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EXAMINING THE PERCEPTIVE ROLES OF A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST IN

COLLABORATION WITH EARLY EDUCATORS

by

MONIQUE SYDNEY COHN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Honors in the Major Program in Early Childhood Development and Education

in the College of Education and Human Performance

and in the Burnett Honors College

at the University of Central Florida

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Thesis Chair: Dr. Kelly Jennings-Towle, Ed.D.

ABSTRACT

The collaborative efforts between school psychologists and early educators can prepare children for success. Since the first decade of life is such a critical time period, early childhood interventions from birth to the early school grades are receiving widespread attention today as one of the most effective ways to prevent learning difficulties and to promote children's development and well-being (Reyonlds, 2004). School psychologists should promote the fact that "making schools ready for all children" contributes to systems integration among schools and early childhood programs (Bagnato, 2006). This study is important to further examine the roles of current school psychologists and to study their collaborative work with early intervention. Early childhood intervention is defined as the provision of educational, family, health and/or social services during any of the first eight years of life to children who are at risk of poor outcomes because they face socio-environmental disadvantages or have developmental disabilities (Reynolds, 2004). Federal law acknowledges the importance and need for early intervention as The Economic Opportunity and Community Partnership Act of 1974 and subsequent amendments to the law required Head Start programs in each state to serve a minimum of 10% children with disabilities (Hooper & Umansky, 2004). When children are not meeting milestones, early intervention increases the likelihood of success and a more positive later outcome.

DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my father who became my angel my sophomore year of my undergraduate studies. His complete belief and confidence for my success pushed me through my completion of this project. He is the guiding light for my passion to continue to learn and grow in order to change the life of children everywhere.

This project is also dedicated to my mother, who has fulfilled the roles of both parents for me and sacrifices so much for my success. I love you more than you know.

Lastly, I would like to express utmost gratitude to my family and friends. Thank you for your continuous enthusiasm, motivation, and belief in my ability.

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Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Hines, Dr. Albers-Biddle, Dr. Levin, Dr. Anne Culp, and Dr. Roberts for their guidance during this process. Dr. Roberts, your positivity and invaluable workshops truly aided in my successful completion of this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I have enjoyed the Early Childhood Development major immensely throughout the last four years at The University of Central Florida. Through coursework and observations, this major has led me to notice the importance of collaboration of early childhood educators with school psychologists to meet the needs of the whole child. The coursework in this major has taught me the important different stages and social/emotional, physical, and language developmental milestones that children should be reaching. When children are not reaching certain milestones, it becomes a red flag, in which outside professionals need to intervene. Furthermore, throughout my time in this major, I was required to complete many observations in which I was able to apply my knowledge from the classroom and reflect on different stages and developmental milestones of infants and toddlers.

I believe that I have found my calling in life and want to create a meaningful practice in school psychology to ensure that all children are receiving necessary services in order to succeed. The roles of school psychologists are critical because they have the capability to act as first responders while supporting early childhood educators. If school psychologists are to become more effective in modern schools, they must become more successful in working proactively with students and teachers in the everyday activities that constitute school life (Braden, DiMarino-Linnen, & Good, 2001).

This study seeks to examine the roles of a school psychologist in supporting early childhood educators through early intervention models and social emotional milestones that can affect delays by interviewing six current school psychologists who work with early childhood

educators. The following chapter provides a review of the research literature concerning the

roles a school psychologist.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This document provides a review of the research related to my topic on examining the roles of school psychologists in conjunction with early childhood educators. School psychologists support many roles of the school unit, and I am continuously learning the many roles surrounding this profession. During my literature review, I read many articles and determined the prominent trend in roles a school psychologist has while supporting early educators. In this review of related research, an overview of the roles a school psychologist plays is provided. Subsequently, the following subheadings guide this review of related research and are organized under the topics: Roles of a School Psychologist, Providing Support to the Classroom Teacher in Response to Trauma, Providing Grief Support After Loss, Providing Supports in Early Intervention Contexts, Providing Support Related to Social Emotional Skills, and Providing Support Related to Varying Exceptionalities. Often, the role of school psychologists and early childhood educators are to act as first responders to many different children and families as they progress through the educational system.

Roles of a School Psychologist

The time that a school psychologist spends is vital to the quality of services they provide. In this section I will outline three journal articles that analyzed the different roles of a school psychologist and how they use their time. In the study of Poulou (2003), school psychologists were perceived in two ways. First, as an active member of the school community who operate alongside other school members, staff, parents and teachers for the achievement of common goals. The other findings in the study stated school psychologists were regarded as a distant

member of the school team who, while continuously observing the school's proceedings, do not contribute to their outcome but are able to respond to any request for intervention (Poulou, 2003). Ultimately, the findings in this study enforce that school psychologists' aim for all-round development, prevention and handling of the children's problems while also at making the teacher's work easier. It was also noted that the constant changeability of conditions in which the profession of school psychologist is undertaken adds difficulty to the work. For example, the circumstances of action alter depending on the needs of the people whom the school psychologist serves which also depends on the educational policy (Poulou, 2003).

The second study revealed findings from school psychologists to identify both their preferred and actual service roles. This included school psychologists wishing to diversify their professional functioning by reducing the amount of time they spend in assessment activities and increasing the amount of time they spend in alternative service roles (Watkins, Crosby, & Pearson, 2001). Additionally, respondents in the study of Watkins et al. (2001), reported that the school psychologists serving their schools were doing a good job with the time he/she had at their school but needed to be there more often so that more services could be provided.

The last study reviewed included job satisfaction amongst 500 randomly selected members of the National Association of School Psychologists. Results show that job satisfaction has increased over the previous 22 years with school psychologists being most satisfied with the social service, independence, and values aspects of their job (Worrell, Skaggs, & Brown, 2006). School psychologists also desire to perform fewer traditional psycho-educational assessments

and focus their time on direct intervention, problem solving consultation, organizational consultation, and applied research (Reschly, 2000).

Providing Support to the Classroom Teacher in Response to Trauma

Akin-Little, Little, & Somerville (2011) focus on the role of the different types of trauma that children may experience related to abuse and grief. Subsequently, Akin-Little et al. (2011), highlighted that children are exposed to traumatic events and schools are one of the few places children turn to for safety and stability. Therefore, is important that school psychologists have training in meeting the needs of children using the most effective interventions to provide support to early educators.

Akin-Little et al. (2011) posed an intriguing question that sparked an interest in me, "what can school psychologists do to help mitigate the effect of trauma on children?" The authors stated that although there is mandated training on crisis intervention in many school psychology programs, there is little training specifically in addressing the needs of the children who have suffered (Akin-Little et al., 2011). There are many different positions in which a child can face a traumatic event and wherever you are in the world, there are children who have been exposed to trauma that are most likely attending schools. "Teachers and other school personal are, for the most part, not trained in dealing with grieving and traumatized children and youth"(Akin-Little et al., 2011). Crisis team members should be trained in offering psychological first-aid and in de-escalating chaos (Openshaw, 2011).

School psychologists can be the professional that makes the difference in a child's life by educating the school staff, teachers, and directly working with a child during a traumatic event.

5

Different interventions for trauma include Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT) and Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS). TF-CBT is used for children who have experienced trauma and is individualized to meet the needs of the child and family. Sessions can involve activities like relaxation training, reviewing the traumatic event via cognitive behavior techniques, and ending with a permanent product such as a journal (Akin-Little et al., 2011).

CBITS is a skills-based group intervention for children exposed to traumatic events and the intervention is focused on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. CBITS has been used with children who have experienced violent acts, exposed to a natural disaster, or abuse (Akin-Little et al., 2011). This intervention is conducted in group sessions that build off of each session. The sessions are geared towards the individual, group, and cultural needs. For example, children aged 5- to 7-years-old have difficulty processing trauma with words, therefore, at this age, children should have the option of drawing a picture of the traumatic event to convey their feelings (Openshaw, 2011). Interventions can help children cope and make them feel like they are not alone.

Providing Grief Support After Loss

The death of a peer or relative is a non-normative event for children to cope with. School psychologists need to be skilled in offering school-based support to bereaved children. These skills include basic counseling, psycho-education on topics of grief and bereavement, and trying to normalize the experience (Balk, 2011). Educating children about the grief process will help with understanding common childhood misperceptions regarding death, and assisting children in

expressing feelings, worries, and anxieties associated with their grief (Cole & Heath, 2011). Students experiencing a loss of a peer have many domains in which they are impacted including physical, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual (Balk, 2011). Each domain needs to be addressed by the school psychologist. For example, to support a child's behavior, psychologists can encourage healthy behaviors such as journaling or engaging in a sport. The psychologist should also overview destructive coping skills.

Cole & Heath (2011) defined bereavement as experiencing a loved one's death and grief as responding to a loved one's death. Children learn how to grieve based on observing how others grieve and defining death based on cultural customs. A child's age has a big impact on the level of understanding the loss and the meaning of death. Grief was thought to occur in sequential stages, however now, it is proposed that there are tasks of grief. Unlike stages, tasks of grief do not occur in order and there is no time frame or expectations for a child to fully master each task (Cole & Heath, 2011).

School psychologists can assist educators in supporting a child after a family death. The school system provides the majority of supportive mental health services to youth and it is estimated that 75% of mental health services provided to youth are delivered in public schools (Cole & Heath, 2011). Therefore, school psychologists are in a great position to provide intervention and assistance to children and early childhood educators.

A surprising statistic is that by the age of 16, one-fourth of all USA children will experience an extreme stressor, such as the death of a family member or classmate (Cole & Heath, 2011). Following the 2001 New York City World Trade Center terrorist attacks, over

10,000 children suffered the death of a parent or loved one (Cole & Heath, 2011). The support and stability provided by the family and school are critical in assisting the child.

School psychologists are in a position to support the classroom educator and children by providing individual counseling with bereaved children. It is important that school psychologists are aware that relationship building with traumatized children is an on-going process that needs to be nurtured in order to maximize the child's self-disclosure (Ayyash-Abdo, 2001). Additionally, school psychologists can communicate to the educator developmental challenges a child may be having in regards to a loss.

School mental health professionals have opportunities to assist teachers and staff by providing interventions and different supportive coping groups. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and bibiliotherapy in the classrooms assist bereaved children. CBT can help the educator with help from the school psychologist to respond more sensitively to students and help normalize a child's feelings (Cole & Health, 2011). Additionally, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF- CBT) is used for Childhood Traumatic Grief (CTG), a condition in which trauma symptoms interfere with adaptive child grieving (Cohen & Mannarino, 2011). Gradual exposure is incorporated throughout all of the TF-CBT components which mean that children are gradually assisted different frightening aspects of death by incorporating discussion in a slow and careful manner (Cohen & Mannarino, 2011). School psychologists are in a positon to support the classroom educator, child, and family members through this intervention. Bibliotherapy is choosing different books that can assist early childhood educators due to its therapeutic strategy to address and change children's problematic thinking and subsequent

behavior (Cole & Health, 2011). School psychologists can support an educator's involvement when a child is experiencing a loss.

Providing Supports in Early Intervention Contexts

Early childhood intervention requires assessment procedures that capture real-life competencies in everyday settings and document even small improvements (Bagnto, 2005). Early intervention procedures provide information about at-risk children who are not meeting developmental milestones. Purposes for early intervention assessment include conducting functional assessments in the natural environment, identifying functional capabilities to plan individualized programs and supports, and monitoring child progress during intervention (Bagnto, 2005).

School psychologists contribute to effective intervention by providing early educators many ways for determining if a child is "on track". According to Hojnoski & Missall (2006), school psychologists can provide educators with a scientific framework for interpreting rate of skill development relative to assessment criteria. One of the main roles of a school psychologist is to collaborate with early educators to identify what is best matched to children's individualized needs. This approach allows for a meaningful and family centered approach (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006).

School Readiness

Readiness has been defined as the readiness to learn and readiness for school. Readiness to learn is viewed at a level of development and readiness for school indicates that a child will also be successful in a school context (Carlton & Winsler, 1999). To ensure that children are

ready for kindergarten, school psychologists can assist early educators by acting as a liaison from preschools to elementary schools. This will allow educators to prepare for their diverse student population. School psychologists can help preschools to create a uniform developmental rating system for reporting children's strengths and weaknesses to their future kindergarten educators and aid educators in the interpretation of developmental information (Carlton & Winsler, 1999). School psychologists can be a strong resource for all teachers in areas of social skill development and behavior. Psychologists can educate educators in cultural issues with social skills, enable teachers to handle teaching diverse students, and provide teachers with information on successful intervention programs for children who need a different mode of instruction (Carlton & Winsler, 1999).

Response to Intervention

A Response to Intervention (RTI) framework is the first step toward identifying a student's needs. RTI is a relatively new term that reflects the use of a multitiered approach to intervention within American schools that provides research-supported, educational instruction that is tailored to support academic and behavioral outcomes for students (Vujnovic et al., 2014). Within the RTI model, there are three tiers that aid in preventing school failure. At Tier I, children are receiving a general education program and the students who do not show appropriate gains, will receive additional support at Tier II. Tier II includes supplemental small-group instruction to aid in the areas of deficit. Lastly, Tier III interventions are individualized and may include a multidisciplinary assessment to determine whether a child meets eligibility for special education programming (Vujnovic et al., 2014). Placement within a tier and movement between tiers relies on frequent assessment and progress monitoring (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010).

School psychologists can apply this knowledge to support early educators and professionals implementation of RTI. The coordination of educators and school psychologists will need to increase so that educators have the proper ability to apply their knowledge of RTI principles to make proper decisions regarding student placement in receiving appropriate education (Vujnovic et al., 2014).

Assessment

One of school psychology's primary roles is assessment; however, the general consensus is that school psychologists want to broaden their job role in this area. School psychologists play an important role in assessments that aim to measure different skill growth over time. The general outcome measurement (GOM) and the functional behavioral assessment (FBA) are two tests that school psychologists use that emphasize a teach-test-teach model (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006). A GOM approach to assessment is designed to determine child progress toward long – term goals by monitoring skills that represent valued education or developmental process (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006). Subsequently, collected GOM data can facilitate the establishment of benchmarks and criteria that aim for success. School psychologists can aid early childhood professionals in using this information to accelerate the progress of children who are struggling to meet specific criterion. Additionally, school psychologists can aid kindergarten educators in using preschool GOM data to plan instruction to accommodate the diverse learners as they enter kindergarten (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006). The use of GOM provides an opportunity for school psychologists to collaborate with early educators to facilitate and promote school readiness for all learners (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006). FBA is a framework to guide assessment, decision making, and intervention. FBA has been used for young children with behavioral difficulties and

developing interventions to reduce the problem behavior. Both assessments can assist in children who are making the transition from early childhood to formal school settings. Early childhood professionals should collaborate with school psychologists to ensure that students are receiving the developmentally appropriate services needed. According to Hojnoski & Missall (2006) the functional behavioral assessment guides assessments and is used to promote school readiness by reducing problem behaviors.

Instructional consultation

In collaboration with educators and parents, school psychologists can facilitate different issues that may arise. One form of intervention in the classroom setting is instructional consultation that assists educators and parents with providing early learning skills (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006). Intervention in the classroom can additionally help in targeting at risk children to provide counseling and mentoring to those children.   There is a need to assist educators in the design and delivery of instruction to provide quality instructional programs to diverse learners, especially students who enter school with varied formal and informal learning experiences (Hanes & Powers, 2008). To ensure that children are on track, school psychologists can plan, in collaboration with early childhood educators, intentional learning experiences for young children. School psychologists can assist educators in the delivery of effective instruction by directly observing and providing consultation to improve the classroom environment and instruction (Hanes & Powers, 2008).

Providing Support Related to Social Emotional Skills

Early childhood educators play a large role in supporting the growth of social emotional skills and self-regulation. Research indicates that while educators play this vital role in

supporting a child's behavior, it also indicates that many early childhood educators are unaware of evidence-based practices that can increase interactions with children (Vo & Sutherland, 2012). Reinke et al. (2011), conducted a study with 292 educators from five school districts asking their views of the role of school psychologists. The educators reported viewing school psychologists as having a primary role in most aspects of mental health services provided in the school. The educators perceived school psychologists as having the primary responsibility for implementing classroom-based behavioral interventions. The educators also believed school psychologists had a greater role in teaching social emotional lessons. This puts school psychologists in the position to educate on how to support these developmental skills such as self-regulation and social competence.

School psychologists can support educators in promoting different positive teacher-child interactions. For example, a school psychologist can help schools to select evidence-based interventions that provide training, consultation, and coaching to educators (Vo & Sutherland, 2012). This can be done through the BEST in CLASS intervention model that has the goal of providing an intervention that addresses the needs of young children who demonstrate chronic problem behaviors. School psychologists can play the role of providing various support methods and coaching for schools to adopt the BEST in CLASS model. This model changes educators' use of effective practices and decreases the likelihood that children will display problem behaviors (Vo & Sutherland, 2012).

Lack of social-emotional skills can cause a child to be at-risk, and therefore, need intervention. Signs of abnormal social-emotional development are when children are not

meeting expected developmental milestones. Since early educators act as first responders, school psychologists are in the position to educate them on the different red flags to look for. Children should be engaging in associate and cooperative play with peers by the age of four as well as parallel play (Berk & Meyers, 2015, p. 366). At the ages of 5-6, children improve in emotional understanding, or the ability to interpret, predict, and influence others' emotional reactions (Berk & Meyers, 2015, p. 361). If children are not meeting these milestones and many more, it appears as a red-flag. Therefore, school psychologists can also provide support by providing information to educators on developmentally appropriate ages and stages as well as being a resource when educators notice a child who needs intervention.

Providing Support Related to Varying Exceptionalities

The Individual with DisabilitiesE ducation Act (1997) defines children with disabilities as those children with mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who because of those impairments need special education and related services. There is mounting evidence that early intervention can have a markedly positive effect on the development of infants and preschoolers with some types of disabilities (Hooper & Umansky, 2004, p. 4). Therefore, school psychologists play a large role in early intervention for children with exceptionalities and ensuring that children are receiving the services necessary for success. In 2000 and 2001 Early Head Start provided services to 858,000 children of which more than 10% were disabled. (Hooper & Umansky, 2004, p. 6). The impact that these programs have on children is immense. Part C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004)

requires that the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) include statements of the measurable results or outcomes expected for the child and family and the goals must be based upon identified priorities of the family and other care providers with input from other team members as appropriate (Shelden & Rush, 2014). School psychologists can assist early educators in identifying children that need both IEP and IFSP services and later provide accommodations and modification to help these children succeed.

The various roles identified by research offered the research literature a strong understanding of school psychologists' current roles. The following chapter provides a review of the methodology used to complete this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to examine how school psychologists support early educators and the need for further supportive measures. Through my literature review I realized the need to define the role and future roles that a school psychologist plays in supporting early educators. To measure the relationship between school psychologists and early educators, six interviews were conducted. The participants in the interviews were school psychologists in the Central Florida area.

Using the literature review evidence, I created an interview protocol that included questions about the roles of a school psychologist. I found prominent topics in the literature review evidence to derive questions for the interview questionnaire. The interview consisted of the open-ended question, "describe your roles as a school psychologist while supporting early educators" followed by closed questions. For example: "What test(s) do you use for early screening of a child with a social-emotional concern?" (a. ASQ b. RTI c. FBA d. other). The interview instrument can be found in Appendix C. The face to face or email interviews took no longer than 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed using a qualitative and quantitative approach.

The participants were a sample of convenience which means that the participants were drawn from the population that was close to hand. The demographics of the participants are outlined in the table below:

Participant	Demographics
A	Brevard County
B	Orange County
C	Brevard County
D	Brevard County
E	Brevard County
F	Orange County

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Before conducting the study, the following research steps included: (a) Obtaining

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct this study; (b) Identification of six school

psychologists in the Central Florida area to interview; (c) Obtaining permission to carry out the

questionnaire with the school psychologists, which entailed obtaining email consent for

participation in the study. Fifteen emails were sent out to school psychologists and professionals

in the field within the Central Florida area.

The methodology is outlined so that this study can be replicated. The following chapter

provides a review of the results that were derived from the participants' responses.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The knowledge from this study is important because it helps to further define the role of a school psychologist while supporting educators. Additionally, it will help show the misunderstandings of the profession and the areas that need improvement. After interviewing all six school psychologists and analyzing the data, it was clear that the roles for the participating school psychologists varied throughout the participants. There are many similarities and differences from the respondents based on the different questions from the survey. This chapter will comprise of the data collected from the five school psychologists in the Central Florida area to answer the following survey questions which can be found in Appendix C. Four of the questionnaires were conducted with school psychologists who practice in Brevard County and two were conducted from a school psychologist whom is practicing in Orange County. Five of the questionnaires were completed via email communication and one was completed face-to-face. The qualitative and quantitative data was organized by the open and close ended responses. Tables and figures are included which display the respondents' answers.

Summary of Results

Respondents were asked how their role as a school psychologist is vital to early intervention. The respondents' answers showed the similarity in providing suggested interventions and an appropriate developmental perspective that identifies areas of concern. Once the areas of concern are addressed, a commonality amongst the respondents was that they provide interventions that will lead to child success.

Participant	Response
A	Developmental perspective for planning/implementing interventions
B	Assist teachers and staff with providing appropriate academic/ behavioral interventions Understanding of student development and academic expectations allows us to provide useful input at the early stages of concern
C	Information and knowledge of interventions that have been successful
D	Identify areas of concern and possible interventions for student progression
E	Determines possible eligibility for exceptional education services. When children exhibit significant delays are provided exceptional education services which result in improvements in their skills at an early age.
F	I wouldn't say my role is vital to early intervention; I do not evaluate young children.

Table 2: Question 1 Response

A second open-ended question asked the respondents if they have found anything that surprised them in their role as a psychologist. Again, the answers amongst the interviewees were very similar. The respondents stated that parents are difficult to contact and do not collaborate well with the school-based team as well as a lack of parental guidance and participation in their child's upbringing. Other responses stated that there is a huge misunderstanding of the school psychology role even amongst school personnel. Lastly, a respondent stated "the biggest surprise is the way the role of a school psychologist has changed over the years."

Participant	Response
A	Nothing has surprised me over the years
B	Role is misunderstood even amongst school/district personnel
C	Lack of parental guidance and participation in child's upbringing with respect to academic, behavioral, and emotional concerns
D	The way the role of a school psychologist has changed over the years
E	Parents are difficult to contact and do not collaborate well with school-based teams
F	How long it takes to write a thorough evaluation/report

Table 3: Question 2 Response

When asked what they find is the most valuable use of their time respondents answers were similar in that the majority stated "collaborating with teachers" or "being a part of the educational planning process". Other answers stated spending time with the children, conducting evaluations, and attending MTSS meetings. When the respondents were asked what the least valuable use of their time was, their answers varied greatly with answers ranging from meetings, paperwork, rescheduling evaluation appointments, and one respondent answered nothing.

Participant	Response
A	Collaborating with teachers, grade level teams, and working in the classroom
B	Taking the time to attend meetings when parents are attending directly to hear their concerns
C	Spending time with children
D	Meeting with teachers and using the problem solving process
E	Conducting comprehensive evaluations to provide the needed data for staffing teams
F	Direct assessment and researching different behaviors

Table 4: Question 3 Response

Participant	Response
A	Meetings
B	Paperwork
C	IEP meetings
D	Nothing
E	Rescheduling evaluation appointments due to unresponsive parents
F	Filling out my log which includes the minutes of my day

Table 5: Question 4 Response

Five of the six school psychologists answered that they provide support in response to trauma and/or grief after loss. When asked what test(s) the school psychologists use for early screening of a child with a social-emotional concern the most common answer was Response to Intervention (RTI) followed by Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). Since there is a wide array of tests available for early screening, the only tests in common listed under letter choice D other were the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) and the Development Profile 3 (DP3). Other tests listed under letter choice D included PDD Behavior Inventory, Emotional Disturbance, Decision Tree, Projectives (such as sentence completion and drawings), CDC, CARS-2, GADS, BDI-2, DP3, Vineland, and DAYC.
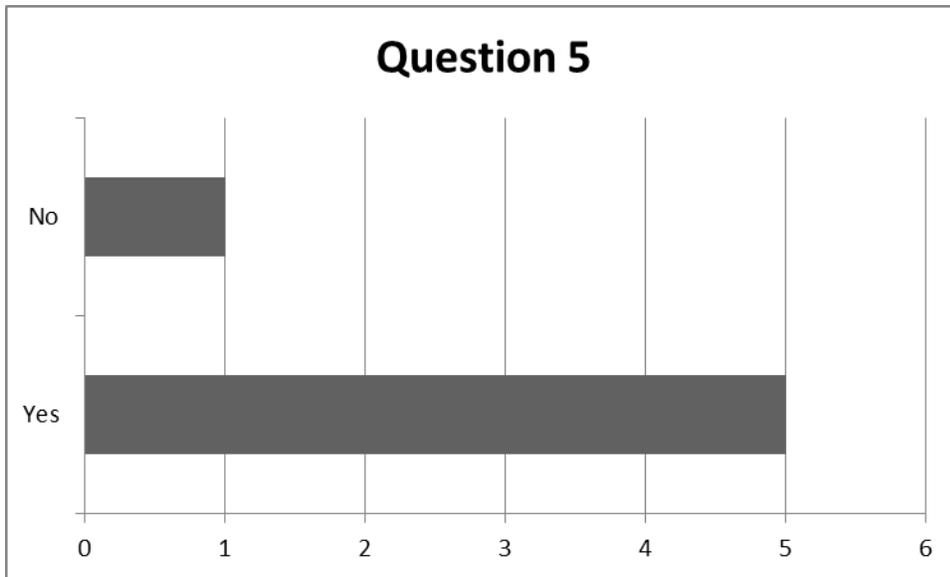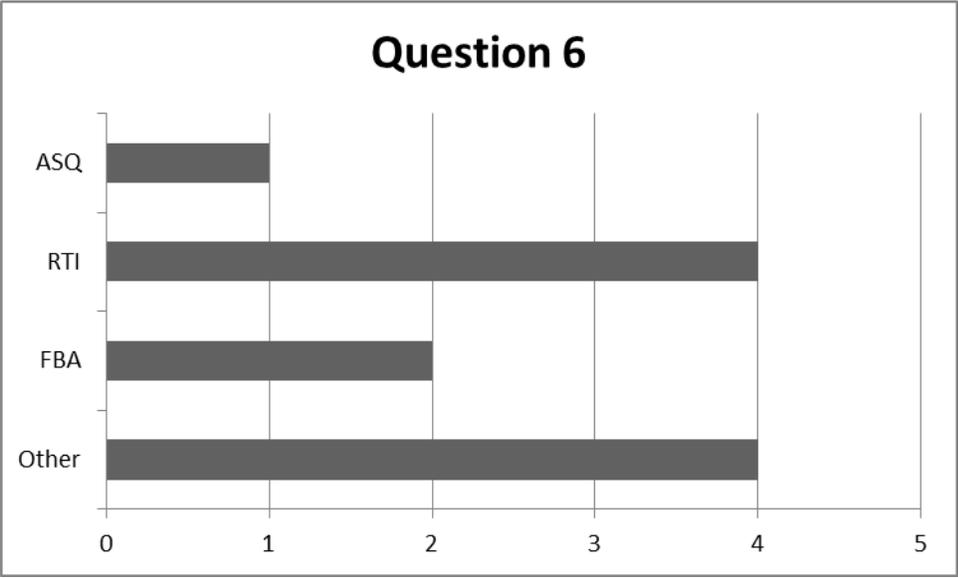

Figure 1: Question 5 Response

Figure 2: Question 6 Response

When asked how the school psychologists support early educators with interventions for young children with varying exceptionalities all respondents answered that they provide resources/referrals and provide assessments. One respondent stated they help to create Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). Two respondents offered additional information and stated that they aid in consultations and intervention recommendations.
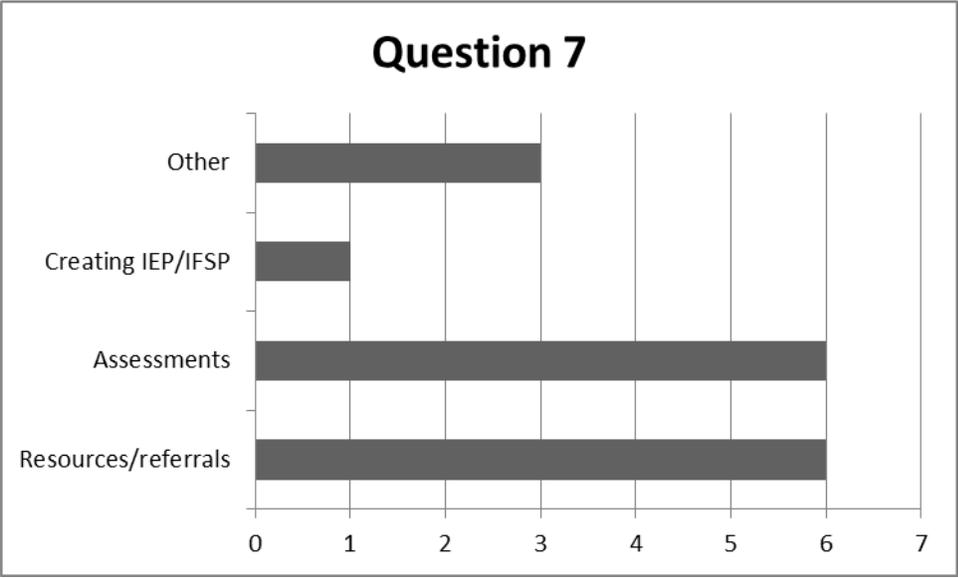
Figure 3: Question 7 Response

Based on question number eight, all of the respondents stated that they do not have enough time to implement the proper interventions necessary for early childhood success. Unanimously the respondents agreed that due to the high number of referrals and assignments of schools there is not enough time to assist in providing the interventions. Additionally, a

respondent stated that there was a lack of school psychologists with the demands of the job.
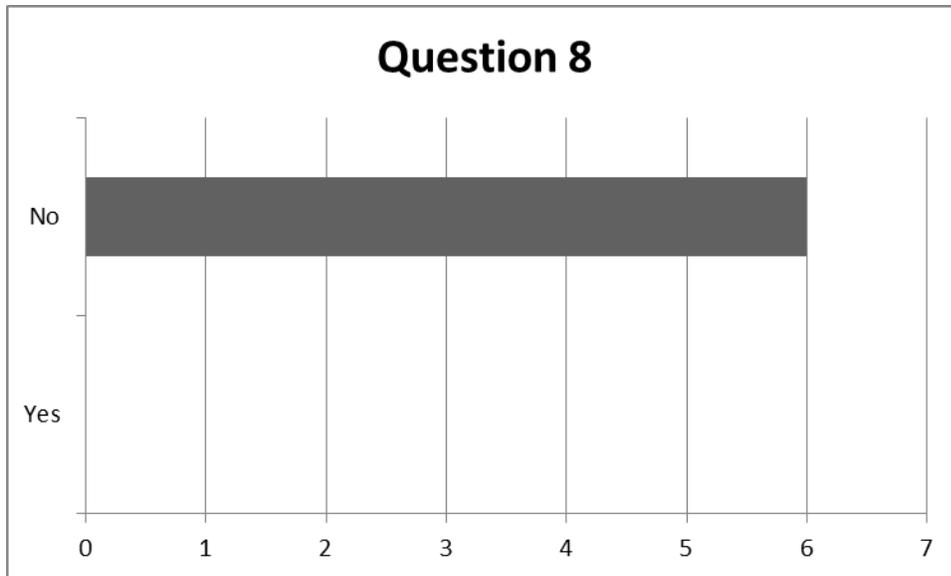
Figure 4: Question 8 Response

When asked how the respondents support early educators all school psychologists stated that they provide suggested interventions and assessments. Three respondents stated that they assist in creating goals for the child and one respondent added that their role assists in ongoing consultation. A respondent stated she assists with positive behavior support plans and consultations with teachers in letter D of the question.
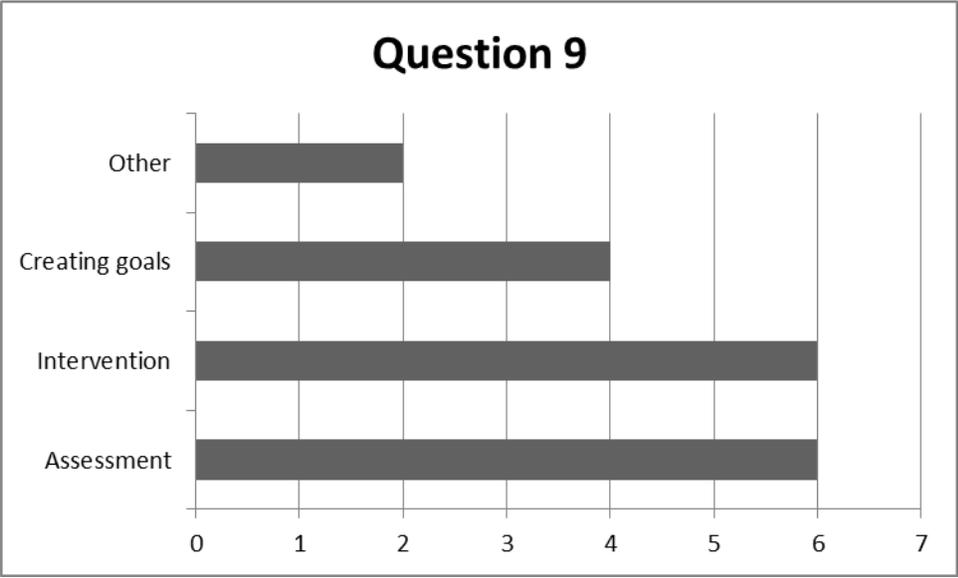
Figure 5: Question 9 Response

The following chapter provides the conclusions of this study that were analyzed from the results of the participants' responses.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study seeks to examine the roles of a school psychologist in supporting early childhood educators through early intervention models and social emotional milestones that can affect delays by interviewing six current school psychologists who work with early childhood educators. In this section, I will discuss the importance of this study for school psychologists and early educators. I will also discuss the limitations of this research and how I can apply this to future research. Overall, this study has afforded me knowledge of the school psychology profession and perspectives from current practicing professionals.

School psychologists play an important role in a child's success. The process of interviewing professionals reinforced my findings from my literature review. I noticed three major themes throughout the interview process which includes: (1) roles in early intervention; (2) supporting in response to trauma and grief; (3) implementation of interventions. I believe that this study is important because respondents stated, "the role has changed over the years" and "there is a misunderstanding of the role."

While conducting my literature review, I found that early intervention provides information about at-risk children who are not meeting developmental milestones (Bagnato, 2005). The respondents' answers when asked how their role is vital to early intervention reinforced this concept. For example, one respondent stated that "having an understanding of student development and academic expectations allows us to provide useful input at the early stages of concern" and a second respondent stated that they bring a "developmental perspective for planning/implementing interventions." Through the literature review, I learned the different therapies and interventions that school psychologists can facilitate that would aid in support and coping during grief (Cole & Health, 2011). Additionally, when I asked the professionals if they

provide support in response to trauma and/or grief after loss five of the six respondents stated that they do. I enjoyed finding that the roles outlined in my literature review correlated with my findings in the questionnaire. The respondents answers that they did not have enough time for implementation of suggested interventions correlated exactly with the literature of Watkins et al. (2001) that the school psychologists needed to be there more often so that more services could be provided.

It was surprising to me that school psychologists did not have enough time to implement the interventions to which they suggest. The respondents stated that "due to high number of referrals for evaluations they do not enough time to assist in providing interventions." Another respondent stated that "having multiple school assignments doesn't have enough time to make sure interventions are implemented." It was shocking to me that unanimously all respondents stated that they do not have the time to assist in implementation of their referrals.

After conducting my literature review and reviewing my findings, my hopes are to utilize technology to shorten the time of write ups of reports. I believe that there is a shortage of school psychologists and school districts need to employ more in their districts to meet the needs of their students. In my future practice, I plan to utilize technology to assist with writing up assessments so that I have more time for direct service of interventions with the students that I am servicing.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The limitations of this study included the very limited sample size, the location of sample, unresponsiveness from prospective interviewees, and the broadness of the survey questions. The first limitation of sample size for the questionnaire was limited to only six school

psychologists. I believe if there were more participants in the study, the responses would have been more valid. If I had more respondents, I would have had a larger pool of perspectives of the roles.   Another limitation was that the respondents stated that the "the role has changed over the years" and "there is a misunderstanding of the role" but did not elaborate on their answer. Having the respondents answer via email was a limitation for the open-ended questions because some respondents wrote short answers.   As mentioned before, the limitation of the sample only targeted the Central Florida area. If my study was broadened, I could have gauged the roles of school psychologists through various district sizes. A more complex way to expand the participants in this study would be to include another population which would include the educators with whom the school psychologists are working. This would enable different perspectives on the role of a school psychologist. Another limitation to this study was that I sent out over fifteen inquiry emails, yet the level of responsiveness was limited for prospective interviewees. Lastly, I was told that the survey was very broad, and if I had included more narrowed views with my questions, I would have been able to hone in on a specific area. Through one interviewee, it was mentioned that she could give more information and that is why an email response wasn't as strong. If this study were to be duplicated in the future, my suggestions would be to broaden the scope of interviewees as well as conduct face-to-face interviews or via video chat.

Closing Remarks

I feel so fortunate to have had this opportunity over the past year to learn and grow through the completion of this study. This study has made me a stronger writer, critical thinker, presenter, and has increased my thirst for knowledge even more. This research project has

enhanced my communication skills amongst faculty and the community as well as facilitated my ability to form networks. Additionally, I have become confident in facing new challenges presented to me. I now know how to navigate the IRB process and analyze data. These skills will carry me throughout my graduate studies and through a future dissertation. I hope that my drive and passion to create knowledge only continues to grow and strengthen.

Overall Concluding Remarks

This study sought to examine the roles of a school psychologist in supporting early childhood educators through early intervention models and social emotional milestones that can affect delays by interviewing six current school psychologists who work with early childhood educators.   The collaborative efforts between school psychologists and early educators can prepare children for success. When children are not meeting milestones, early intervention increases the likelihood of success and a more positive later outcome.   The knowledge from this study is important because it helps to further define the role of a school psychologist while supporting educators. Additionally, it will help show the misunderstandings of the profession. This study gave me an understanding of the role, what needs improvement, and how I want to create a meaningful practice for myself. At the graduate level I want to know how school psychologists effectively use their time to meet the needs of children.

APPENDIX A: TIMELINE

TIMELINE

December 2015 Proposal approved

January 2016 CITI Training completed

January 2016 Submit IRB Protocol

February 2016 Receive IRB Approval

March 2016 Contact School Psychologists

March 2016 Conduct Interviews

March 2016 Analysis of Collected Data

March 2016 Initial Format Review

April 2016 Thesis Defense

April 2016 Submit Thesis Attachment Form

April 2016 Submit Thesis Approval Form

April 2016 Complete Thesis

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
          FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Kelly L. Jennings-Towle** and Co-PI: **Monique Sydney Cohn**

Date: **February 08, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 02/08/2016, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Examining the Roles of a School Psychologist in Collaboration with Early Educators
Investigator:	Kelly L Jennings-Towle
IRB Number:	SBE-16-12003
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Joanne Muratori

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/08/2016 09:55:37 AM EST

IRB Manager

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

School Psychologist Interview

The goal of this study is to explore the roles of the school psychologist in collaboration with

early childhood educators. The interview will consist of various open-ended questions and

closed questions that inquire how school psychologists support early educators.

1. How do you think your role as a school psychologist is vital to early intervention?

2. Have you found anything that has surprised you in your role as a school psychologist?

3. What do you find is the most valuable use of your time?

4. What do you find is the least valuable use of your time?

5. Do you provide support in response to trauma and/or grief after loss?

   a. Yes

   b. No

6. What test(s) do you use for early screening of a child with a social-emotional concern? Circle all that apply.

   a. ASQ

   b. RTI

   c. FBA

   d. Other _____

7. How do you support early educators with interventions for young children with varying exceptionalities? Circle all that apply.

   a. Providing resources/ referrals

   b. Providing assessments

   c. Creating Individualized Education Plans and or Individualized Family Service Plans

   d. Other _____

8. Do you believe you have enough time to implement the proper interventions necessary for early childhood success?

   a. Yes

   b. No

   Please explain:

   _____

   _____

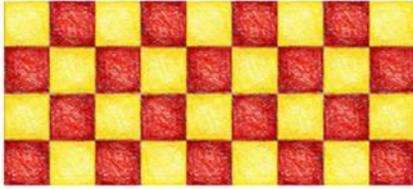9. In what ways do you support early educators? Circle all that apply.

    a. Providing interventions

    b. Providing assessments

    c. Assisting in creating goals for the child

    d. Other _____

APPENDIX D: BROCHURE

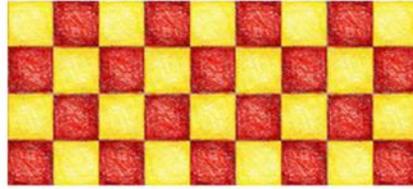# Helping Children Succeed

My GOAL as your School Psychologists is to assist in your child's overall success.

How can I support your child to reach important milestones?

This brochure can help you learn more about our services and support your child and student in and outside of the classroom!

Monique Cohn

Schedule:

1. University School
2. Central School
3. Florida School

Hours:
Monday-Friday 8-5pm

Monique Cohn
School Psychology

(800) 111-2222
4000 Central Florida Blvd, Orlando, FL 32816
www.cohnpsychology

I am a School Psychologist.
I can play a role in your child's academic success.
Let me assist...

Ms. Monique Cohn
www.cohnpsychology

School Psychology Services

Students, I am here to help with:

- Setting personal and academic goals
- Success in and outside the classroom
- Coping with stressful situations
- Coping with trauma or the loss of a peer or family member

Teachers, I am here to help with:

- Assessment
- Interventions
- Consultation
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals
- Resources/Referrals

Parents, I am here to help with:

- Exploring ways to help your child succeed
- Assessments
- Coping with loss/ change
- IEP planning

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