Running Head: SPECIALIST OR DOCTORAL DEGREE?

Why Students Pursue a Specialist or Doctoral Degree in School Psychology

Jeff Laurent

Western Illinois University

Lisa L. Steffey

Glenbrook North High School

Mark E. Swerdlik

Illinois State University

Poster presented at the 40th Annual Convention of the

National Association of School Psychologists

New Orleans, LA

February 2008

Address correspondence to: Jeff Laurent, Department of Psychology (WG 100), Western Illinois University, 1 University Circle, Macomb, IL 61455-1390 or JL-Laurent@wiu.edu.

Abstract

Reasons school psychology students choose to pursue a specialist or a doctoral degree were examined. A survey was mailed to 350 school psychology students whose names were provided by the National Association of School Psychologists. Survey items were subjected to a principal components analysis and scores from the resulting 10 scales were compared for specialist students and doctoral students (N = 189; 54% response rate). Specialist students obtained significantly higher scores than doctoral students on scales related to accessibility of programs, the influence of additional requirements for a doctoral degree, the desire to gain experience and begin their careers, and stress/difficulty. Doctoral students' scores were significantly higher than specialist students' scores on scales measuring prestige, a desire to improve knowledge/impact the field, and responsibilities characteristic of a university professor. No significant differences existed on scales dealing with financial issues, self-perceived prohibitions, and limitations of a doctoral degree. In addition, doctoral students obtained higher scores than specialist students on Mastery Motivation scale of the Career Motivation and Achievement Planning Questionnaire. Implications for graduate training are presented. (15 references; 2 tables)

Why Students Pursue a Specialist or Doctoral Degree in School Psychology

Interest in graduate education in professional psychology is evidenced in surveys conducted concerning various aspects of training. For example, Cassin, Singer, Dobson, and Altmaier (2007) surveyed doctoral students in clinical and counseling psychology programs to examine their views on training models, theoretical orientations, career aspirations and reasons for choices, research productivity, and expected salaries. Likewise, Erchul, Scott, Dombalis, and Schulte (1989) surveyed school psychology doctoral students to solicit their preferences among applied specialties in professional psychology, applications to other graduate programs, anticipated internship settings, preferred client population, personal interests, professional goals, and satisfaction with current training. Both studies provided insight into doctoral students' personal decision making processes and perceptions of training.

School psychology is different from clinical and counseling psychology because the specialist degree is the entry level for independent practice with the use of the title "psychologist."[1] Approximately 70% of those who responded to a membership survey by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) reported they held the master's or specialist degree (Curtis, Chesno Grier, & Hunley, 2004).[2] This creates a unique situation for students pursuing a degree in school psychology. At some point, they must decide whether to pursue a specialist degree or a doctoral degree. The enticement of independent practice as a "psychologist" that exists for clinical or counseling psychology graduate students who pursue a doctoral degree does not exist for the school psychology graduate student.

Surveys of school psychology students generally have focused on preparation for practice. For example, Graden, Christenson, Ysseldyke, and Meyers (1984) surveyed students graduating from their training program and school psychology practitioners about their training experiences

in six broad roles (i.e., assessment, consultation, intervention, change agent, research/program evaluation, communication/interpretation). Reschly and Wilson (1997) examined characteristics of graduate education in school psychology at both the non-doctoral and doctoral level through a review of earlier surveys. These surveys indirectly dealt with training by asking practitioners to reflect on their education. Variables examined included curricular issues, preparation to perform different services, demographics and job characteristics, and job satisfaction. Differences existed in terms of the practice of school psychology – doctoral level practitioners were more likely to work in non-school settings, to be licensed for private practice, and earn a slightly higher income. Doctoral level school psychologists also were better prepared to do research and provide consultation at a systems or organizational level. Ratings on 112 job satisfaction items revealed significant differences between doctoral and non-doctoral school psychologists on only 3 items; all were related to opportunities for advancement or promotion. Reschly and Wilson concluded that there was substantial overlap between the preparation and practice of non-doctoral and doctoral level school psychologists.

School psychology also differs from clinical and counseling psychology because there is an increasing shortage in the field. In fact, the projected shortages led the profession of school psychology to examine its future. Part of that examination included a review of the current demographics within school psychology. Curtis et al. (2004) provided the most current published description of the field. They estimated that currently there are approximately 34,000 working school psychologists. Using data provided by Thomas (1998), Curtis et al. noted that approximately 1,750 new school psychologists enter the field each year. These researchers also examined retirement trends and attrition to provide insight into personnel needs. Using a more conservative estimate of the total field (i.e., 30,000 vs. 34,000), they reported that in the decade

from 2000 - 2010 there would be a shortage of 8,810 school psychologists (Curtis et al., 2004). This is alarming, because shortages of school psychologists already exist and have existed for many years (Fagan, 2004). The projected shortage of doctoral-level school psychologists is of particular concern because many trainers are nearing retirement. Curtis et al. (2004) and Little and Akin-Little (2004) noted a shortage in university faculty adversely affects the ability to prepare new school psychologists, exacerbating the shortage problem for the field as a whole.

Demographic information about the field (Curtis et al., 2004; Reschly & Wilson, 1997; Thomas, 1998) describes *who* school psychology is as a profession, but does not tell us *why* school psychology is the way it is. For example, it is known that about 30% of school psychologists hold a doctoral degree (Curtis et al., 2004) and that approximately 17% of those graduating during the 1996 - 1997 school year obtained a doctorate (Thomas, 1998). However, it is not known why some students chose to pursue a doctorate while others chose the specialist degree. The purpose of this study was to survey school psychology students to determine factors that influenced their decision to pursue either a specialist or doctoral degree. This information may suggest why many school psychologists obtain a specialist degree, but do not pursue a doctorate.

Method

Participants

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provided a list of 350 randomly selected student members from across the United States. Of the 350 surveys mailed, 225 were returned (gross response rate = 64.3%). Several could not be included because the participants either were in a program that was not equivalent to a specialist or doctoral program or did not complete the information necessary to determine the degree level of their program; others could

not be used for various reasons (e.g., blank, no longer pursuing a degree in school psychology). As a result, 189 surveys were used in this study (net response rate = 54%).

The majority of those completing surveys were in specialist programs (*n* = 117, 61.9%). Students in both the specialist and doctoral groups predominantly were female (84.6% and 81.9%, respectively) and full-time students (82.9% and 97.2%, respectively). Most students were 30 years of age or younger (specialist *M* age = 29 years, *SD* = 6.2 years, range = 22 – 52, *Mdn* age = 26.8 years, 63.2% fell between the ages of 24 – 28; doctoral *M* age = 28.8 years, *SD* = 6.4 years, range = 23 – 58, *Mdn* age = 26.9 years, 65.2% fell between 24 – 28 years of age). About half of the members in each group were married (specialist = 52.1%, doctoral = 47.2%).

Instrument

A survey composed of three sections was used in the study. The first section of the survey requested demographic information about the respondents (e.g., age, gender, marital status) and information regarding the program in which the student was enrolled (e.g., academic credit hours, practicum hours, internship hours). The latter was used to verify or identify the student's program as a specialist or doctoral program.

The second section of the survey asked students to rate 50 items designed to represent variables that influenced their decision to pursue their current degree (see Table 1). Items tapped such areas as availability of night classes, stress, and potential for increased salary. The instructions were as follows: *Please indicate the influence each of the following has had on your decision to graduate with a specialist or doctoral degree*. The items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *no influence at all*, 2 = *very little influence*, 3 = *some influence*, 4 = *strong influence*, 5 = *an extreme influence*).

The third section of the survey contained 31 items from the Cooperative Achievement

Style, Competitive Achievement Style, Career Commitment, and Mastery Motivation subscales of the Career Motivation and Achievement Planning Questionnaire (C-MAP; Farmer, 1985). The C-MAP assesses various motivations and attributions people make for success at work or in the work environment and factors that might influence success. The Career Commitment scale measures the extent that individuals feel that their career gives meaning to their lives. The Mastery Motivation scale assesses an individual's preference to work on projects that command a high level of skill rather than to pursue tasks in which they are comfortable. The Competitive Achievement Style subscale measures a person's view that doing better than others is important. The Cooperative Achievement Style subscale assesses the degree to which an individual enjoys working in a cooperative situation with other people. Individuals rate statements on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *not sure*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Farmer and Chung (1995) provided factor analytic support for the construct validity of the C-MAP scales. They reported alpha coefficients that ranged from .67 (Mastery Motivation) to .82 (Career Commitment) for the C-MAP subscales used in the current study.

Procedure

The 50 items of the survey related to school psychology students' experiences were developed based on a review of literature regarding the training of school psychologists and input from school psychology students across the United States (n = 19) regarding factors that influenced their decision to pursue their current degree. Input was obtained by posting a message on SPTRAIN, a listserv designed for communication among trainers of school psychologists, asking trainers to have students willing to share information regarding factors that influenced their decision to pursue their particular degree to contact the second author via e-mail. In addition, the survey was reviewed and critiqued by six students at a Midwestern university with

both specialist and doctoral degree programs.

Surveys were mailed to students along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and requesting consent for participation. Two weeks after the initial mailing, each individual who had not returned the survey was mailed a follow-up postcard. Two weeks after the follow-up postcard was mailed, the students who had not replied previously were mailed a final postcard that again reminded them of the importance of their input. This approach (i.e., use of official letterhead, a personal signature, including a stamped return envelope, specific return dates, follow-up postcards) is recommended to increase response rate (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Babbie, 1990). In order to maintain confidentiality and keep track of returned surveys, each participant was assigned a number (Alreck & Settle, 1995). When an individual returned a survey, their name and number was crossed off a master list. An explanation for the numbered envelopes was contained in the cover letter.

Results

Data reduction was attempted by submitting the items from the 50-item survey to a principal components analysis (PCA) with orthogonal rotation. The intention was to derive a smaller number of scales that could be used in analyses rather than analyzing each of the 50 items. The PCA revealed 10 components with eigenvalues greater than 1 that were conceptually meaningful (i.e., items measured the same general ideas). The items on each component had loadings $\geq .40$, the convention suggested by Gorsuch (1997). The 10 components used in subsequent analyses are presented in Table 1.

Once the 10 components were identified, additive scales were created. The alpha coefficients for these scales ranged from .42 to .93; 8 scales had alpha coefficients greater than or equal to .75, of these, 6 scales exceeded .80. Mean scores on the 10 scales for students

pursuing a specialist degree versus a doctoral degree were compared using *t*-tests. Because multiple *t*-tests were computed, the level of significance was adjusted to .005 (i.e., .05/10).

The responses of specialist students at institutions with doctoral programs in school psychology (n = 35) were compared with students at institutions where the specialist degree was the highest degree available in school psychology (n = 82). There were no significant differences on any of the 10 scales for these two groups of specialist students.[3] Therefore, these two groups of specialist students were combined in subsequent analyses comparing specialist and doctoral student responses.

Table 1 contains the results of the analyses between specialist and doctoral students on the 10 scales. A significant difference existed on the scale that assessed the prestige associated with a doctorate. Doctoral students indicated that prestige had a stronger influence on their decision to pursue a doctorate. The prestige associated with a doctorate was less important to those pursuing a specialist degree. Degree level also proved to significantly affect scores on the scale measuring the desire to impact the field of school psychology or improve one's knowledge. Desire to impact the field and/or improve the breadth of their knowledge had a stronger influence on doctoral students than it did on specialist students. Doctoral students obtained a higher score on the scale describing interests consistent with pursuing a faculty position. Doctoral students were more interested in activities associated with being a faculty member than were students pursuing a specialist degree.

A significant difference in responses was found on the scale related to the additional requirements for a doctoral degree. The additional requirements for a doctoral degree had a significantly stronger influence on specialist students' decision *not* to pursue a doctoral degree. In a related vein, a significant difference existed on the scale that measured students' desire to

gain experience and begin their career. Specialist students indicated a stronger desire to begin their career and gain experience as practicing school psychologists than did doctoral students. Specialist students indicated that the difficulty/stress of graduate school had a stronger influence on their decision to pursue their particular degree relative to doctoral students. A significant difference existed on the scale that assessed students' perceptions of the accessibility of graduate programs. Specialist students indicated that the accessibility of graduate programs had a strong influence on their decision to pursue their chosen degree.

No difference was found on a scale that assessed perceived limitations of a doctoral degree. Likewise, no difference was observed on the scale assessing self-perceived inhibitions. Finally, when taking into consideration the correction for multiple *t*-tests, there was no significant difference between specialist students and doctoral students on the survey scale dealing with financial issues.

Scores on the four C-MAP scales also were compared for students pursuing a specialist degree and those pursuing a doctoral degree (see Table 2). On 3 of the 4 scales – Career Commitment, Competitive Achievement Style, and Cooperative Achievement Style – no significant differences existed between doctoral students and specialist students or specialist students at institutions with doctoral programs in school psychology and specialist students at institutions where the specialist degree was the highest degree available in school psychology. The difference between the scores on the Mastery Motivation scale was statistically significant with doctoral students obtaining a higher score than specialist students. Scores obtained on this scale also were higher for specialist students from institutions where this was the highest degree in school psychology than for specialist students from programs that also had a doctoral program.

Discussion

Surveys conducted with school psychologists tend to be descriptive in nature (e.g., Curtis et al., 2004; Reschly & Wilson, 1997). Surveys with school psychology students largely have followed a similar pattern, but have extended their focus to include variables such as preferred client population, personal interests, professional goals, and satisfaction with current training (Erchul et al., 1989). Although informative, these studies tend to describe school psychology students, they do not tell us much about their motivations. The current study attempted to examine the reasons why students choose to pursue a specialist degree versus a doctoral degree.

The factors that seemed to have influenced specialist students' decision to pursue a specialist degree and doctoral students' decision to pursue a doctorate made sense intuitively. For example, doctoral students rated the desire to obtain more knowledge or impact the field higher than specialist students. Doctoral students appear to be willing to delay entry into the field in order to take more courses and develop their knowledge base or expertise. Not surprisingly, doctoral students also differed from specialist students in terms of their rating of the prestige associated with a doctorate. The doctorate is the terminal degree in the field, and the title, "doctor," is valued by society. Finally, the desire to pursue a career in academia is a logical reason to pursue a doctoral degree, and ratings on the scale measuring this differed for specialist and doctoral students. Opportunities to teach at a university, to train future school psychologists, and to do research are more easily accomplished with a doctoral degree. In fact, universities typically will not hire tenure-line faculty members unless they have earned a doctoral degree.

On the other hand, specialist students differed from doctoral students on the scale assessing perceptions of accessibility. Specialist programs outnumber doctoral programs in school psychology (Thomas, 1998). As a result, those seeking a specialist degree have more flexibility

in terms of the location of the program they attend. For some students, remaining at the institution at which they received their undergraduate degree, or in the general geographic location, may be an important consideration in selecting a graduate program. Because there are more specialist programs, it may be easier to make the decision to attend a particular program due to its location. The other component of perception of accessibility related to flexibility. More specialist students or specialist-level practitioners may consider doctoral training, if doctoral programs were flexible, for example, encouraging part-time enrollment.

A second factor that differentiated specialist from doctoral students was the additional requirements for a doctoral degree. Specialist students often choose not to pursue a doctorate because of the time commitment necessary to earn a doctoral degree and the additional requirements, such as a dissertation. A related finding is that a desire to gain experience and begin a career influenced students' decisions to pursue a specialist degree. Specialist students have dedicated at least seven years of their life to post-secondary training at the point of graduation, often going straight from high school through their undergraduate education to graduate training. Specialist students rated items related to beginning their career higher than doctoral students, suggesting that they were eager to enter the field.

Interestingly, specialist students differed from doctoral students on the scale examining stress. Specialist programs often have highly structured curricula in order to meet state certification or licensure requirements within a prescribed period of time (i.e., two years on campus, one year of internship). As a result, there is little flexibility regarding course offerings and when courses are taken in most specialist programs, which may contribute to feelings of stress. Doctoral programs often mirror specialist programs for the first two years. After the first two years, doctoral programs become more self-paced and allow for elective courses. Pursuing

one's interests at a pace determined by the student himself/herself may reduce some stress associated with obtaining a doctoral degree.

No statistical differences were witnessed on scales that involved financial issues, self-perceived shortcomings, or perceived limitations of the doctoral degree. These findings suggest that these issues affect specialist and doctoral students similarly. A closer look at items composing these scales revealed both groups shared an equal commitment to helping children, staying informed on changes in the field, and acting as change agents.

Similarities between specialist and doctoral students also extended to their responses to the C-MAP scales. No statistical differences were revealed on the Cooperative Achievement, Competitive Achievement, or Career Commitment scales of the C-MAP. Both specialist and doctoral students reported similar levels of commitment to their careers. The sense of cooperation and competition also is shared across degree levels. The only differences that existed on the C-MAP were on the Mastery Motivation scale, a scale that assesses the desire to succeed on challenging tasks. Doctoral students scored higher on this scale than did specialist students. Also, specialist students from institutions where the specialist degree was the terminal degree in school psychology scored higher than specialist students where the doctorate was the highest degree in school psychology. It seems that individuals pursuing the terminal degree at their institution may have a difference sense of conquering a challenge than individuals who are not pursuing the highest degree possible at their college or university.

In reviewing the findings, several points should be considered. First, cognitive dissonance may have played a role in students' responses. When people feel that there is inconsistency between their attitudes and actions, their thinking is influenced to create consistency (Festinger, 1957). In this study, students may have answered the questions that supported their degree

choice more favorably in order to justify to themselves that they were pursuing the "right" degree to meet their career needs.

Second, a survey provides a snapshot of individuals' perceptions at a particular moment in time. Events may influence these perceptions. For example, economic swings and their consequences create job markets that may be more or less supportive of certain career choices. Currently, a shortage of school psychologists exists. The need for university trainers and practicing school psychologists suggests that both specialist-level and doctoral-level school psychologists are in demand (Akin-Little & Little, 2004; Fagan, 2004; Little & Akin-Little, 2004). Knowing that employment is readily available at both the specialist-level and doctoral-level may affect students' decisions to pursue one degree or another. If the economic situation changes, perhaps students would respond to the survey differently.

Also, the time of year that the mailings occurred must be considered. In the current study, the initial surveys were mailed near the end of a school year. The end of the year tends to entail an increased level of stress for most graduate students. Strong feelings that result from increased stress may have affected the way that students responded to some of the questions on the survey. Responses may have been different, if the survey was conducted at the beginning of a semester or academic year. To understand the meaning of survey results, surveys need to occur across time.

The participants in the present study were student members of NASP. The possibility exists that this group of students may have responded differently than the overall population of school psychology students. By selecting students from a certain population, the sample was not entirely random. Future studies should include students who are members of other school psychology organizations (e.g., Division 16 of the American Psychological Association) and

who do not belong to any such organizations. This could be done by developing an on-line version of the survey and alerting training programs of its existence.

Finally, a larger sample would allow more confidence in the results of the PCA. Although the PCA violated the suggested minimum number of cases per variable (i.e., 5 cases per variable [Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989]), 8 of the 10 components employed in the study had acceptable alpha coefficients, suggesting they were robust. Nevertheless, a larger sample may result in a different component structure.

It is relatively easy to gather descriptive information about students in graduate programs in school psychology. This is done routinely by programs for institutional reports and for accreditation purposes at the state and national level. From time to time, this descriptive information has been gathered systematically by NASP (Thomas, 1998). Unfortunately, data describing the graduate student experience is less available. Most programs gather these sorts of data for accreditation purposes and as part of the formative evaluation of a program's curriculum. However, there is little information reported in the school psychology literature about the students' perspective of training or their graduate school experience (e.g., Erchul et al., 1989; Graden et al., 1984; Reschly & Wilson, 1997).

Findings from this study were not surprising and likely support the anecdotal experiences of the school psychology trainers, current graduate students, and practitioners reading this article. For example, at institutions that have both specialist and doctoral programs, talented specialist students often are recruited for the doctoral program. Many times these students reject these overtures because they want to go out into the field and begin their careers. When asked why they are pursuing a doctorate, doctoral students often cite the knowledge or expertise that comes with additional training. Financial concerns weigh equally on the minds of specialist and

doctoral students. These anecdotal experiences were documented in the current study.

The value in documenting these anecdotal experiences in training programs is that we can then begin to examine more broadly some of the issues that are common across programs. Graduate students' experiences often deal with quality of life issues that may have a broader impact on the shortage issue. For instance, we know that specialist programs tend to be intense because of the state mandated requirements for certification/licensure. In this study, stress influenced specialist students' decision to pursue a specialist degree more than it did doctoral students' decision to pursue a doctorate. It may be that the stress and difficulties experienced during specialist training dissuades students from pursuing an advance degree, leads to attrition within programs, and/or leads to early burnout in the field – all events that have implications concerning the shortage of school psychologists. These areas are all avenues for future research. At the same time, there is some indication that specialist students would consider pursuing a doctorate, if they could do so on a part-time basis, allowing them to gain the practical experiences many of them desire.

Our survey represents an attempt to go beyond demographic descriptions to understand school psychology training from the students' perspective. We believe programs have collected these sorts of data as part of their review processes or self-studies. We also believe these sorts of data exist in the form of theses and dissertations (e.g., Jacofsky, 2006). Although this information may not be widely distributed, it would benefit the profession if it were. The better we understand students' motives for pursuing a particular degree, perceptions of the field, and general perspective on their training, the more responsive programs can be at recruiting and retaining students.

References

Akin-Little, K. A., & Little, S. G. (Eds.) (2004). The state of developing university faculty in school psychology: Current status and perspectives on the future [Special issue]. *School Psychology Quarterly, 19(4).*

Alreck, P. L., & Settle, R. B. (1995). *The survey research handbook: Guidelines and strategies for conducting a survey* (2nd ed.). New York: Irwin.

Babbie, E. (1990). *Survey research methods* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Cassin, S. E., Singer, A. R., Dobson, K. S., & Altmaier, E. M. (2007). Professional interests and career aspirations of graduate students in professional psychology: An exploratory survey. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, *1*, 26-37.

Curtis, M. J., Chesno Grier, J. E., & Hunley, S. A. (2004). The changing faces of school psychology: Trends in data and projections for the future. *School Psychology Quarterly, 18*, 409-430.

Erchul, W. P., Scott, S. S., Dombalis, A. O., Schulte, A. C. (1989). Characteristics and perceptions of beginning doctoral students in school psychology. *Professional School Psychology*, *4*, 103-111.

Fagan, T. K. (2004). School psychology's significant discrepancy: Historical perspectives on personnel shortages. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*, 419-430.

Farmer, H. S. (1985). Model of career and achievement motivation for women and men. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 32*, 363-390.

Farmer, H. S., & Chung, B. Y. (1995). Variables related to career commitment, mastery motivation, and levels of career aspiration among college students. *Journal of Career Development, 21*, 265-278.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford University, Stanford, CA.

Graden, J., Christenson, S., Ysseldyke, J., & Meyers, J. (1984). A national survey of students' and practitioners' perceptions of training. *School Psychology Review, 13*, 397-405.

Jacofsky, M. D. (2006). Mediating and moderating effects of irrationality on stress in school psychology students. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 67 (01)*, 90A. (UMI No. 3200289)

Little, S. G., & Akin-Little, K. A. (2004). Academic school psychologists: Addressing the shortage. *Psychology in the Schools, 41*, 451-459.

Reschly, D. J., & Wilson, M. S. (1997). Characteristics of school psychology graduate education: Implications for the entry level discussion and doctoral-level specialty definition. *School Psychology Review, 26*, 74-92.

Thomas, A. (1998). Directory of school psychology graduate programs. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Footnotes

[1] The Model Act for State Licensure of Psychologists (MLA) was proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1987 to guide states in the titling and practice of psychology. This document recommended that the use of the title “psychologist” be reserved for those holding the doctorate. An exemption was made for school psychology. Those working in public school settings were allowed to use the term school “psychologist” regardless of their degree as long as they held the appropriate credential from their state board of education. APA has removed the exemption from its most recent version of the MLA. Whether the exemption should be included in the final document is a topic of discussion. Interested readers are referred to the following sites: http://www.nasponline.org/standards/MLA_Analysis_9_07.pdf (NASP analysis of APA’s proposed MLA); http://www.nasponline.org/standards/apamla.aspx (NASP Response to APA Model Act Revisions); http://theaasp.org/pdf/37a__TF_on_Revision_of_the_APA's_Model_Act_-_Exhibit_1[1].pdf (APA MLA draft); http://theaasp.org/pdf/37a__TF_on_Revision_of_the_APA's_Model_Act_-_Exhibit_1[1].pdf (Comparison of original and proposed MLA).

[2] Historically, the difference between the degrees reflected programs that required fewer than 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours (i.e., master’s programs) and those who required more (i.e., specialist programs); the doctorate was defined by the terminal degree (i.e., Ph.D., Psy.D., Ed.D.). Today, a master’s degree or specialist degree in school psychology typically requires two years of coursework on campus and a one school year (i.e., 1200 hour) internship experience. The differences in the degree title often reflect the college in which a program is located, university policies, state credentialing preferences, work place issues (e.g., pay scale placement), or a combination of these. Throughout the article, those completing a two-year on campus, one-

year internship experience will be referred to as specialist students.

[3] Analyses between specialist students at institutions with doctoral programs in school psychology and students at institutions where the specialist degree was the highest degree available in school psychology for the 10 scales is available from the corresponding author.

Table 1
Scales Resulting from the Principal Components Analysis of the 50-Item Survey

	Specialist		Doctoral		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Scale 1: Prestige or opportunities associated with doctoral degree (eigen = 12.52; α = .93)	20.13	8.94	32.08	5.30	-10.18*
17 Applicability of the doctoral curriculum to meet professional needs (.68)					
26 The increase in status at the doctoral level (.87)					
27 The increase of respect within the field at the doctoral level (.88)					
28 The increase in salary at the doctoral level (.81)					
29 The increase in job opportunities for doctoral school psychologists (.84)					
30 The desire to hold the title of licensed psychologist (.82)					
31 The increased opportunities for doctoral school psychologists to work in a private/independent practice (.82)					
40 A doctoral degree has always been an educational goal for me (.57)					
Scale 2: Desire to impact the field or improve one's knowledge (eigen = 7.65; α = .92)	28.58	7.85	33.75	5.64	-4.98*
32 A desire to be a leader in the field (.58)					
33 A desire to have a stronger knowledge base from which to operate (.67)					
34 A desire to have an impact on the profession (.69)					
35 A desire to improve myself (.76)					
36 A desire to earn a higher degree (.71)					
37 a desire to gain influence in my future working environment (.71)					
38 Desire to help children (.72)					
39 Desire to stay "on the cutting edge" of the field (.81)					
Scale 3: Additional requirements for a doctoral degree (eigen = 3.04; α = .83)	13.72	5.52	10.73	4.10	3.90*
13 The number of additional classes required for a doctoral degree (.79)					
14 The time commitment necessary to earn a doctoral degree (.74)					
18 The type and number of quantitative courses (statistics) required in a doctoral program (.46)					
19 Dissertation requirement (.76)					
20 The doctoral qualifying exams (.65)					

table continues

Table 1 (continued)

	Specialist		Doctoral		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Scale 4: Financial issues (eigen = 2.29; α= .83)	9.33	5.32	10.93	3.95	-2.10
05 Assistantships available in doctoral programs (.71)					
06 Scholarships available for doctoral programs (.76)					
07 Student loans available for doctoral programs (.74)					
08 A desire to pay back student loans quickly (.62)					
Scale 5: Desire to gain experience and begin a career (eigen = 1.80; α= .86)	19.59	3.85	11.06	4.79	13.03*
15 The skills learned from a specialist program are sufficient for my career objectives (.53)					
16 A desire to gain experience in the field before pursuing the higher degree (.51)					
21 A desire to graduate and begin working as soon as possible (.77)					
22 A desire to start earning money (.81)					
23 Current or future family plans (.71)					
Scale 6: Stress/difficulty (eigen = 1.75; α= .78)	8.29	3.55	6.64	2.77	3.43*
09 The stress of graduate school (.65)					
10 The difficulty level of classes in doctoral programs (.56)					
11 My current difficulties as a graduate student (.81)					
12 Dislike for graduate school (.68)					
Scale 7: Accessibility of programs (eigen = 1.60; α= .75)	11.31	4.16	8.24	3.67	5.12*
01 Location of programs available for choice of degree level (.76)					
02 Number of university programs available (.82)					
03 Being able to attend my program part-time (.55)					
04 Night classes available in doctoral programs (.41)					
Scale 8: Desire to pursue a university position (eigen = 1.39; α= .88)	5.41	3.08	9.93	3.23	-9.72*
41 A desire to teach at a university (.63)					
44 The desire to do research (.48)					
49 Desire to train future school psychologists (.62)					

table continues

Table 1 (continued)

	Specialist		Doctoral		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Scale 9: Self-perceived prohibitions (eigen = 1.33; α= .42)	4.21	1.96	4.25	1.98	-0.10
45 My age (.77)					
46 Fear of not being able to gain admission into a doctoral program (.59)					
Scale 10: Perceived limitations of a doctoral degree (eigen = 1.13; α= .53)	4.42	2.29	4.48	1.58	-0.13
24 I am afraid it might be harder to get a job in my desired setting with a doctoral degree (.73)					
25 The availability of jobs for doctoral level school psychologists (.64)					
Items that did not load meaningfully on a scale					
42 The fact that I already have a master's degree in school psychology or another field encouraged me to pursue my current degree					
43 The desire to complete the entire program at one time so I would not need to go back to graduate school					
47 I plan on going on for a doctoral degree in an area outside of school psychology					
48 Future employment trends in the field					
50 Desire to work in a part-time capacity when I have completed my degree					

Note. Eigen = eigenvalue. Numbers in parentheses are the factor loadings for the item. * $p \leq .001$.

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations for Specialist and Doctoral Students' Responses on the Career Motivation and Achievement Planning Questionnaire

Scale	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
	Specialist		*Doctoral*			
Career Commitment	57.77	9.92	57.52	6.86	.20	.84
Mastery Motivation	21.65	2.85	23.73	7.29	-2.30	.02
Competitive Achievement Style	14.54	5.67	13.96	3.60	.80	.39
Cooperative Achievement Style	17.38	2.05	18.38	6.91	-1.18	.24
	Specialist Only		*Specialist w/Doctoral*			
Career Commitment	58.00	9.91	57.21	10.23	.38	.70
Mastery Motivation	22.07	2.89	20.72	2.43	2.53	.01
Competitive Achievement Style	14.72	6.30	14.24	3.87	.50	.62
Cooperative Achievement Style	17.41	1.87	17.24	2.46	.38	.70

Note. Specialist n = 117, Doctoral n = 72. Specialist Only n = 82, Specialist w/Doctoral n = 35.