An Analysis of the Self-Reported Ethical Competencies of School Psychologists across the Continuum of Professional Development

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELF-REPORTED ETHICAL COMPETENCIES OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS ACROSS THE CONTINUUM OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Laura Williams Monahon
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Psychology
June 2012
This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Laura W. Monahon on the 5th day of April, 2012, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is acceptable in both scholarship and literary quality.

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Abstract

School psychologists have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the ethical principles and guidelines of professional conduct. This study sought to determine if there is a relationship between gender, race, age, dates and types of ethics training, number of years of experience, types of credentials and membership in professional school psychology organizations and school psychologists' knowledge and self-perceived skills regarding ethical practices in school psychology. School psychology graduate students and practicing school psychologists were invited to complete a survey that assessed their knowledge of ethical principles. Data also were collected regarding ethics training and ethical problem-solving practices. Analysis of survey data revealed no significant relationship between school psychologists’ gender or race and their knowledge of ethical principles. Similarly, there is no relationship between where school psychologists work and in what type of school/educational setting they practice and their knowledge of ethical principles. The data further suggest that activities in which professional school psychologists engage following certification are critical to their ability to maintain ethically sound professional practices. Specifically, those certified school psychologists who continue to engage in formal training in ethical principles once they are practicing in the field are more likely to be knowledgeable regarding ethical best practices when compared to their colleagues who do not pursue additional training. Similarly, findings revealed the incontrovertible positive impact of the NCSP credential on ethical knowledge, as certified school psychologists who hold the NCSP credential scored significantly higher when responding to the ethically challenging situations than their colleagues who did not hold the NCSP credential. Positive results were also noted
with regard to the impact of membership in professional school psychology organizations on knowledge of ethical principles. Finally, the type of ethics training in which school psychology graduate students and certified school psychologists engage is also critical to the development of their knowledge of ethical principles. Study results revealed that the types of ethics training that appear to reap the greatest rewards in terms of acquisition of knowledge of ethical principles are those that are integrated into an internship experience and training that is provided via professional development workshops.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Professional decisions made by school psychologists oftentimes impact multiple parties and systems, including children and adolescents, their families, school faculty and staff, and the school system as a whole. School psychologists have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the ethical principles and guidelines of professional conduct. In addition to ethical principles, many aspects of the practice of school psychology also are regulated by state and federal laws. As such, a competent school psychologist also must be mindful of legal guidelines in order to respect and to safeguard the legal rights of pupils, families, and schools (Jacob, Decker, & Hartshorne, 2011). Ignorance or knowing disregard of federal and/or state laws not only potentially compromises the legal rights of pupils, families, and schools, but also can result in legal action against the practitioner. Unlawful conduct by school psychology practitioners can result in loss of professional credentials, including certifications and/or licenses (Jacob et al., 2011).

In an effort to encourage and support ethical professional conduct, both the American Psychological Association (APA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) have developed and adopted codes of ethics regarding ethically sound professional practices (e.g., APA Ethics Code; APA, 2002; NASP-PPE; NASP, 2010a). These codes help professionals to monitor their own behavior and provide guidelines regarding the boundaries of appropriate professional conduct (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). While codes of conduct such as the NASP 2010 ethics code
(NASP-PPE; NASP, 2010a) provide guidelines for professional practice, it is also critical that students of school psychology receive training in ethical practices before they become practicing school psychologists. Ideally, this training can then be translated into ethically sound professional practices (supported by ongoing professional development) as the practitioner gains experience in the field.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) developed a five-stage model to describe, using a phenomenological approach, how individuals gain ethical expertise. The model outlines a process whereby individuals progress through five levels: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991). When applying the model to the development of ethical expertise, the authors note, “... to acquire ethical expertise one must have the talent to respond to those ethical situations as similar that ethical experts respond to as similar” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991, p. 237).

The phenomenological nature of the model invites application of its principles to a variety of areas, including professional school psychology. Further investigation of the five-stage model suggests that the initial stage (i.e., novice) could be applied most meaningfully to those school psychology students whose exposure to ethical principles and issues is limited to didactic classroom instruction. The second stage, advanced beginner, is characterized by the novice “gain[ing] experience actually coping with real situations” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991, p. 232). As such, the advanced beginner stage naturally aligns with school psychology interns, or those students who have completed foundational coursework and are participating in supervised field experiences. The remaining three stages—competence, proficiency and expertise—describe levels of
experience that can be gained as practicing school psychologists build their careers in the field (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991).

As with any professional practice, students and practitioners demonstrate varied levels of knowledge, skills, and aptitudes as they progress along the developmental continuum. Variability also is apparent across the multiple roles school psychologists assume within their job, including assessment, counseling, consultation with teachers and parents, and planning and developing educational programs. In terms of knowledge of ethical principles, however, Williams and Armistead (2010) note that, regardless of where a student or practitioner of school psychology falls on the developmental continuum, he/she must be aware of how contemporary ethical and legal guidelines form the basis for the practice of school psychology.

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to consider how best to ensure that those at the beginning stages of their career as professional school psychologists develop an understanding of the ethical and legal principles of the field. Following the five-stage model, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) recommended that the process begin with “the instructor decomposing the task environment into context-free features which the beginner can recognize without the benefit of experience” (p. 232). The first step towards ethical expertise in the field of school psychology, therefore, must include well-developed training courses that provide the “rules” of ethical and legal principles as they relate to the profession, while also taking into consideration the developmental level of the student or practitioner. Tryon (2000) and others (Jacob-Timm, 1999) agreed and advised that formal coursework in ethics and law be included in the early stages of
graduate training in school psychology in order to provide students with a knowledge base from which they will be able to participate in discussions of ethical and legal issues throughout their coursework.

Statement of the Problem

A school psychologist’s understanding of and ability to apply codes of ethical conduct, such as the NASP 2010 Principles of Professional Ethics (NASP-PPE; NASP, 2010a), are critical to developing competencies across all functional domains of the practice of school psychology. Acquiring knowledge of ethics in school psychology is a developmental process. As such, one may reasonably assume that school psychology students and practitioners acquire increased competencies in ethical knowledge as they progress along the developmental continuum from the level of novice (i.e., beginning student) to advanced beginner (i.e., intern) to competent professional, then proficient and, hopefully, expert professional. Exposure to and understanding of codes of ethical conduct, such as the 2010 NASP-PPE, and the ability to apply the principles within a decision-making model are critical to developing ethical competencies as a school psychologist (NASP, 2010a). Furthermore, these factors likely enhance the students’ and practitioners’ ability to apply a critically evaluative decision-making style to problem solving (Armistead, Williams, & Jacob, 2011).

The manner in which novice school psychologists (i.e., school psychology students) and advanced beginners (i.e., school psychology interns) begin to develop their understanding of how to conceptualize and then to apply ethical codes of conduct is a matter of utmost importance not only to the students themselves, but also to their
graduate educators and supervisors. In order to maintain accreditation from the APA and/or NASP, graduate programs in school psychology must address ethics within their curricula (Prus & Waldron, 2008; Tryon, 2001). Unfortunately, research regarding the effectiveness of ethics education is limited (Tryon, 2001). Furthermore, Welfel (1992) found that even those graduate programs that, by self-report, rated their internship-level students highly in regard to their general knowledge of ethical principles indicated a need for additional training in the area of clinical application of ethical principles. These findings suggest a need for further investigation into the efficacy of ethics training within school psychology graduate programs.

Variability in knowledge of ethical principles is likely not limited to preservice school psychologists. While individual states require some hours of continuing professional development in ethics and professionalism (requirements ranging from 1.5 to 6 hours), approximately 50% of states require ongoing training in ethics and law in professional school psychology (Armistead, 2008). NASP’s National School Psychology Certification Board currently requires 75 hours of continuing professional development every 3 years for psychologists holding the NCSP credential (NASP, 2010b). A portion of these 75 hours must be dedicated to participation in ongoing training in ethical principles and ethical problem solving (Armistead, et al., 2010). Thus, one may assume that school psychologists who secure and maintain the NCSP credential may be more likely to demonstrate an increased commitment to developing their ethical knowledge and competencies in school psychology than would their colleagues who do not hold the
NCSP credential. Gathering data from both school psychologists who hold the NCSP credential and those who do not may help either to support or to refute this assumption.

Finally, the body of research currently available for review regarding ethical knowledge and competencies in the field of psychology is focused heavily on the clinical or counseling branch of the profession (e.g., Baldick, 1980; Bernard & Jara, 1986; Fly, van Bark, Weinman, Kitchener, & Lang, 1997; Haas, Malouf, & Mayerson, 1986; Shen-Miller et al., 2011) as listed in Tryon (2001). Within the field of professional psychology, school psychology is unique in that school psychologists perform their many duties (e.g., assessment, counseling, and consultation) within the specific context of a school, a setting that typically possesses a unique culture and set of expected behaviors and roles. As such, school psychologists face ethical dilemmas that psychologists who work in other settings with other populations (e.g., adults) do not encounter (Jacob et al., 2011). It is critical, therefore, to examine how school psychologists understand and apply ethical principles within their highly specialized setting.

**Purpose of the Study**

The current study is designed to examine the influences of gender, race, age, dates and types of ethics training, number of years of experience, types of credentials, and membership in national and/or state professional school psychology organizations on school psychologists’ knowledge and self-perception of skills regarding ethical practices in school psychology. It is hoped that identifying the factors that support the development of ethically sound professional practice in the field of school psychology may inform best practice in ethics training (both at the graduate level and as ongoing
professional development), and that this knowledge may, in turn, allow for school psychologists across the developmental continuum to perform in the best interest of students, families, and schools.

**Research Questions**

1. Do factors such as gender, age (independent of years of experience), geographical setting (e.g., urban, suburban, rural) and characteristics of the professional setting (e.g., public school, private school, educational consortium) influence school psychologists’ knowledge of the ethical principles of professional school psychology?

2. Is there an association between a school psychologist’s knowledge of ethical principles and his/her years of experience in the field?

3. Is a school psychologist’s knowledge of ethical principles influenced by his/her level of training (e.g., highest degree attained)?

4. Is a school psychologist’s knowledge of ethical principles influenced by holding the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential?

5. Does membership in a professional organization (including local, state and/or national organizations) influence a school psychologist’s knowledge of ethical principles?

6. Does the type of ethics training (e.g., formal coursework, professional workshop, self-study) influence a school psychologist’s knowledge of professional ethical principles?
7. Is school psychologists’ knowledge of the 2010 NASP-PPE (NASP, 2010a) commensurate across different principles included in the code?

8. Is there an association between a school psychologist’s regular application of a critical-evaluative method of problem solving to resolve ethical dilemmas and his/her level of knowledge of professional ethics in the field of school psychology?
Ensuring that they apply ethically sound practices within their daily work is the responsibility of all practitioners of school psychology. Williams and Armistead (2010) liken ethical and legal standards to the scaffolding, or supporting framework, that guides the practice of school psychology. Similarly, in *A Blueprint for Training and Practice III*, Ysseldyke et al. (2006) include professional legal, ethical, and social responsibility as one of the four foundational domains that inform all types of work performed by school psychologists. These responsibilities are described in *A Blueprint for Training and Practice III* as “relatively straightforward but absolutely central to the efficacy of a school psychologist’s work” (Ysseldyke et al., 2006, p. 17). Ysseldyke et al. go on to assert that “school psychologists should be prepared to practice in ways that meet all appropriate professional (practice and ethical) and legal standards, in order to enhance the quality of service and protect the rights of all parties” (Ysseldyke et al, 2006, p. 18).

**Models of Developing Ethical Competence**

Reflecting on the words of Ysseldyke et al., one must consider the separate yet interrelated notions of preparation and practice. While few would argue that developing and implementing practices that are ethically and legally sound is critical, it is important to consider just *how* school psychologists (including school psychology students) develop ethical competence. To that end, two models have been suggested to describe how individuals develop ethical competence or expertise: the acculturation model
The acculturation model. The acculturation model as described by Handelsman, et al. (2005) applies acculturation strategies formulated by J.W. Berry (1980, 2003) to develop “a framework for understanding ethical acculturation” in the field of psychology (Handelsman et al., 2005, p. 59). Interestingly, when describing their application of Berry’s (1980, 2003) principles to the field of professional psychology, Handelsman et al. did not denote a specific area or areas within the field and referred only generally to “ethical psychologists” (Handelsman et al., 2005, p. 59). Further analysis of the model, however, suggests that it certainly can be applied to the discipline of school psychology. For example, the authors describe psychology as “a profession and a scientific discipline [that] represents a discrete culture with its own traditions, values and methods of implementing its ethical principles” (Handelsman et al., 2005, p. 59). Among the values described by the authors are “scientific thinking, appreciating the complexity of behavior, scientifically informed practice, lifelong learning, the sharing of knowledge, improving society, tolerance for diversity and social justice” (Handelsman, Gottlieb, & Knapp, 2005, p. 60). These same values form the basis for best practice of professional school psychology.

The acculturation model is rooted in the notion that psychology, both as a discipline and as a profession, possesses its own culture that includes aspirational ethical principles, ethical rules, professional standards and professional values (Jacob et al., 2011). Within this model, students develop a sense of ethical competence as they learn
about the profession and culture of psychology, with the goal of achieving “an adaptive integration of personal moral values and the ethics culture of psychology” (Handelsman et al., 2005, p. 64).

One important caveat to this developmental process, however, is the assumption that school psychology students are equipped with well-developed personal ethics and the ability to understand and assimilate the salient aspects of the ethics culture of psychology. As Jacob et al. (2011) asserted, those who do not possess these qualities may have difficulty making appropriate professional ethical choices.

**The five-stage model.** In contrast to the acculturation model, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) created a five-stage model that describes the development of what they term “ethical expertise” (p. 229). Like the acculturation model, the model delineated by Dreyfus and Dreyfus was likely not developed with professional school psychology in mind. Dreyfus and Dreyfus provided a more globally applicable, phenomenological description of five stages in the development of expertise in general. Because the model was developed using a phenomenological, rather than a contextualized, approach, it therefore can be applied to the development of ethical competencies in a variety of settings. Indeed, Dreyfus and Dreyfus demonstrated the universality of the model by providing driving a car and playing a game of chess as illustrative examples in their seminal description of the five-stage model.

The five-stage model describes a process whereby “beginners” make decisions based on “strict rules and features” until they gain sufficient experience to allow them to “[see] intuitively what to do without applying rules and making judgments at all”
(Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991, p. 235). In terms of skill acquisition, the model describes five stages; namely, novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise. Beyond driving and playing chess, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) applied the five-stage model to the development of ethical competence thereby providing a context for the stages that can be applied readily to the field of school psychology. The authors note:

it would seem that the budding ethical expert would learn at least some of the ethics of his community by following strict rules, would then go on to apply contextualized maxims, and, in the highest state, would leave rules and principles behind and develop more and more refined spontaneous ethical responses


Considered in light of the developmental progression of a professional school psychologist (i.e., from student to intern to practicing school psychologist), one can see that the five-stage model would be applicable to the development of a variety of skill areas, including ethical competencies.

That being said, one must understand that an individual school psychology student or professional can find himself/herself at different levels of development (i.e., at different stages within the five-stage model) across the many facets of the job of professional school psychologist. For example, a beginning school psychologist may feel he/she is competent in administering a specific cognitive assessment (based on training and experience), yet, may feel less competent in a more dynamic and unpredictable area of the practice of school psychology, such as consultation with teachers and parents.
A study conducted by Tryon (2001) indicated that this type of variability also may be the case when developing ethical competence. This study surveyed school psychology graduate students regarding their beliefs about their preparation for and concern with handling ethical issues, including situations in which they perceived pressure from an outside source to practice unethically. Study participants were grouped according to their progress within the graduate curriculum (e.g., students in later years of study versus those in earlier years of study) and also based on their exposure to ethical training (e.g., those who had versus those who had not taken a course in the ethics of professional school psychology). Tryon (2001) concluded that students who had completed ethics training felt more competent when faced with ethical dilemmas than those who had yet to receive instruction in ethical practices. Further, those students who were in their later years of study felt better prepared to deal with ethical issues than their colleagues in earlier years of study. Interestingly, Tryon’s study did not indicate a relationship between perceived and reported competencies in other areas of professional school psychology (e.g., assessment, counseling, consultation) and reported feelings regarding ethical competence (Tryon, 2001). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that there are school psychology students and practitioners who, while they feel well prepared in some areas, are still in the beginning stages of development in terms of ethical competence.

In keeping with the five-stage model (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991), one can assume that acquiring knowledge of ethics in professional school psychology is indeed a developmental process. As such, one can expect that school psychology students and practitioners acquire increased competencies in ethical knowledge as they progress along
the developmental continuum. The manner in which this progression occurs is a matter of considerable importance not only to school psychology students and practitioners, but also to graduate educators and supervisors of those who are at the beginning stages of their careers as professional school psychologists. Jacob et al. (2011) integrated Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s (1991) five-stage model with the traditional practice of training school psychology students. They note that, in foundational coursework, instruction is centered on teaching the basic principles of decision making. Consideration also is given to heightening students’ awareness of the ethical and legal aspects of situations that they may encounter in their practice. Further, it is widely agreed upon that ethics, legal aspects of practice, and a problem-solving model for dealing with ethical dilemmas must be taught explicitly during graduate training (Haas et al., 1986; Jacob et al., 2011; Tryon, 2001; Tymchuk, 1985).

**Novice.** Tryon (2000) and others (Jacob-Timm, 1999) suggested that formal coursework in ethics and law be implemented specifically at the beginning of a graduate training program in order to prepare students to participate in discussions of ethical and legal issues throughout their training program. While this type of instruction is certainly necessary and appropriate as a jumping off point, one must remember that learning about ethics in a classroom setting is only the beginning. Meara, Schmidt, and Day (1996) noted that while a single foundational course in ethical and legal issues can provide a springboard for further instruction, it typically does not allow students sufficient exposure to be able to apply the knowledge gained in the course across various domains of the practice of professional school psychology. Indeed, research has shown that students
who are engaged at the didactic level are limited in their understanding and application of professional ethics only to those dilemmas that can be solved easily by a careful application of a rule or law (Jacob et al., 2011). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) described those at the novice level as “like a computer following a program” (pg. 232). As such, they tend to be rule bound and slow to make decisions regarding the ethically sound best practice within a given situation.

Foundational coursework, then, must be paired with supervised field experiences to provide what Harvey and Struzziero (2000) described as “a vitally important opportunity for students to apply their knowledge to multiple real-work situations” (p. 13). This combination supports a school psychology student’s development from novice to the next stage of development, advanced beginner.

**Advanced beginner.** Advanced beginners can be conceptualized as those school psychologists who have gained some experience in applying previously taught ethical principles within a real-life setting. These individuals have progressed from the classroom and into professional practice in some capacity, typically in the form of supervised professional internships. In keeping with the five-stage model (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1991), students at this stage of development already have learned the “rules” and have demonstrated the ability to apply them in what the authors term “context-free features” (p. 233). The hallmark of the advanced beginner stage, however, is that now students can begin to recognize meaningful components of a situation independently, whereas before the instructor pointed out what might be meaningful in a given situation. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) went so far as to discard the concept of “rules” and replaced
them with “maxims” to denote the application of context (or “situational aspects”) to what was previously simply a list of behavioral directives (p. 232).

In order to support students of school psychology at this stage in their professional development, both Tryon (2000) and Jacob-Timm (1999) emphasized the importance of practica and internships as active learning experiences in which students can practice and hone their ethical decision-making skills. This assertion supports Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s (1991) suggestion that with increased experience comes an increased capacity not only to identify multiple aspects of complex situations but also to consider the situation within a particular context or setting. While this scenario represents an increase in skill level when compared to that of individuals at the novice level, Jacob et al. (2011) noted that school psychologists functioning at this level continue to demonstrate a focus on “technical mastery of their skills” (p. 100).

**Competence.** Practitioners who have developed beyond the stage of advanced beginner to competent practitioner have been identified as possessing many of the requisite skills for ethically sound best practice in school psychology (Jacob et al., 2011). Among these qualities are the ability to identify the most critical elements within a situation and to see relationships among and connections between those elements. Competent practitioners are able also to recognize subtle differences between situations that appear similar (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991). They demonstrate the capacity to balance their skills with a sense of empathy and are also able to consider and evaluate potential long-term effects of their decision (Jacob et al., 2011).
While they are all vital capacities, these skills can cause competent practitioners to become overwhelmed by the complexity of ethically ambiguous or troubling situations. One can see easily how, in the dynamic field of professional school psychology, the ability to apply learned skills while maintaining a sense of perspective about the real-life consequences of one’s actions is critical to advancing to a level of proficiency that exceeds merely competent. To support development at this stage and beyond, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) suggested that the individual apply a hierarchical view of decision making. The authors explained this view thusly: “By first choosing a plan, goal or perspective which organizes the situation and by then examining only the small set of features and aspects that he has learned are relevant given that plan, the performer can simplify and improve his performance” (p. 233). Within the context of professional school psychology, this concept of a hierarchical view suggests that it is in this stage of development school psychologists can begin to utilize a problem-solving approach to the application of ethical principles.

**Proficiency.** Indeed, the label assigned to the next stage along the developmental continuum, proficient practitioners, suggests a level of ethical competence that would enable the school psychologist to navigate the complicated aspects of an ethically problematic situation with a degree of skill and, perhaps, even ease. If that were the case, however, would the practitioner not have reached the end of the continuum rather than the penultimate position? Where does the distinction between proficiency and expertise lie in regard to the development of ethical competence in professional school psychology?
According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991), proficiency is achieved when individuals are able to recognize trends and differences within and across situations in a manner that allows them to prioritize decision-making elements almost effortlessly. In other words, proficient individuals no longer need to deliberate over the individual elements of a situation and plan multiple alternatives, as a competent individual might do when he/she is applying a hierarchical view to the situation as previously described. On the contrary, proficient individuals frequently demonstrate the ability to apply ethically sound skills and thinking processes without even thinking about them in many situations. Once this level of proficiency has been attained, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) indicated that continued experience across a variety of diverse situations lays the groundwork for a professional to move from proficiency to expertise.

**Expertise.** Within the five-stage model, individuals who demonstrate expertise in an area represent the most highly skilled end of the developmental continuum (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991). Ericcson and Williams (2007) defined an expert practitioner as one who is able to rely on past decision to shape future choices and who can often base his/her decisions on subtle qualitative differences. In other words, whereas someone who is developed to the level of proficiency can easily determine what needs to be done and then decide how to do it, an expert “knows how to perform the action without calculating and comparing alternatives” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991, p. 235).

Just as Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) did not apply a timeline of expected progress through the five-stage model, it is erroneous to assume that all school psychologists progress to the level of expert as a matter of years of experience within the profession.
This assertion is supported by Dailor’s (2007) finding, which indicated that, by self-report, school psychologists’ level of perceived preparedness to handle ethically problematic situations was not associated with years of experience on the job. In other words, school psychologists do not achieve an expert level of competence simply by default. However, if attaining an expert level of competence is included in the aspirational goals set forth by professional organizations such as APA and NASP, one must consider which factors play a role in helping school psychologists gain an expert level of competence in the domain of ethical decision making.

Guidelines for Professional Ethics

The term *ethics* has been defined as a system of principles that guides individuals’ behavior (Solomon, 1984). The ethical codes of conduct for psychologists and other professionals are based on what W.D. Ross (1930) described as a “number of moral duties of the ethical person” (p. 10). These duties included concepts such as nonmaleficence, fidelity, beneficence, justice, and autonomy (Jacob, 2008). When these moral duties are applied within the scope of professional duty, they can be translated into specific rules of professional conduct that are known collectively as applied professional ethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001).

Within the field of school psychology, codes of professional ethics increase school psychology students’ and practitioners’ awareness of the ethical aspects of service delivery and appropriate professional conduct (Jacob, 2008). Additionally, Jacob et al. (2011) asserted that a school psychologist who is knowledgeable about the ethical principles of his/her field is likely to be more aware of and sensitive to ethically
ambiguous situations. Ethical codes and standards also assist school psychologists in monitoring their own behavior. Finally, professional codes of ethics provide guidelines for adjudicating complaints (Bersoff, 1983; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008).

Bearing these phenomena in mind, professional organizations such as APA and NASP have long recognized the importance of adopting a code of ethics that balances the interests of the practitioner and the profession with regard for the welfare of the consumers of services (Jacob, 2008). As school psychologists are eligible for membership in both APA and NASP, a review of the ethical codes of both organizations is worthwhile.

**Ethical Guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA)**

The *Ethical Standards of Psychologists* was adopted by the APA initially in 1952 and subsequently has been revised and amended nine times (Fisher, 2009). The APA’s current code of ethics, “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,” includes both aspirational goals and enforceable rules for conduct (APA Ethics Code; APA, 2002). The aspirational principles mirror those developed by Ross (1930) and include beneficence and nonmaleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for people’s rights and dignity (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2005). The rules for conduct state, among other things, that psychologists have an obligation to “actively pursue awareness and knowledge of how culture and experiential factors may influence mental health, development, behavior and learning” (APA Ethics Code; APA, 2002, p. 201; Flanagan, Miller, & Jacob, 2005).
While the adoption of the original APA Ethics Code in 1952 represented a breakthrough in the field of psychology in terms of ethical standards and codes of conduct, it soon became clear that there was a need for disciplines within the field of professional psychology (e.g., school psychology) to develop specialized ethical guidelines and codes of conduct. In 1974, NASP addressed emerging ethical and legal issues in school psychology in a special issue of School Psychology Digest (now School Psychology Review; Kaplan, Crisci, & Farling, 1974). Proponents of a specialized code of ethics and conduct for school psychology felt that the existing APA Ethics Code (at that time, most recently revised in 1963) could not be readily applied to practitioners who worked within a school system (Trachtman, 1974). In addition, the existing APA Ethics Code did not address issues that were critical to professional school psychologists. These issues included balancing the interests of children with the rights of parents, including students in educational and mental-health decision-making processes, defining boundaries of confidentiality within a school setting, and ensuring fair and valid assessments of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Jacob, 2008). In addition to these issues was another topic central to the profession of school psychology: resolving conflicts that result from the dual roles of both child advocate and school employee inherent in the job of school psychologist (Armistead et al., 2011; Bersoff, 1983; Trachtman, 1974). In an effort to address these issues, NASP developed and adopted the c (NASP-PPE) in 1974. Since that date, this NASP code of ethics has been revised five times, most recently in 2010.
The NASP Principles of Professional Ethics

As previously described, the APA’s “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” was developed for psychologists trained in a variety of specialty areas and settings, including private practice, industry, hospitals and clinics, public schools, colleges and universities and research settings (APA Ethics Code; APA, 2002; Williams & Armistead, 2010). NASP developed and adopted Principles for Professional Ethics (NASP-PPE) to address specifically the practice of school psychology (NASP, 2010a). As described by Williams and Armistead (2010), “By virtue of its specificity to the practice of school psychology, the NASP-PPE are typically those ethical guidelines most school psychologists refer to and use as a resource to guide their practice of school psychology” (NASP-PPE; NASP, 2010a, Introduction).

When a school psychologist joins NASP, he/she agrees to abide by the guidelines set forth in the NASP-PPE when interacting professionally with all consumers of school psychological services (e.g., students, parents, and school personnel, including fellow school psychologists) (NASP, 2010a). One should note that school psychologists may seek membership in both NASP and APA, in which case they are beholden to apply both the NASP-PPE and the APA’s “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and of Conduct.” Jacob (2005) further notes that school psychology students and practitioners should be familiar with both ethics codes, as doing so would likely provide an enhanced knowledge base in ethical principles and standards. This knowledge would, in turn, increase the practitioner’s ability to anticipate and possibly prevent ethical problems from occurring
and, if a challenging situation did arise, would allow the practitioner to be more likely to make ethically and legally sound choices (Jacob, 2005).

Like the APA’s “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,” the NASP-PPE encompasses and endeavors to codify the “moral duties” outlined by Ross (1930), including nonmaleficence, fidelity, beneficence, justice and autonomy (NASP, 2010a). The NASP-PPE also provides a framework (i.e., a code of conduct) for the application of the moral duties within the scope of professional duty (i.e., applied professional ethics). The NASP-PPE includes two fundamental underlying principles that are introduced at the outset of the document. Namely, school psychologists must act as advocates for their clients (i.e., students), and school psychologists must, at the very least, do no harm (NASP, 2010a). The NASP-PPE also addresses four broad ethical themes with regard to professional ethical competence: (a) respecting the dignity and rights of all persons; (b) professional competence and responsibility; (c) honesty and integrity in professional relationships; and (d) responsibility to schools, families, communities, the profession, and society (NASP, 2010a). Each of these areas will be further discussed as follows.

**Respecting the dignity and rights of all persons.** A fundamental responsibility of school psychology practitioners as outlined in the NASP-PPE is that school psychologists engage only in those practices that promote and maintain the dignity of all individuals. Inherent in this principle is the need for school psychologists to consider the constructs of personal autonomy, self-determination and privacy when working with individuals and their families (Armistead et al., 2011). Additionally, all professional
school psychologists have an ethical responsibility to uphold “a commitment to just and fair treatment of all persons” (NASP, 2010a, Introduction).

Informed consent is one method by which school psychologists seek to maintain a client’s self-determination and autonomy. Put simply, professional school psychologists must ensure that individuals with whom they work have a “voice and a choice” in all decision-making processes (Armistead et al., 2011, p. 6). Not all professional services provided by a school psychologist, however, require informed consent. For example, if a school psychologist is serving on a multidisciplinary team or making recommendations to a classroom teacher regarding an intervention that is within the scope of a typical classroom intervention, he/she is not required to gain informed consent from the parent(s) of the child or children who may be recipient(s) of the consultative services (Armistead et al., 2011; Burns, Jacob, & Wagner, 2008; Corrao & Melton, 1988). This example serves to underscore the need for a specialized ethical code of conduct for school psychologists, as their professional duties frequently are shaped by their work settings. It also reinforces the notion that practicing school psychologists must be knowledgeable about their code of professional ethics and its application in a variety of situations.

NASP recognizes that school psychologists often are required to advocate for students within the school system where they are employed. Similarly, it is important to realize that school psychologists must maintain relationships with a variety of individuals, groups, and systems across the scope of their professional duties. Generally speaking, school psychologists must strive to develop relationships that promote improvement in the quality of life of children, their families, and the school community.
(Williams & Armistead, 2010). When school psychologists employed by a school board make professional decisions regarding students of the school district, they are operating as what is known as “state actors” and, as such, have special obligations to all students (NASP, 2010a, p. 2). These obligations include knowledge of and respect for the rights of students under both federal and state law. While, on the surface, this task seems straightforward, school psychologists must be able to balance the authority of parents to make decisions regarding their children’s educational and emotional development and well-being with the needs and rights of the children. Additionally, all decisions must be made in light of the “purposes and authority” of the school system (NASP, 2010a, p. 2).

One should note that, while the NASP code of ethics recognizes that in situations involving the rights of students, the wishes of parent and the policies of school districts can be difficult to navigate, the responsibility to resolve situations in an ethically and legally sound manner clearly rests on the school psychologist. The introductory section of the *NASP-PPE* states, “. . . it is expected that school psychologists will make careful, reasoned, and principled ethical choices based on knowledge of [the] code, recognizing that responsibility for ethical conduct rests within the individual practitioner” (NASP, 2010a, Introduction).

**Professional competence and responsibility.** Beneficence, or responsible caring, is a common theme across many professional ethical codes of conduct. In the field of school psychology, beneficence is achieved through engaging in actions that are likely to benefit others, practicing within the boundaries of professional competence, using evidence-based knowledge from the fields of both psychology and education to
help guide decision making and, finally, accepting responsibility for decisions made in professional capacities (Armistead et al., 2011; Welfel & Kitchener, 1992).

The *NASP-PPE* further stipulates that school psychologists act as advocates for children across every facet of their practice (NASP, 2010a). For example, when assessing a child and developing school-based interventions based on the data collected, a school psychologist is obligated to be knowledgeable regarding current best practices. This is also true with regard to consultation (both direct and indirect) and counseling (Williams & Armistead, 2010). Take, for example, a case in which a student has been evaluated by a school psychologist, who is now responsible for sharing the information with that student, his/her parents, and appropriate school personnel for the purposes of educational programming. Under the guidelines of the *NASP-PPE*, the practitioner must have selected the most appropriate, empirically supported, valid and reliable assessment measures and would have administered all assessment tasks in the standardized manner outlined in the test materials. Next, the *NASP-PPE* dictates that the school psychologist must report the data using language that is understandable and meaningful, avoiding the use of unedited computerized reports as their own (NASP, 2010a). As indicated in the previous section, all data must be reported in a manner that best serves the school psychologist’s primary client, the student. Finally, all relevant data must be shared with only those people who will be actively involved in developing, implementing, and monitoring interventions on behalf of the student (e.g., parents/guardians and appropriate school personnel). Fortunately for professional school psychologists, the *NASP-PPE* not
only provides aspirational goals regarding the assessment and program development process, but also delineates proper procedure for each step in the process (NASP, 2010a).

**Honesty and integrity in professional relationships.** In addition to beneficence, school psychologists also are bound to demonstrate fidelity in all professional duties (Armistead et al., 2011). Bersoff and Koeppel (1992) defined fidelity as continuing faithfulness to the truth and to one’s professional duties. As such, school psychologists must be honest about the boundaries of their competence and accurately represent the duties that their abilities, training, and credentials permit them to perform (NASP, 2010a). They also must be able to explain the scope of their services to clients and families in a clear and understandable manner. In the same vein, school psychologists must be knowledgeable about and respectful of the competencies of other professionals who are involved with clients and their families (NASP, 2010a).

Also included within the principle of professional competence is the directive that school psychology practitioners must abstain from engaging in any activity in which personal problems might interfere with their professional effectiveness (Williams & Armistead, 2010). In the event that such a situation should arise, school psychologists should seek assistance from supervisors and/or colleagues and make every effort to resolve conflicts in an ethically sound manner (Armistead et al., 2011). Finally, in order to maintain the highest standards of professional competence, the *NASP-PPE* indicates that school psychologists must be responsible for knowing and actively applying the code within the practice (NASP, 2010a). As Williams and Armistead (2010) summarized, “ignorance of the ethical code is no excuse” (p. 18).
Responsibility to schools, families, communities, the profession, and society.

As a member of a helping profession, school psychologists must promote healthy school, family, and community environments (Armistead et al., 2011). In addition to acting in ways that maintain environments that are healthy and safe for all clients and families, the NASP-PPE further charges school psychologists with the duty to assume a proactive role in counteracting social injustices that affect children and schools (NASP, 2010a). While school psychologists can work on an individual level to ensure that the students and families under their direct care are treated fairly and justly, they also should strive to be a part of systems-level change to secure socially just environments for all.

One manner whereby school psychologists can work to support equality and social justice for all students and families is to develop and utilize practices that are culturally competent. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004), more than 5 million English language learners (who speak more than 400 different languages) are currently attending school in the United States. Further, the National Association of School Boards of Education (2002) estimates that, by the year 2040, no single ethnic or racial group will comprise the majority of the United States’ school-aged population. Culturally competent practices have been defined as those behaviors and policies that enable school psychologists to work effectively to address the social, behavioral, mental-health, and educational needs of students from a variety of cultures (Williams, 2007). In order to serve their clients most effectively, school psychologists must be committed to developing and continually upgrading their skills in order to better support students from diverse backgrounds (Williams & Armistead, 2010). Research indicates that developing
these competencies involves both personal and professional development. As Ortiz, Flanagan, and Dynda (2008) noted:

Separating oneself from culturally based ethnocentric viewpoints inculcated from birth by way of natural social interaction is not easily accomplished. The very essence of what an individual believes, thinks and does is a product of unique background and developmental experiences that are most often shaped and determined primarily by culture” (p. 20).

Matsumoto (1994) further stated that, “sometimes we cannot separate ourselves from our own cultural backgrounds and biases to understand the behavior of others” (p. 89).

In light of this phenomenon, school psychologists must engage in self-reflection in an effort to understand how their own cultural experience informs both their view of others and others’ view of them (Ortiz et al., 2008; Williams & Armistead, 2010). Further, beyond engaging in a thoughtful self-appraisal, school psychologist also must seek opportunities to develop their cultural competencies. This process could include identifying and consulting with other school- and community-based personnel and resources. In this way, school psychologists can adhere to the guidelines and codes of conduct included in the NASP-PPE (NASP, 2010a) and can provide a better standard of care for all clients, regardless of culture or ethnicity.

**Ethical Decision Making**

Professional school psychologists are frequently required to attempt to resolve problematic situations in a manner that best serves a wide variety of individuals, including students, parents, teachers, and other school personnel. These situations are
often complex and sometimes are made more so when they involve strong emotions on the part of the stakeholders (Armistead et al., 2011). Psychologists have the unique challenge of balancing individuals’ feelings and beliefs with ethical principles and codes of conduct (Haas & Malouf, 2005; Hansen & Goldberg, 1999). In order to navigate the process successfully, school psychologists must be careful to acknowledge individuals’ feelings without becoming overly reliant on an intuitive approach to problem solving that may result in poor decisions or confusion (Kitchener, 1986).

When faced with the daunting task of balancing ethical principles and emotions, school psychologists must develop a systemic approach to solving problems that allows a blending of rules and intuition (Gutheil, Bursztajn, Brodsky, & Alexander, 1991). Adopting a problem-solving model that examines the evidence, considers alternate courses of action, and evaluates possible consequences helps to support responsible and ethical decision making. Further, Tymchuk (1986) found that using a critical-evaluative problem-solving model allows practitioners to assume a proactive (rather than reactive) approach to ethical thinking and problem solving.

Koocher and Keith-Speigel (2008) suggested the use of an ethical decision-making procedure that applies a systematic multistep approach. This type of approach has been adopted by NASP as best practice and includes the following seven problem-solving steps: describe the problem situation; define the potential ethical-legal issues involved; consult available ethical-legal guidelines; consult with supervisors and colleagues; evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and welfare of all affected parties; consider alternative solutions and consequences of making each decision; and make the decision
and take responsibility for it (Armistead et al., 2011). This model can be effective for solving complex situations for which the most ethical course of action may not be readily apparent. As an added benefit, Armistead et al. (2011) noted that decisions made using the ethical decision-making model will be more defensible to anyone who might question them than would those made using an emotional or intuitive approach.

Effective graduate training in professional school psychology should include an introduction to and application of a problem-solving model for dealing with ethical dilemmas (Haas et al., 1986; Jacob et al., 2011; Tryon, 2001; Tymchuk, 1985). Jacob et al. (2011) advocated for explicit instruction of an ethical problem-solving model as part of the foundational coursework in professional school psychology. In light of the five-stage model, introductory coursework should include instruction surrounding the basic principles of decision making so that novice school psychologists may begin to conceptualize potential ethical and legal aspects of situations that they may encounter in their future practice from a proactive, problem-solving perspective (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991). An additional benefit of including ethics and law in foundation in school psychology is that it prepares students to participate in discussions of ethical and legal issues throughout their training program (Jacob-Timm, 1999; Tryon, 2000).

**Credentialing in School Psychology**

Another means by which the field of professional school psychology seeks to ensure that practitioners achieve and maintain a level of competence that allows them to perform their job effectively is requiring professionals to secure a certification prior to beginning independent practice. All prospective school psychologists are required to
complete, at minimum, graduate coursework and supervised field experiences before they may apply for professional certification (Prus & Waldron, 2008). Individual states also may have additional requirements. These guidelines and requirements serve as ways to protect the profession and the public (Pryzwansky, 1993). Additionally, requiring certification and licensure enables the profession to protect the use of the title “school psychologist” (Fagan & Wise, 2002).

The job title “school psychologist” appeared as early as 1915 (Batsche, Knoff, & Peterson, 1989; Fagan & Wise, 2002). By the mid-1930s, some states had adopted a credentialing procedure for professional school psychologists. Progress in this direction, however, was slow; by 1946, only seven states had mechanisms in place to certify school psychologists (Harrison & Prus, 2008). In 1969, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) was formed in an effort to advance the field of school psychology. At that time, 38 states had adopted credentialing standards through state departments of education. By 1977, all states had some type of endorsement or credentialing process for professional school psychology (Armistead, 2008).

In 1988, the NASP Delegate Assembly adopted a policy that outlined a national certification for school psychologists. Practitioners who held the credential of Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) from that date forward certified that they had met the educational and professional requirements set forth in what is now known as the NASP Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists (formerly known as the Standards for Training and Field Placement Program in School Psychology) (NASP, 2010b). To date, approximately half of the states in the country recognize the NCSP
credential, and according to NASP, professionals who obtain this credential demonstrate the highest level of professional development and commitment within the field of school psychology (NASP, 2010b).

**Research Hypotheses**

Based on the previously described research, the following hypotheses are posited for this study:

1. Factors such as gender, race, age (independent of years of experience), geographical setting (e.g., urban, suburban, rural), and characteristics of the professional setting (e.g., public school, private school, educational consortium) do not influence school psychologists’ knowledge of the ethical principles of professional school psychology.

2. As school psychologists gain years of experience in the field, it is likely that their knowledge of ethical principles increases.

3. School psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles is influenced by their level of training (e.g., highest degree attained).

4. School psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles is influenced by holding the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.

5. Membership in a professional organization (including local, state, and/or national organizations) influences school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles.

6. Type of ethics training (e.g., formal coursework, professional workshop, self-study) influences school psychologists’ knowledge of professional ethical principles.
7. School psychologists’ knowledge of the 2010 *NASP-PPE* (NASP, 2010a) is commensurate across different principles included in the code.

8. An association exists between school psychologists’ regular application of a critical-evaluative method of problem solving to resolve ethical dilemmas and their level of knowledge of professional ethics in the field of school psychology.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This study invited school psychology students and practicing school psychologists to complete a pencil-and-paper survey entitled “The Ethical Competencies of Pre-Service and Practicing School Psychologists” (Appendix A). Demographic data of participants were collected, including individual participant’s gender, race, age, dates and types of ethics training, number of years of experience, types of credentials, and membership in national and/or state professional school psychology organizations. Survey responses were analyzed and data were extrapolated to suggest general trends in the field of school psychology (e.g., Lewis, Truscott, & Volker, 2008; Meachem & Peckham, 1978).

Recruitment

School psychology graduate students. Initially, as an indirect means of recruitment, coordinators of graduate training programs of school psychology at multiple universities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania were contacted via email. The purpose of the initial contact was to provide a means of introduction to the researcher, to describe briefly the purpose of the study, and to invite currently enrolled school psychology graduate students to participate in the study (Appendix B). The program coordinators were provided also with a PDF version of the survey for their review. Upon ascertaining the interest of the program coordinator, an appointment was made to provide students with an opportunity to complete the survey.

Practicing school psychologists. Professional school psychologists in New Jersey and Pennsylvania were recruited in an effort to develop geographic congruency
with school psychology graduate students. In an effort to maximize the number of potential respondents, the survey was made available at the annual conference of the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania (ASPP). Additionally, a Web-based version of the survey was sent via email to members of the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP).

**Research Design**

Survey research is a widely used and accepted tool for gathering data for many different purposes by many different individuals and groups, including public policy, commercial enterprises, and private social organizations (Rea & Parker, 2005). Within the realm of academic research, the social sciences often utilize surveys to gather data regarding subjects’ behaviors, attitudes, and preferences. When conducted within the bounds of careful scientific rigor, surveys can provide a means by which researchers can study a small portion of a population by gathering data that then may be generalized to a broader population (Cresswell, 2008).

Prior to the late 1990s, survey research relied primarily on two methods of implementation, namely the telephone interview and mail-based questionnaires (Hoonakker & Carayon, 2009). More recently, however, the Internet has become “the communication method of choice” for many people in the United States (Granello & Wheaton, 2004, p. 387). It is estimated that more than 78% of individuals living in the United States have access to the Internet. This percentage represents a growth of nearly 157% when compared with Internet-usage rates from 2000 (“Internet Usage”, 2010). As Internet usage in the United States has increased, so has the use of Web-based surveys for
conducting psychological research (Lewis, Watson, & White, 2009). Rhodes, Bowie and Hergenrather (2003) noted several advantages to using Internet-based surveys to collect behavioral data, including rapid access to many potential responders, respondent openness, increased rates of full participation, opportunities for student research, and reduced research costs. Web-based surveys also allow data to be reported quickly (as compared to other methods), which allows for research findings to be reported in a more expedient manner. Finally, when respondents complete a Web-based survey, interactions with the survey are standardized, thus eliminating threats, such as interviewer bias (Rhodes et al., 2003).

While online administration of surveys has become an increasingly popular means of data collection over the last decade, some research has shown that paper-and-pencil surveys elicit higher response rates, particularly among college students (Hansen, Henley, Brouwer, Oraefo, & Roth, 2007; Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003). Further, Web-based surveys have been shown to elicit unique problems (i.e., problems that are not found with pencil-and-paper surveys), including concerns with security and data integrity and concerns regarding confidentiality that discourage participation (Gjestland, 1996; Sax et al., 2003; Smith, 1997). For example, results of NASP National Membership Study reported in February 2011 indicated a higher percentage of completed/usable postal surveys (45.7% rate of completion) when compared with Web-based survey response rates (37.7% rate of completion; Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, & Cunningham, 2011). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Hamilton (1999) found that the recent spike in utilization of Web-based surveys has potential ethical implications, noting, “The growth
of research on the Internet has outpaced the efforts of researchers--and advocates for the ethical treatment of research participants--to understand the implications of this new methodology and to develop guidelines for its responsible use” (p. B6).

Bearing in mind the advantages and limitations inherent in both Web-based and pencil-and-paper survey methodology, the researcher determined that utilizing both Web-based and pencil-and-paper forms of the survey would be the most effective means to reduce the rate of nonresponse within the sample. Since the survey was designed to gather data that, following statistical analyses, potentially could allow for formal statistical inferences to be made regarding a larger population using information collected from a subset of that population, a high rate of response was critical (Sax et al., 2003). The phenomena of low response rates and nonresponse bias have been cited as significant threats to survey research primarily because when the response to a survey is low, the likelihood of nonresponse bias increases, which increases the difficulty of researchers to generalize the results to a larger population (Hoonakker & Carayon, 2009; Tourangeau, 2004). While Scheuren (n.d.) noted, “non-response is nearly inevitable for most surveys because some members of the sample will refuse to participate – despite every reasonable effort made by the survey taker” (p. 47), Hansen et al. (2007) noted, “the best way to avoid nonresponse bias is to improve response rates” (p. 251).

**Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument utilized to collect data (Appendix A) was organized into four sections. Section 1 included questions regarding ethics training. Respondents were asked to indicate the type or types of training they had received in professional ethics in
school psychology. They also were asked to indicate the time frame during which they last participated in ethics training (i.e., within 6 months, within 1 year, between 1 and 5 years, and more than 5 years ago). The final set of questions in Section 1 asked respondents to indicate how familiar they felt they were with the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics (2010 and 2000 versions) and the APA “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (2000) using Likert scale response choices (“Not at all familiar,” “Somewhat familiar,” “Very familiar”).

Section 2, entitled “Knowledge of Ethical Principles,” presented brief descriptions of eight scenarios. Following each scenario were four multiple-choice answer options. Respondents were directed to select the answer that indicated the most ethically sound course of action based on the NASP-PPE (NASP, 2010a). For each scenario, there was one correct answer and three incorrect choices. Each scenario was developed to reflect a specific principle or topic included in the ethics code. In an effort to measure a diverse number of topics while restricting the length of the survey to a manageable length, two scenarios were created for each of the four broad ethical themes included in the NASP-PPE (NASP, 2010a). Once the scenarios and responses were constructed, a working draft of Section 2 was sent via email to a panel of widely recognized experts in the area of ethics in school psychology. These experts were asked to comment on the degree to which they felt the scenarios would measure accurately respondents’ understanding of specific ethical
principles, thereby establishing internal validity. Feedback was provided by three experts in the field and scenarios were adjusted accordingly.

The third section, “Ethical Decision Making,” asked respondents to identify the steps, if any, they take when faced with an ethical dilemma. Seven problem-solving steps were included along with Likert scale response choices (“Never,” “Sometimes,” “Often,” “Always”). These problem-solving steps were taken from the decision-making model developed by Koocher and Keith Spiegel (2008) and endorsed by NASP (Armistead et al., 2011). An additional eighth option was included (“Other”), which encouraged respondents first to indicate other action or actions they might take and then to endorse how frequently they take that action or actions using the aforementioned Likert scale options.

The fourth and final section, “Background Information,” included questions related to respondents’ demographic information. Eleven questions were developed to gather data in the following areas:

- Respondents’ status (i.e., school psychology graduate student and/or certified school psychologist). Additionally, respondents were asked to indicate if they were currently completing or had completed practica and/or internships in school psychology.

- Highest degree attained (i.e., Bachelors, Masters, Masters plus certificate, Educational Specialist or Doctorate)
• Year of receipt of highest degree (open-ended response option)

• Gender

• Age. Ranges were provided, including “Under 30 years,” “31-40 years,” “41-50 years,” “51-60 years,” and “60+ years.”

• Race (including seven response options and an “Other” option)

• Characteristics of primary employment setting (e.g., single school district, self-employed consultant, “other”)

• Geographical description of respondents’ primary employment setting (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural)

• Membership in professional school psychology organizations, including “State-level organizations (i.e., NJASP, ASPP),” “NASP,” “APA,” and “Other”

• Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential. Respondents were asked to indicate if they currently hold the certification and, if so, for how long they have held it.

Once respondents had completed the survey, they were provided with a list of resources that would facilitate additional education regarding ethical principles (Appendix C). For those respondents who completed the pencil-and-paper version of the survey, the resource guide was made available on a separate piece of paper. Respondents were encouraged to take a resource guide as they turned in their completed surveys. For those respondents who completed the Web-based version of the survey, the (printable) list of resources appeared automatically once they completed all survey questions. This
resource guide was included in an effort to minimize potential discomfort that might have been generated during the administration of the survey if respondents were unsure of or unable to identify the most ethically sound course of action for each scenario.

**Procedures**

In an effort to recruit school psychology graduate students, an email including a letter of introduction and a PDF version of the survey was sent to professors of graduate courses in school psychology and school psychology graduate program coordinators at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM; Philadelphia, PA), Rowan University (Glassboro, NJ), Seton Hall University (South Orange, NJ), and Georgian Court University (Lakewood, NJ) (Appendix B). It was determined that the responsible investigator would ask school psychology graduate students enrolled at PCOM and Rowan University to complete a paper-and-pencil version of the survey during a class meeting of a graduate course. Surveys were distributed by the researcher, completed by the students, and collected by the researcher on the same date. Students enrolled in school psychology training programs at both Seton Hall University and Georgian Court University were provided via email with a letter of introduction and a link to the Web-based survey (Appendix D).

A similar protocol was applied to inviting practicing school psychologists to complete surveys during an annual meeting of the state-level professional school psychology organization. Specifically, the researcher contacted representatives from both ASPP and NJASP. It was determined that the responsible investigator would attend the annual ASPP conference in State College, PA, to invite attendees to participate in the
survey. An email was sent to members of NJASP that included a letter of introduction and a link to the Web-based survey (Appendix D).

Analyses

Once the data were collected, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 18, was used to generate descriptive and inferential statistics that were then used to examine specific research questions. Data gathered from completed surveys were first coded into a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel and then transferred to the SPSS program for analysis. Descriptive statistics included frequency data for demographic factors, such as gender, race, age (independent of years of experience), highest degree attained, and membership in professional organizations. Both analyses of variance (ANOVA) and chi square tests were used to determine main and interaction effects between variables. The .05 significance level $p < .05$ was used for all analyses. Posthoc testing was utilized to examine results further when appropriate.
Chapter 4

Results

The sample was comprised of 400 respondents who accessed the survey titled, “The Ethical Competencies of Pre-service and Practicing School Psychologists.” Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample. Of the 400 respondents, slightly more than half (n = 218, 54.5%) were practicing school psychologists, and the remaining 182 participants (45.5%) were preservice school psychologists (i.e., students currently enrolled in a school psychology graduate program). Participants who indicated that they were practicing school psychologists who were also enrolled in advanced graduate training (n = 53, 24.3%) were treated as practicing school psychologists for the purpose of the study. Within the sample subset of preservice school psychologists (n = 183), 84 participants (45.9%) had no practicum or internship experience, 33 (18%) were completing a practicum assignment currently, 18 (9.8%) had completed a practicum experience but had not completed an internship, and 48 (26.2%) had completed a practicum experience and were functioning as interns currently.

Within the population of preservice school psychologists (n = 182), approximately 70% (n = 129) completed the pencil-and-paper version of the survey, and the remaining 54 (29.5%) completed the Web-based version. Approximately 58% (n = 127) of the 218 practicing school psychologists completed the pencil-and-paper version, and an additional 91 (41.7%) completed the Web-based version. In addition to the 400 respondents included in the final sample, 13 additional qualifying respondents accessed the survey but completed only the initial survey question prior to exiting the survey and
Table 1

*Basic Demographic Characteristics of Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td>Practicing</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preservice (Total)</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No practicum or internship experience</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Currently completing practicum</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed practicum</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Currently completing internship</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American, Black</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biracial/Multiracial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>Under 30 years</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60+ years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were therefore not included in the study. Another 16 respondents indicated that they had no prior exposure to any type of ethics training (including self-study) and therefore were excluded from the study.

**Sample Demographics**

Demographic data for study participants are included in Table 1. The sample was overwhelmingly female ($n = 328, 82\%$) and primarily Caucasian ($n = 330, 82.5\%)$. African American or Black participants accounted for $7.3\% (n = 29)$ of the sample. Fewer than $5\% (n = 18, 4.5\%)$ identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino, $2.8\% (n = 11)$
identified themselves as biracial/multiracial, and 2% \( (n = 8) \) identified themselves as Asian American. The remaining 1% \( (n = 4) \) identified themselves using the “Other” option.

More than half of the sample was aged 30 years or younger \( (n = 216, 54\%) \), 22.8% \( (n = 91) \) were aged 31-40 years, 9% \( (n = 36) \) were aged 41-50 years, 8.8% \( (n = 35) \) were aged 51-60 years, and 5.5% \( (n = 22) \) were older than 60 years of age. Study participants indicated the highest degree they had attained and also indicated the year in which that degree was attained. Of the participants, 12.8% \( (n = 51) \) reported a bachelors degree as the highest degree attained, 31.5% \( (n = 126) \) reported a masters degree, 18% \( (n = 72) \) reported a masters degree plus certificate, 26.8% \( (n = 107) \) had earned a specialist degree, and 11% \( (n = 44) \) had received a doctoral degree. The years in which participants’ highest degree was attained ranged from 1968 to 2011. The vast majority of participants earned their highest degree between the years of 2001 and 2011 \( (n = 331, 87.25\%) \), 9.5% \( (n = 38) \) attained their highest degree between 1991 and 2000, 5.75% \( (n = 23) \) between 1981 and 1999, and 2% \( (n = 8) \) between 1968 and 1980.

Study participants also were asked to indicate membership in professional organizations. Response options included “State-level organizations (e.g., NJASP, ASPP),” “NASP,” “APA,” and “Other.” Results indicated that nearly half of the study participants \( (n = 191, 47.8\%) \) were current members of state-level school psychology associations. More than two thirds of the sample \( (69.5\%, n = 278) \) were current members of NASP, and 14.3% \( (n = 57) \) identified themselves as members of APA.
Fewer than 5% of participants \((n = 19)\) indicated that they were members of other professional organizations.

**Familiarity with Ethical Codes for Professional School Psychologists**

Participants were asked to rate their familiarity (i.e., “not at all familiar,” “somewhat familiar,” or “very familiar”) with the following three ethical codes of conduct for school psychologists: NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics 2010*, NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics 2000*, and APA “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (2002). One third of the participants \((n = 133, 33.3\%)\) reported that they were very familiar with the NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics 2010*. Approximately one half of the participants \((n = 213, 53.3\%)\) indicated that they were somewhat familiar with this code, and an additional 13.5% \((n = 54)\) reported that they were not at all familiar with the NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics 2010*. By comparison, fewer participants \((n = 71, 17.8\%)\) indicated that they were very familiar with the previous NASP code of ethics (i.e., NASP *Principles for Professional Ethics 2000*), and even fewer participants \((n = 68, 17\%)\) reported that they were very familiar with the APA “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct” (2002). Table 2 provides further data regarding participants’ familiarity with ethical codes.

**Ethics Training**

Data also were gathered regarding ethics training for both pre-service and practicing school psychologists. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the type or types of ethics training they had received. Response options included the following: no formal training, a graduate course(s) on ethics, ethics taught in multiple
Table 2

Familiarity with Ethical Codes for Professional School Psychologists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very familiar</td>
<td>33.3% (n = 133)</td>
<td>17.8% (n = 71)</td>
<td>17% (n = 68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat familiar</td>
<td>53.3% (n = 213)</td>
<td>47% (n = 188)</td>
<td>57% (n = 228)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all familiar</td>
<td>13.5% (n = 54)</td>
<td>35.3% (n = 141)</td>
<td>26% (n = 104)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

graduate courses, ethics addressed during practicum, ethics addressed during internship, professional development workshops, school district in-services, ethics discussed at regular school-psychology staff meeting, and self-study (e.g., journal articles and/or books). Participants were asked to select more than one option as appropriate. Respondents who selected only the “No formal training” option were excluded from the study. To facilitate interpretation, responses were clustered into groups according to the level or levels of training participants had received. Table 3 shows the results by cluster groups.

The largest percentage of respondents (n = 118, 29.5%) received only formal instruction (either via one graduate course dedicated to ethics or via multiple graduate courses that addressed ethics). The next largest cluster (n = 64, 16%) included those participants who had received ethics training during practicum and/or internship experiences in addition to graduate-level instruction. Fifty-three participants (13.25%)
Table 3

*Types of Ethics Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type(s) of ethics training</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction only</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + practicum/internship</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + practicum/internship + training in professional school setting</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + practicum/internship + training in professional school setting + self-study</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + training in professional school setting</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + practicum/internship + self-study</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate-level instruction + self-study</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in professional school setting only</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study only</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in professional school setting + self-study</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum/internship + training in professional school setting + self-study</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum/internship + training in professional school setting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicum/internship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
had received ethics training via graduate-level instruction, during practicum, and/or internship and also in a professional school setting (e.g., professional development workshop(s), district in-service(s), and/or discussion at school psychologist staff meetings). Slightly fewer participants \( (n = 49, 12.25\%) \) had received instruction across all four clusters (i.e., graduate-level instruction, during practicum and/or internship, in a professional school setting, and via self-study of journals and/or books). An additional 9.25% \((n = 37)\) of participants had received ethics training via graduate-level instruction and within a professional school setting. Eighteen participants \( (4.5\%) \) had received ethics training via graduate-level instruction, during practicum and/or internship, and also through participation in self-study. Slightly fewer \( (n = 16, 4\%) \) had received training via graduate-level instruction, within a professional school setting, and via self-study. Thirteen respondents \( (3.25\%) \) indicated that they had received ethics training via graduate-level instruction and self-study only. The remaining participants \( (n = 32, 8\%) \) had received a combination of training that did not include formal graduate-level instruction.

Participants also were asked to indicate when they had last participated in training regarding professional ethics in school psychology. Most respondents \( (n = 159, 39.8\%) \) had participated in some type of ethics training within 6 months of completing the survey. Approximately one third of participants \( (n = 134, 33.5\%) \) had participated in ethics training within 1 year of completing the survey. Twenty percent of respondents \( (n = 82) \) had participated in training between 1 and 5 years prior to completing the survey,
and only 25 respondents (6.3%) had last participated in training regarding professional ethics in school psychology more than 5 years prior to completing the survey (Table 4).

**Characteristics of Primary Employment Setting**

A portion of the survey was completed solely by practicing school psychologists \((n = 218)\). Table 5 contains data collected from this subset of the sample. Specifically, data were collected regarding the primary employment setting and geographic description (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) for practicing school psychologists. Preservice school psychologists were excluded from this portion of the data collection because they are not yet working in schools and therefore data regarding where they are working were deemed not relevant to the study. Forty percent \((n = 160)\) of survey participants were employed primarily by a single public school district, 3.5% \((n = 14)\) were employed by multiple school districts, 2.5% \((n = 10)\) were employed by a private or parochial school, and 1.5% \((n = 6)\) were employed by an educational consortium/Intermediate Unit. Approximately 3% \((n = 13)\) of respondents were self-employed consultants, and an additional 3.8% \((n = 15)\) selected the “Other” option.

An additional two questions in the survey were intended to be answered only by practicing school psychologists. These questions concerned whether or not the school psychologist held the NCSP credential and, if so, for how long they had held the credential. These questions could not be completed by preservice school psychologists as they are not eligible to apply for the credential at the NCSP level. Exactly one half \((n = 109)\) of practicing school psychologists within the sample held the NCSP credential. The number of years that practicing school psychologists held the NCSP credential ranged
Table 4

*Dates of Most Recent Ethics Training*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of most recent training</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within 6 months</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 1 year</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 5 years</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

from 1 to 24. The vast majority of those participants who held the NCSP credential had held it for between 1 and 6 years \( n = 77, 70.6\% \), 12.8\% \( n = 14 \) had held the NCSP credential for between 7 and 12 years, 1.8\% \( n = 2 \) had held the NCSP credential for between 13 and 18 years, and 7.3\% \( n = 8 \) had held the NCSP credential for more than 18 years.

Inferential Statistics

**Effects of demographic characteristics on knowledge of ethical principles.**

Several univariate ANOVAs were conducted to determine if demographic characteristics of the school psychologists included in the sample influenced their knowledge of ethical principles. For the purposes of these analyses, knowledge of ethical principles was determined by computing the percentage of correct answers provided by each respondent to the eight ethical dilemmas included in the survey.
Table 5

Data Collected by Practicing School Psychologists Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary employment setting</td>
<td>Single public school district</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple school districts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private/parochial school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational consortium/Intermediate Unit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed consultant</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holds NCSP credential</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long has NCSP credential been held</td>
<td>1-6 years</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7-12 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13-18 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 18 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender and race.** It was hypothesized that school psychologists’ gender would not influence their knowledge of ethical principles. While the results of the one-way ANOVA suggested that female school psychologists are more knowledgeable of ethical principles, $F(1, 398) = 5.23, p = .023$; however, the sample was not evenly distributed between female and male participants (i.e., it was overwhelmingly female). Therefore,
while the effects may appear significant, a further comparison of the mean percent correct score and standard deviation for each gender grouping and the grand mean (i.e., mean of the total sample) and standard error revealed that the difference was not meaningful, as indicated in Table 6.

It was further hypothesized that school psychologists’ race would not influence their knowledge of ethical principles. The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed no interaction effect between race and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(5,394) = 1.65$, $p = .145$. When respondents were grouped according to race, the mean scores were not significantly different from each other or from the grand mean, as shown in Table 6.

**Location and professional characteristics of work setting.** It was hypothesized that the geographical setting (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) would not influence school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles. The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed no interaction effect between geographical setting and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(2,211) = 0.29$, $p = .742$. Specifically, when respondents were grouped according to the geographical setting of their primary place of employment, the mean scores were not significantly different from each other or from the grand mean, as shown in Table 6.

It was further hypothesized that the characteristics of school psychologists’ professional setting (e.g., public school(s), private/parochial school, educational consortium/Intermediate Unit, self-employed consultant, or other setting) would not influence their knowledge of ethical principles. The results of an analysis of variance supported this hypothesis, $F(5,211) = 1.69$, $p = .139$. While the sample was
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Response option</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (grand mean)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>African American, Black</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biracial/Multiracial</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (grand mean)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic setting</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (grand mean)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
overwhelmingly employed in a single public school, the mean percentage correct was not significantly discrepant when respondents were grouped according to the characteristics of their professional settings, as illustrated in Table 6.

Effects of age, experience, and credentials on knowledge of ethical principles.

Several univariate ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the age (independent of years of experience), experience, and credentials of the school psychologists included in the sample influenced their knowledge of ethical principles. For the purposes of these analyses, knowledge of ethical principles was determined by computing the percentage of correct answers provided by each respondent to the eight ethical dilemmas included in the survey.

Age, years of experience, and highest degree attained. It was hypothesized that school psychologists’ age (independent of years of experience) would not influence their knowledge of ethical principles. An analysis of the data collected from the sample, however, suggested otherwise. The analysis of variance revealed that, for this population, age was a predictor of knowledge of ethical principles, \( F(4, 395) = 5.59, p > .05. \) Posthoc
Tukey HSD Tests revealed that the percentage correct scores for those respondents in the youngest age group (e.g., younger than 30 years of age) were significantly lower than those of their colleagues aged 60+ years \(p < .05, d = .84\). These results are summarized in Table 7.

It was further hypothesized that years of professional experience and level of degree attainment influenced school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles. Interestingly, despite the relationship between age of respondent and percentage correct score previously indicated, further analysis revealed no significant interaction effects between percentage correct and number of years of professional experience, \(F(36, 181) = 1.03, p = .433\). Significant effects were discovered, however, between percentage correct scores and the level of training (i.e., level of degree attained) of the respondents, \(F(7, 392) = 13.75, p < .05\). Posthoc Tukey HSD Tests indicated that those respondents who had earned a bachelors degree differed significantly in their knowledge of ethical principles when compared to those who had earned a masters degree \(p < .05, d = .86\). Likewise, those respondents who had earned a bachelors degree differed significantly from those who had earned degrees beyond a masters degree (i.e., masters plus certificate, educational specialist, and/or doctoral degree; \(p < .05, d = .24\)). Further comparison on the effects of degree attainment on knowledge of ethical principles indicated that those respondents who had earned a masters degree differed significantly in their knowledge of ethical principles from those who had earned degrees beyond a masters degree \(p < .05, d = .28\). These results are summarized in Table 7.
Table 7

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Age, Highest Degree and NSCP Credential and Percent Correct Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage correct</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 30 years</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40 years</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s + certification</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational specialist</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCSP credential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.* It was hypothesized that holding the NCSP credential would influence school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles. An analysis of the data collected from the sample supported this hypothesis. The ANOVA revealed that, for this population, holding the NCSP credential
was a significant predictor of knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1, 216) = 17.39$, $p > .05$. Posthoc testing was not indicated, as there were fewer than three groups. These results are summarized in Table 7.

**Effects of membership in professional organizations on knowledge of ethical principles.** It was hypothesized that membership in professional school psychology organizations influences school psychologists’ knowledge of professional ethics. Respondents were asked to identify membership in the following organizations: state-level school psychology associations (typically, NJASP or ASPP), the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the American Psychological Association (APA) and/or other professional organizations. For the purposes of analysis, the final category (i.e., other professional organizations) was not included, as other organizations indicated by respondents did not include professional school psychology organizations. An analysis of the data collected from the sample supported the hypothesis that membership in state-level school psychology organizations is a powerful predictor of knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1, 398) = 25.39$, $p > .05$. Posthoc testing was not conducted, as there were fewer than three groups. Conversely, the results of the one-way ANOVA revealed no interaction effect between APA membership status and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 0.53$, $p = .467$. Results were similar for membership in NASP. Specifically, an analysis of the data showed no interaction effects between NASP membership status and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 0.63$, $p = .430$. These results are summarized in Table 8.
Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Membership in Professional Organizations and Percent Correct Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Percentage correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-level association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Student</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Certified SP</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-member</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Student</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Certified SP</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmember</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Student</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Certified SP</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmember</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(grand mean)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SP = school psychologist

In order to understand more fully the effects that membership in state- and national-level school psychology organizations have on the knowledge of ethical principles of the sample, further analysis was conducted to isolate interaction effects between organization members’ professional status (i.e., school psychology graduate student or practicing school psychologist) and their percent correct scores. Significant
Effects were found within the membership groups for both state-level and national-level school psychology organizations when members’ professional status was considered. Specifically, members of state-level organizations who identified themselves as professional school psychologists scored significantly higher on measures of ethical principles when compared with student members of each organization, $F(1,398) = 60.83, p > .05$. Similarly, APA and NASP members who identified themselves as professional school psychologists scored significantly higher on measures of ethical principles when compared with student members of each organization, $F(1,398) = 55.76, p > .05$ and $F(1,398) = 56.25, p > .05$, respectively. These results suggest that professional status influences knowledge of professional ethics for members of state- and national-level school psychology organizations. These results are summarized in Table 8.

**Effects of ethics training on knowledge of ethical principles.** Several univariate ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the type of ethics training received by school psychologists included in the sample influenced their knowledge of ethical principles. Respondents were given eight options for describing the type or types of ethics training in which they had participated. For the purposes of these analyses, knowledge of ethical principles was determined by computing the percentage of correct answers provided by each respondent to the eight ethical dilemmas included in the survey. It was hypothesized that the type of ethics training in which school psychologists engaged would influence their knowledge of ethical principles.

**Graduate training.** Respondents were provided with two response options that included graduate-level ethics training (i.e., ethics were addressed in one or more courses
dedicated to ethics and ethics were taught across multiple graduate courses). The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed no interaction effect between enrollment in one or more courses dedicated to ethics and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 2.261, p = .133$. Likewise, no interaction effects were seen between enrollment in multiple graduate classes in which ethics were addressed and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 0.00, p = .989$. Results are presented in Table 9.

**Training during practicum and internship experiences.** Respondents were provided with a response option to indicate that ethics were taught during practicum and a response option to indicate that ethics were taught during internship. The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed no interaction effect between ethics training during practicum and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 2.62, p = .106$. Significant effects were observed, however, between ethics training during internship and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 14.20, p < .05$. Specifically, the percentage correct score of respondents who received ethics training during their internship was significantly higher than the overall mean. Results are included in Table 9.

**On-the-job ethics training.** Respondents were provided with several response options to indicate participation in ethics training while practicing as professional school psychologists, including professional development workshops, district in-services and discussion about ethics at regular school-psychologist staff meetings. The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between ethics training during
Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Types of Ethical Training and Percent Correct Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of training</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single graduate course</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple graduate courses</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During practicum</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During internship</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development workshop</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District in-service</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meetings</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-study</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

professional development workshops and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = 26.44, p < .05$. Significant effects were not observed, however, between ethics training during district in-service or via regular staff meetings and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1,398) = .18, p = .672$ and $F(1,398) = 2.31, p = .6129$, respectively. Results are included in Table 9.

**Self-study of ethics.** Respondents were provided with a response option to indicate ethics training via self-study (e.g., journal articles or books). The results of a one-way ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect between engaging in self-study
of ethics and knowledge of ethical principles, $F(1, 398) = 12.12, p = .001$. Results are included in Table 9.

**Effects of date of ethics training on knowledge of ethical principles.** A univariate ANOVA was conducted to determine if the date of participation in ethics training by school psychologists included in the sample influenced their knowledge of ethical principles. Respondents were given four options for describing when they had last participated in training regarding professional ethics in school psychology (i.e., within 6 months, within 1 year, between 1 and 5 years, and more than 5 years ago). For the purposes of these analyses, knowledge of ethical principles was determined by computing the percentage of correct answers provided by each respondent to the eight ethical dilemmas included in the survey.

It was hypothesized that the dates of ethical training would influence school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles. Significant effects were discovered between percentage correct scores and the date of school psychologists’ most recent training in professional ethics, $F(3, 392) = 5.52, p < .05$. Posthoc Tukey HSD Tests indicated that the percentage correct scores for those respondents who had participated in training within the last 6 months were significantly lower than those who had participated at other times ($p < .05, d = .89$). Results are included in Table 10.

**Knowledge across different ethical principles.** Several chi-square tests were conducted to determine if respondents’ knowledge was commensurate across the various ethical principles presented in the scenarios. Further analysis was conducted to ascertain if respondents’ status (i.e., school psychology graduate student or practicing school
Table 10

*Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Dates of Ethical Training and Percent Correct Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of most recent training</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within 6 months</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 1 year</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 and 5 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Grand mean)

psychologist) was related to their knowledge of ethical principles. Specifically, 2 x 2 chi-square analyses were used to determine if respondents as an aggregate group and as separate groups (i.e., school psychology students or practitioners) differed in their knowledge of specific ethical principles as evidenced by their ability to select the correct response for each scenario. It was hypothesized that respondents’ knowledge would be commensurate across ethical principles. It was further hypothesized that, as school psychologists gain years of experience in the field, it is likely that their knowledge of ethical principles increases; therefore, practicing school psychologists should demonstrate increased knowledge when compared with preservice school psychologists.
(e.g., graduate students). For the purpose of these analyses, $\alpha$ was set at 05. Post-hoc analyses were not conducted. Results for all scenarios are presented in Table 11.

**Scenario 1.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard I.1.1 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states:

It is ethically permissible to provide school-based consultation services regarding a child or adolescent to a student assistance team or teacher without informed parent consent as long as the resulting interventions are under the authority of the teacher and within the scope of typical classroom interventions (NASP, 2010a, p. 4).

Results indicate that a marginally significant relationship exists between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 24.77, p < .001$. While more than half of the total sample ($n = 263, 59\%$) selected the correct response, a higher percentage of respondents within the subset of practicing school psychologists answered correctly ($n = 153, 70.2\%$) when compared with school psychology students who answered correctly ($n = 83, 45.6\%$). Phi, which indicates the strength of the association between the two variables, is .249, and thus, the effect size is considered to be small to medium.

**Scenario 2.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard I.2.6 of the *NASP-PPE* that states, “School psychologists respect the right of privacy of students…with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status. They do not share information about the sexual orientation . . . of a student (including minors) . . . with anyone without that individual’s permission” (NASP, 2010a,
Table 11

*Chi-square Analyses of Responses Among Students and Certified School Psychologists*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>( n )</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Certified School Psychologist</th>
<th>( \chi^2 )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24.77</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.98</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>166</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.96</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>185</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.39</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>214</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>209</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 7</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16.92</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 8</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.034</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A chi-square analysis revealed that more than half of the total sample \((n = 221, 55.3\%)\) did not select the correct response for this scenario. Further analysis revealed that, while there is no significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle, a slight trend was noted in favor of practicing school psychologists \(\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 2.26, p = .08\). Specifically, more school psychology students responded incorrectly \((n = 108)\) than were expected, whereas fewer practicing school psychologists responded incorrectly \((n = 113)\) than were expected based on a 2 x 2 chi-square analysis. This trend should be interpreted with caution, however as phi is .075, which indicates a small effect size.

**Scenario 3.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard II.5.1 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states, “Unless otherwise required by law or district policy, school psychologists provide parents with the opportunity to inspect and review their child’s test answers rather than providing them with copies of their child’s test protocols” (NASP, 2010a, p. 9). Approximately two thirds of the total sample responded correctly \((n = 264, 66\%)\), and, as with the previous scenario, results revealed a somewhat significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle \(\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 21.98, p < .001\). Specifically, a higher percentage of respondents within the subset of practicing school psychologists answered correctly \((n = 166, 76.1\%)\) when compared with school psychology students who answered correctly \((n = 98, 53.8\%)\). Phi is .234, which reflects a small-to-medium effect size.

**Scenario 4.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard II.4.9 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states, “School psychologists, in collaboration with
administrators and other school staff, work to establish district policies regarding the storage and disposal of school psychological records that are consistent with law and sound professional practice” (NASP, 2010a, p. 9). As with the previous scenario, a majority of respondents within the total sample answered correctly (n = 299, 74.8%). Analysis also revealed a significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 25.96, p < .001$. Specifically, while the majority of respondents in each group answered correctly, nearly 85% of practicing school psychologists (n = 185, 84.9%) answered correctly as compared to 62.6% of school psychology students (n = 114). Phi is .255, which indicates a medium effect size.

**Scenario 5.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard III.4.2 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states, “School psychologists refrain from any activity in which conflicts of interest or multiple relationships with a client or a client’s family may interfere with professional effectiveness” (NASP, 2010a, p. 10). An overwhelming majority of respondents within the sample answered this scenario correctly (n = 373, 93.3%). Further analysis revealed no significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 18.39, p < .001$.

**Scenario 6.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard III.4.7 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states: “School psychologists neither give nor receive any remuneration for referring children and other clients for professional services” (NASP, 2010a, p. 11). As with the previous scenario, nearly all respondents within the sample answered this scenario correctly (n = 382, 92%). Further analysis revealed no
significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 9.76, p = .002$.

**Scenario 7.** This scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard IV.3.2 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states, “When a school psychologist suspects that another school psychologist . . . has engaged in unethical practices, he or she attempts to resolve the suspected problem through a collegial problem-solving process, if feasible” (NASP, 2010a, p. 12). Nearly 90% of the sample identified the correct response for this scenario ($n = 354, 88.5\%$). Further analysis revealed no significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 16.92, p < .001$.

**Scenario 8.** The final scenario sought to measure knowledge included in Standard IV.5.3 of the *NASP-PPE*, which states, “School psychologists who use their assessment, intervention or consultation cases in lectures, presentations, or publications obtain written prior client consent or they remove and disguise identifying client information” (NASP, 2010a, p. 14). Ninety-two percent of respondents ($n = 368$) within the sample answered this scenario correctly. Further analysis revealed no significant relationship between respondents’ status and their knowledge of this ethical principle $\chi^2(1, n = 400) = 4.05, p = .034$.

**Relationship between the use of a problem-solving model and knowledge of ethical principles.** A final univariate ANOVA was conducted to determine if those school psychologists included in the sample who reported that they regularly used a problem-solving model to solve ethical dilemmas demonstrated significantly different
levels of knowledge of ethical principles when compared with colleagues who do not use a problem-solving model. It was hypothesized that there is an association between school psychologists’ regular application of a critical-evaluative method of problem solving to resolve ethical dilemmas and their level of knowledge of professional ethics in the field of school psychology. In order to determine if an ethical problem-solving model was utilized, respondents were given a list of seven problem-solving steps (i.e., define the problem situation, consult available ethical-legal guidelines, consult with supervisor and colleagues, etc.) and asked to indicate the frequency with which they used each step (i.e., never, sometimes, often, or almost always). For the purposes of this analysis, those respondents who responded “almost always” and/or “often” to all seven steps were grouped as using a problem-solving model to solve ethically challenging situations.

It was hypothesized that whether or not a school psychologist uses a problem-solving model would influence his/her knowledge of ethical principles. At first glance, an analysis of the data appeared to support this hypothesis in that the main effect for status and model usage is significant $F(1, 398) = 4.38, p = .037$. Further analysis, however, indicated that the effect for the status of the respondent (i.e., school psychology graduate student or practicing school psychologist) is more significant than their use of a problem-solving model. Finally, a comparison of the mean percent correct score and standard deviation for each group (e.g., those who use a model and those who do not) and the grand mean (i.e., mean of the total sample) and standard error revealed that the difference was not meaningful, as indicated in Table 12.
Table 12

*Percent Correct Scores by Problem-Solving Approach as Compared to Total Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses a problem-solving model</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use a problem-solving model</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (grand mean)</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Discussion

Knowledge and application of ethically sound principles are critical within the field of professional school psychology to safeguard the rights of clients, families and schools. Ethical codes of conduct provide a means by which professionals can monitor their own behavior to ensure that they are acting within the boundaries of appropriate professional conduct (Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 2008). School psychology students are introduced to ethical codes of conduct as part of the curriculum of graduate preparation programs. Didactic presentation then is augmented with practicum and internship opportunities that allow preservice school psychologists to apply what they have learned to real-life situations. Finally, once certified, school psychologists are charged with maintaining a faithful application of ethically sound practices in their professional careers.

Analysis of the data collected in the current study suggests that activities in which professional school psychologists engage following certification are critical to their ability to maintain professional practices that are considered best practice in terms of the ethical code of conduct. Specifically, the data suggest that those certified school psychologists who continue to engage in formal training in ethical principles once they are practicing in the field are more likely to be knowledgeable regarding ethical best practices when compared to their colleagues who do not pursue additional training. Similarly, the data also suggest that those school psychologists who seek membership in
professional school psychology organizations (on both a state and national level) and pursue advanced credentials, such as the NCSP also are more knowledgeable about ethical principles in school psychology.

**Impact of Demographic Characteristics on Knowledge of Ethical Principles**

Survey respondents were asked to provide demographic information, including gender, race, and age (independent of years of experience). They were asked further to indicate the geographic characteristics of their primary employment setting (e.g., urban, suburban or rural) and the characteristics of that setting (i.e., public school, private school, educational consortium). This demographic information then was analyzed in light of measures of ethical knowledge to determine if a relationship exists between the two factors.

**Gender and race.** Not surprisingly, no significant relationship exists between school psychologists’ gender or race and their knowledge of ethical principles. Similarly, there is no relationship between where school psychologists work and in what type of school/educational setting they practice and their knowledge of ethical principles. This finding is heartening in that it suggests that all children and adolescents potentially could have the support of a school psychologist who practices ethically. A school psychologist who employs ethical practices in any setting can be a resource for responsible caring for the students and families with whom he/she engages. In this manner, school psychologists can serve as protective factors in educational settings that may be rife with risk factors, such as limited resources and safety concerns.
**Age.** While the data clearly show that demographic characteristics such as gender and race, have no bearing on school psychologists’ knowledge of ethical principles, the relationship between respondents’ age (independent of years of experience) and their knowledge of ethical principles is more complex. At first glance, the data suggest that age may be a factor in that those respondents in the youngest age group (i.e., under 30 years) scored significantly lower in terms of their knowledge of ethical principles than did their most senior colleagues (i.e., those in the over-60 age group). Upon closer examination, however, other factors influencing this trend become apparent.

**Experience.** One potentially mitigating factor, number of years of experience, proved to be insignificant in influencing survey respondents’ ability to provide ethically sound responses to the scenarios included in the survey. This finding supports the notion that, while developing ethical competence is indeed a developmental process, one does not gain ethical expertise simply by virtue of gaining years of professional experience in the field. Further, data gathered via the current study directly support and reinforce previous findings that indicated that school psychologists’ level of perceived preparedness to handle ethically problematic situations is not associated with years of experience on the job (Dailor, 2007). Put simply, the current study reinforces a previous suspicion: school psychologists do not achieve an expert level of ethical competence simply by logging years of experience in the profession.

**Professional training.** Ruling out the impact of years of experience on knowledge of ethical principles begs a question of critical importance not only to the current study but also to the field of professional school psychology as a whole. Since it
has been established that advancing ethical competence is not merely a function of gaining years of experience, it is necessary to begin to identify those factors that play a contributory role in developing ethical expertise in the field of professional school psychology. Not surprisingly, current findings lend support to the idea that the level of training received by school psychologists is an important contributing factor to their level of ethical competence.

School psychology students who have participated in coursework regarding ethical and legal issues but who have not had the opportunity to apply knowledge of ethical principles in a professional setting are limited in their ability to appreciate fully and apply ethical principles to professional practice (Jacob et al., 2011; Meara et al., 1996). An analysis of survey responses indicates that this phenomenon holds true for this sample, as respondents who had earned a masters degree (and had therefore participated in some type of field experience in the schools, but had not yet completed an internship in school psychology) demonstrated significantly less well-developed knowledge of ethical principles when compared with those respondents who had received more advanced training in school psychology. This finding not only further underscores the importance of real-world professional experiences in developing ethical competence as a school psychologist, but also sheds light on a potentially important distinction between practicum and internship experiences. Specifically, these results suggest that school psychology graduate students who have participated in an internship experience (i.e., specialist-level students) are more knowledgeable than their fellow students who are completing or who have completed a practicum, but not an internship. The reason for
this distinction could lie in the simple fact that students who are at the internship stage of their graduate preparation program are farther along in their training program than those who have reached the preinternship practicum stage. This scenario is unlikely, however, for two reasons. First and foremost, graduate preparation programs in school psychology generally include foundational coursework in ethics and law within the beginning semesters of the program. This course sequence does not happen by chance; rather, the choice is supported by research that shows that implementing formal coursework in ethics and law at the beginning of a graduate training program prepares students to become active participants in discussions of ethical and legal issues throughout the remainder of their training program (Jacob-Timm, 1999: Tryon, 2000). Therefore, one could reasonably discount the idea that internship-level students have received more formal coursework devoted to ethics in school psychology than have practicum-level students. Secondly, since it has been established that practicing school psychologists do not gain ethical expertise simply by gaining years of experience, it is unlikely that this phenomenon would hold true for pre-service school psychologists.

If the difference in knowledge of ethical principles between practicum-level and internship-level students cannot be explained by exposure to coursework in ethical and legal issues, taking a closer look at the distinctions between practicum and internship experiences is warranted. NASP defines school psychology practica experiences as “closely supervised on-campus and/or field-based activities designed to develop and evaluate school psychology candidates’ mastery of specific professional skills consistent with program goals and objectives” (NASP, 2010c). With this definition in mind,
practicum experiences are conceptualized most appropriately as opportunities to evaluate students’ understanding of what they have learned in the classroom, rather than their ability to apply and extend classroom knowledge to novel situations. By definition, then, practicum students should be expected to have an understanding of the theoretical constructs of an ethically challenging situation, but should not bear the responsibility for resolving the situation. This level of experience correlates with the transition period between the novice stage and the advanced beginner stage as described in Dreyfus and Dreyfus’ (1991) five-stage model for developing competency. Whereas novices are limited to classroom instruction only, advanced beginners are defined as those who have gained experience in applying previously taught ethical principles within a real-life setting. Practicum-level students fall somewhere between these two stages, as they are in the midst of gaining those critical first real-life experiences, but likely have not faced enough ethically challenging situations to be considered as “experienced.”

Conversely, the expectations for the school psychology intern are more rigorous when compared to those placed on a preinternship practicum student. NASP defines internship experiences as follows:

a supervised, culminating, comprehensive field experience that is completed prior to the awarding of the degree or other institutional documentation of completion of the specialist or doctoral level program. The internship ensures that school psychology candidates have the opportunity to integrate and apply professional knowledge and skills acquired in program coursework and practica, as well as to
acquire enhanced competencies consistent with the school psychology program’s goals and objectives. (NASP, 2010c)

While the distinction may be subtle, the expectation that internship-level students should be able to “integrate and apply” their knowledge of ethical principles places them firmly in the advanced beginner stage of the development of ethical competencies (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991). The findings of this current study indicate that this level of training and experience makes a difference in an individual’s knowledge of ethical principles and his/her ability to apply principles to solve ethically challenging situations. Finally, while internship experiences apparently serve as a pivotal point for developing ethical competency as previously described, it is likely that the cumulative effect of classroom instruction, preinternship practicum, and internship experiences serves to support the growth of school psychology students’ ethical competencies.

Interestingly, while a significant difference in ethical knowledge was observed between masters-level students and respondents who had received further training, no significant difference in knowledge was found between individuals who had earned an educational specialist (EdS) degree and those who had earned a doctoral degree. This finding further supports the idea that graduate preparation activities leading up to and including internship experiences are most instrumental in developing a knowledge base of ethical principles, and once that level has been reached, school psychologists are able to maintain and apply their knowledge in professional practice. Homogeneity in ethical knowledge across the EdS-level and doctoral-level respondents is also likely a reflection of the rigor of graduate preparation at the specialist level.
Impact of Professional Commitment on Knowledge of Ethical Principles

In addition to demographic information, respondents were asked to provide information regarding their level of professional commitment in school psychology. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate if they held the NCSP credential, if they were members of professional school psychology associations, and in what type or types of ethics training they engaged. Not surprisingly, analysis of the data revealed that respondents’ commitment to professional activities in the field of school psychology had a positive effect on their knowledge of ethical principles.

Nationally Certified School Psychologists. Findings revealed the incontrovertible positive impact of the NCSP credential on ethical knowledge. Specifically, certified school psychologists who held the NCSP credential scored significantly higher when responding to the ethically challenging situations than did their colleagues who did not hold the NCSP credential. One can reasonably assume that this difference can be explained by the requirements of ongoing ethics training set forth (effective on January 1, 2009) by NASP’s National School Psychology Certification Board (NASP, n.d.). The board currently requires 75 hours of continuing professional development every 3 years for those psychologists holding the NCSP credential, a portion of which must be dedicated to ethics training (Armistead et al., 2011; NASP, 2010b). As such, school psychologists who secure and maintain the NCSP credential demonstrate an increased commitment to developing their ethical knowledge and competencies in school psychology.
**Membership in professional organizations.** Positive results also were noted with regard to the impact of membership in professional school psychology organizations on knowledge of ethical principles, particularly state-level organizations such as NJASP and ASPP. Those respondents who indicated membership in state-level organizations scored significantly higher than did their colleagues who are nonmembers. A key factor in this relationship is likely tied to the aforementioned requirements for maintaining the NCSP credential, namely ongoing ethics training. In an effort to encourage members to secure and maintain the NCSP credential, many state-level organizations include training in professional ethics in school psychology on a regular basis (e.g., at annual state-level conferences). By providing members with opportunities to participate in ongoing ethics training, state-level organizations not only are facilitating attainment and retention of the NCSP credential, but also are enhancing members’ knowledge of ethical principles, as demonstrated in the current study.

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, no significant relationship was found between membership in national-level professional organizations (namely NASP and APA) and knowledge of ethical principles. A closer examination of this phenomenon, however, indicates that there are other factors to consider. It has been established that certified school psychologists as a group have greater knowledge of ethical principles when compared to preservice school psychology graduate students. Upon examining the status (i.e., certified school psychologist or school psychology graduate student) of APA and NASP members, both of these national-level professional organizations have a significantly higher student member population when compared with the student member
population of state-level organizations. One would expect therefore that the knowledge of ethical principles of members of national-level professional organizations as a whole would be somewhat less than that of members of state-level organizations. Taking this factor into consideration, the larger issue to address with regard to membership in professional school psychology organizations then becomes how to encourage increased student membership at the state level to ensure active participation across all levels of the continuum of professional development in the field.

Ethics training. Survey respondents were asked to indicate when they had last participated in ethics training in school psychology. It was expected that respondents who had participated in training most recently (e.g., within 6 months) would demonstrate greater knowledge of ethical principles because of the proximity of training. Interestingly, however, the data did not support this hypothesis. A closer analysis of the demographic characteristics of each response cluster indicated that preservice school psychology graduate students represented the vast majority of respondents who indicated that they had participated in ethics training within the past 6 months. Therefore, while the data may suggest that there is a relationship between the proximity of respondents’ most recent training in ethics and their knowledge of ethical principles, it is once again apparent that the status of the respondent (i.e., school psychology graduate student or certified school psychologist) is likely to be a more important factor in determining ethical knowledge and competence.

The type of ethics training in which school psychology graduate students and certified school psychologists engage is also critical to their knowledge of ethical principles.
principles. One caveat to consider when discussing the efficacy of one type of ethics training as compared to another is that, for the purposes of this study, the interaction effects of multiple modalities of ethics training preclude a pure analysis of one type of training in isolation. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they engage in a combination of ethics training. Indeed, very few reported that they received all training in ethical principles from one source. With this in mind, however, clear trends emerged from an analysis of the study data. Specifically, the types of ethics training that appear to reap the greatest rewards in terms of acquisition of knowledge of ethical principles are those that are integrated into an internship experience and training that is provided via professional development workshops.

One should not be surprised that including ethics training as a part of comprehensive internship experience promotes the development of ethical competence. It has been demonstrated that the internship stage of school psychologists’ preparation program is of paramount importance to the enhancement of ethical knowledge. The relationship between receiving ethics training during an internship (either via explicit instruction or as a by-product of intern-supervisor interactions) and enhanced knowledge of ethical principles is yet another rationale for the notion that the internship stage represents a pivotal point in the development of school psychologists’ understanding of professional ethics in school psychology. Internship experiences provide students with an opportunity to see professional ethics in school psychology in action. As such, supervisors must ensure that they are performing their duties in an ethically responsible manner so that learning is facilitated for their interns. Similarly, graduate educators of
school psychology students must monitor supervisor-intern interactions to ensure that their students get the most from their internship experiences.

Professional development workshops reflect another effective approach to increasing ethical knowledge. Specifically, data suggest that, of the three on-the-job training options (i.e., professional development workshops, school in-services, and school psychologist staff meetings), professional development workshops were the only type of training that produced significantly positive results. This finding confirms what most have already suspected, namely that all modalities of on-the-job professional training are not created equal. In terms of ethics training, school psychologists must have access to specialized training provided by knowledgeable professionals in the field of school psychology. A one-size-fits-all approach to ongoing ethics training is not appropriate and may lead to misinformation. While “ignorance of the ethical code is no excuse” (Williams & Armistead, 2010, p. 18) and school psychology practitioners are responsible for understanding and applying ethical best practices, providing training that may not be specialized to the field is simply not effective, as the study data show. As public-school budgets are whittled down year after year and opportunities for meaningful professional development become scarcer, one must remember that providing school psychologists with appropriate professional development training is critical to maintaining ethical standards and ensuring best professional practice.

**Respondents’ Knowledge of Specific Ethical Principles**

Analyses were conducted to determine if respondents’ knowledge of ethical principles was consistent across the eight topics selected for inclusion in the survey.
scenarios. Data were examined in this manner in an effort to uncover potential trends or gaps in knowledge related to specific topics included in the ethics code. Most respondents were able to identify the most ethically sound course of action for most of the scenarios, with two notable exceptions. Scenarios 1 and 2 addressed ethical principles included in the first broad theme of the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics: Respecting the Dignity and Rights of All Persons (NASP-PPE; NASP, 2010a).

Scenario 1 involved school psychologists’ ability to intervene (at the request of a classroom teacher) on behalf of a child without first securing parental consent. Approximately 40% of respondents were not able to select the correct answer for this scenario. Scenario 2 focused on upholding the right to privacy for students regarding sexual orientation. Sadly, more than half of the sample answered Scenario 2 incorrectly.

Respondents’ difficulty in correctly identifying the most ethically sound course of action for these two scenarios has clear implications for the practice of professional school psychology. A fundamental tenet of the NASP-PPE is that school psychologists must always consider the right of the client (i.e., student) as paramount when making decisions (NASP, 2010a). In a school setting, this process can be made difficult when other parties who are not bound to uphold the same professional ethics (e.g., parents, teachers, school administrators) also are involved with a child. In the example of Scenario 2, school psychologists must respect the right of a student (regardless of that student’s age) to disclose information regarding his or her sexual orientation without fear of that information being shared with others without his or her consent (assuming there are no mitigating factors that may put the student or others at risk). While there may be
other school personnel who feel that alerting the student’s parents or guardians is the best course of action, school psychologists are charged with upholding the rights of the student, despite directives and pressure placed upon them by colleagues and supervisors. Moreover, those school psychologists who are familiar with the NASP 2010 *Principles of Professional Ethics* (*NASP-PPE*; NASP, 2010a) would be aware that the revised ethical standards now explicitly address the issue of privacy and confidentiality of sexual orientation, gender identity, and transgender status of students. Consistent with a federal appeals court ruling in *Sterling v. Borough of Minersville* (2000), the *NASP-PPE 2010* (NASP, 2010a) added the following standard to protect privacy and confidentiality rights of students and others with regard to sexual orientation:

School psychologists respect the right of privacy of students, parents, and colleagues with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status. They do not share information about the sexual orientation, gender identity, or transgender status of a student (including minors), parents, or school employee with anyone without that individual’s permission. (p. 5)

Remembering that “ignorance of the ethical code is no excuse,” practicing school psychologists would do well to seek support and ongoing training in ethical best practices to ensure that they are able to make sound decisions across all facets of their practice (Williams & Armistead, 2010, p. 18).

**Impact of Utilizing a Problem-Solving Model**

Careful application of ethical principles on the part of school psychologists will promote best practices across a variety of professional activities. However, not all
situations faced by school psychologists can be solved with a simple, straightforward procedure or protocol. Many times, school psychologists are required to balance ethical principles with the emotions of stakeholders, including children, families, and school personnel. In order to do this effectively, professional school psychologists must develop a systematic approach to solving problems that allows a blending of ethical principles and intuition (Gutheil et al., 1991). This does not mean that school psychologists should ignore ethical principles in favor of feelings or intuition; however, it behooves them to consider all components of a complex situation before deciding the best course of action.

Survey data were analyzed to determine if there is a relationship between regular application of a critical-evaluative problem-solving method and knowledge of ethical principles. Specifically, are those school psychologists who endorse following specific problem-solving steps when faced with an ethically challenging situation better able to apply ethical best practices when compared with their colleagues who do not utilize a problem-solving model? At first glance, the data appear to support this hypothesis, as the group of school psychologists who indicated that they use a problem-solving model scored significantly higher than those included in the group that did not endorse using a model. This effect was mediated, however, by the status of the school psychologists included in each group, as the majority of certified school psychologists indicated that they use a problem-solving model while more pre-service school psychologists reported that they do not regularly use a problem-solving model when faced with an ethically challenging situation.
These results suggest that, once again, practitioner status is a deciding factor in knowledge of ethical principles, thereby lending support to the developmental model of evolving ethical competence. The fact that practitioners who utilize a problem-solving model were able to apply ethical principles more accurately to solving problematic situations also provides further evidence that, when faced with the difficult task of balancing ethical principles, emotions, and intuition; it is most helpful to apply a model of problem solving that allows practitioners to take into account multiple viewpoints when evaluating a situation. When considering this practice in light of the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1991) model of developing ethical competence, it is clear that learning how to utilize a problem-solving model when approaching ethically challenging situations is an important tool in helping preservice and beginning school psychologists move from novice to advanced beginner and beyond.

**Limitations of the Study**

Inherent in this study are limitations that warrant consideration, including limitations with regard to instrumentation and sample selection. While survey research is widely used to collect data within the social sciences, questions have been raised regarding the reliability and validity of survey measures. The current study is particularly sensitive to issues of reliability and validity since the survey used to gather data was created for the purpose of the current study (i.e., was not previously standardized). Additionally, while a panel of experts in the area of the ethics of school psychology was consulted regarding the internal validity of the survey’s scenarios, the scenarios ultimately reflect the principal investigator’s conceptualization of components of the ethical code. In the same
vein, the scenarios included in the survey represent a small sample of topics intended to measure respondents’ knowledge of the ethical code as a whole. As such, the results may be conceptualized more appropriately as measuring respondents’ knowledge of specific ethical principles rather than their knowledge of the ethical code in its entirety.

Generalization of survey results is complicated by the fact that a true random sampling of all school psychologists was not possible; therefore, the respondents represent a sample of convenience. One must also consider that respondents were limited to school psychology students and practitioners who elected to complete the survey by choosing to take the time to respond to questions. Recruitment methods also may affect the generalizability of study results. Specifically, respondents were recruited primarily from Pennsylvania and New Jersey state-level professional organization membership, which may limit generalization to other parts of the United States and to school psychology students and practitioners who are not members of state-level professional organizations.

Conclusions and Considerations for Further Study

Despite the limitations just noted, this study has generated considerable information regarding how ethical competence is fostered within the field of professional school psychology. First and foremost, data gathered via this study provide valuable insight into which factors support the development of ethical competence (e.g., internship experiences, ongoing commitment to professional development) while helping to rule out
those that do not (e.g., individual demographic characteristics, school settings, in-service training that is not specific to the field of school psychology). In this manner, this study conveys a message of hope to those considering entering into the field, those who are currently being prepared to be school psychologists, practicing school psychologists, and graduate educators in school psychology. As a discipline, school psychology preparation programs are moving in the right direction in terms of providing authentic experiences in the form of internships that allow students to apply the principles they have learned in the classroom in a real-world setting. These critical experiences promote the development of competence and enhance the profession of school psychology.

Findings also support the importance of ongoing professional development in ethics. Effective classroom instruction provides a stable base from which to develop fundamental knowledge of ethical principles in school psychology. Internship experiences build on that base, adding critical real-world experiences to classroom learning. In order to maintain momentum and continue traveling along the developmental continuum of ethical competence, school psychologists require ongoing training that is specific to the field of school psychology. This area warrants further consideration and study. In an era of shrinking school budgets, many school psychologists are faced with limited options regarding professional development. This phenomenon is a cause for concern as the current study shows that replacing professional development activities created specifically for school psychologists with school-based in-service workshops that are typically developed with the broader audience in mind is not
best practice in furthering the ethical competence of school psychologists. As such, this study represents a call to action for future research to ensure that school psychologists continue to receive the training they need to practice most effectively in an ethically competent manner that enhances the learning and mental health of all children and youth.
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Appendix A

Survey

The Ethical Competencies of Pre-Service and Practicing School Psychologists

Thank you for completing this survey about ethics and school psychology. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and consent will be assumed if the questions have been answered. All responses will be anonymous. Survey data will be included in a doctoral dissertation completed by Laura Monahon at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). Results can be made available upon request. This survey has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at PCOM.

<table>
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<th>Section 1: Ethics Training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What training have you received in professional ethics in school psychology? <em>(Check all that apply)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o No formal training</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Graduate course(s) on ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Ethics were taught in multiple graduate courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Ethics were addressed during practicum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Ethics were addressed during internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Professional development workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o District in-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Ethics are discussed at regular school psychologist staff meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Self-study (e.g., journal articles or books)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you last participate in training regarding professional ethics in school psychology?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Within six months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Within one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Between one and five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More than five years ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Other (please explain): ____________________________________________</td>
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__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
How familiar are you with the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics 2010?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all familiar</th>
<th>Somewhat familiar</th>
<th>Very familiar</th>
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How familiar are you with the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics 2000?

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How familiar are you with the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (2002)?

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Section 2: Knowledge of Ethical Principles

The following scenarios refer to application of the NASP Principles of Professional Ethics 2010:

Scenario 1: A teacher approaches a school psychologist in the district with concerns regarding a general education student in her classroom. The school psychologist plans to review the student’s educational records, conduct a classroom observation and then assist with developing a classroom intervention. Is it ethically permissible for the school psychologist to do this without informed parental consent?

- ○ Yes. This is permissible under any circumstances.
- ○ Yes. This is permissible as long as the scope of the services is included in what would typically be done in a classroom.
- ○ Yes. This is permissible as long as the teacher has received written permission from the parent/guardian.
- ○ No. This is not permissible under any circumstances.

Scenario 2: A 13-year old middle school student discloses to the school psychologist that he is gay. Is it ethically permissible for the school psychologist to contact his parents following the conversation?

- ○ Yes. The school psychologist can contact the parent(s) of the minor student if he/she feels that it is appropriate.
- ○ Yes. The school psychologist can contact the parent(s) after reviewing the case with his/her supervisor.
- ○ Yes. The school psychologist can contact the parent(s) with permission from the student.
- ○ No. This is not permissible for the school psychologist to contact the parents of this student at this time.
### Scenario 3: A parent has questions about the results of his child’s psychological evaluation and requests to review the test protocols. What is the most ethically sound course of action for the school psychologist?

- Explain that protocols cannot be reviewed due to test security concerns and offer to review the evaluation report in greater detail with the parent.
- Provide the parent with the original protocol with assurances that he will return it after he reviews it.
- Provide the parent with a photocopy of the protocol that does not need to be returned.
- Invite the parent for a face-to-face meeting to review the protocol.

### Scenario 4: As a school psychologist, your supervisor has concerns regarding the availability of space for record storage. He requests that you assist him in destroying records of students who graduated from the district at least seven years previously. What is the most ethically sound course of action for the school psychologist?

- Work with the supervisor to establish a district policy for maintaining student records that is consistent with legal guidelines.
- Explain to the supervisor that, ethically, student records cannot be destroyed, regardless of the age of the records.
- Explain to the supervisor that records must be maintained for a minimum of ten years.
- Follow the directive of your supervisor, as he is a district administrator.

### Scenario 5: A teacher approaches a school psychologist with whom he works. He has concerns about his daughter and requests that the school psychologist evaluate her. The school psychologist suggests that the parent contact the school district where his daughter is enrolled to inquire about possible testing. The teacher responds that he “doesn’t want the school involved” and prefers that his daughter be evaluated by someone who “knows her and knows the family.” What is the most ethically sound course of action for the school psychologist?

- Explain to the parent that the evaluation can only be completed by an employee of his child’s school district.
- Complete the evaluation for an agreed-upon fee.
- Complete the evaluation without accepting payment.
- Provide the parent with a list of appropriately credentialed practitioners who could complete the evaluation.

### Scenario 6: As a school psychologist, you frequently make referrals to a neurologist whom you feel works well with school-aged children. The neurologist phones your office one day and offers you two tickets to the World Series as a thank you for the referrals. What is the most ethically sound course of action for the school psychologist?

- Accept the tickets, as long as attending the game will not interfere with your work schedule.
- Explain that you must first consult with your supervisor. Make your decision based on his/her input.
- Express your appreciation and explain that you must decline the tickets.
- Accept the tickets, but cease making referrals to the doctor so that it does not become a problematic situation in the future.
Scenario 7: As a school psychologist, you share an office with another school psychologist who is responsible for reevaluating students in the district. You come to realize that she regularly shreds student protocols once the evaluation report has been written. What is the most ethically sound course of action for you?

- Ignore the situation, making sure that you retain all protocols when you complete evaluations.
- Approach your colleague with your concerns. If nothing changes, approach your supervisor with your concerns.
- Share your concerns with your supervisor immediately and request that he/she speak with your colleague.
- Express your concerns at a school psychology staff meeting in an attempt to convince your colleague to change her practices regarding test protocols.

Scenario 8: As a school psychologist, you have been asked to present a workshop in your school district about how to work with difficult students in the classroom. In order to make your presentation more interesting, you decide to use examples from students with whom you have worked. Is this ethically permissible?

- Yes, as long as you disguise your case examples so that no individual student could be identified.
- Yes, as long as you do not provide workshop attendees with written documentation of your examples (e.g., copies of your presentation slides, handouts that include student examples).
- Yes, as long as the students are not currently enrolled with the teachers in the audience.
- No. This is not permissible under any circumstances.

Section 3: Ethical Decision Making

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>When faced with an ethical dilemma, how often do you do the following?</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulate a clear description of the problem situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Define potential ethical-legal issues involved.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult available ethical-legal guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consult with supervisors and colleagues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate the rights, responsibilities and welfare of all affected parties.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider alternative solutions and consequences of making each decision.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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ETTICAL COMPETENCIES OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

<table>
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<th>Take action and accept responsibility for decisions.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other (please describe):</td>
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### Section 4: Background Information

1. Are you currently enrolled in a graduate program in school psychology?  ○ Yes  ○ No
   - If no, proceed to the next question.
   - If yes, are you currently completing a practicum in school psychology?  ○ Yes  ○ No
   - Have you completed a practicum in school psychology?  ○ Yes  ○ No
   - Are you currently completing an internship in school psychology?  ○ Yes  ○ No

2. Are you a certified school psychologist?  ○ Yes  ○ No
   - If no, proceed to the next question.
   - If yes, how many years have you worked as a school psychologist?  

3. What was the highest degree you have attained?
   ○ Bachelors  ○ Masters  ○ Masters plus certificate  ○ Educational Specialist (EdS)  ○ Doctorate

4. In what year did you receive your highest-level degree?  

5. Are you?
   ○ MALE  ○ FEMALE

6. Age?
   ○ Under 30 years  ○ 31-40 years  ○ 41-50 years  ○ 51-60 years  ○ 60+ years
ETHICAL COMPETENCIES OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

7. Race?

- African American, Black
- Asian American
- Biracial/Multiracial
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other

8. Which of the following best describes your primary employment setting?

- Single school district - public
- Self-employed consultant
- Private or parochial school
- Educational consortium/Intermediate Unit
- Multiple school district
- Other: _______________________________

9. Which of the following best describes your primary employment setting?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

10. Are you currently a member of a professional school psychology organization? **(Check all that apply)**

- State-level organization (e.g., NJASP, ASPP)
- NASP
- APA
- Other (please list):

11. Are you currently a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP)?  ○ Yes  ○ No

If yes, how long have you been an NCSP? _____________________

*Thank you for completing this survey!*
Dear Dr. [NAME]:

I am writing to you to request an opportunity to meet with your school psychology graduate students. I am currently gathering data via survey regarding the ethical knowledge and self-reported competencies of pre-service and practicing school psychologists in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This survey will be used for Doctoral dissertation purposes at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at PCOM. Attached is a PDF-version of the survey for your review.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to attend a meeting of a school psychology graduate class at XX University so that I can invite students in your program to participate. The survey requires approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and there will be no names or identifiers on the survey itself.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Should you have any questions, please contact me via email at lauramon@pcom.edu. You may also contact the dissertation chair for this study, Diane Smallwood, Psy.D. at dianesm@pcom.edu or (215) 871-6564.

Sincerely,

Laura Monahon
(856) 340-5889
lauramon@pcom.edu

Diane Smallwood, Psy.D., Dissertation Chair
(215) 871-6564
dianesm@pcom.edu
Appendix C

Resource Guide

Would you like to know more about the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics 2010?

A copy of the code can be found at: http://www.nasponline.org.

Additional resources:


Appendix D

Sample Letter of Introduction for Recruitment of Web-based Survey Responders

Dear fellow school psychologist,

You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring the self-perceived knowledge and competency levels of school psychologists with regards to the ethics of professional school psychology. This survey will be used for Doctoral dissertation purposes at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM). You will be asked to rate your knowledge of ethical practice and decision-making processes, as well as to provide demographic information. The survey will take less than 25 minutes to complete.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and consent will be assumed if the questions have been answered. You may withdraw at any time with no penalty by closing out of the SurveyMonkey website.

In order to complete the survey, please click on the link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XXXXXXX

All responses will be anonymous with no personal identifiers used. The results will be analyzed and could be made available if you are interested.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Should you have any questions, or if you would like the results, please contact Laura Monahon at PCOM at lauramon@pcom.edu. You may also contact the dissertation chair for this study, Diane Smallwood, Psy.D. at dianesm@pcom.edu or (215) 871-6564.

Sincerely,

Laura Monahon
(856) 340-5889
lauramon@pcom.edu

Diane Smallwood, Psy.D., Dissertation Chair
(215) 871-6564
dianesm@pcom.edu