distress or other unplanned incidents, efficient organisers and time-managers in order to juggle the many activities that make up their role and good clerical administrators as they manage appointments, write assessment reports and keep regular counselling records. Therefore, it is not surprising that a significant finding in the present study was that school psychologists are very busy and engaged in a variety of activities in their daily work. Furthermore, although the present study found that many school psychologists enjoyed the variety of activities that make up their role and felt personally inspired and rewarded by their work, many also indicated that they were somewhat emotionally exhausted by their roles.

A number of problematic professional issues emerged from this study. The most striking issue was school psychologists’ lack of appropriate supervision. In consideration of the findings regarding the professional activities and types of student issues that school psychologists deal with, there is no doubt that school psychologists require regular and high-quality supervision. Regular supervision means that school psychologists are not left to make important or difficult decisions in isolation, and are provided with an opportunity for collegial support and feedback in order to enhance, reflect upon and improve their work within schools. This is important because the principle of confidentiality means that they cannot always share such decision-making with fellow staff. The fact that so many were paying for it themselves, rather than employer-supported supervision, may point to a lack of understanding among some employers about the challenges and complexities that such a position entails and how supervision ultimately adds to job effectiveness, which in the long-term is of benefit to employers. The implication from this finding is that much needs to be done to inform the educational community about psychologists’ major ethical responsibility and professional need to engage in regular supervision. This is particularly pertinent for those working in the government system. It is interesting that school psychologists working in Catholic and independent schools participated in more supervision, were more likely to have their employer pay for their supervision, were more satisfied with their supervision arrangements and were more satisfied professionally than those working in the government system. Part of the solution to improving industrial conditions of school psychologists in general would be to focus on the areas that are working well, and school psychologists and principals working in non-government schools may be able to provide good examples of best practice and effective models of service delivery.
Similarly, discussion between the psychological profession and school administrators and other key people within the educational community about common ethical dilemmas faced by school psychologists, such as ‘who is the client?’ could take place. One aim would be to develop a deeper understanding of the complex dilemmas that school psychologists face especially when deciding on what is in the best interests of their clients, and to develop guidelines and policies which will assist in providing some structure around the school psychologist’s role. Emphasis could be placed on how practices, such as supervision and the development of appropriate policies and guidelines actually benefit the educational community. A common understanding amongst the educational community of the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists could be encouraged which would help to reduce role confusion and role incongruent expectations. Another reason to increase dialogue between the psychological and educational community would be for school psychologists to learn and understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of school administrators and teachers in order to develop common links and understanding between the two disciplines and to promote a multi-disciplinary team approach. This could be incorporated into professional development or other training programs for school psychologists and would help to reduce any ‘us and them’ approaches to school psychological practice (Beesley, 2004) and may even result in a modification of existing beliefs within the psychological profession itself regarding the responsibilities and roles of school psychologists.

The second most remarkable issue highlighted in the present study was the differences between multi-service and single-service school psychologists, and government and non-government school psychologists. It appears that Victorian government and multi-service school psychologists in particular are experiencing a host of problematic professional issues associated with their role. Compared to their non-government and single-service counterparts they participate in more time-consuming assessments and less program development and delivery, they are less satisfied with their supervision arrangements, they are less aware of the APS Standards for the Delivery of School Psychological Services (Australian Psychological Society, 2000) and in regard to government school psychologists they are less professionally satisfied with a range of aspects related to their role – particularly their office space, security of confidential files, their technological and psychological resources, and their budget allocation. The implications of these findings are that these psychologists may not
always be able to deliver as good a service as their non-government or single-service counterparts due to their inadequate industrial conditions.

There appears to be a host of benefits associated with servicing just one school. One is that single-service school psychologists usually serve fewer students. Because of this, they may be more likely to be more familiar with both the students and the teachers whom they serve. They are possibly more integrated and part of their school community and are likely to have a better understanding of their particular school’s organisational culture, ethos and systems. Students’ increased familiarity with their (single-service) school psychologist may help to explain the finding in the present study that single-service school psychologists worked more often with students who were presenting with issues relating to social anxiety and peer group conflict than multi-service school psychologists. Perhaps this result reflects the increased availability and visibility of school psychologists in single-service schools, and therefore students may feel that they can access them for support with issues that are still highly important, but that are less serious in nature (such as friendship group conflict). Likewise, for cases of social anxiety, students may be more likely to trust seeking support from a more familiar face than disclosing their anxieties to a school psychologist who they see infrequently (or tend to not see at all). In addition, school psychologists servicing just one school may have more time to deal with less crisis-driven student issues. Further research which explores students’ perceptions of school psychologists, as well as a comparison of student attitudes towards seeking support from school psychologists would be valuable.

Overall, regardless of school psychologists’ employment setting, they generally reported significant dissatisfaction with their budget allocation, the time that they have to do various activities in their role, and their pay and promotion opportunities. In consideration of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Framework (1977) it appears that, in order to improve the overall work conditions and job satisfaction of school psychologists, change is needed at the exosystem or political level, in the form of enhanced funding to improve working conditions (such as providing regular supervision and appropriate office space and resources), a review of current salary structures and career advancement opportunities and increased employment of psychologists in schools which may help to reduce the number of students that school psychologists serve. The latter is being currently promoted by the National Association of School Psychologists in the US (National Association of School Psychologists, 2000). However, changes to this extent in Australia will only occur if the service is valued as a
genuine and worthwhile service by politicians, as well as the public and educational community. Historically, it appears that school psychological services in Victorian government schools have barely survived due to the many educational policy changes that have occurred over the years. This is despite the continuing and overwhelming need for school psychologists’ expertise and services. A result of all these changes seems to be the deprofessionalisation of the school psychology profession as whole through initiatives such as the removal of specific training in school psychology and the removal of senior psychologists as managers and supervisors. This, coupled with worsened industrial conditions, which have been continually revealed in government reviews of the student support system within Australia (e.g., ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) further add to the burden. Merely conducting reviews is inadequate without implementing recommended changes.

The third major finding of the present study was that psychologists are in fact working systemically within schools as promoted in the school psychological literature (e.g., Meyers, 1995), in addition to engaging in traditional activities such as student counselling and assessments. In particular, school psychologists indicated that they were often providing advice to school management, meeting with teachers about individual students, providing advice to and even counselling parents. School psychologists also indicated a desire to have more time to develop and deliver student programs and to attend more meetings with other school psychologists. Interestingly, engagement in fewer counselling duties was also associated with fewer symptoms of burnout, which may mean that participation in systemic duties links the school psychologist with other professionals, increases role variety, reduces isolation and crisis driven work, and may result in them seeing more direct and observable positive outcomes.

One systemic activity that most school psychologists reported that they do not engage in is advocating for students through policy change. Similarly, the majority of principals also reported that they believed that school psychologists should not engage in this activity. However, as mentioned, there appears to be a need for school psychologists to become more vocal at a ‘political’ level in order to influence positive changes for the profession – if time would permit. In contrast, industry representative bodies such as the Australian Psychological Society may be better equipped and experienced in advocating on behalf of psychologists and the clients that they serve. They may be the more suitable spokespeople to represent the interests of school psychologists by engaging in discussion and dialogue with the educational community.
at the school and political level, especially in regard to improving industrial conditions for school psychologists.

It is a matter of concern that the majority of school psychologists indicated that they do not engage in designing and implementing research projects in their school. Although the present study did not ask school psychologists whether or not they published, a review of the Australian literature reveals that there is a significant need for more Australian research in this area. Similarly, there is also a need for more examples of school psychology in introductory psychology text books and in psychology training programs (Lucas et al., 2005). In addition to a lack of leadership within the profession itself to implement systemic and industrial change, a “lack of research and evaluation” (p. 281) was also identified as a widespread industrial problem in the international study conducted by Jimerson et al. (2004). Perhaps the range and intensity of roles that school psychologists engage in make this extra task very difficult to fulfill.

Finally, there is no doubt that much good work is being done within schools by school psychologists, as demonstrated by the overwhelming support for their presence in schools from teachers in the present study. However, the profession of school psychology must engage in empirical and theoretical debates regarding best-practice in order to promote itself as a valued and significant area, and to ensure that school psychologists engage in evidence-based practice. Australia has much to learn from the US, where school psychological literature is abundant, there are training programs in school psychology, and various school psychological journals are well established. In addition to more research concerning the professional issues of school psychologists, further Australian research that “listen[s] to the perspectives of students in order to be responsive to their needs, help them effectively deal with their problems when they arise, and enable them to have satisfying and beneficial interpersonal relationships” (Andrews & Violato, 2003, p. 3) is important. Therefore, such research should explore students’ attitudes towards school psychology and their experiences of effective (and ineffective) models of service delivery. In addition, evaluation research, such as student satisfaction surveys of their school counselling experience (ACT Department of Education Youth and Family Services, 2003) and the effects of school psychological interventions on outcomes such as academic performance and school connectedness would be worthwhile. An increase in practice-based research in this area, from school psychologists, consumers and other stakeholders’ perspectives will help to inform and shape the future of school psychology in Australia.
Limitations of study

There were a number of limitations associated with the present study. The most notable limitation was the smaller than expected sample size of Victorian school psychologists. Due to the absence of any ‘list’ of psychologists working in schools it proved to be somewhat difficult knowing just how many school psychologists actually worked in Victoria. However, considering that four hundred and fifty-two APS members are school psychologists, the current sample represents 18% of what may have possibly been achieved. Furthermore, the relatively small sample of principals was a further limitation. This makes it difficult to generalise to the rest of the Victorian school psychology and principal population and so further research in this area that replicates and expands upon the issues examined in the current study is recommended.

Although the scales used in the study obtained adequate reliability, the fact that they have only been used in the present study, in pilot form, serves as another limitation. Again, further research which replicates data obtained by the measures used in the present study would help to validate findings and provide increased confidence in using the same measures in other school psychological research. As noted in Chapter 3, a lack of standard measures used consistently across school psychology studies has been noted as a problem by Idsoe (2003) as this makes it difficult to compare findings between different samples.

In regard to the measures used in the present study, after the data was collected, a small number of items were identified as being in need of modification. Firstly, in the Role Consultation Scale (RCOS) the item which required school psychologists to indicate how often they engaged in supervision did not differentiate between ‘clinical’ supervision and ‘administrative’ supervision. These two types of supervision are discussed in the literature as being available to school psychologists (e.g., Barletta, 1996b). The type of supervision that the item was referring to in the present study was ‘clinical’ supervision. It seems that the term ‘supervision’ is a common phrase amongst psychologists and generally refers to supervision that is more clinical in nature. In any future research, however, it would be beneficial to differentiate between the two types of supervision in which school psychologists may possibly engage.

Secondly, in regard to the same scale mentioned above there was no item that tested the number of school psychologists who engaged in the supervision of others – particularly of other school psychologists. This would have been an interesting piece of
data and could be related to other studies which have found that school psychologists do supervise others (e.g., Bramston & Rice, 2000). A possible outcome from obtaining this information could be to assist in developing a database of school psychologists who are qualified and available to provide supervision to others. Less experienced psychologists may benefit from receiving supervision from psychologists who have first-hand experience and knowledge regarding the activities and responsibilities of the role, the challenges associated with working with minors, and an understanding of the dynamics of working therapeutically within a school environment with a variety of stakeholders.
CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

The current study provides a much needed Australian contribution to the psychological literature concerning the roles, experiences and professional issues of school psychologists. Furthermore, the study findings regarding the wide range of student issues with which school psychologists deal, the variety of professional activities in which school psychologists engage, and the overwhelming support expressed by teachers and principals for the presence of psychologists in schools provides a strong argument for the continued existence of school-based psychological services. It also indicates a need to value and support school psychologists in the beneficial work that they do. The school psychological profession in Australia can only remain sustainable through improved industrial conditions, more research, better ethical guidelines and a greater understanding and appreciation among stakeholders regarding the roles and responsibilities of these professionals. If this is achieved the future of school psychology in Australia will show greater potential and school psychologists can continue to do what they do best, assisting in the creation of safe and healthy school environments and helping students to achieve academically, socially and emotionally in the sometimes difficult time of growing up, providing advice to families, building positive links between school and home, and supporting teachers and principals in their key roles.

Finally, and in the words of the National Association of School Psychologists (2005):

*Children carry more between home and school than their lunch and a backpack; working together we can lighten their load.*
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

School Psychologist Survey
Teacher Survey
Principal Survey
APPENDIX B

The Percentage of Psychologists, Teachers and Principals
Who Agree and Disagree with Each Item on the SPRM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Psychologist</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The school psychologist should...</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=81</td>
<td>N=21</td>
<td>N=88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist teachers in handling discipline</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer discipline to students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Include counselling in disciplinary procedures</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research on school issues</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be up to date on relevant research</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct IQ assessments</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct psychological assessments</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Fudge’ IQ results to receive funding for student</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling and Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide counselling to students</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be the main contact for student problems</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide career guidance to students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel teachers</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge a fee to teachers for counselling</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel students’ families</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise group programs for students</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide workshops to teachers</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide general information to teachers</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be the referral agent within the school</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let referring teacher know about student*</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow teachers to access counselling records</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform teachers of student’s attitudes about them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make IQ reports available to relevant teachers*</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform teachers of students’ receiving counselling*</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform primary student’s parents of counselling</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform secondary student’s parents of counselling</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform parents of student’s behaviour</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach subjects as well as counsel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate counselling for some students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not give advice to sec. student against school</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not give advice to secondary student against parents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A = Agree, D = Disagree (‘agree’ and strongly agree’ responses were added to form the agree category, and ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ responses were added to form the disagree category. Please note there was an additional category, ‘undecided’, and this is not included in the above table).

* For these items most psychologists wrote on the questionnaire that they would do this only if the student had given informed consent and then would only disclose minimal information.
APPENDIX C

Publications produced by the candidate as a result of the project

Refereed Journal Articles


Manuscripts in Press


Conference Presentations


Thielking, M. (September, 2005). *Professional issues associated with the role of school psychologists*. Presentation as part of a professional forum on the issues related to school psychology at the Australian Psychological Society Fortieth Annual Conference, Melbourne.