Job Satisfaction, Burnout, Occupational Intentions, and Stress Coping Styles among Illinois School Psychologists

Courtney Ratliff

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

JOB SATISFACTION, BURNOUT, OCCUPATIONAL INTENTIONS,
AND STRESS COPING STYLES AMONG ILLINOIS SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT
TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY
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For my brilliant daughter
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ABSTRACT

There is a long-standing shortage of school psychologists (Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2004; McIntosh, 2004; Fagan, 2004; Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014). A shortage that allows the social, emotional, and academic needs of American school-children to go under served. To understand better the working conditions that may contribute to this shortage, a sample of Illinois school psychologists were surveyed. The aim of this study was fourfold. First, to collect rates of job satisfaction, the experience of burnout, and the five-year occupational intentions of school psychologists. Second, to measure the rates of occupational stress coping styles. Third, to build a model, using hierarchical multiple regression, to predict stress coping with rates of job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and age. Lastly, when age was found to be a predictor of coping style, the relationship of generational cohort was compared to occupational coping style. This study indicates that job satisfaction is high among Illinois school psychologists. Yet, these school psychologists experience a number of the symptoms of burnout. Although school psychologists were found to employ mostly positive coping strategies, younger school psychologists, belonging to the Millennial generation when compared to Generation X, were more likely to endorse an avoidant coping style.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Psychologists in Schools

The retention of trained school psychologists is of great importance as the number of children in American public schools continues to grow, reaching approximately 52 million by 2027 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) notes that this burgeoning population of youth will be increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically. Furthermore, additional students also indicate an at least proportional growth in issues related to poverty, homelessness, and mental health (NASP, 2017). As professionals, trained in both mental health and learning, school psychologists are uniquely qualified to support these very needs (Armistead, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, & Cunningham, 2013).

Additionally, the presence of school psychologists in schools has been associated with the maintenance of a healthy school ecology by improving teacher resilience (Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris, 2016). School psychologists are sources of expertise in educational research, behavioral and academic consultants, as well as advocates for teachers (Anderson, Klassen, & Georgiou, 2007). These benefits are all in addition to the common conceptualization of school psychologists as the individuals responsible for the evaluation and determination of entitlement to special education for students with disabilities. In this traditional role, school psychologists also deliver essential services
mandated by federal and state laws, keeping their employers in compliance (Tharinger & Palomares, 2004). To summarize the importance of psychologists in schools, school psychologists provide prevention and intervention services to individuals, groups, or systems, in collaboration with stakeholders, while using research and data to inform decision-making, all viewed through a lens of cultural competence.

**Research Problem**

Regrettably, there is a long-standing shortage of school psychologists (Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2004; McIntosh, 2004; Fagan, 2004). The most recent estimates suggest that this shortage will persist through at least 2025 (Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014). Due to this shortage, the needs of school-aged children and the organizations that educate them are underserved. Consequently, the question of the importance of understanding the shortage of school psychologists, their working conditions, and ultimately, their reasons for attrition are, in fact, an issue of social justice. To be precise, the unmet social, emotional, and academic needs of American school-children and the lack of support in public schools is an issue of equity. Understanding this lack of service makes the issues examined in this study of great significance to all educators, as well as to any individual interested in the achievement and mental health of American children.

**History of the Shortage**

The under service of schools and children, as it relates to the stress and working conditions of those meant to serve, is the central focus of this research. However, to end the discussion there oversimplifies the complexity of the shortage and ignores the history of the profession. A brief explanation of the history and intricacy of this long-standing
personnel shortage, which has left children in need, will illuminate current trends in the light of the past, as well as demonstrate the place in the record for the present study.

Fagan (2004), who is likely the foremost expert in the history of school psychology, has outlined the shortages to the inception of the profession. According to Fagan, early thinkers did not begin to consider the number of school psychologists necessary to meet the needs of children until the 1930s. Yet it was not until the 1940s that this thinking was quantified into the ratios recognizable today. The very first ratio recommendation, given in 1942, was for one psychologist per every 3,000 students. Later, this ratio was reinforced at the Thayer Conference in 1954 and with this recommendation, the shortage was first quantified. However, as Fagan (2004) explained, these early shortages were viewed with “no sense of alarm” (p. 422).

The current era of school psychology familiar to present-day practitioners was ushered in with the passage of P.L. 94-142 the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which has since been reauthorized under the title of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004. Fagan (2004) clarifies that although “there has never been a time when the supply of school psychologists was sufficient to meet the demand” (p. 419), the shortage following the passage of P.L. 94-142 began to raise some alarms. In addition to amplifying the need for school psychologists, P.L. 94-142, according to Castillo and his associates (2014), “intensely refocused the field on its origins related to testing and special education” (p. 833). Although, psychoeducational evaluation has always been part of the school psychologists’ skill-set, the pressure to perform excessive assessment is something which
many psychologists have long believed is only a small portion of the overall services they can provide.

Prior to the passage of P.L. 94-142, Sarason (1973) described the demand for excessive assessment as the “prison of the test” saying, “school psychology was born in the prison of the test, and although the cell has been enlarged somewhat, it is still a prison” (p. 587). NASP has not remained silent on the misconception of school psychologists as solely psychometricians, creating the Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services, more commonly known as the NASP Practice Model (Skalski et al., 2015). This model emphasized the skills of trained school psychologists in prevention, systems analysis, cultural competency, community-school collaboration, as well as the ability to administer, interpret, and report individual evaluation results. To accomplish this level of service outlined in the model, NASP (2010) recommended a staffing ratio of one psychologist per 500 to 700 students and not to exceed a ratio of one per 1,000. Unfortunately, the most recent estimate of the actual ratio provided through the NASP Membership Survey suggests that the ideal ratio has not been attained. Rather, as of the 2014-2015 school year, it is estimated to be 1: 1,381, (Walcott & Hyson, 2018).

Training and Credentialing

The shortage of school psychologists is a more dynamic issue than simply the supply not meeting the demand. For example, although there is a national shortage, the shortage is often worse in rural areas (Clopton & Knesting, 2006). Additionally, the interplay of complex concerns, such as who can be credentialed as a school psychologist and after how much training, as well as the working conditions related to legislation,
affect the ability of the field to meet the needs in schools. Furthermore, there are a number of demographic trends that also interact with these aforementioned matters.

There has long been debate over the appropriate training standards and credentialing for school psychologists. Some experts advocate for the allowance of clinical or counseling psychologists to practice in schools (Tharinger & Palomares, 2004; Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2003). Other authorities agree with the potential of these resources, but maintain that any psychologist wishing to practice school psychology must obtain a certain minimum level of additional training specific to the field (Crespi & Politikos, 2004). Regardless of this debate, current estimates suggest that 80% of school psychologists report completing at least 60 graduate semester hours in school psychology (Castillo et al., 2014) and 87% report obtaining certification to practice as school psychologists in their respective states (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This indicates that the majority of current school psychologists are trained as such, and that the discussion of other professional psychologists practicing school psychology, possibly lessening the shortage, remains only a discussion.

Furthermore, doctoral-level-only training was predicted to be the future by Brown (1989), endorsed by the American Psychological Association (APA), but it was not what happened. Rather, over the years, the field appears to have found a middle ground in the specialist degree. According to the NASP Membership Survey completed in 2015, 54.9% of school psychologists held a specialist-level degree, which represents a 27 percentage point increase from the survey conducted in 2000 (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This growth in professionals trained at the specialist-level has been credited with staving off the shortage of practitioners (Davis, McIntosh, Phelps and Kehle, 2004), but not of trainers,
who are often required to obtain doctoral degrees (Clopton & Haselhuhn, 2009; Little & Akin-Little, 2004). Also, according to the most recent NASP Membership Survey, there has been a decrease of 5.5 percentage points in the number of school psychologists with a doctoral degree since 2000 (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This particular facet of the shortage limits the ability of the profession to conduct academic research (Krotochwill, Shernoff, & Sanetti, 2004), as well as to expand training programs to train any level of school psychologist, creating a bottleneck in the supply of new psychologists at the university.

**Demographic Trends within the Shortage**

In addition to training and credentialing, there have been dramatic changes in the gender of psychologists, as the majority of school psychologists are now female (83%) (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This pattern, termed the “feminization of the field”, appears stable, as men retire at a faster rate, as well as the percentage of females in training programs has remained around 80% for approaching 20 years (Castillo et al., 2014). On the surface, a gender disproportionality may appear unimportant, since females, unquestionably, are as capable as males and vice versa. However, when the imbalance leans female in a country with historical sex discrimination, a trend toward feminization can leave the profession vulnerable to sexism. One study of female academicians indicated that the work climate in school psychology was generally positive and free of sexual harassment, but these women still reported disparities in salary and respect at the university level (Akin-Little, Bray, Eckert, & Kehle, 2004). In relation to the topic of the shortage, the primary concern with any suboptimal working condition, like sexism, is that it could exacerbate the shortage.
The most recent survey of NASP members, conducted in 2015, shows the first instance of a reduction in the mean age (42 years) of psychologists since 1990. However, the mean age has not returned to the level of 1990, which was 39 years-old (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). Although, this recent evidence may be a good sign that the aging trend, often referred to as the “graying” of the profession, could be at an end, this trend persisted for at least 25 years. In general, an aging workforce signals a large number of psychologists readying to retire. More retirements would aggravate the shortage. Although recent indicators are good, the field must continue to monitor this trend closely because, as Curtis and his associates (2004) presciently commented in their estimates of the shortage in the early 2000s, “any number of unanticipated developments… could dramatically alter our path and lead to a future not even considered” (p. 409). Writing in 2004, Curtis and his associates could not have anticipated the Great Recession, a phenomena Castillo and colleagues (2014) attributed to a delay of retirements as older psychologists worked longer for financial reasons, possibly preventing a large number of psychologists retiring en mass and exacerbating the shortage.

Lastly, although there have been several demographic changes among those individuals who practice school psychology, some demographics have remained stagnant—school psychologists remain, as they have always been, mostly white and monolingual. As of 2015, approximately 87% of school psychologists identified themselves as Caucasian (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This represents a reduction in the percentage of white psychologists measured in the recent past. In the 1990 survey, 94% of school psychologists identified themselves as white. However, it is nowhere near the parity advocated by some (Zhou et al., 2004). As Proctor, Nasir, Wilson, Li, and Castillo
(2018) suggest, without adequate representation, the field will struggle to best meet the specific needs of racially and linguistically diverse students. This is of importance, considering the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) projects that by 2044, the United States will be majority minority and that this shift is anticipated to occur in children by 2020.

While the field can little afford to discourage white practitioners, or older psychologists, or females, or require that all be trained at the doctoral-level, no one endorses the exclusion of any individual from entering the profession. Nevertheless, demographics are indicators of the overall health and vibrancy of the field, which is of utmost importance when considering the ability of the profession to meet the needs of American children. Demographic shifts, or lack of change, as is the case with racial and linguistic diversity, combine to make the shortage more complex than the simple calculation of supply less demand. In some cases, there are too many of a type of school psychologists, specifically white females trained at the specialist-level, but too few overall.

**Relationship of the Shortage to Working Conditions**

The shortage of school psychologists is well-documented and much is known about why this shortage persists. However, relatively little is known about those psychologists who leave the field for reasons other than retirement; an occurrence known as attrition. Reschly (2000) commented on the lack of study on this topic saying, “to my knowledge, no systematic study of attrition has been published” (p. 511). Reschly (2000) did, however, offer an estimate of 5% as the likely rate of attrition. This estimate was used in 2004 by Curtis and colleagues when they reviewed the current trends in school psychology at that time. Most recently, this estimate was again used in 2014 by Castillo
and his colleagues when they sought to quantify the shortage of school psychologists. By the calculations of Castillo and associates (2014), given an attrition rate of 5%, approximately 2,000 school psychologists are lost from the field each year. Two-thousand may not seem like a large number. However, 5% is exactly double the percentage of the projected shortage in the year 2025 (Castillo et al., 2014), suggesting that if half of the estimated loss could be prevented, there would be no shortage in 2025. Some have posited probable reasons for attrition, such as the acceptance of a position in school administration, or as trainers in universities, hospitals, or medical clinics (Curtis et al., 2004). Despite these educated opinions, the reason the field loses an estimated 5% of trained psychologists each year is actually unknown, although Reschly’s estimate has been long accepted as the rate.

Given the lack of understanding, of not only the quantity of attrition from the field, but the quality of the working conditions that may prompt professionals to leave prematurely, a better understanding of these issues seems warranted. The field simply cannot afford to lose trained psychologists. As discussed throughout this introduction, a long-standing shortage of school psychologists prevents school-aged children from receiving the necessary academic, behavioral, and emotional supports they need to become healthy adults and productive citizens. One method of easing the shortage is to encourage trained psychologists to remain active. The first step in encouraging them to continue may be to better grasp why they leave. Conditions such as job satisfaction, rates of burnout, reports of the intention to leave the profession, and occupational stress coping styles are factors which may affect attrition rates.
Job Satisfaction

Research on job satisfaction began in the mid-1980s (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown et al., 1998) and continued steadily until the early 2000s (Worrell, Skaggs, & Brown, 2006). These studies predominately indicated that school psychologists report a high degree of job satisfaction in general. However, younger school psychologists were found to report less satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984). Research also indicated the consistent dissatisfaction with opportunities for advancement and school district policies (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1998; Worrell et al., 2006). Since age as well as the lack of potential for advancement and employer policies were identified as reliable indicators of dissatisfaction, it is reasonable to suspect that these factors may somewhat explain early exit from the field and contribute to the national attrition rate.

Burnout

The bulk of the research on the condition of burnout among school psychologists was conducted by a handful of researchers, spanning approximately a decade, from the late 1980s to the late 1990s. Similar to the research on job satisfaction, increased burnout was often associated with youth (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Huebner, 1993a; Huebner & Mills, 1997; Mills & Huebner, 1998), meaning older psychologists reported less burnout than younger individuals. More recent work by Schilling, Randolph, and Boan-Lenzo (2018) found that 90% of school psychologists reported experiencing burnout at some point in their career; highlighting how common the condition is among psychologists. As occupational burnout has been found to be both
common and to have an inverse relationship with age, it seems that age, as well as burnout, may help explain the attrition of trained school psychologists.

**Occupational Intentions**

The majority of the research on job satisfaction among school psychologists also examined the occupational intentions of the respondents to remain in their current position, find a new position, or to leave the field entirely (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006; Schilling & Randolph, 2017; Schilling et al., 2018). Two early studies, using national samples, demonstrated that the intention of a psychologist to remain in their job was predictive of job satisfaction (Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006). Given both the established relationship of occupational intentions and job satisfaction, as well as the simple logic that if a psychologist reports the desire to leave the field—they may—it seems plausible that occupational intentions will further add to the understanding of attrition.

**Occupational Stress Coping**

The strategies that school psychologists employ to cope with occupational stress has not been thoroughly explored. Recently, there has been international research on the coping styles of school psychologists (Mackonienė & Norvilė, 2012), in addition to some interest in the United States. In the United States, Schilling and his colleagues (2018) identified several ways that psychologists cope with occupational stress, including, talking to coworkers (74%), changing the perceived cause (54%), self-distraction (54%), talking to family (54%), talking to friends (54%), and some other behavior (43%) (i.e., yoga, meditation, medication, or exercise). These descriptive findings, while helpful in
beginning to understand how school psychologists cope with occupational stress, do not explain the potential relationship between coping and other variables, such as job satisfaction, burnout, and the report of occupational intentions. Further study is needed to predict coping styles by the relationship to potential risks as related to working conditions (e.g., job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions).

**Statement of Purpose**

The aim of this study was to collect updated rates of job satisfaction, the experience of burnout, and the occupational intentions of school psychologists in Illinois. This study also measured the rate of four different types of occupational stress coping styles (i.e., social support, problem solving, avoidance, and positive thinking). This study used rates of job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and age to predict four coping styles. Lastly, when age was found to be a predictor of coping style, the relationship to generational cohort was examined. This relationship is particularly important to understand, since Millennials, the youngest generation of school psychologists, may have unique risk factors, as well as potential.
**Research Questions**

This study was designed to measure the following:

1. What are the current rates of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions (e.g., expect to stay in current job, change position, leave the field, etc.) of school psychologists in the State of Illinois?

2. What are the rates of the occupational stress coping styles, social support, problem solving, avoidance, or positive thinking, among school psychologists in the State of Illinois?

3. Do levels of job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, or age of the practitioners predict any of the four coping styles?

4. If age is predictive of any of the coping styles, does generational membership further explain differences in coping styles?
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose of Literature Review

The intention of the following section is to: (a) review the historical literature on job satisfaction and the experience of burnout among school psychologists, (b) to examine recent research with other professions in order to fill the void in research with school psychologists, (c) to summarize the most recent literature on the occupational stressors experienced by school psychologists, and finally, (d) to demonstrate the need for further investigation of job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and coping among school psychologists. This research is of importance, as the shortage of school psychologists has proven persistent (Castillo et al., 2014) and the reasons for attrition are not fully understood (Reschly, 2000). Furthermore, and as will be explained, research from other professions suggests that Millennials, the youngest generation of practicing psychologists with the largest number of potential years of service, may be at greater risk for lower job satisfaction, higher rates of burnout, and possess fewer productive coping skills, all of which may lead to a desire to leave the field. As the generation poised to serve in the field the longest, there is a strong need to understand how to retain Millennials in the practice of school psychology.

Review of Historical Understanding of Job Satisfaction

In 1984, Anderson and associates completed the first national study of job satisfaction among school psychologists. The second national survey was conducted in
1992, by Brown and associates (1998). Worrell and colleagues (2006) completed a third national survey of school psychologists’ job satisfaction. All of this historical research was conducted using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) as the measure of job satisfaction. The MSQ is a paper-pencil survey that was designed based on the Theory of Work Adjustment (Weiss et al., 1967). The long-form of the MSQ, with some minor modifications, has been used in national studies of job satisfaction among school psychologists (e.g., Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; & Worrell et al., 2006).

This body of research indicated that school psychologists enjoyed a high degree of job satisfaction. The first study of job satisfaction among school psychologists, utilizing a randomly selected sample (n = 245) of school-based practitioners, showed overall high rates of satisfaction; 81% were satisfied and 5% were very satisfied. Furthermore, a regression model indicated that age and psychologist-to-student ratio were predictive of job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984). Using a very similar method to that employed by Anderson and colleagues (1983), Brown and associates (1998) also analyzed the report of job satisfaction among school psychologists as well as identified the predictors of job satisfaction. Results of their study of school-based practitioners (n = 228), indicated that the vast majority (92%) of psychologists who participated were satisfied with their job. However, the regression model demonstrated somewhat different predictors than previous studies. The authors used four demographic categories to predict job satisfaction; gender, national certification, participation in private practice, and intention to remain in one’s current position. Brown and his associates (1998) found that
together, those four independent variables accounted for 11% of the variance in job satisfaction.

Finally, and consistently, Worrell and colleagues (2006) found similar results in their randomly selected sample of school-based practitioners (n = 234), 84% of school psychologists reported being satisfied and 7% indicated they were very satisfied with their jobs. The model of Worrell and associates (2006) indicated that the intent to remain in the profession and credentials of their supervisors were both predictors of job satisfaction. Historical findings consistently have demonstrated that school psychologists are predominately satisfied with their work. Conversely, the predictive relationship between job satisfaction and demographic characteristics, such as age, has varied between investigations.

**Historical Sources of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**

Historical evidence has also indicated which aspects of their job school psychologists are the most satisfied. Brown and colleagues (1998) indicated that school psychologists were the most satisfied with autonomy, importance of their work, and the relationships with their colleagues. Similarly, Worrell and colleagues (2006) reported that social service, independence, and overall alignment with their values were the facets with which school psychologists were most satisfied. Of substantial importance to the present study is the relationship between age and job satisfaction. Anderson and colleagues (1984), as well as Brown and associates (1998) both found a predictive relationship between age and reduced job satisfaction; meaning older practitioners endorsed higher job satisfaction.
There was also consistency with the conditions with which school psychologists reported dissatisfaction. Anderson and colleagues (1984) indicated that school psychologists were most dissatisfied with a lack of opportunities for career advancement and school district policies. Brown and associates (1998) and Worrell and colleagues (2006) replicated these findings, again affirming, school psychologists were often displeased with their professional potential for advancement as well as with the policies of their employers.

**Implications of Historical Research on Attrition**

When noting the implications of this historical knowledge on the present study, it is important to recall that the long-accepted rate of attrition for school psychologists is 5% loss per year (Reschly, 2000), and that the shortfall in 2025 is estimated to be 2.5% (Castillo et al., 2014); which is exactly half of the estimated rate due to attrition. Findings from the existing three national surveys indicated that school psychologists intended to leave the field at a rates approaching the estimated 5% of attrition. Specifically, 15% in 1982 (Anderson et al., 1984), 8% in 1992 (Brown et al., 1998), and 15% in 2004 (Worrell et al., 2006). These findings appear to indicate that the field has lost approximately 5% of practitioners each year due to attrition illuminating, at least in part, the reason for the continuation of the shortage.

**Historical Understanding of Burnout**

**Clarification of Construct and Measurement**

Although the term “burnout” is often used in the vernacular, as a research term it is easily misunderstood. Burnout is not a stand-alone mental health diagnosis recognized
in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is, however, recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO), and was listed in the most recent International Classification of Diseases (ICD) as an "occupational phenomenon" (World Health Organization, 2018). As defined by the Mayo Clinic (2012), job burnout is a type of work related stress that results in a state of exhaustion, both physical and emotional, ultimately resulting in a lack of occupational identity and reduced feelings of accomplishment. Despite the lack of official codification, the most common conceptualization of burnout was created by Maslach (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Maslach and Jackson (1986) published the widely used instrument for assessing burnout, which they named the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

**Review of Historical Research on Burnout Among School Psychologists**

One of the earliest studies on the condition of burnout among school psychologists was conducted in 1988 by Huberty and Huebner. This national study was the second use of the MBI with school psychologists and was exploratory in nature. This investigation defined a lack of role clarity, heavy caseloads, as well as inter/intrapersonal pressure as positive correlates with burnout. More specifically, job/role definitions (27%), time constraints (8%), external (6%) and internal pressures (2%), and age (0.9%) were found to account for 44% of the variance when burnout was defined as the frequency of emotional exhaustion on the MBI. Similarly, job/role definition (19%), time constraints (8%), external (6%) and internal (2.5%) pressures, age (1%), and experience (1%) were found to account for 38% of the variance when burnout was defined as the intensity of emotional exhaustion on the MBI. Furthermore, they reported that the age of
the practitioner had a negative relationship with burnout, in that younger school psychologists were more likely to report higher rates of burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988).

Following this initial study, Huebner continued to conduct additional research on burnout throughout the next decade. In 1992, Huebner, using the MBI with a national sample (n = 139), found that one-third of school psychologists reported high emotional exhaustion, one-fourth reported low personal accomplishment, and approximately 10% indicated feelings of depersonalization. Beyond, descriptive data, this study was also designed to identify the predictive risk factors for burnout as measured by the MBI. Huebner (1992) accomplished this through a series of several multiple linear regression models using stressful duties specific to school psychologists (i.e., interpersonal conflict, risk to self or others, lack of resources, public speaking, time management, and travel hassles), as well as demographic categories (i.e., degree type, age, number of districts served, ratio, urbanicity, and number of psychologists employed in cooperative/district), as variables to predict burnout. From this analysis, Huebner (1992) reported that psychologists’ perceptions of their caseload, overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervision, and the desire to leave the profession were correlates to burnout (Huebner, 1992). In 1993, Huebner conducted another national survey of school psychologists (n = 245) and found that 25% of the school psychologists reported emotional exhaustion, 12% endorsed low levels of personal accomplishment, and 3% indicated experiencing depersonalization (Huebner 1993a). In 1994, Huebner published a third study of school psychologists (n = 114) indicating that social support, especially in the form of supervision, contributed to the well-being of psychologists.
Huebner and Mills (1997) conducted a study of the occupational stressors experienced by school psychologists (n = 225) using a longitudinal design, which spanned the majority of a school year. This study indicated that occupational “hassles,” such as report writing or time constraints, and “organizational conditions,” such as a lack of resources, were found to be more stressful than “high profile” stressors, such as student suicide (Huebner & Mills, 1997). Huebner and Mills (1998) continued to investigate both burnout and occupational stressors by adding the assessment of personality. In this study, they demonstrated that personality traits, specifically extroversion and agreeableness, had a positive relationship with burnout. In other words, the more outgoing and agreeable a school psychologist was, the more likely that individual was to experience occupational burnout. Huebner and Mills summarized these finding by saying, “burnout reports reflect both state and trait components” (1998, p. 116). As this study was longitudinal, the authors also found stability in the experience of stress, explaining that “many school psychologists begin the year feeling emotionally stressed and end the year feeling emotionally stressed” (Huebner & Mills, 1998, p. 116).

It is important for the present study to note that the effects of burnout have appeared most burdensome for younger psychologists. In one of the earliest studies, Huberty and Huebner (1988) identified age as a predictor of burnout. Later, Huebner found a similar predictive relationship between age and the experience of burnout in two subsequent studies, conducted in 1992 and 1993. In their research related to the topic of occupational stress, Huebner and Mills (1997) reported that younger psychologists indeed reported experiencing more stress. Finally, Mills and Huebner (1998) demonstrated a relationship between both age and years of experience and burnout in their expansion of
the research into the relationships with personality. Over the span of a little more than 10 years, and with the support of a few collaborators, Huebner collected the bulk of current knowledge on the topic of occupational burnout among school psychologists. Huebner has referred to existing research as “meager” and called for others to join him in the investigation (Huebner, 1993b). Unfortunately, others did not pick-up the mantle, and there seems to be an almost two-decade hiatus in research on this issue.

**Summary of Historical Findings.**

There was a time when research was more frequently conducted on job satisfaction and burnout among school psychologists. This research indicated that school psychologists predominately experienced a high degree of job satisfaction. However, job satisfaction was not experienced equally; age was correlated with a reduction in job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998). As for burnout, Huebner and his associates established that occupational burnout was a common experience among school psychologists and that age was associated with higher rates of burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Huebner, 1993b; Huebner & Mills, 1997; Mills & Huebner, 1998). The relationships between job satisfaction and age, as well as age and the experience of burnout, are of particular importance to the present study. However, as many things have likely changed in the practice of school psychology since the time when the majority of this research was conducted, it may not accurately represent current trends. The last national study of job satisfaction was completed more than a decade ago (Worrell et al., 2006) and the majority of studies on burnout were completed approximately 20 years ago (Mills & Huebner, 1998). Thus, current scientific knowledge
on the topic of job satisfaction and burnout amongst school psychologists is largely outdated.

Even more significant, the ways in which school psychologists cope with occupational stress and the relationship with job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and age has never been fully investigated. This paucity of knowledge is problematic as the shortage of trained school psychologists continues. Likewise, an increased understanding of these issues seems essential to interpret current rates of retention and attrition.

**Review of Current Investigations**

*Research with School Psychologists*

Since the mid-2000s and late-1990s when research into job satisfaction and burnout ended respectively, there has not been a total void of information, as some investigation into related topics has continued. Contemporary investigations have not been as focused as former research. However, popular occupational topics include excessive psychometric assessments, pressure to engage in unethical practice, and the emotional cost of practicing school psychology.

*Excessive Psychoeducational Assessments*

Unfortunately, the desire to do less standardized psychometric assessment is not new. Sarason (1973) voiced his frustration, calling excessive assessment “a conceptual and vocational strait jacket from which [the profession] is still struggling to free itself” (p. 585). Recently, a study by Unruh & McKellar (2013) showed that among school psychologists who were employed at sites that used Response to Intervention (RTI), many reported completing fewer initial evaluations than those at sites that did not utilize
RTI. Furthermore, they found that psychologists using RTI reported higher job satisfaction than those who did not. Unruh & McKellar (2013) explained these findings by saying, “fewer assessments and more expanded roles may help to account for [a] higher level of satisfaction... [as] psychologists tend to prefer such roles as consultation, counseling, interventions, and systems change” (p. 363). Similarly, in their study of 216 school-based practitioners, Filter, Ebsen, and Dibos (2013) found a discrepancy between actual and preferred job duties of school psychologists. They demonstrated that school psychologists wanted to engage more regularly in prevention and spend less time engaged in assessment and report-writing. This study identified time and administrative expectations as the greatest barriers to these preferred roles (Filter et al., 2013).

In 2010, NASP released the model of practice as one of the four pillars of professional standards for school psychology. The NASP Practice Model is comprised of two major principles; namely, professional practices and organizational principles. The professional practice is subdivided into 10 domains—three of which are foundational, two of which (data-based decision making and collaboration/consultation) are applicable to all service delivery, and the remaining five pertain to direct and indirect service delivery (Skalski et al., 2015). It is in the domains related to service delivery that seem congruent to the longs-standing objections of school psychologists to excessive testing. More specifically, three of the five domains of service delivery are related to school-wide systems; promoting practices that ensure learning for all students, prevention as well as responsive intervention, and supporting collaboration between home and school (Skalski et al., 2015). Time being finite, it seems unlikely that school psychologists are able to
engage in these school-wide practices, endorsed by the national organization, if they are otherwise occupied with excessive assessments.

Furthermore, given the positive relationship between age and job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998), as well as the inverse relationship between age and the experience of burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Huebner, 1993b; Mills & Huebner, 1998) established in historical studies, it seems reasonable to expect differences in occupational expectations, especially among those trained since the creation of the NASP Practice Model. This relationship has not been assessed directly, but what is known, is that older school psychologists are less likely than younger psychologists to select continuing development on contemporary methods of assessment (Armistead, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, & Cunningham, 2013). Recent studies have shown a discrepancy between school psychologists’ role expectations and others’ expectations of them (Filter et al., 2013) as well as pressure from administrators to engage in, what psychologists report as, unethical practice (Boccio, Weisz, and Lefkowitz, 2011).

Given recent changes to the philosophy of the practice of psychology in schools, reflected in the NASP Practice Model, it is reasonable to suspect that younger psychologists may have different expectations than older psychologists, as well as that psychologists may have differing expectations of their role in schools relative to other educators. Although, differences in occupational expectations have yet to be studied between those psychologists trained before the establishment of the NASP Practice Model and those after, older notions of the differences in expectations between generations, such as those expressed by Huebner and Mills (1997), who suggested that
“older school psychologists have developed better coping strategies or have resolved the excessive expectations of the novice” (p. 371) seem overly simplistic.

**Administrative Pressure to Practice Unethically**

Similar to concerns with excessive assessment, it has also been long known that pressure to engage in unethical practices has been identified as a stressor and source of dissatisfaction among practicing school psychologists (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006). Unfortunately, the prevalence of this occupational stressor appears quite high as more recently Boccio and colleagues (2011) found that almost one-third of practitioners experience such pressure. This common phenomenon has adverse effects for the psychologists who experience pressure from administrators, as Boccio and colleagues (2011) demonstrated a link between administrative pressure to engage in unethical practice and diminished occupational health. In fact, their research established that school psychologists who experience higher levels of administrative pressure report higher levels of burnout, less job satisfaction, and a greater desire to exit the field, compared to psychologists who do not experience such pressure.

**Exposure to Crisis and Secondary Trauma**

Beyond concerns with excessive testing and administrative pressure, there are emotional costs associated with the practice of school psychology. In 2017, Weaver and Allen published a study, using Hochschild’s theory of emotional labor, to further explain stress and coping among school psychologists (n = 192). According to Hochschild (1983), emotional labor occurs when employees suppress or force emotional expression to comply with the expectations of the work place (known as display rules). *Surface acting* is a dissonant behavior, where the underlying emotional experience does not
match the affective presentation, and has been associated with adverse emotional outcomes. In contrast, *deep acting* is the ability to better match the emotional experience with the appropriate affect, than done with *surface acting*. In their study, Weaver and Allen (2017) found that *surface acting* shared a positive relationship with burnout, accounting for a significant amount of the variance in emotional exhaustion ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$) and depersonalization ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$). A negative relationship between job satisfaction and personal accomplishment was also found with *surface acting* and similarly accounted for the variance in job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .02, p < .05$) and personal accomplishment ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$). Therefore, the authors argued that school psychologists who engaged in *surface acting* at work were more likely to experience burnout and decreased satisfaction.

In addition to exposure to work environments that may dictate the particular expression of emotions, school psychologists are also occasionally involved in school-based crises. Findings from a study of 200 school psychologists working in the state of California demonstrated that 86% of respondents indicated having been involved in at least one crisis. Furthermore, 90% of those individuals reported at least one adverse physical, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, or performance reaction—physical exhaustion being the most common (Bolnik & Brock, 2005).

Although psychologists are exposed first-hand to crises, they are more commonly exposed to the trauma of others. A more recent study of Australian school psychologists (Diehm, Mankowitz, & King, 2018) indicated that even this indirect exposure could result in symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. Figley (1995) began referring to this contagion phenomenon as secondary traumatic stress (STS). Among
school psychologists, Diehm and colleagues (2018) found that increased levels of exposure to a combination of secondary trauma, the clinician’s personal experiences with trauma, and perceptions of the resolutions of a client’s trauma were positively related to the symptoms of STS. There was no relationship between STS and age, or years of experience, indicated through this study. Social support of the practitioner was found to moderate the impact of increased exposure to secondary trauma (Diehm et al., 2018).

**Research with Other Educators**

Research on job satisfaction, burnout, and coping has been conducted with other groups of educators. Using a large sample of students ($n = 8,690$) and a longitudinal design, Banerjee, Stearns, Moller, and Mickelson (2017) examined the relationship between student achievement and teacher job satisfaction in four waves spanning over nine years (from 1999-2000 to 2006-2007). They reported a small, yet positive, relationship with teacher job satisfaction and student reading growth. However, the interaction of job satisfaction and school culture was shown to affect both math and reading achievement. As part of a larger study of the efficacy of positive behavior intervention and supports, Herman, Reinke, and Hickman-Rosa (2018) used latent profile analysis to determine patterns of teachers’ ($n = 121$) stress, coping, efficacy, and burnout. These profiles were linked to their students’ ($n = 1,817$) academic and behavioral performance. Herman and colleagues (2018) reported that the majority (93%) of the teachers reported high levels of stress and that teachers who expressed the highest stress, greatest burnout, and lowest coping skills were associated with the poorest outcomes for their students, specifically, low academic grades and increased behavior problems (Herman et al., 2010).
These studies represent a fraction of the research conducted with another group of educators—educators who share the same ultimate goal of student achievement, as well as working conditions and occupational stressors with school psychologists. These similarities make it plausible that the experiences (job satisfaction and burnout) and capabilities (coping) of school psychologists may ultimately affect educational outcomes as well. More importantly, it is also possible that school psychologists experience similar levels of stress as teachers.

Research with Non-Educators

In the absence of information from within the field of school psychology, occupational research in other similar roles may help to fill in the gaps. More specifically, studies have been conducted with nurses and service industry employees who are also in helping roles to examine the differences between generational cohort and job satisfaction, burnout, and coping skills.

Investigation of generational differences among nurses has been conducted recently. Nurses are a population similar to school psychologists in a number of ways. The most obvious comparison is that both psychology and nursing are helping professions and, as such, practitioners of either are exposed to crises, as well as secondary trauma. The risks for school psychologists (Bolnik & Brock, 2005; Diehm et al., 2018) were previously discussed in this review of the literature and are similar for nurses (Austin, Saylor, & Finley, 2017). Nursing is also a profession held primarily by women and has likewise experienced an aging of the workforce (Clendon & Walker, 2012), much like the field of school psychology. Furthermore, nurses, like school
psychologists, report the intention to leave the field in high numbers (Lavoie-Tremblay, Trépanier, Fernet, & Bonneville-Roussy, 2014).

Specific to generational cohort, a study by Stevanin, Palese, Bressan, Vehviläinen, and Kvist (2018), demonstrated that Baby Boomer nurses experienced lower levels of stress and burnout than did Generation X and Millennial nurses. Additionally, Baby Boomer nurses felt more competent with greater autonomy and control in their workplace than did Generation X or Millennial nurses. However, Stevinin and colleagues (2018) did not explain why these differences were found, other than acknowledging a theoretical belief in the existence of generational cohorts. They do make apt occupational recommendations based on the observed differences. Stevanin and colleagues (2018) recommend that nursing managers anticipate generational differences and modify their employment practices to meet the needs of each generation. Similarly, the authors suggest that training programs assess the needs of future nurses and adapt accordingly. Given the similarities between the two populations of helping professionals, it is reasonable to expect similar generational differences among psychologists. Furthermore, similar recommendations for adaptations to training programs or the workplaces of school psychologists may be appropriate.

Moreover, it has been asserted that major events, such as the Great Recession, that occurred between approximately 2007 and 2009, may affect generational cohorts differently, depending on the stage in life a cluster of individuals are at during said major event (Bennett, Beeher, & Ivanitzkaya, 2017). A study conducted with hospitality employees indicated that Millennials experienced lower job satisfaction and reported higher turnover intention than Baby Boomers (Lu & Gursoy, 2013). Utilizing a sample of
randomly selected adults over the age of 18 who resided in the continental United States, Brown, Richman, and Rospenda (2017) measured the degree of symptoms of anxiety and depression experienced by those individuals according to their generation. The authors also sought to measure the type of coping strategies used most by individuals in specific generational cohorts. Similar to Stevanin and colleagues (2018), Brown and associates (2017) ascribed to the belief that differences exist between generations, but they further asserted that the exposure to economic stressors, such as the Great Recession, impact those who are younger and who have fewer resources to weather the scarcity. This may disadvantage a particular generation permanently. Brown and colleagues (2017) postulated that the economic impact of the Great Recession could result in greater adverse effects for younger generations. Their study indeed indicated that when compared to Baby Boomers, Millennials expressed more anxiety and depression, as well as fewer active coping skills, than older generations.

**Summary of Current Investigations**

Following the foundational research into job satisfaction and the experience of burnout among school psychologists, related research with school psychologists has continued. Topics have included studies on excessive psychometric assessment, pressure to engage in unethical practices, and the emotional cost of practicing school psychology. Although these studies were meritorious, research on job satisfaction, burnout, and coping, as well as generational differences, have been recently conducted with other populations, while analogous research has not been completed with school psychologists. This absence of information creates a blind spot in the ability of the field to gauge the occupational health of its clinicians. Further study, especially on generational differences,
is important because the youngest practicing psychologists belong to the Millennial
generation. Individuals who, according to research by Brown and colleagues (2017), may
be prone to experience more anxiety, depression, and possess fewer active coping skills.
Further, they are more likely to experience frustration due to the gaps in their training and
practice when they enter the field. Considering the evidence that age is associated with
job satisfaction, this may present a double-threat to the occupational well-being of the
youngest psychologists and increase the risk of attrition in the field of school psychology.
It is worth emphasizing that the youngest practitioners are those with the greatest number
of years left to serve their communities and are the individuals who it is most vital to
retain, in light of the current shortage.

Renewed Interest and Recent Attention

The topics of job satisfaction, burnout, and coping have received recent attention in
countries across the world, such as Lithuania. Although there are obvious linguistic,
cultural, and legislative differences between Lithuania and the United States, Lithuanian
school psychologists are similar in a number of ways. In Lithuania, school psychologists
provide services within schools with a similar average psychologist-to-student ratio (1: 1,420),
they are predominately female (23: 1), and require a minimum of a Master’s degree (at least 60 credits) for entry into practice (Gintiliene, 2007). In 2012, Mackonienė
and Norvilė conducted a study of Lithuanian school psychologists and found that,
although they experience burnout, they also remain satisfied with their jobs (52% reported moderate satisfaction and 46% reported high satisfaction). Furthermore,
Mackonienė and Norvilė (2012) examined the coping styles of school psychologists, a
topic which has infrequently been the subject of inquiry. Interestingly, the authors
indicated no relationship between active coping and any variable, including age. This is especially curious since multiple studies in the United States have documented lower job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998) and higher rates of burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Huebner, 1993b; Mills & Huebner, 1998) among younger school psychologists. These differences may be due to many factors, including cultural differences in occupational habits. Regardless of the specific results, the fact that this study is one of so few certainly highlights the need for a better understanding of this topic, especially due to its conflicting results with studies conducted in the United States.

Schilling and Randolph (2017) recently investigated this issue in their first study of 38 Western Carolina University alumni who graduated in the previous 10 years and were currently practicing in the field. Schilling and Randolph (2017) also created a new measure, the School Psychology Satisfaction and Burnout Questionnaire (SPSBQ), as they were more interested in assessing the perceptions of burnout and job satisfaction among practicing school psychologists than using a measure validated on a different population. They asserted that the SPSBQ was necessary to measure the unique profile of factors that contribute to occupational satisfaction and burnout among school psychologists (Schilling & Randolph, 2017). Results of this exploration revealed that most (92%) of the sampled school psychologists reported some degree of current burnout. The average onset of burnout was reported to be within the first three to four years of practice, but all endorsed feeling some burnout at some time in their career, either in the past or at the time of the study (Schilling & Randolph, 2017).
Subsequently, Schilling and his associates (2018) conducted a study utilizing a larger sample size with 122 participants from four Southeastern states. Schilling and colleagues (2018) determined that it was best to use both the MBI, as well as the newly created SPSBQ. Similar to Schilling and Randolph (2017), the study by Schilling and colleagues (2018) indicated that a very high percentage (90%) of school psychologists endorsed experiencing occupational burnout based on this measure.

This recent study by Schilling and colleagues (2018) not only provides updated evidence on the present topography of the burnout condition among school psychologists, but it also shares new rates of practitioners’ desires to leave the field. Schilling and Randolph (2017) reported that 23% of psychologists indicated a desire to leave the field in their first analysis and 19% of respondents in their second evaluation (Schilling et al., 2018). These two studies may represent an increase in the current rate of the report of the desire to leave the field when compared to historical rates reported in the 1990s and 2000s. Rates from the historical studies were somewhat lower: 15% in 1982 (Anderson et al., 1984), 8% in 1992 (Brown et al., 1998), and 15% in 2004 (Worrell et al., 2006).

Schilling and colleagues (2018) also assessed coping strategies among school psychologists. They measured the variety of ways that psychologists report that they cope with burnout. Specifically, 74% reported talking to coworkers, 54% attempted to change the perceived cause of burnout, 54% distracted themselves, 54% indicated talking to family, 54% indicated they talked to friends, and 43% engaged in some other behavior (i.e., yoga, meditation, medication, or exercise).

The topics of job satisfaction, the experience of burnout, as well as the skills to cope are again garnering some much needed attention (Mackonienė & Norvilė, 2012;
Schilling & Randolph, 2017; Schilling et al., 2018). Recent studies confirm that despite continued reports of high job satisfaction, burnout persists—further indicating that job satisfaction and burnout are not mutually exclusive and may be concurrent conditions (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Schilling et al., 2018). Furthermore, results from the two most recent studies in the United States suggest that contemporary rates of burnout may be higher than those measured in the past. Schilling and his colleagues (2018) referenced the work of Worrell and associates (2006) and suggested that, “differences [in the report of burnout] may signify a generational shift, with practicing school psychologists now experiencing more burnout than even 11 years ago” (p. 328-329).

Gaps in the Literature

Beyond the desire to have happier school psychologists, further research is important to understand the factors contributing to the current shortage of qualified school psychologists today. A shortage in school psychologists negatively impacts the quality of service to children in schools across the country. This review of the existing literature is notable for gaps in several essential topics. First, with the exception of the studies by Mackonienë and Norvilë (2012), Schilling and Randolph (2017), and Schilling and colleagues (2018), there has simply been an absence of measurement of the rates of job satisfaction and burnout for at least a decade. Periodic updates in these rates are important in order to monitor the occupational health of the field. Second, intermittent updates of the occupational intentions of school psychologists, to either remain in, or leave the field, have not been conducted. This is of importance for reasons similar to the need for tracking the rates of job satisfaction and burnout. However, the assessment of occupational intentions is further needed as the field does not have a good estimate of
attrition (Reschly, 2000) and may never have one, since attrition is difficult to measure directly. Third, research on the effects that generational cohort may have on job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions have not been done with school psychologists, as it has been with other populations. This is critical, since it is plausible, based on research from other populations (Brown et al., 2017), that school psychologists from younger generations, especially Millennials, may experience less job satisfaction, higher rates of burnout, and possess fewer coping skills, all leading to higher than expected attrition rates that perpetuate a shortage in the field. Finally, very little research exists on the coping skills, or styles, of school psychologists. More research is needed to measure current rates, as well as assess the types of strategies school psychologists use to cope with occupational stressors.

The present study fills in some of the gaps in the literature, first by collecting updated descriptive data on the too-long neglected rates of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions. More importantly, this study gathered, for the first time, rates of occupational stress coping styles used by school psychologists. Building on the findings of other studies, this project used these new prevalence rates, to build four models of occupational stress coping styles, using job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intention, and age as predictors. Lastly, when age was found to contribute to the models of occupational stress coping, this study also measured generational differences.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The methodological structure of this study was a cross-sectional non-experimental design. The intention of this study was two-fold. The first intent was to collect updated rates of job satisfaction, the experience of burnout, and the occupational intentions (e.g., expect to stay in current job, change position, leave the field, etc.) of school psychologists in the state of Illinois. Secondly, this study was designed to build four discrete models of occupational coping styles. The dependent variable for each model was either social support, problem-solving, positive thinking, or avoidance; the four coping styles measured using the Brief COPE. The continuous predictor variables for each model were job satisfaction, burnout, and age. The categorical predictor variables were occupational intentions and generational cohort (when age was found to significantly add to the models). When used, the generation of psychologists currently working in schools was defined as Baby Boomers (individuals born between 1943 and 1960), Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981), and Millennials (anyone born after 1982), which are modeled after the cut-off dates used by Brown and associates (2016).

Participants

The population from which all participants was drawn was any school psychologist currently practicing in the state of Illinois with a publicly listed school email
address. The state of Illinois collects and publicly posts demographic and locational data for all public entities providing direct services to students in kindergarten through twelfth-grade. According to the most recent data collected by the Illinois Department of Education (ISBE), there are 3,993 public schools in the state (2019). School psychologists, with publicly posted email addresses, employed in those public schools were the potential participants of this study.

**Procedure**

**Sampling**

The method of sampling was a random cluster sample of school psychologists from all 3,993 public schools in the state of Illinois. Schilling and colleagues (2018) used an electronic survey of school psychologists on similar topics and received a 45% response rate. Taking this rate of response into account, the present study pulled an oversample of 600 schools, in order to achieve a sample size of at least 89 participants which is the minimum number for an acceptable level of type I error ($\alpha=0.05$) using hierarchical multiple regression with the number of independent variables used in this study. The rationale for the oversampling was to ensure that at least 89 participants were obtained, since many school districts do not post contact information, or do not have a school psychologist on staff.

Following selection, the website of the corresponding school was searched for the name and email address of any school psychologist employed at the selected school. The initial internet search contained the name of the school, plus the city and state, plus the words “staff directory” and “school psychologist.” If no name was found in association
with those search terms, efforts were made to locate the school psychologist under an analogous title. The specific terms used in further searching were “diagnostican,” “psychometrician,” and “clinician.”; however, none were found, and thus only individuals with the title school psychologist were included. Lastly, to ensure a thorough search for psychologists, associated with the selected school, district directories and student services/special education pages were also searched, if they were linked to the school page. If multiple psychologists were listed at one school, all were selected for participation. If none were listed, then the school was omitted.

**Recruitment**

Since the sample included practicing school psychologists, it was essential to take their busy schedules into account. Accessibility and ease of completion was important for participation. Therefore, a link to the survey via SurveyMonkey was emailed to the participants. SurveyMonkey is a cloud-based survey development and collection software that is available to participants across multiple devices (SurveyMonkey Inc., n.d.). In the email with the survey link (Appendix A), each participant was provided with a statement including (a) a brief summary of the intention of the study, (b) time expectations, (c) potential risks and benefits associated with completion of the questionnaire, (d) assurance that their participation was voluntary, (e) expectation for confidentiality, anonymity, and data security, and (f) contacts for the researcher, university supervisor, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Loyola University Chicago to answer any questions or address participant concerns. Following the presentation of this information, in the informed consent document (Appendix B), participants were asked to indicate if they consented to participate in the research by clicking either “yes” or “no.” Three full weeks
were allowed for data collection. One week after the distribution of the survey, a reminder email was sent (Appendix C). The same reminder procedure was repeated two weeks (Appendix D) after distribution and two days (Appendix E) before the closing of the survey.

Survey

The survey for this study was comprised of four research-based scales, as well as items to collect demographic data, including age and generational cohort. Cohort affiliation was measured using the cutoffs proposed by Brown and associates (2016). In total, the entire survey was 72 items in length (Appendix F). Job satisfaction was assessed via the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss, Davis, & England, 1967), burnout using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) (Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010), and coping using the Brief COPE Instrument (Brief COPE) (Carver, 1997). Recently, Schilling and Randolph (2017) constructed a tool, SPSBQ, specifically for school psychologists. This measure was used as a reference to update language in the MSQ, as well as to tailor the questions towards school psychologists. Additionally, instructions for all measures incorporated into this new tool were revised for continuity, as well as changed for clarity in an online format.

Job Satisfaction

Measurement of job satisfaction was conducted using the short-form of the MSQ. The long-form of the MSQ has historically been used in national studies of job satisfaction among school psychologists (e.g., Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; & Worrell et al., 2006); however, the full MSQ is quite lengthy (100 items), and given
that this study measured variables other than job satisfaction, a shorter-measure was argued here to be more appropriate.

The design of the short-form followed the construction of the long-form, which consolidated items into three scales: *Intrinsic Satisfaction*, *Extrinsic Satisfaction*, and *General Satisfaction* (Weiss et al., 1967). The MSQ (short-form) is a 20-item instrument with a five-point scale, which are as follows: 1 (*very dissatisfied*), 2 (*dissatisfied*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*satisfied*), and 5 (*very satisfied*). However, this scale was modified in research with school psychologists (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; & Worrell et al., 2006) by excluding the neutral indicator and linking each item to a number, one through four, so that higher numerical scores reflect more job satisfaction. This procedure was employed in the present study. The new anchors were as follows: 1 (*very dissatisfied*), 2 (*dissatisfied*), 3 (*satisfied*), and 4 (*very satisfied*).

The MSQ was also modified to make the language more reflective of the terms used by educators. For instance, the words “boss” and “supervisor” were changed to “administrator”, “company” to “district”, and “workers” to “staff”. The MSQ was also further modified based on the language from the SPSBQ, adapting the tool to the context of psychology in schools. Furthermore, specific language on satisfaction with salary, psychologist-to-student ratio, and the number of evaluations per year was also added to the MSQ, as Schilling and Randolph (2017) found these factors predicted burnout in their model. Hence, the MSQ item, which contained the word “pay”, was switched to “salary”. The item that requested participants to respond with their degree of satisfaction to “the working conditions” was modified to read, “the working conditions (e.g., psychologist-to-student ratio).” The item which reads in the original MSQ, “my pay and the amount of
work I do” was modified to read, “my salary and the amount of work I do (e.g., number of evaluations per year)” (Weiss, et al., 1967).

With specific modifications, the MSQ has historically been used as a measure, of job satisfaction among school psychologists. In one such historical study, Brown and associates (1998), reported excellent indicators of reliability (Intrinsic Satisfaction = 0.89, Extrinsic Satisfaction = 0.89, and General Satisfaction = 0.98). All three scales were used as measures of job satisfaction in the prospective study. Given the history of the use of the MSQ, documentation of strong reliability, as well as the proposed updates using the SPSBQ as a model, the MSQ was a good fit for the assessment of job satisfaction among school psychologists in the present study.

**Burnout**

The measure of burnout used in this study was the OLBI (Demerouti et al., 2010). The OLBI is a 16-item instrument with a four-point rating scale which were as follows: 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (disagree), and 4 (strongly disagree). The OLBI subdivides the 16 items into two subscales: Disengagement (8 items) and Exhaustion (8 items). Disengagement was assessed through agreement with statements such as, “this is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing”. Exhaustion was assessed with statements such as “when I work, I usually feel energized” (Demerouti et al., 2010).

The internal consistency ranged from 0.74 to 0.87 (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005). The test-retest reliability for the Exhaustion subscale is r = .51, p < .001 and r = .34, p < .01 for the Disengagement subscale (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005).

Furthermore, Mackonienė and Norvilė (2012) reported reliability coefficients of 0.71 for
the *Exhaustion* subscale, 0.76 for the *Disengagement* subscale, and 0.77 for the entire measure.

**Coping**

Measurement of coping styles was assessed with a modified version of the Brief COPE created by Carver in 1997. The Brief COPE is a 28-item instrument with a four-point rating scale which were as follows: 0 (*I haven't been doing this at all*), 1 (*I've been doing this a little bit*), 2 (*I’ve been doing this a medium amount*), and 3 (*I haven’t been doing this at all*). The original construction of the scale included 14 subscales: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, behavioral disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame (Carver, 1997). But, the 14 subscale construction made analysis unwieldy for researchers as well as practitioners. As such, a recent factor analysis was conducted by Baumstarck and colleagues (2017) on a sample of French cancer patients and their caregivers. Results of their analyses indicated an acceptable alternative 4-factor structure of the Brief COPE (Baumstarck et al., 2017). Following their study, Baumstarck and colleagues (2017) proposed the following 4-factor structure of the Brief COPE: social support (four original subscales: religion, emotional support, instrumental support, and venting); problem solving (two original subscales: active coping and planning); avoidance (five original subscales: self-distraction, denial, substance use, behavioral disengagement, and self-blame); and positive thinking (three original subscales: positive reframing, acceptance, and humor). For ease of analysis and clarification of interpretation, the new 4-factor structure of the Brief COPE was used in the present study.
The Brief COPE has been used to measure coping skills under a variety of stressful conditions. It was used by Brown and colleagues (2016) to measure stress related to the Great Recession, and was originally designed to measure coping in singularly stressful events, such as a natural disaster or serious illness (Carver, 1997). This made modification to some wording of the questionnaire necessary. Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub (1989) allowed for the conversion of verb tense from the original scale anchors to allow for the measurement of a “coping style.” The anchors were modified for tense, in order to reflect a style of managing workplace stress. Further, the four-point scale was also modified to start with one, and not zero, in order to maintain consistency with the other measures. The modified four-point scale was: 1 (I don’t do this at all,) 2 (I do this a little bit,) 3 (I do this a medium amount,) and 4 (I do this a lot.) Similarly, the tense of the items themselves was modified to reflect more of a pattern of behavior, rather than a response to a specific situation. For example, “I’ve been making jokes about it,” was changed to, “I make jokes about it,” and, “I’ve been expressing my negative feelings,” was changed to, “I express my negative feelings.” One other specific change to the Brief COPE was made for clarity. Specifically, the item that reads, “I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.” had the word “work” omitted and read, “I turn to other activities to take my mind off things” (Carver, 1997). This modification was necessary since the item was intended to measure avoidant coping behaviors. The inclusion of the word “work” in this item altered the intent and transformed the item into an active coping strategy.

No pertinent reliability or validity data is available for the Brief COPE for use with school psychologists. Carver (1997) reported acceptable internal reliability for all 14
scales. The new 4-factor variation as proposed by Baumstarck and colleagues (2017) was reported to have acceptable internal consistency: Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from 0.71 to 0.82 across the four subscales.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

All data was collected and stored via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey promised privacy protection, as well as secure data storage, of which all participants were informed and provided with a link to the full security statement from SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey Inc., n.d.). Following the closing of the survey window, all data was exported from SurveyMonkey into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to assess data. The descriptive methods were intended to answer the first and second research questions (see Table 1). Descriptive statistics were used to measure the current rates of psychologists’ reported job satisfaction, burnout, and intention to leave their job or the profession, as well as types of occupational stress coping styles.

To predict, the dependent variable, of the four occupational stress coping styles (social support, problem solving, positive thinking, and avoidance) of the Brief COPE, data was analyzed using a hierarchical multiple regression. The purpose of this analysis was to answer the third research question (see Table 1). As the dependent variable, coping styles, yielded four discrete styles of coping, each style was the dependent variable in a single model, and there were four total models, one for each style. Job satisfaction, burnout, and the intention to leave the field comprised the first step of the hierarchy. The second step in the model contained the independent variable of clinician
age. When age was found to significantly explain the variance in one of the four models of coping styles, follow-up analysis was conducted to examine if variability in age could be explained by generational cohort using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This analysis was intended to answer the fourth and final research question (Table 1). When age was shown to be a significant predictor of a coping style, this analysis was used to determine if individuals from different generations also differed on that style of coping.

Table 1

Alignment of Research Question to Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) What are the current rates of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational</td>
<td>descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intentions (e.g., expect to stay in current job, change position, leave the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field, etc.) of school psychologists in the state of Illinois?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) What are the rates of the occupational stress coping styles, social support,</td>
<td>descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem solving, avoidance, or positive thinking, among school psychologists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the state of Illinois?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) Do levels of job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, or age of</td>
<td>hierarchical multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the practitioners predict any of the four coping styles?</td>
<td>regression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.) If age is predictive of any of the coping styles, does generational</td>
<td>one-way analysis of variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membership further explain differences in coping styles?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

A random cluster sampling of 600 schools, from the 3,993 public schools in the state of Illinois, yielded a sample of 324 publicly available email addresses of school psychologists. Of the total 324 email addresses, 12 were returned to the researcher as undeliverable, resulting in a participant pool of 312. Of the 312 school psychologists who were emailed recruitment letters, 133 (43%) agreed to participate and 120 (38%) completed the survey.

Sample Demographics

The sample was predominately female (85%), with 14% identifying as male and one individual who identified as non-binary (1%). Participants ranged in age from 26 to 72. However most reported to be in early middle-age ($M = 39, SD = 9.6$). When using the generational parameters proposed by Brown and associates (2016), 4% of individuals were categorized as Baby Boomers, 39% as Generation X, and 57% as Millennials.

According to self-report, the majority of the participants in the sample who completed the survey indicated that they were trained at the level of an educational specialist (EdS). Specifically, 78% of participants indicated they had obtained an EdS, 12% of respondents reported holding a doctoral degree, 9% indicated they had a Master’s degree, and less than one percent reported their training level as “other”. Experience in
the field ranged from the first year of practice to more than 20 years of experience.

Twenty-six percent of respondents reported having between 1 and 5 years of experience, 31% between 6 and 10 years of experience, 20% between 11 and 15 years of experience, 6% between 16 and 20 years of experience, and 17% of individuals reported they had more than 20 years of experience (Figure 1).

*Figure 1. Percentage of sample by years of experience*

When asked to indicate the number of years in their current position, the majority (52%) indicated they had been in their current position between 1 and 5 years. Twenty-two and a half percent of participants reported being in their current position between 6 and 10 years, 15% between 11 to 15 years, 3% between 16 and 20 years, and 7.5% of school psychologists reported being in their current position over 20 years (Figure 2).
Results of Research Questions

Question 1: Rates of Job Satisfaction, Burnout, and Occupational Intentions

The rates of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions among Illinois school psychologists were examined to accomplish the first goal of this study. Job satisfaction was assessed using the short-form of the MSQ, which yielded three measures of job satisfaction: Intrinsic Satisfaction, Extrinsic Satisfaction, and General Satisfaction. The General Satisfaction index measured the combined constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction with the addition of satisfaction with supervision. Intrinsic Satisfaction measured satisfaction with the utilization of abilities, achievement, activity, advancement, compensation, coworkers, creativity, independence, social service, social status, and working conditions. Extrinsic Satisfaction measured satisfaction with authority, policies, recognition, responsibility, security, and variety (Weiss et al., 1967).

Burnout was measured using the OLBI, which was subdivided into two scales: Disengagement and Exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2010). Each of the subscales contained
eight items, some of the items were positively worded, while others were negatively phrased. According to the authors, *Exhaustion* measures “physical, affective, and cognitive strain, that is, as a long-term consequence of the prolonged exposure to certain job demands,” and *Disengagement* measures “distancing oneself from one’s work in general, work object, and work content” (Demerouti et al., 2010, p. 210-211).

Occupational intentions were measured by one item, which required participants to indicate their vocational plans for the next five years. This construct has been measured along with job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006; Schilling et al., 2018), but in a nonstandard way. For this study, participants had six options to indicate their 5-year occupational intentions (i.e., “I plan on staying in my current job,” “I plan on leaving for another job as a school psychologist,” “I plan on leaving my job for one in school administration,” “I plan on leaving my job for one in academia,” “I plan on leaving the field of school psychology entirely,” or “I plan to retire in the next 5 years”).

**Job Satisfaction**

Regardless of the measure, *General, Extrinsic,* or *Intrinsic* job satisfaction among Illinois school psychologists appears high. As shown in Table 2, half reported a “high” degree of *General Job Satisfaction*, 47% reported a “moderate” degree, and 3% reported job satisfaction in the “low” range. A majority (52%) of school psychologists indicated experiencing “moderate” *Extrinsic Job Satisfaction*, 34% reported “high” extrinsic satisfaction, and 14% indicated they had “low” extrinsic satisfaction. Similarly, a majority (70%) also reported “high” intrinsic satisfaction, 29% reported a “moderate” degree of intrinsic satisfaction, and only one individual reported scores in the range of
“low” intrinsic satisfaction (<1%). Although the respondents indicated they were both extrinsically and intrinsically satisfied with their work, it also appears that the sample endorsed a higher degree of intrinsic satisfaction.

Table 2

*Job Satisfaction Scales Summary Table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Low n (%)</th>
<th>Moderate n (%)</th>
<th>High n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSQ Extrinsic</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>17 (14.17)</td>
<td>62 (51.67)</td>
<td>41 (34.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSQ Intrinsic</td>
<td>22.57</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1)</td>
<td>35 (29.17)</td>
<td>84 (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSQ Total</td>
<td>41.55</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>4 (3.33)</td>
<td>56 (46.67)</td>
<td>60 (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In previous research (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006) the rates of job satisfaction were reported in ranges matching the response options (1 = *very dissatisfied*, 2 = *dissatisfied*, 3 = *satisfied*, and 4 = *very satisfied*). In order to accomplish this comparison, each response option was treated as a midpoint in a range and then multiplied by the total number of items in the scale (e.g., “very dissatisfied” becomes the midpoint in a range created through multiplying .5 and 1.5 with the number of total items in a scale). This procedure was repeated in the present study to facilitate the comparison with existing research. Using this second metric, the majority (78%) of school psychologists indicated that their job satisfaction fell in the “satisfied” range and a further 3% reported job satisfaction in the “very satisfied” range. Dissatisfaction was also indicated, as 18% reported job satisfaction in the “dissatisfied” range and less than one percent in the range of “very dissatisfied.” The rates of job satisfaction measured in this Illinois sample were similar to the rates reported in the historical national samples (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006).
Burnout

As shown in Table 3, the majority of school psychologists surveyed reported a “moderate” degree of burnout. The majority (77%) of participants indicated they experienced a “moderate” degree of Disengagement, 16% reported a “high” degree, and the remaining 7% indicated a “low” degree of Disengagement. Similarly, the majority (72%) of individuals reported a “moderate” degree of Exhaustion, 23% reported a “high” degree, and 5% reported a “low” degree of Exhaustion. This result demonstrates that although the school psychologists surveyed are generally satisfied with their jobs, they also endorsed experiencing the symptoms of burnout, such as disengagement and exhaustion.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Low n (%)</th>
<th>Moderate n (%)</th>
<th>High n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OLBI Disengagement</td>
<td>20.02</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>9 (7.5)</td>
<td>92 (76.67)</td>
<td>19 (15.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLBI Exhaustion</td>
<td>21.02</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
<td>86 (71.67)</td>
<td>28 (23.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Occupational Intentions

Based on the item requesting that practicing school psychologists indicate their occupational intentions in the next five years, nearly a quarter reported the intention to leave school-based practice. Seven percent reported they plan to retire, 8% reported the intention to leave school-based practice for a position in school administration, 3% reported the desire to leave for a position in academia, and 5% reported the desire to leave the field of school psychology entirely. The remaining respondents reported the desire to continue in school-based practice. Over half (58%) of the school psychologists
surveyed reported that they intend to remain in their current position for the next five years, and a further 19% of school psychologists reported that they plan to leave their current position for another job as a school psychologist.

**Question 2: Rates of Occupational Stress Coping Styles**

To answer the second question of the study, the occupational stress coping styles were assessed using the Brief COPE. To simplify analysis, coping styles were measured using the four categories indicated in a recent factor analysis of the original measure (Baumstarck et al., 2017). These categories were: social support, problem-solving, positive thinking, and avoidance. Social support included behaviors such as venting, seeking emotional or instrumental support, as well as engagement in religious practices. Problem-solving included active coping and planning. Positive thinking included the use of humor, positive reframing, and acceptance. Avoidance included maladaptive coping skills such as disengagement, self-distraction, substance use, denial, and self-blame.

Table 4

*Copin Scale Summary Table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Low n (%)</th>
<th>Moderate n (%)</th>
<th>High n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>20.97</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>11 (9.17)</td>
<td>79 (65.83)</td>
<td>30 (25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>4 (3.33)</td>
<td>55 (45.83)</td>
<td>61 (50.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Thinking</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3 (2.5)</td>
<td>72 (60)</td>
<td>45 (37.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>17.93</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>90 (75)</td>
<td>29 (24.17)</td>
<td>1 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, the majority of psychologists employ a “moderate” to “high” degree of adaptive strategies to cope with occupational stress. For social support, 66% of individuals reported that they use a “moderate” degree of social support strategies, 25% indicated a “high” degree, and 9% of psychologists reported a “low”
degree. The majority (51%) of respondents indicated using a “high” degree of problem-solving strategies, 46% reported a “moderate” degree, and 3% indicated a “low” degree. Similar to the results for seeking social supports and problem-solving skills, 60% of school psychologists reported a “moderate” degree of positive thinking, 37% endorsed using a “high” degree, and 3% reported using a “low” degree.

However, a quarter of the sample, reported engaging in a “moderate” degree of avoidance behaviors as a method of responding to occupational stress. One individual reported a “high” degree of engagement in avoidance (<1%). The majority (75%) of the respondents, reported they engaged in a “low” degree of avoidance behaviors.

**Question 3: Predictors of Occupational Stress Coping Styles**

To determine if job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intention, or age were predictive of the utilization of specific coping styles, four models were built using hierarchical multiple regression. Each model corresponded to one of the four types of coping: social support, problem solving, positive thinking, and avoidance. For all models, the predictor variables of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were entered into the first step of the model. Age was entered into the model, in the second step, to determine if any variance between the first three predictors was influenced by the age of the participants.

**Social Support**

Shown in Table 5, the first model was designed to predict the use of social support. The change in variance ($\Delta R^2$) accounted for in this step was equal to .02 and was found not to be significantly different from zero ($p = .74$). When age was entered into the model in step two, the further change in variance ($\Delta R^2$) was approximately equal to 0,
which was also determined not to be significantly different from zero \( (p = .65) \). Neither, job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, nor age appeared to predict a social support coping style among school psychologists.

Table 5

*Model 1: Social Supports Summary Table*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( B )</th>
<th>( SE )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
<th>( \Delta R^2 )</th>
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<td><strong>STEP 1</strong></td>
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<td>General Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disengagement</td>
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<td>.17</td>
<td>-.07</td>
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<td>Exhaustion</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational Intentions</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.66</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( B )</th>
<th>( SE )</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>STEP 2</strong></td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.65</td>
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</table>

*Items in bold are statistically significant at least a of p-value = <.05*

**Problem Solving**

Shown in Table 6, the second model was designed to predict the use of problem solving strategies. The same four independent variables (i.e., job satisfaction, disengagement, exhaustion, and occupational intentions) were entered into step one and accounted for 11% of the variance in problem-solving at a level of statistical significance \( (p = .01) \). When age was entered into the second model, in step two, the further change in variance \( (\Delta R^2) \) was approximately equal to 0, which was determined not to be significantly different from zero \( (p = .66) \). It appears that job satisfaction, burnout, and
occupational intentions predicted problem-solving coping style, but was not influenced by one’s age.

Table 6.

Model 2: Problem-Solving Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Job Satisfaction</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.65</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Disengagement</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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<td>Occupational Intentions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Items in bold are statistically significant at least at a p-value = <.05*

**Positive Thinking**

Shown in Table 7, the third model was designed to predict positive thinking as a coping style. The same four independent variables as the first two models were entered into step one. Together, the change in variance (ΔR²) accounted for in this step was equal to .07 and was judged not to be significantly different from zero (p = .07). In step two, when age was entered into the model, age was found to account for 5% of the variance in positive thinking at a level of statistical significance (p = .01). Although job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were not found to account for a meaningful amount of the variance in positive thinking, there appears to be a significant relationship when age was included as a predictor. Therefore, it appears that the variables in step one, job
satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions, only predicted positive thinking when age was part of the model.

Table 7.

Model 3: Positive Thinking Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>β</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tr>
<td>General Job Satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
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<td>-.12</td>
<td>.27</td>
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<td>.63</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items in bold are statistically significant at least a of p-value = <.05

Avoidance

Shown in Table 8, the fourth and final model was designed to predict an avoidant coping style. The independent variables, of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were entered into the model in step one and were found to account for 21% of the change in variance (ΔR²) of avoidant coping at a level of statistical significance (p = <.00). In step two, when age was entered into the model, this variable was found to account for a further 8.5% of the change in variance (ΔR²) at a level of statistical significance (p = <.00). For avoidant coping it appears that job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and age influence the use of this style.
Table 8.

Model 4: Avoidance Summary Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>SE $B$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
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<td>.05</td>
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<td>.21</td>
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<td>Disengagement</td>
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<td>Exhaustion</td>
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<table>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>-.32</td>
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*Items in bold are statistically significant at least at a $p$-value $= .05$*

**Question 4: Relationship Between Coping Styles and Generational Membership**

To determine if individuals from different generational cohorts differ in their use of specific coping strategies, a one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This test was only performed on those models which indicated that age contributed in a statistically significant way to the overall model. This result occurred in two models: positive thinking and avoidance. A 3-x-1 ANOVA was used to compare generational membership (i.e., Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial) and coping strategy for both positive thinking and avoidance. Generational cohort was modeled after research by Brown and associates (2016); Baby Boomers were defined as individuals born between 1943 and 1960, Generation X as those born between 1961 and 1981, and Millennials as anyone born after 1982.
Positive Thinking

As shown in Figure 3, there was not a statistical difference between generational cohort and the use of positive thinking \( F(2, 117) = 1.94, p = <.15 \). A post hoc comparison using a Bonferroni test was completed and further indicated that there was no statistical difference between the means of Baby Boomers \( (M = 18.4, SD = 2.3) \), Generation X \( (M = 17.15, SD = 3.04) \) or Millennials \( (M = 16.35, SD = 2.77) \). This result indicates that generational affiliation does not appear to influence the use of positive thinking.

Figure 3. ANOVA comparison of means on positive thinking by generation

Avoidance

Shown in Figure 4, when the avoidant coping style was used as the dependent variable, there was a statistically significant difference between generational cohort \( F(2, 117) = 8.13, p = <.00 \). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test indicated that Millennials \( (M = 18.9, SD = 3.43) \) were significantly different from Generation X \( (M = 16.62, SD = 2.4) \), but not Baby Boomers \( (M = 17, SD = 2.24) \). Furthermore, the mean of avoidant coping styles of Baby Boomers and Generation X were not different from each
other. It appears Millennials report higher avoidant coping than Generation X, but no more than Baby Boomers.

Figure 4. ANOVA comparison of means on avoidant coping by generation

Summary of Results

Results of this study demonstrated that the school psychologists sampled were mostly female (85%) and in early middle age ($M = 39, SD = 9.6$). The majority (78%) were trained at the specialist level and most (52%) had been in their current position between one and five years. The results suggest that participants are likely to be highly mobile in their positions, as the sample had a wide range of years of experience. According to respondents, most have high job satisfaction, especially intrinsic satisfaction. However, most also reported currently experiencing symptoms of burnout. These results suggest that for school psychologists, the experience of burnout and job satisfaction may not be mutually exclusive considering that the majority (58%) of the sample intended to stay in their current jobs. However, a large number of school psychologists, enough to raise concerns given the current shortage, reported the desire to leave their job (19%) or school-based practice (23%) in the next five years.
Statistical modeling revealed that neither the relationship between job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intention, nor age predicted the utilization of social support seeking strategies among the sample. Age did not indicate a significant contribution to the use of problem solving strategies as a method of coping, but the relationship between job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were found to influence the use of this coping style. For positive thinking, job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were only predictive of this coping style when age was added to the model. Avoidance was found to be predicted by job satisfaction, burnout, occupational intentions, and a decrease in age. For the coping styles that were, to some degree, predicted by age, follow-up analysis indicated that generational differences were detected for avoidant coping but not for positive thinking. For avoidant coping, these differences were found between Millennials and Generation X, but not between Millennials and Baby Boomers, or between Baby Boomers and Generation X.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Demographic results of the present study of Illinois school psychologists indicate that the sample was similar to the results of the most recent NASP Membership Survey (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). The average age ($M = 39, SD = 9.6$) of this study was similar, but slightly younger than the survey of membership ($M = 42, SD = 12$). Participants in both this study (85%) and the membership survey (84%) were predominantly female. This study differed from the NASP survey in the degree of training reported by participants. The present study found that 78% of participants were trained at the EdS level, 12% had doctoral degrees, and 9% held a Master’s degree, compared to the NASP Membership Survey which indicated that 55% had an educational specialist degree, 25% had doctorates, and 19% had a Master’s degree (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). This difference is likely due to the fact that the sample for this study only included school-based practitioners and the survey of membership included individuals working at universities, which often require a doctorate. Despite this difference, the sample from this Illinois study appeared similar to the national sample of NASP membership. Specifically, school psychologists are typically females, in early middle-age, and a majority of whom hold an EdS.
Job Satisfaction

This study revealed high rates of job satisfaction among school psychologists, which were comparable with historical trends. Job satisfaction among school psychologists has historically been measured using a modified form of the MSQ, as was done in this study. One of the first studies of job satisfaction found that 81% of school psychologists reported being “satisfied” and 5% indicated they were “very satisfied” with their jobs (Anderson et al., 1984). Subsequent research by Brown and associates (1998) found that 92% reported being satisfied and 8% reported being “very satisfied”. The most recent national assessment of job satisfaction was conducted in 2006 by Worrell and colleagues and indicated that 84% of school psychologists reported to be “satisfied” with their jobs and 7% indicated that they were “very satisfied”. Results from the present study are in-line with this historical finding. Specifically, 78% of Illinois school psychologists reported job satisfaction in the “satisfied” range and 3% in the “very satisfied” range. This result suggests that job satisfaction appears to be currently high among school psychologists in the State of Illinois. Furthermore, when current data is viewed through the lens of historical trends, high job satisfaction appears to be stable among school psychologists.

Burnout

Although job satisfaction has been high, and based on the results of this assessment, appear to remain high, it would be wrong to conclude that school psychologists do not experience significant occupational stress. Existing research, as well as the results of this study, demonstrate that school psychologists frequently experience the symptoms of occupational burnout. Results showed that 77% of Illinois school
psychologists reported experiencing a “moderate” degree of Disengagement at the time of the study, and 72% reported experiencing a “moderate” degree of Exhaustion, as measured by the OLBI. These results are similar to a recent Lithuanian study, using the same measure, which found that 65% of Lithuanian school psychologists reported a “moderate” degree of Disengagement and 76% reported a “moderate” degree of Exhaustion (Mackonienë & Norvilė, 2012). The results of the current study are also similar to those reported by Schilling and his associates (2018), that used a different measure of burnout, but also concluded that the experience of burnout is very common among school psychologists. Specifically, 90% of school psychologists indicated that they have experienced burnout during their careers (Schilling et al., 2018).

Additionally, it cannot be assumed that the job of a school psychologist is low-stress and that this influences satisfaction with their job. It seems the majority of school psychologists experience burnout, but this is not influencing job satisfaction. One explanation for this may be that despite substantial occupational stress, school psychologists like their jobs. It takes years of study and commitment to become a school psychologist. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that school psychologists are motivated to practice regardless of occupational stress. This claim may be supported by the fact that 70% of respondents to the present study reported a “high” degree of intrinsic job satisfaction, a further 29% reported a “moderate” degree, and only <1% reported “low” intrinsic job satisfaction.

**Occupational Intentions**

Another metric used to understand the working conditions of school psychologists has been their self-report of their occupational intentions over the next five years. This
question has been a part of historical assessments of job satisfaction and more recently used by Schilling and colleagues (2018), as well as in this present study. In one of the earliest studies, 15.5% of school psychologists reported they intended to leave the field (Anderson et al., 1984). A little over a decade later, Brown and associates (1998) reported that 8% indicated the desire to leave the profession. In 2006, Worrell and colleagues reported that a little over 15% of psychologists surveyed intended to leave the field. Most recently, Schilling and associates (2018) asked school psychologists to report their occupational intentions, using a slightly different measure, and found that approximately 19% of school psychologists reported the desire to leave the field. Commensurate with the result of previous research, this study indicates that 16% of Illinois school psychologists report the desire to leave school-based practice.

Although this question has been put to respondents slightly differently over the years, it certainly appears that school psychologists consistently report the desire to leave the field at a rate between 10% and 20% over a five-year period. This rate of intended attrition approaches the 5% loss per year estimated by Reschly (2000). If distributed over a five-year span, if all of the psychologists who reported the desire to leave the field did, this would indicate the furtherance of the 2.5% shortfall in 2025 estimated by Castillo and associates (2014).

**High Occupational Mobility**

In addition to reporting the desire to leave the field, this study found that 19% of school psychologists reported the desire to leave their current position for another job as a school-based practitioner. It appears that school psychologists are highly mobile—
changing positions somewhat often. One finding that illustrates this trend is that a little over half of the sample (58%) reported the desire to remain in their current job. Furthermore, although practitioners ranged in experience from one to more than twenty years, more than half (52%) of the sample had only been in their current job between one and five years. Anderson and associates (1984) found a similar pattern in their study and explained that, “school psychologists are fairly mobile in regard to specific position, but are generally satisfied with their career choice” (p. 229). This appears to be the case in the present study. One possible reason for this mobility is as a response to occupational stress. It is plausible that school psychologists may change positions if occupational stress becomes overwhelming. This is a somewhat counterintuitive way that the shortage may be useful to individual practitioners in the short-term; as there is an overabundance of open positions they can easily find a new job and escape poor working conditions.

**The Influence of Generation on Coping with Occupational Stress**

The specific modeling completed as part of this study has not been conducted before with a sample of school psychologists. However, similar research conducted with nurses indicated that Baby Boomer nurses experienced lower levels of stress and burnout than did Generation X and Millennial nurses (Stevanin et al., 2018). A recent study with a sample of adult workers over the age of 18 using the Brief COPE as a measure, indicated that when compared to Baby Boomers, Millennials engaged in fewer active coping skills than older generations (Brown et al., 2017).

Results from the present study of practicing school psychologists indicated that job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions were predictive of problem solving and avoidant coping strategies. Age was found to be predictive of the utilization of
avoidance. Age had an inverse relationship with avoidant coping. Generational affiliation was found to differ significantly only for avoidant coping. Regarding an avoidant style, Millennials differed from Generation X, but not from Baby Boomers in the use of this style; furthermore, Baby Boomers and Generation X did not differ significantly from each other.

The results of this study are somewhat in line with the studies on nurses (Stevanin et al., 2018) and a sample of adult workers (Brown et al., 2017), in that all studies suggest more adverse occupational effects for Millennials. The specific finding that illustrates this from the present study suggests that younger school psychologists, belonging to the Millennial generation, appear to engage more frequently in maladaptive coping strategies than Generation X. Specifically, Millennials endorsed the utilization of avoidance as a method to deal with work related stress more than Generation X.

Occupational stress coping styles have not been thoroughly studied among school psychologists. However, age has been shown to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998), and an inverse relationship with burnout (Huberty & Huebner, 1988; Huebner, 1992; Huebner, 1993b; Huebner & Mills, 1997; Mills & Huebner, 1998). Meaning, in the past, youth has been associated with more occupational stress for school psychologists. Brown and associates (2017) suggested that, for the general population, that widespread stressful events, such as the Great Recession, can affect generational cohorts differently, leaving a lasting impact on some. However, long-term analysis is needed to determine if Millennials remain more likely than other generations to engage in avoidant coping. At present, this study suggests
that Millennials, who are also the youngest psychologists currently practicing, engage more in avoidance when compared to Generation X.

**Limitations**

The first set of limitations for this study are related to the design. The cross-sectional design of this study limits the ability to draw conclusions about the effect of generational affiliation on occupational stress coping styles of school psychologists. Future research should repeat the measurement of coping styles, or utilize a longitudinal design, to determine if the relationship between coping styles and generational cohort remains stable, or changes as individuals age. The second limitation is related to the close-ended nature of the survey research. This study only analyzed the response of participants to a specific set of predetermined questions which inhibited the ability of the researcher to capture the authentic working conditions of school psychologists. Future research should add a qualitative element, allowing respondents to describe working conditions. Beyond design, the results of the survey also present some limitations. Although the sample was of adequate size to utilize the statistics employed, the data collected violated some statistical assumptions. Specifically, neither problem-solving, nor avoidant coping styles, were normally distributed, as is an assumption of a dependent variable when using hierarchical multiple regression. Generational cohort was not homogeneous as the independent variable for the follow-up ANOVA test. Therefore, results of this study should be interpreted with some caution. If the design is repeated, future researchers should seek to obtain a larger sample size, as this will increase the likelihood of normality and homogeneity in the data.
Implications

The ever persistent shortage of school psychologists creates an issue of social justice; namely in the unmet social, emotional, and academic needs of American school-children. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), the number of children in public schools continues to grow, reaching approximately 52 million by 2027. As the student population in public schools continues to grow, it is also becoming increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically, and these increases suggest an at least proportional growth in issues related to poverty, homelessness, and mental health (NASP, 2017). School psychologists, as professionals trained in both mental health and learning, are uniquely qualified to support these very needs (Armistead et al., 2013). Therefore, those interested in the equity of social, emotional, and academic service delivery to school-children must also be concerned with understanding and lessening the shortage of school psychologists that results in this under service.

The present study furthers this understanding through updating rates of job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational intentions, as well as measuring the occupational stress coping styles of school psychologists practicing in Illinois. In agreement with previous studies, the results of this work indicate that rates of job satisfaction were high (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006), as were rates of burnout (Mackonienė & Norvilė, 2012; Schilling et al., 2018). It appears that Illinois school psychologists both like their jobs, as well as experience a problematic degree of occupational stress. Results of this study also indicated that the majority of school psychologists engage in adaptive coping behaviors, but that younger school psychologists are more prone to engage in avoidant coping.
Furthermore, school psychologists appear highly mobile in their positions. It is postulated here, that individual school psychologists may benefit from the shortage, in the short-term, because of the ability to leave their position and find a new one if conditions are too stressful in their current job. Yet, this mobility does nothing to address the underlying cause of stress for psychologists. Moreover, if efforts to reduce the shortage are successful, mobility will be reduced, potentially limiting an individual’s ability to escape suboptimal conditions. Lastly, and of greatest concern in regards to the shortage, is the finding of this study that school psychologists report the desire to leave school-based practice in rates that will perpetuate the estimated 2.5% shortage of 2025 (Castillo et. al., 2014). This particular result indicates, that if school psychologists leave at the rates they report, it will continue to be difficult to close the gap between supply and demand. Although the present study sheds new light on the shortage, further study is needed. The following recommendations list possible solutions that individuals, employers, and national or state organizations can apply to possibly increase the percentage of psychologists who choose to remain in school-based practice.

**Recommendations**

**Monitoring of Occupational Stress**

Presently, there is no systemic or repeated way to monitor the topic addressed by this study. Rather, job satisfaction, burnout, and occupational coping skills, as well as the relationship to demographic characteristics, such as age, or generational affiliation, are assessed only when interested researchers have the opportunity. It seems appropriate, given the adverse effects to children, their families, and schools related to this enduring shortage, that state and/or national organizations consider more consistently assessing job
satisfaction, rates of burnout, and coping styles of practitioners. For instance, NASP surveys the membership every five years to determine demographic trends in age, race, training, and salary (Walcott & Hyson, 2018). It seems possible that additional items could be added to such an analysis. This data may not only be useful in understanding trends, but also used to prevent future shortages by identifying the needs of school-based practitioners and allowing for early intervention.

**Preventative Training in Self-Care and Advocacy**

Outside of more consistent data collection, training programs should also increase the explicit instruction of methods of self-care to preservice psychologists. Adoption of instruction in self-care skills is of importance as this study demonstrated that practicing school psychologists commonly experience the symptoms of burnout, and therefore, could make good use of these skills. There has been recent endorsement of such instruction in the NASP Communiqué (Kelly-Vance, 2018; Lopez, 2016), indicating that others have recognized the need for more training in self-care. Instruction in professional advocacy may also improve conditions for school-based practitioners. Schilling and his associates (2018) suggested instructing students on techniques to advocate for a role beyond “assessors for eligibility” (p. 330); an expanded role, which is more consistent with current training programs, as well as the NASP Practice Model.

Instruction in self-care and advocacy are apropos of the results of this study. Considering, that school psychologists in the state of Illinois appear to experience many of the symptoms of burnout despite having high job satisfaction. Nearly a quarter (23%) of Illinois school psychologists surveyed in the current study reported the desire to leave school-based practice, and younger psychologists, belonging to the Millennial generation,
at least when compared to Generation X, were found to be more likely to engage in maladaptive coping behaviors. If training programs adopted an increased focus on self-care and advocacy, it seems possible that such strategies would enable school psychologists to improve working conditions for themselves once they leave graduate school.

In addition to adding instruction for school psychology students, graduate programs may also create partnerships with training programs for school administrators. The aim of such a collaboration would be two-fold. First, to advertise all of the services that school psychologists can provide. Simply explaining what the average school psychologist is capable of to a future administrator may help to expand the role of psychologists in schools and improve job satisfaction, considering the traditionally narrow role has been a consistent source of dissatisfaction among school psychologists (Sarason, 1973; Unruh & McKellar, 2013; Filter et al., 2013). Secondly, as school psychologists have long reported dissatisfaction with district policies (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006), as well as pressure from administrators to engage in unethical practice (Boccio et al., 2011), suggest that this partnership could help the practices of both professions.

**Supervised Practice**

Beyond professional organizations and training programs, employers can also help improve conditions. Reducing burnout and increasing longevity behooves employers as school psychologists provide scientifically-informed, culturally and linguistically appropriate prevention and intervention services to individuals, groups, and systems, in collaboration with all stakeholders. School psychologists engage in roles beyond their
diagnostic duties that keep their employers in compliance with state and federal mandates (Tharinger & Palomares, 2004). One way employers could improve working conditions for school psychologists is to provide them with adequate and long-term supervision. NASP endorses supervision throughout the professional lifespan (NASP, 2018). Furthermore, supervision has been shown to reduce stress in a similar population of clinicians working with students in schools (Gibson, Grey, & Hastings, 2009).

Unfortunately, supervision beyond the years as a novice are infrequently implemented in schools. To maintain the resources employers have invested in their school psychologists, school districts should consider increasing access to supervision for all school-based practitioners.

**Self-Monitoring**

Practitioners are also responsible for monitoring and maintaining their mental health. To facilitate this, further research into this topic could enable the creation of a self-assessment. This self-assessment could be used by school psychologists to measure their job satisfaction, symptoms of burnout, and coping strategies. This tool could then be used as a screener for intervention, as well as monitor the progress of the practitioner. Unfortunately, no such tool currently exists. However, there are resources available on self-care and stress reduction through the national and state organizations of school psychologists. The maintenance of mental health is not simply a good suggestion for the school psychologist, but an ethical obligation. Standard II.1.4 of the NASP Principles of Professional Ethics states that, “school psychologists refrain from any activity in which their personal problems may interfere with professional effectiveness” (NASP, 2010, p. 309). Although there are many things that professional organizations, training programs,
or employers can do to improve the working conditions for school psychologists, the ultimate responsibility remains with the individual practitioner.

Summary

In conclusion, this study indicates that job satisfaction is high among Illinois school psychologists which is in line with the rates of job satisfaction that have been historically measured nationally (Anderson et al., 1984; Brown et al., 1998; Worrell et al., 2006). Similarly, school psychologists in the state of Illinois experience a number of symptoms of burnout, as evidenced in findings that are also similar to another recent regional study (Schilling et al., 2018). This study found that although school psychologists in Illinois employ mostly positive coping strategies, younger school psychologists belonging to the Millennial generation, when compared to Generation X, were more likely to endorse an avoidant coping style. The need for action from professional organizations, training programs, employers, and individuals to improve the resilience and longevity of school psychologists practicing in schools has been thoroughly discussed. Further study and intervention are necessary to increase access for all American schoolchildren to the supports that can be provided by school psychologists.
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT EMAIL
Hello Fellow School Psychologist,

My name is Courtney Ratliff and I am a doctoral student in the School Psychology program at Loyola University Chicago. I am conducting a survey as part of my degree requirements and I have decided to focus on understanding the conditions that may lead school psychologists to stay in their positions as well as their desire to leave the field. As a practicing school psychologist, this is an issue that is close to my heart as I advocate for my colleagues to have supportive and affirming working conditions.

The intention of this email is to invite you to participate in a survey I’ve created for my research by sharing your experiences and insights. You were invited to participate because you were listed as a practicing school psychologist in the state of Illinois. This survey will ask you to share your opinions on your job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, and coping with stress. I believe this research is extremely valuable because, as you may already be aware, there is a persistent national shortage of school psychologists practicing in schools as well as that state and national organizations seem pressed to address this gap in service.

I am conducting this survey under the supervision of Dr. Amy Nelson Christensen in the School Psychology program at Loyola University Chicago and this project is approved by Loyola University Chicago’s Institutional Review Board (IRB Application # 6587).

It is anticipated that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time. Your participation will be anonymous and you will not be asked to provide any identifying information.

If you are interested in supporting my project, please follow the survey link below. There, you will also find a full explanation of your rights as a volunteer to participate in a research project, risks/benefits, further specifics, as well as more contact information.

Click Here to Take the Survey

I understand that your time is very valuable. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Courtney Ratliff, EdS, NCSP
EdD Candidate
School Psychology Program
Loyola University Chicago
cratliff1@luc.edu
APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT
Title: Conditions that predict the occupational stress coping styles of school psychologists practicing in schools

Researcher: Courtney D. Ratliff, EdS, NCSP
University Supervisor: Amy Nelson Christensen, PhD, NCSP

Research Description: Your participation is requested to support the investigation of the factors that predict the occupational stress coping styles of school psychologists practicing in schools. This research is being conducted by Courtney Ratliff, as part of her doctoral research project, under the supervision of Dr. Amy Nelson Christenson in the Department of Education at Loyola University Chicago. This research is valuable as a persistent national shortage of school psychologists practicing in schools exists. Your experience as a school-based practitioner is vital to better understand the conditions that may lead school psychologists to leave their positions as well as the desire to leave the field.

Time Expectations: Your participation involves the completion of a 72 item electronic questionnaire. It should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Benefits: There are no foreseeable risks associated with completion of this study beyond the potential discomfort caused by thinking of occupational stress. Although there are no direct benefits to you as a participant, this study may result in publication which could assist in gaining a better understanding of the factors that precede the desire of school psychologists to leave the field.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is completely voluntary and you may decline to participate, without penalty, by simply disregarding this communication. You may change your mind about participation until your survey has been submitted; once submitted your responses become and individually undifferentiated part of the data set, and your individual data cannot be disaggregated.

Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Security: Your response to this survey will be kept confidential. Furthermore, results of single participants will not be analyzed; data analysis will be conducted on aggregated data. Your email address nor your IP address will be collected with your responses. However, if you would like to receive a copy of the completed study, you may email the researcher, and once completed, a copy of the final research project will be emailed to you. Your responses will be collected via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is a cloud-based survey development and collection software, available to participants across multiple devices. SurveyMonkey Inc. promises privacy protection as well as secure data storage, you may review their policy at https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/security/.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, you may contact Courtney Ratliff, doctoral student, at cratliff1@luc.edu or Dr. Amy Nelson Christensen, university supervisor, at anelsonchristensen@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you can call Loyola University Chicago Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Consent: By proceeding to the survey you indicate your understanding of the information above, had an opportunity to ask questions, and agreed to participate in the study.
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL: FIRST REMINDER
Hello (again) Fellow School Psychologist,

As a practicing school psychologist myself I know how busy we can get. This email is meant to remind you that you have been invited to participate in research on job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, and coping among school psychologists in the state of Illinois.

I believe this research is extremely valuable because, as you may already be aware, there is a persistent national shortage of school psychologists practicing in schools. I believe your opinion on this topic can help explain the conditions that may lead school psychologists to stay in their positions as well as their desire to leave the field.

It is anticipated that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time, but results from the completed surveys indicate the survey is taking 8 minutes to complete on average. Remember that your participation will be anonymous and you will not be asked to provide any identifying information.

The survey will remain open for a brief time if you are interested in participating, please follow the survey link below. There, you will also find a full explanation of your rights as a volunteer to participate in a research project, risks/benefits, further specifics, as well as more contact information.

Click Here to Take the Survey

I understand that your time is very valuable and thank you for your consideration. If you have completed the survey, thank you so much for your participation.

Sincerely,
Courtney Ratliff, EdS, NCSP
EdD Candidate
School Psychology Program
Loyola University Chicago
cratliff1@luc.edu
APPENDIX D

RECRUITMENT EMAIL: SECOND REMINDER
Hello Fellow School Psychologist,

This email is meant to remind you that you have been invited to participate in research on job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, and coping among school psychologists in the state of Illinois. This survey will remain open until 1/31/2020 until midnight, so if you would like to share your opinions you have until then.

Thank you if you have already participated! You are receiving this reminder simply because I have no way of knowing who filled the survey out and who did not due to the anonymity of data collection. If you have completed the survey, please disregard this email.

It is anticipated that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time, but results from the completed surveys indicate the survey is taking 8 minutes to complete on average.

Your participation will be anonymous and you will not be asked to provide any identifying information.

Please follow the survey link below. There you will also find a full explanation of your rights as a volunteer to participate in a research project, risks/benefits, further specifics, as well as more contact information.

[Click Here to Take the Survey]

I understand that your time is very valuable and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Courtney Ratliff, EdS, NCSP
EdD Candidate
School Psychology Program
Loyola University Chicago
cratliff1@luc.edu
APPENDIX E

RECRUITMENT EMAIL: FINAL REMINDER
Hello Fellow School Psychologist,

This email is meant to remind you that you have been invited to participate in research on job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, and coping among school psychologists in the state of Illinois. This survey will remain open until Friday, 1/31/2020 until midnight, so if you would like to share your opinions you have until then.

Thank you if you have already participated! You are receiving this reminder simply because I have no way of knowing who filled the survey out and who did not due to the anonymity of data collection. If you have completed the survey, please disregard this email.

It is anticipated that this survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time, but results from the completed surveys indicate the survey is taking 8 minutes to complete on average.

Your participation will be anonymous and you will not be asked to provide any identifying information.

Please follow the survey link below. There you will also find a full explanation of your rights as a volunteer to participate in a research project, risks/benefits, further specifics, as well as more contact information.

Click Here to Take the Survey

This is the final e-mail reminder that will be going out. Thank you again to everyone who has taken the survey, your input is very valuable to this research.

Sincerely,
Courtney Ratliff, EdS, NCSP
EdD Candidate
School Psychology Program
Loyola University Chicago
cratliff1@luc.edu
APPENDIX F

JOB SATISFACTION, BURNOUT, AND COPING QUESTIONNAIRE
Upon reading the informed consent, do you agree to participate in this study?

☐ Yes
☐ No

You will find a series of 20 statements for which you will indicate your current degree of job satisfaction. Using the scale, please indicate your degree of satisfaction.

1. Being able to keep busy all the time.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

2. The chance to work alone on the job.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

3. The chance to do different things from time to time.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

4. The chance to be "somebody" in the community.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

5. The way my administrator handles their staff.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

6. The competence of my administrators in making decisions
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

7. Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

8. The way my job provides for steady employment.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

9. The chance to do things for other people.
   ☐ Very Satisfied
   ☐ Satisfied
   ☐ Dissatisfied
   ☐ Very Dissatisfied

10. The chance to tell people what to do.
    ☐ Very Satisfied
    ☐ Satisfied
    ☐ Dissatisfied
    ☐ Very Dissatisfied

11. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.
    ☐ Very Satisfied
    ☐ Satisfied
    ☐ Dissatisfied
    ☐ Very Dissatisfied
12. The way district policies are put into practice.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

13. My salary and the amount of work I do (e.g., number of evaluations per year)
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

14. The chance for advancement in this job.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

15. The freedom to use my own judgment.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

16. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

17. The working conditions (e.g., psychologist-to-student ratio).
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

18. The way my coworkers get along with each other.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

19. The praise I get for doing a good job.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied

20. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.
   □ Very Satisfied
   □ Satisfied
   □ Dissatisfied
   □ Very Dissatisfied
Next, you will find a series of 16 statements with which you will indicate how you feel about your job. Using the scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement.

21. I always find new and interesting aspects in my work.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

22. There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

23. It happens more and more often that I talk about my work in a negative way.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

24. After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

25. I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

26. Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

27. I find my work to be a positive challenge.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

28. During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

29. Over time, one can become disconnected from this type of work.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

30. After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

31. Sometimes I feel sickened by my work tasks.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

32. After work, I usually feel worn out and weary.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

33. This is the only type of work that I can imagine myself doing.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
34. Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

35. I feel more and more engaged in my work.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

36. When I work, I usually feel energized.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
Next, you will find a series of 28 statements with which you will indicate how you cope with the stress of your job. Using the scale, please indicate how often you use the specific coping strategies to deal with work related stress and/or stressful situations. Do not answer on the basis of whether it seems to be working or not—just whether or not you are doing it.

37. I turn to other activities to take my mind off things.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

38. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about the situation I’m in.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

39. I say to myself "this isn’t real”.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

40. I use alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

41. I get emotional support from others.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

42. I give up trying to deal with stress.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

43. I take action to try to make the situation better.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

44. I refuse to believe that it has happened.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

45. I say things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

46. I get help and advice from other people.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

47. I use alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

48. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often

49. I criticize myself.
   - I don’t do this at all
   - I do this a little bit
   - I do this a medium amount
   - I do this often
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
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<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>I get comfort and understanding from someone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a lot Very Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>I give up the attempt to cope.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>I look for something good in what is happening.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>I make jokes about it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>I do something to think about it less (such as go to movies, watch TV, read, daydream, sleep, or shop).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>I accept the reality of the fact that it has happened.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
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<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>I express my negative feelings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
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<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>I try to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>I try to get advice or help from other people about what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>I learn to live with it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
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<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>I think hard about what steps to take.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>I blame myself for things that happened.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>I pray or meditate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a medium amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>I make fun of the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I don’t do this at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>□ I do this a little bit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following 6 questions will gather general demographic information about you.

65. Gender?
   □ Male
   □ Female
   □ Non-binary

66. What in what year and month were you born?
   ______ Year, ______ Month

67. What generational cohort to you identify yourself as being part of?
   □ Baby Boomer
   □ Generation X
   □ Millennial

68. What is your level of training?
   □ Master’s
   □ Educational Specialists
   □ Doctoral
   □ Other

69. How would you describe the current type of community that you work in?
   □ Urban
   □ Suburban
   □ Rural

70. Please indicate your occupational plans for the next 5 years.
   □ For the next 5 years, I plan on staying in my current job.
   □ In the next 5 years, I plan on leaving for another job as a school psychologist.
   □ In the next 5 years, I plan on leaving my job for one in school administration.
   □ In the next 5 years, I plan on leaving my job for one in academia.
   □ In the next 5 years, I plan on leaving the field of school psychology entirely.
   □ I plan to retire in the next 5 years.

71. Years worked in the field?
   □ 1
   □ 2
   □ 3
   □ 4
   □ 5
   □ 6
   □ 7
   □ 8
   □ 9
   □ 10
   □ More than 20

72. Years worked in current job?
   □ 1
   □ 2
   □ 3
   □ 4
   □ 5
   □ 6
   □ 7
   □ 8
   □ 9
   □ 10
   □ More than 20

Thank you very much for completing this survey. Your time is valuable and I would like to sincerely thank you for choosing to spend your time helping me to further study this important topic.
REFERENCE LIST


VITA

Courtney Ratliff was born and raised in Prescott, Arizona. She moved to the Midwest to attend college, but remained after meeting her husband, a native Illinoisan. The majority of her extended family remains in the southwest. Courtney currently resides in a far northwestern suburb of Chicago, Illinois with her husband and two young children.

Prior to attending Loyola University Chicago, Courtney graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran College where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She received her Master of Science in School Psychology and Educational Specialist in School Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Whitewater in 2007. She has been licensed as a school psychologist in Illinois since 2006 and she maintains the credential of a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

Since completing her training, Courtney has been employed as a school psychologist in two public school districts in the northwestern suburbs of Illinois. Her first position was at an early childhood special education program within Crystal Lake Elementary School District 47, in Crystal Lake, Illinois. There she was part of a team providing transdisciplinary play-based assessments. After four years at the early childhood center, Courtney transferred to a dual language k-5 elementary building. She held leadership positions on school-wide systems teams, including PBIS and RtI. Her
duties also included the more traditional role of school psychologists, conducting assessments for special education entitlement.

After experiencing many of the occupational stressors referenced in her work, Courtney moved to a part-time position. Currently, she is responsible for leading teams and completing individual student assessments at an elementary school in McHenry School District 15, McHenry, Illinois, with a year-round calendar and multiage classrooms. Although it was Courtney’s intention to reduce her professional duties with this part-time role, the needs of her community drew her back. In addition to her current work as a district employee, Courtney also specializes in supporting school districts through staffing shortages and short-term leaves by providing assessment and consultation as an independent contractor. This experience has made her acutely aware of the professional pressures experienced by school psychologists and sparked her interest as a research topic.
The Dissertation submitted by Courtney D. Ratliff has been read and approved by the following committee:

Amy Nelson Christensen, PhD, Director
Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Rosario Pesce, PhD,
Clinical Assistant Professor; Coordinator of Clinical Training, School of Education
Loyola University Chicago

Debra Barton, EdD,
Executive Director of Special Service
McHenry School District 15