

**Psychological Reports of Novice and Expert School Psychologists:
An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions**

By

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
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Abstract

The psychological report represents one of the most important aspects of the work of the school psychologist. The psychological report is usually the end result of an assessment process following the referral of a child or adolescent. The psychological report is an enduring document that will have immediate and possibly future ramifications for the child or adolescent. One of the most important consumers of the psychological report is the classroom teacher. Presenting problems are often manifested in the classroom and, as a result, the classroom teacher is likely to have a vested interest in the results and recommendations presented in the psychological report. Therefore it is very important that the school psychologist present the information in the psychological report in a manner that will maximize the chances that his or her message is received as intended. Based on communication theory (Wood, 1977, as cited by Jacobs, 1995), the sender, that is, the school psychologist, needs to take the recipients, namely the teacher's knowledge and experiences into consideration when writing the psychological report. School psychologists are not a homogenous group and vary, among other things, in their level of experience and expertise. The question becomes, how would a school psychologist's experience level affect the relevance of his/her psychological reports from the perspectives of teachers' expectations and preferences? An extensive literature fails to provide any answers to the above question. The present study is, therefore, exploratory in nature. In the present study, two classroom teachers were each asked to read 14 psychological reports written by novice school psychologists and 15 psychological reports written by experienced school psychologists and evaluate and categorize them in terms of their overall quality and relevance to teachers. For purposes of the present study, novice school psychologists were defined with up to 2 years of

professional experience, while experienced school psychologists were defined as those with more than 5 years of professional experience. The results failed to indicate any effects of job experience level on the overall quality of psychological reports. Novice school psychologists' reports were evaluated as being of equal quality as those reports written by more experienced school psychologists. The lack of significant effects is possibly due to sample size and poor inter-rater reliability. Results, however, may reflect the effects of high quality practicum supervision. The present study is limited with small sample sizes, poor inter-rater reliability, as well as additional confounding factors affecting the interpretation of results. Implications for further research are discussed.

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Psychological Reports of Novice and Expert School Psychologists: An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions

Introduction

Since their introduction into the school system approximately 40 years ago, school psychologists have become familiar faces in many of our local schools. According to Baker (1965), the Lucas County Board of Education in Ohio employed its first school psychologist in 1957. This position was established in recognition of the need for the schools to broaden their responsibilities to the student body to include issues related to personal and emotional development.

The role of the school psychologist, in those days, was also quite unidimensional and straightforward. He or she was perceived as conducting individual diagnostic evaluations, studying the results obtained, and assisting school personnel and parents in developing educational and environmental plans to aid the child. Today, although the school psychologist's role has broadened considerably in many jurisdictions, individual diagnostic evaluations still remain the school psychologist's major responsibilities.

An important part of the individual diagnostic evaluation is to communicate results obtained from an assessment to school personnel and parents. This may be done in a variety of ways. Assessment results may be communicated to parents and teachers interpersonally during a scheduled meeting. However, in almost all cases, assessment results are communicated to parents and teachers in a written form through the psychological report.

According to Reynolds, Gutkin, Elliott, & Witt (1984), as cited by Wiese, Bush, Newman, Benes, and Witt (1986), reports "serve to communicate to multidisciplinary personnel

the needs of an individual child, as well as suggesting the techniques and procedures with which to meet those needs" (p. 291).

Zins and Barnett (1983) also present the reader with a similar definition:

We view assessment as part of the broader consultation process. It is a problem-solving activity with the immediate purpose of providing multifaceted information which can be used in problem clarification and which ultimately will lead to the generation of effective interventions. The results are incorporated into a written report (in addition to verbal explanations) which documents the assessment and intervention procedures and conveys information that will help in educational programming and contribute to overall decision making. (p.220)

The psychological report is used to communicate to teachers and parents the assessment and recommendations for intervention, as indicated. After a student referral has been made, the school psychologist will discuss the presenting problem with the classroom teacher and parent(s), observe the child in the classroom, interview the child, and administer relevant tests in order to develop hypotheses regarding the child's presenting problem(s). The content of a psychological report typically includes the initial reason(s) for referral, observations made, tests administered, as well as the results and interpretations of the latter, the school psychologist's hypotheses about the presenting problem and recommendations for further work. Aside from being a written form of communication, the psychological report also represents the end result of a lengthy process from which the school psychologist has formed his/her hypotheses concerning a particular child's presenting problem(s) and suggestions for remediation. In considering the psychological report as the focus of the present study, we must always keep in mind that it is a major part of the role of the school psychologist and the assessment process.

Nevertheless, the psychological report is a very important and enduring document. Once written, the psychological report will remain in the child's file until he/she leaves the educational

system. The psychological report represents a document that will “follow” the child from year to year. Individuals having contact with the child’s file will ultimately be entitled to read this document. It is evident that the report will not only have immediate implications for the child, but may also have future ones as well. For these reasons, it is very important that the report be well written in a clear and straightforward manner taking into consideration the perspectives of its recipients.

In reality school psychologists and other personnel within a particular domain are not homogenous groups. School psychologists may differ in their educational backgrounds as well as familial and emotional experiences. It is likely that these experiences are to affect their performance on the job. However, school psychologists will also differ from one another in their job experience level. It is important to take this factor into consideration when evaluating the communication process between school psychologists and teachers as well as parents. The question becomes, how would a school psychologist’s level of experience affect the quality of his/her psychological reports as viewed by teachers or parents?

Theoretical Context

Communication Theory

Since the psychological report represents a form of communication used by the school psychologist, a discussion of communication theory is relevant and necessary in answering the above question. According to communication theory (Jacobs, 1995), communication is “a complex interaction among participants to which each person brings a set of understandings; expectations; language skills; and attitudes toward the situation, the speaker, the topic, and him- or herself” (p.150). Jacobs (1995) also states that the goal of communication is that all participants gain a similar understanding or meaning from the message even though they might

not agree on the conclusion. In most instances, the communication process represents the interaction between the sender and the receiver through the use of a particular medium. The sender is ultimately the individual who chooses to communicate with someone else, while the receiver is ultimately the individual who receives the message. Communication may be accomplished through the use of a medium such as a telephone, if the message is oral, or a letter, if the message is written.

According to Jacobs (1995), communication serves to inform others, to persuade or control others' behaviors, beliefs, or attitudes; to express feelings; to imagine or hypothesize about something; and to perform some ritualistic behavior such as greeting or bidding farewell to others. In most cases, the psychological report is used to provide teachers and parents with assessment results and recommendations. In some cases, however, the purpose of the report may also be to influence the teachers' and parents' beliefs and attitudes.

The report is particularly important in that it provides written documentation of the assessment process and its results. Therefore, it is important for the school psychologist to effectively communicate his/her ideas and objectives in a clear and straightforward manner. Important differences exist between written and oral forms of communication. The face-to-face interpersonal exchange is the ideal form of verbal communication, since the parties involved can hear and see each other. Each individual may respond more accurately to the other's reactions or facial expressions and get a better sense of the intention and the meaning of the message. The interpersonal exchange alone does not provide the parties involved with a written transcript of the conversation. Therefore, information or important details may be forgotten. The report, on the other hand, may be read and re-read, if necessary, providing the receiver with a "hard copy" of the information received. Written communication, on the other hand, limits the information

exchange. Individuals are not in close contact with each other and reactions cannot be observed. Written communication also limits the opportunity for clarification. That is, in a conversation, misunderstood information can simply be repeated and clarified. Communication through a letter or report lacks this opportunity. It is necessary for the school psychologist to be a competent communicator and maximize the chances that his/her message is to be received as intended. As indicated earlier, many individuals may read the psychological report written several years earlier by an unknown school clinician. Clarity and understandability of the message intended is a necessity.

According to Wood (1977), as cited by Jacobs (1995), the competence of a communicator is determined by several factors. Wood (1977) states that a competent communicator must be first flexible in his or her ability to select a range of communication strategies to meet the needs of the situation and/or audience. The flexible communicator must be able to perform a range of communication acts that are required by the conversation, the people, the setting, and the task-at-hand. Second, the competent communicator must reflect before communicating and consider the audience, the situation, the specific goal to be reached, the function of the communication, and the relationship between him- or herself and the audience. Third, a competent communicator must have the skills, such as vocabulary, articulation, delivery, timing, and verbal or nonverbal messages to implement the communication strategy selected. Fourth, the communicator must be able to present the message in a way that ensures that the receiver will decode the message as intended.

Communication Theory and the School Psychologist

In writing a psychological report, therefore, it is important for the school psychologist to first present the message intended in the report in a way that will ensure that teachers will decode

the information as intended. The report must be written in a clear and straightforward manner so that teachers will understand what the school psychologist is trying to communicate. The school psychologist must also take his/her audience, in this case the teacher, into consideration when writing the report. This may mean taking their knowledge of the presenting problem into consideration as well as their knowledge of psychological terminology. Furthermore, it also means taking their expectations regarding the content of psychological reports into consideration.

Throughout the assessment process, the school psychologist is perceived as the outsider, the advice giver. He/she enters the situation and must evaluate a child he/she has, in most cases, never met before. Observations are made, conversations take place with parents and the classroom teacher, and work is done individually with the child. In general, the school psychologist's contact with the child, teacher, and parents is time limited. Furthermore, due to their different experiences and training, the school psychologist's perception of the child may be different to the teacher's. The classroom teacher's perception of the child is based her own experiences with him or her in the context of the classroom. On the other hand, the school psychologist's perception of the child is more clinically based. Miscommunication between the psychologist and the classroom teacher or parent is quite possible and consideration of these differences in perspectives when writing the report is very important.

Although the focus of the following discussion will be on teachers' perspectives and preferences for psychological reports, they are not the only consumers of these documents. Parents are also likely to read the psychological report written about their child. They, compared to the teacher, are likely to bring another perspective to the psychological report. Other school clinicians are also likely to bring yet another perspective to the psychological report. In most cases, teachers are likely to be the most frequent recipients of a psychological report.

Psychological reports are usually written following the assessment of a child experiencing particular presenting problem(s). In many cases, these problems are manifested in the classroom. Assessment results and subsequent recommendations are likely to be important to the classroom teacher. Furthermore, if the school psychologist expects the classroom teacher to implement these recommendations, he/she must present the information in the psychological report in a manner that will be clear and straightforward for the teacher.

Differences in the Level of Experience of Report Writers

As indicated earlier, school psychologists are not homogeneous groups. They will differ, for example, in the number of years they have been working in the field. How would this variable affect the quality of their psychological reports as viewed by classroom teachers? Following Wood (1977), the classroom teacher's knowledge and experiences as well as the context of the classroom itself must be taken into consideration in writing the report. Based on this theoretical framework, it might be expected that the more experienced school psychologist would be in a better position to take other people's perspectives and views into consideration. They would know that classroom teachers reading psychological reports are considering the child in question, the classroom environment, and their own interest. Through several years of experience, the school psychologist will increasingly learn about the school environment and the knowledge and experiences of different classroom teachers. As a result, their ability to write psychological reports considerate of teachers' knowledge and experiences and the classroom environment would improve. The latter is only speculation and a look at the expertise literature might shed some more light on the latter hypothesis.

Expertise Literature

Research in the area of expertise has addressed issues such as differences between novice and experts in particular fields. According to Patel and Groen (1991), over the years, this research has identified two ultimate differences between novices and experts. The first is that of enhanced recall. According to the authors, research has shown that experts in a certain field have superior memory skills in recognizing patterns in their domains of expertise. The second difference between novices and experts is that of forward reasoning. According to Patel, Groen, and Arocha (1990), forward reasoning is the generation of a hypothesis on the basis of data given in the problem. We shall first review the research supporting the first of these differences, that of enhanced recall.

Enhanced Memory Skills. According to Ericsson and Smith (1991), the enhanced memory skills of experts was first studied in the game of chess. DeGroot (1978), as cited by Ericsson and Smith (1991), discovered that experienced chess players were able to perceive and recognize the characteristics of a chess position and evaluate the best possible move by relying on their extensive experience as players. Furthermore, chess masters were able to recall virtually every position while novice players failed to do so.

Following the research by DeGroot (1978), other researchers have found support for the enhanced memory skills of experts in various domains including music notation (Sloboda, 1976); electric circuit diagrams (Egan & Schwartz, 1979); computer programming (McKeithen, Reitman, Rueter, & Hirtle, 1981), and dance, basketball, and field hockey (Allard & Starkes, 1991). The fact is, however, that recall of information does not increase linearly with years of experience, but rather that experts are simply better able to organize the information they have received in schemata or conceptual frames of mind that have been repeatedly rehearsed due to

their extensive expertise. Chess players, for example, do not necessarily recall every single piece position. Rather, he or she has achieved the ability to effectively “chunk” the information in order to enhance its recall. Furthermore, experts are able to filter out what is relevant and what is not relevant to their purposes giving the impression that they have recalled more data in contrast to those with less experience. Although on the surface it may appear that experts have better memory skills than novices, they simply become more efficient in the area of information processing.

Forward Reasoning. According to Patel and Groen (1991), the second major difference between novices and experts in particular domains is that of forward reasoning. According to Patel, Groen, and Arocha (1990), forward reasoning is the generation of a hypothesis on the basis of data given in the problem. Doctors, for example, will examine and run a patient through tests in order to collect data, which he will use to formulate a hypothesis concerning the individual’s medical problem. Forward reasoning is contrasted to backward reasoning where the individual begins with a hypothesis and collects data based on the latter. According to Hunt (1989), experts in particular fields will be more likely to use forward reasoning, since extensive prior knowledge is necessary for the latter to be used, since data must be interpreted without knowledge of a particular hypothesis.

Hunt (1989) states that this difference has been shown in numerous domains including physics (Larkin et al. 1980; Larkin, 1983), economics (Voss et al., 1983), and the law (O’Neil, 1987). In every case, experts recognize a situation and apply the appropriate rules to extract information from that situation. Patel and her colleagues have also established the use of forward reasoning in the medical field. Patel, Groen, and Arocha (1990) found that cardiologists were more likely to use forward reasoning processes in the diagnostic explanation of a clinical

problem in cardiology compared to a group of psychiatrists. The latter group used a mixed approach including both forward and backward reasoning. In this study, the use of forward reasoning was also associated with greater diagnostic accuracy, a finding that was also reported earlier by Patel and Groen (1986).

Summary. All in all, according to Patel and her colleagues, experiential levels are likely to create at least two major differences in an individual's job performance. These differences between novices and experts, however, are ultimately not very closely related to the psychological report writing process. The stated differences may affect the content and organization of the psychological report. Enhanced recall, for example, may cause more experienced school psychologists to include the most relevant information in their reports. The use of forward reasoning, on the other hand, may cause the more experienced school psychologist to more effectively organize the report by first presenting the most relevant data followed by hypotheses supported by the latter data.

Review of the Literature

The previous section pertaining to the theoretical context of the present study has highlighted two major issues that must now be discussed. First, following Wood (1977), the school psychologist must take the classroom teacher's knowledge and expectations into consideration if his/her message is to be decoded as intended. But, what are teacher's expectations and preferences for psychological reports? The first literature review will attempt to answer this question.

Second, a brief review of the expertise literature was not fruitful in providing insight on the effect(s), if any, a school psychologist's level of experience would have on the quality of

his/her reports. This second literature review was conducted in order to examine the effects of experience in particular professional fields including teaching, psychotherapy, counseling supervision, and school psychology.

Teachers' Preferences in Psychological Report Content

The literature indicates that classroom teachers have particular expectations and preferences when it comes to psychological report content. Over the years, researchers have used a variety of methods to evaluate teachers' preferences of psychological report content. Some researchers have focused on global perceptions of the report, while others have focused on specific aspects of the report. The following literature review will present the reader with teachers' expectations and preferences of school psychologists' reports.

General Perceptions

The first group of studies to be discussed are those that have taken a general approach to the topic of teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. Rucker (1967a), for example, asked five elementary school teachers to rate a set of psychological reports that had been written by 19 school psychologists. Psychologists were asked to write a psychological report based on a protocol which contained background information on the child, reasons for referral, description of the child's classroom and testing behavior, and raw data from intelligence, achievement, and personality tests.

The results indicated that the school teachers felt that the better reports were those that presented teachers with a variety of specific suggestions, answered the referral question in a clear and concise way, interpreted test results clearly and meaningfully, and in which the writer displayed an awareness of the classroom procedures in the type of recommendations that were

suggested. Poorer reports lacked form and organization, failed to explain or report test results, and contained vague and short recommendations that did not relate to the referral question.

Similarly, Hagborg and Aiello-Coultier (1994) asked 190 school teachers, of which 54 participated, to complete a questionnaire assessing the quality of psychological reports that had been written by school psychologists in their school division. The psychological reports were of the traditional type, consisting of four to six typed pages with sections concerning the reason for referral, social history, classroom observation, test behavior, test results and interpretations, summary, and recommendations. The results indicated that teachers considered the reports to be easy to understand, helpful, relevant, and free of technical language. The teachers did report that the recommendations were few and lacked concreteness.

Summary. In summary, both studies provide the reader with valuable information pertaining to teachers' preferences of psychological report content. These results, however, must be treated with caution. Both studies are plagued with such problems as small sample size, non-random sampling, and poor return rates. Furthermore, in Rucker's (1967a) study, the lack of context was another limitation. That is, psychologists were asked to write a report on a child they had never met. Psychologists were simply presented with a description of the child, limiting their ability to write a meaningful report.

Variable Report Format

A second group of researchers have evaluated teachers' perceptions of psychological reports by presenting them with different types of reports. Wiener (1985), for example, randomly distributed three types of psychological reports to 81 elementary school teachers. The first was referred to as the Short Form and consisted of a one-page single-spaced report with a brief reason for referral, assessment results, description of child's behavior, and brief

recommendations. The second was referred to as the Psychoeducational Report and grouped information by domain, such as reading, mathematics, written language, and emotional and social development, rather than by test. Finally, the third report type was referred to as the Question-and-Answer. In this report, the Reason for Referral section consisted of a list of referral questions that emerged from discussions with parents and teachers which the remainder consisted of responses to the latter questions. Teachers were asked to assess their comprehension of the psychological reports with the use of 14 multiple-choice questions.

The results indicated that teachers comprehended better reports that specifically answered the referral question, that organized information into functional domains, that described strengths and weaknesses in clear behavioral terms, that described the child's learning style fully, and that stated specific and elaborate program recommendations. Furthermore, the teachers preferred to read longer reports they comprehended as opposed to shorter reports that were less clear.

In 1987, Wiener continued her research of psychological reports conducting three studies all related to the previous ones. In the first study, a total of 42 school administrators (34 males and 8 females) were randomly assigned either of the three types of reports used in the previous study as well as complete the same 14 multiple choice questions.

The purpose of the second study was to examine, more specifically, the factors that would determine elementary teachers' comprehension and preference for psychological reports. The sample consisted of 49 elementary school teachers of whom 44 were female and 5 were male. The teachers were distributed either of four different formats of psychological reports. The first two were identical to those used in Wiener (1985) and consisted of the Short Form and the Psychoeducational Report. A third format, referred to as the Elaborated Child Description,

contained the recommendations section from the Short Form and the child description section from the Psychoeducational Report. A fourth format, referred to as the Elaborated Recommendations, contained the child description section of the Short Form and the recommendations section of the Psychoeducational Report. Teachers were asked to rate their comprehension of their assigned report with the use of the same 14 multiple choice questions.

The purpose of the third study in this article was to replicate the previous study with a sample of secondary school teachers. A total of 77 intermediate and secondary school teachers (37 males and 40 females) were distributed either of five formats of psychological reports. The five formats included those used in the second study of the present article as well as the Short Form as mentioned in Weiner (1985). Teachers were asked to rate their comprehension of their assigned report with the use of 15 multiple-choice questions.

The results of the three studies indicated that principals, like teachers and parents, comprehended the Psychoeducational and Question-and-Answer reports better than the Short Form. Furthermore, they preferred the former to the latter despite the difference in length. The results also indicated that elementary and secondary school teachers' comprehension was enhanced when the recommendations and child description sections were elaborated. When examining other factors involved in the comprehension of reports, the results indicated that gender, age, and experience of subject and type of employment were not related to comprehension or preference of psychological reports for elementary teachers and principals. In the case of secondary teachers those who were 30 years of age or more or had 5 years or more of experience comprehended reports better than their younger or less experienced counterparts.

The previous results are very interesting, but quite difficult to explain. Although experience appeared to affect secondary school teacher's abilities to comprehend psychological

reports, the same was not true for elementary school teachers. As a matter of fact, age and experience had no affect on comprehension of reports for elementary teachers. The question we must now ask ourselves is why? Why do younger, less experienced elementary school teachers understand psychological reports just as well as more experienced ones. It is possible that school psychologists spend more time with elementary school teachers in discussing assessment results as compared to secondary school teachers. Assessment results of elementary students might be viewed as more important since recommendations may have a greater impact on the future of these students as compared to those made for high school students. This could explain the greater amount of time spent with elementary teachers in discussing assessment results, which in turn could reduce the difference in comprehension between experienced and novice elementary teachers. This is only speculation and further research would be necessary to support such a claim.

Wiener (1987) speculated that the Psychoeducational and Question-and-Answer reports are better understood for several reasons. In the latter two formats, technical terms were more likely to be explained. Furthermore, the latter formats are well structured and better organized. Comprehension may be enhanced by the articulated structure and coherence, which may facilitate links between the report and the readers' existing knowledge. According to Wiener (1987), psychologists should make an effort to write reports that have a salient structure, clear explanations of technical terms, and elaborated descriptions of the child and of recommendations.

Salvagno and Teglassi (1987) used different types of reports in their study as well, but, focused on investigating teachers' preferences for different types of information in psychological reports. Two types of reports were randomly distributed to 160 elementary school teachers

(randomly chosen from seven different schools) who were asked to rate them based on a 5-point scale ranging from "excellent" to "poor". The two types of reports included a test-based (traditional in format) and an observation-based which contained a reason for referral, school information, description of the method of observation, three classroom observations, an examiner assessment, a summary of the observations, and recommendations. Both types of reports contained information on a real child as well as identical reasons for referral and recommendations.

The results showed a consistent preference of teachers for interpretive information over factual information as well as information that went beyond what was directly observable. In terms of type of report, teachers reported both observation-based and test-based reports as equally helpful. The results also indicated that teachers preferred recommendations that were concrete, specific, and realistic to carry out.

Summary. All in all, researchers using different psychological report formats have provided us with valuable information pertaining to teachers' perceptions and preferences of these same reports. According to the previous literature search, teachers prefer reports that contain concrete, specific, and realistic recommendations, elaborated descriptions of the child and of recommendations, that organize information functionally, and that address specific skills and observable behaviors.

Psychologists' Recommendations

Aside from the previous researchers who have investigated teachers' general attitudes toward psychological reports, some authors have researched specific aspects of the same reports. One of these aspects consists of the recommendations section of a psychological report. Certain

authors specifically studied teachers' perceptions of recommendations, including their usefulness as well as ease of implementation.

Noble and Dickinson (1988), for example, developed 20 recommendations, four on each of five common referral problems, which included reading, spelling, arithmetic, classroom behavior, and self-concept. For each of the referral problems, four recommendations were developed which simply ranged in degree of specificity. An initial list of recommendation characteristics was developed. Each type of recommendation varied in the number of characteristics it contained. Completely Functional (CF) recommendations contained 8-9 characteristics, Partially Functional (PF) contained 5-7, Incompletely Functional (IF) contained 2-4, and Nonfunctional (NF) contained 1-2. They asked a total of 91 teachers, of whom only 28 returned responses, to each rate one set of four recommendations, on a 5-point scale, on the degree of usefulness in solving the problem and ease of implementation.

The results indicated that NF recommendations were perceived as less useful and more difficult to implement than all other types of recommendations. NF recommendations contained few specifics and also referred to individual characteristics and environmental background as a cause of the problem. The results also indicated, except for NF recommendations, that rank ordering of ease of implementation was just the opposite as it was for usefulness. CF recommendations, which contained the most characteristics, were perceived as being the most useful, however, more difficult to implement. CF recommendations left teachers with little flexibility. The authors concluded that although specifics are important in recommendations, this is only true up to a certain point. They suggested that, if a school psychologist is to use CF recommendations, such as contracts, that consultation with the teacher take place.

Taking a different approach to the study of recommendations, Kutsick, Gutkin, and Witt (1991) sent a total of 604 elementary school teachers (40% return rate) a one page case description and asked them to complete the Intervention-Process Rating Scale. The latter scale is said to measure consumers' perception of treatment acceptability. Each case contained a description of the problem experienced by a teacher, a description of a treatment plan chosen by the teacher in response to the problem, as well as a description of the process used to develop the plan.

The results indicated that teachers preferred positive rather than reducing interventions as well as those that had been developed through the collaborative effort of a teacher and a school psychologist rather than by a school psychologist alone or teacher alone. Kutsick et al. (1991) concluded by stating that it is not only important for school psychologists to consider what they recommend but also how they develop and present the latter recommendations to teachers.

Borghese and Cole (1994) discussed the factors affecting teachers' perceptions of recommendations and their implementation. The authors stated that although the recommendations section of a psychological report is perceived as important by teachers, the probability that they be implemented is only 16% (D'Amato and Dean, 1987). The authors offered several factors related to the implementation of recommendations.

The first factor discussed was the specificity of the recommendations. They cited Trione (1958) who had found that specific and direct recommendations led to significant behavior changes in children who participated in the study. Specificity seems to be important only up to a certain point as indicated by Noble and Dickinson (1988). A second factor involved in the implementation of recommendations is whether or not the school psychologist has taken the

practical workings and limitations of the classroom into consideration. Borghese and Cole (1994) cited Handler, Gerson, and Handler (1965) who had stated that school psychologists' lack of experience and knowledge of the classroom limits the quality of recommendations they can make and Witt (1986) who had stated that certain recommendations are often met with resistance by teachers since they disrupt the ecological balance of the classroom.

The characteristics of the child are also important to consider when determining whether recommendations will be implemented or not. The authors cited Duseck and Joseph (1986) who found that information in student folders, such as level of intelligence and classroom behavior, will not only affect teachers' expectations of them, but will also affect whether recommendations will be implemented. That is, based on student characteristics, teachers may form expectations of whether recommendations will be successful or not.

According to Borghese and Cole (1994), the amount of consultation between the school psychologist and the teacher will also affect whether recommendations will be implemented. The authors also cited Fairchild (1976) who found that teachers were more likely to rate recommendations as effective if they had consulted the school psychologist. Finally, the congruency in the theoretical orientation of the teacher and the recommendation is also important to consider. Borghese and Cole (1994) cited Woolfolk, Woolfolk, and Wilson (1977) and Witt, Moe, Gutkin, and Andrews (1984) who both had found that recommendations need to be consistent with the teacher's own view of the student and his or her own theoretical orientation if the latter is to be implemented.

In the present study, Borghese and Cole (1994) examined teachers' and school psychologists' perceptions of these same factors and other issues related to recommendations. A total of 25 elementary school teachers and 15 school psychologists participated in the study.

Data was collected in the form of 30-minute semi-structured interviews concerning background information and issues related to recommendations.

Based on the semi-structured interviews, the following information was collected.

School psychologists' typically grouped recommendations that follow an assessment into four types: 1) In-class: those aimed at the classroom and implemented by the teacher; 2) In-school: those implemented by those within the school other than the classroom teacher; 3) In-board: those involving services provided by the School Board such as social work, speech and language; 4) Community: those implemented by outside agencies not involved in the school system such as family counseling and medical examinations.

Based on the above types of recommendations, nearly 75% of the psychologists' reported that in-board recommendations were typically implemented while only about 20% reported that in-school recommendations were implemented. Nearly half of the psychologists reported that community recommendations were less likely to be implemented as well as those requiring some change on the part of the teacher. Teachers reported that in-class and specific recommendations were the most helpful to them. They also reported that the same recommendations were also easier to implement.

When asked which factors affect the implementation of recommendations, teachers and psychologists' both mentioned practical considerations, consultation practices, teacher personality, knowledge and attitudes, format for presenting recommendations, and type of referral problem. Psychologists stated that psychologist variables, quality of relationships and rapport, and teacher theoretical orientation were also important to consider. Teachers, on the other hand, reported child variables, specificity of recommendations, and support from colleagues, parents, and the psychologist as influencing the implementation of recommendations.

In conclusion, Borghese and Cole (1994) stated that psychologists must make teachers more directly involved in the development of recommendations. Furthermore, school psychologists must become more knowledgeable in the area of programming and curriculum in order to be able to provide teachers with more specific recommendations for academic problems.

Brandt and Giebink (1968) investigated the importance of recommendation concreteness as well as congruency with teachers' philosophical views to implementation. A sample of 96 elementary and high school teachers were provided with a description of a child's classroom behavior problem, four psychological reports, a personal data sheet, and the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI). Participants were asked to complete the MTAI, which assessed their philosophical views and rank order their preference of the four reports. Each report provided the teacher with a different interpretation of the presenting problem along with four different types of recommendations. Two of the reports provided interpretation and recommendations according to an affection-attention-acceptance orientation while the remaining two were according to a control-discipline-authority orientation. Furthermore, one report on each interpretation provided teachers with concrete recommendations while the others provided teachers with abstract recommendations.

The results of the study first indicated that teachers did prefer more specific recommendations than abstract ones. The authors' second hypothesis, however, dealing with congruence with philosophical orientation was not supported. Although the accepting group of teachers preferred the reports congruent with their views, the group of teachers with authoritarian views did not prefer reports congruent with their views. Rather, all teachers, regardless of their orientation, preferred reports which interpreted and provided recommendations to teachers according to an acceptance orientation.

Summary. Based on the previous brief literature review, the recommendations made by school psychologists following an assessment seem to be perceived as very important by classroom teachers. The literature search also revealed that psychologists must take several factors into consideration when making these recommendations including specificity, child characteristics, consultation practices, and teacher's theoretical background. This last factor, although presented by Borghese and Cole (1994), was not supported by Brandt and Giebink (1968) when they examined authoritarian and accepting orientations. It is possible that Borghese and Cole's (1994) theory does not apply to such views as studied by Brandt and Giebink (1968), but apply to others types such as behaviorism and humanism. Further research would be necessary to confirm such claims. It also seems important that psychologists take the classroom and its limitations into consideration when making recommendations. The previous section has also placed some emphasis on the teacher/psychologist relationship. Research shows that teachers prefer recommendations developed in collaboration with psychologists and teachers than those developed by the psychologist only.

Results, however, must be interpreted with caution. In a few of the studies, mail-in surveys were used to collect the data which consists of non-random sampling and may create a bias. Furthermore, sample sizes were small in some of the above studies. Finally, in Kutsick et al. (1991), attitudinal rather than behavioral data were collected. Although teachers reported their greater acceptability of collaboratively developed interventions, the study does not inform us regarding teachers' willingness to work with school psychologists in the development of recommendations.

Jargon and Technical Language

A second group of studies has concentrated on a different aspect of psychological reports. This aspect deals with the understandability and clarity of reports. For years now, psychologists have been criticized on their use of technical language, or as some people refer to it, jargon. Several researchers stated that, although psychological reports are intended to represent the communication line between psychologists and teachers, the use of technical language alters it. School psychologists have seldom taken into account teachers' lack of knowledge of psychological terms and have rendered their reports as difficult to understand. One of these first studies was conducted by Rucker (1967b) whose goal was to evaluate technical terms used in psychological reports and determine their effectiveness in the communication between teachers and psychologists.

Rucker's (1967) sent a list of 31 commonly used technical terms in psychological reports to a sample of 103 school psychologists and 103 elementary school teachers (72% return rate). Four possible definitions for each of the terms were presented and participants were asked to choose the appropriate one. The results indicated that, of the 31 technical terms, only 14 were agreed upon by both teachers and school psychologists, that is, both teachers and psychologists reached the criterion level of over 50% agreement on the same response for 14 of the words. The remainder of the terms were not agreed upon by teachers and psychologists and, according to the author, would be misinterpreted if used in a written psychological report.

In 1969, Shively and Smith conducted a study identical to that of Rucker (1967) although participants consisted of 35 junior and senior high school counselors, 75 elementary and junior high school teachers, and 49 undergraduate education students. The results indicated that differences among the three groups were significant on ten of the thirty items. Counselors scored

significantly higher than students and teachers on nine of the items. Nearly 50% of the teachers missed 11 of the items while the same percentage of counselors only missed 2 of the items.

Shively and Smith (1969) concluded that counselors seemed to have a better understanding of the technical terms and phrases used in psychological reports than teachers.

Rafoth and Richmond (1983) also examined the level of understanding of psychological terms by educators. Their sample of 147 undergraduate education students, 20 graduate interns from a school psychology program, and 18 classroom teachers was asked to complete a questionnaire, which asked them to rate 25 commonly used psychological terms on their usefulness, clarity, understandability, and informativeness.

The results indicated that teachers preferred terms that were concerned with visual and perceptual functioning as opposed to education students who rated terms such as Verbal IQ and Performance IQ as more useful. The results also indicated that special education teachers or students who had taken special education courses rated more technical terms as more useful compared to regular classroom teachers. Terms rated significantly higher by special education teachers included *modality*, *visual-motor*, *part to whole assembly*, *sequencing ability*, and *developmental delay*. Rafoth and Richmond (1983) concluded by stating that psychologists should be aware that special education teachers may be better equipped in understanding technical terms used in reports as compared to regular teachers.

The last study that shall be discussed in the present section is that of Wiese et al. (1986). Unlike the previous studies, these authors chose to present participants with technical terms in context rather than in isolation. A total of 180 employed and preservice teachers were randomly assigned one of three versions of the same psychological report and asked to rate it using the Psychological Report Evaluation Profile (PREP) which assesses satisfaction with various aspects

of a psychological report. Each of the versions of the same report differed by the amount of technical jargon it contained.

The results indicated that teachers' understanding and comprehension of the reports was affected by the level of jargon present in each. Teachers' ratings of usefulness, educational relevance of the reports, and representation of student behavioral characteristics were not affected by the level of jargon. Wiese et al. (1986) attempted to explain the results by stating that teachers may be well-versed in psychological jargon and might be able to comprehend the information in the reports regardless of the language barriers. This may explain why the level of jargon might have affected their comprehension of the report have not affected their perception of the usefulness of the latter.

Summary. Although the issue of the use of jargon in psychological reports has produced several research studies, the majority of these fail to increase our knowledge of the effects of using technical terms. First, most of the studies discussed above were plagued by small sample sizes as well as non-random sampling. Furthermore, all but one of these studies presented participants with technical terms in isolation. According to this author, by presenting words in context, teachers might better understand the terms presented to them as compared to when they are presented in isolation. The single study that did present participants with reports, which varied in the level of jargon used, did produce some very interesting results. The authors concluded that, although the level of jargon failed to affect the usefulness of the report, it did affect teachers' comprehension of reports. Seeing as the psychological report is the communication tool used between psychologists and teachers, it is important that they be understood by those reading them. It does seem evident that further research is necessary in the area of technical language in psychological reports.

Overall Summary

All in all, all three sections of the present literature search have proven fruitful in providing data concerning teachers' preferences for psychological report content. The first sections revealed that, in many cases, teachers were not satisfied with the reports they received. This section also highlighted how psychologists may change their psychological reports in order to improve teachers' satisfaction with them. The second section of the present literature review placed some emphasis on psychologists' recommendations. According to the literature, this section of the psychological report is considered quite important by teachers. Furthermore in this section, factors affecting recommendations and their implementation were highlighted. It is important that psychologists take these factors into consideration when composing psychological reports. Finally, the third section attempted to evaluate the effects of jargon in psychological reports on teachers' comprehension of these reports. This review, however, was inconclusive due to methodological limitations.

According to the above literature review, teachers form certain expectations as to what represents a psychological report of higher quality and what represents a psychological report of lower quality. In writing a psychological report, therefore, it is important that the school psychologist take these expectations and preferences into consideration if he or she is to be a competent communicator of information.

Effects of Experience in Various Professional Domains

Expertise and the Teaching Profession

Researchers have examined the effects of experience on a variety of aspects related to teachers' duties. Although only a few of these studies will be presented, this shall give us a glimpse regarding the possible differences between novice and experienced classroom teachers.

Brooks (1985) examined the effects of experience level on the first day of school. Two experienced teachers and two inexperienced teachers were videotaped on their 1st, 2nd, 10th, and 28th day of school. Videotapes were then evaluated by two independent raters based on activity selection, activity sequence, and communication rules and procedures.

The results indicated that the experienced teachers were better organized, sequenced activities in a logical fashion, produced much more eye contact with students, and established rules and procedures that were ecologically relevant to the classroom than those of novice teachers.

Brekelmans, Holvast, and Van-Tartwijk (1992) conducted a mixed cross-sectional and longitudinal study examining changes in communication styles as result of experience. The cross sectional part of the study was based on data from 25,000 students, while the longitudinal part was based on data from 51 teachers during their first 4 years in the teaching profession. The results indicated that teachers' communication styles changed mainly with dominant behavior. This behavior intensified during the first 10 years of a teacher's career toward his or her perception of an ideal communication style. Cooperative behavior, on the other hand, remained relatively constant throughout the teachers' careers.

Sanchez, Rosales, Canedo, and Conde (1994) also examined experiential differences in teachers' classroom communication styles. Participants consisted of 9 teachers with 3 to 10 years of professional experience and 9 beginning teachers. Variables that were examined included teachers' resources to provide a common starting ground among students and their ability to convey ideas in a coherent manner. The results indicated that expert teachers used more resources to create a common context and were more rhetorical as compared to novice

teachers. Novice teachers were almost never rhetorical, presented a greater volume of information, and failed to distinguish the importance of different types of materials.

Summary. According to the three studies reviewed above, more experienced teachers seemed to sequence activities in a logical fashion, established rules and procedures that were more ecologically relevant to the classroom, made more eye contact with students, used more rhetorical language when speaking, and used more resources to enhance students' learning. Results must always be treated with caution due to methodological limitations. In the case of the last two studies cited, only abstracts were obtained and details were lacking. In the case of Brooks (1985), sample size was quite low at four participants limiting generalizability of the results.

Experience and the Counseling Profession

Although only a handful of studies have been done in the domain of teaching, much of the experiential literature has examined the effects of job experience level on various aspects of the counseling profession. Cicchetti and Ornston (1976), for example, asked 19 staff psychologists and psychiatrists from a VA hospital and 24 first-year psychiatric residents from the same institution to interview a film patient in order to assess experiential differences in the content of verbal responses. Therapists were instructed to flick a switch that would stop the film whenever they wished to speak to the patient. Verbal behaviors were recorded and later analyzed for content.

The results indicated that novice therapists seemed to concentrate more on the client's words and actions rather than trying to understand what the patient was trying to convey during the interview. Experienced therapists, on the other hand, had mastered this skill and were able to

hear the clients' words and see their actions, however, at the same time, grasp the meaning that was being conveyed.

Polenz and Verdi (1977) examined the effects of experience in paraprofessional therapists. Participants included twelve individuals who had just completed a 3-week training program, twelve who had been working for less than 1 ½ years, and twelve who had been working for more than 1 ½ years. All participants watched videotapes of three different patients who had been interviewed. The videotapes were each stopped at three different places upon which participants were asked to respond to the patient's statement.

The results indicated that although experience level had no effect on participants' communication scores, the latter were dependent on initial competency ratings. That is, participants who were initially rated as more competent were more likely to improve their communication with experience as opposed to those who were less competent whose scores decreased.

D'Augelli, Handis, Brumbaugh, Illig, Searer, Turner, and D'Augelli (1978) examined experiential differences in volunteer telephone counselors. A total of 15 helpees were asked to each call one of 15 experienced telephone counselors and one of 15 inexperienced counselors. Helpees had been instructed to consider what they would discuss prior to making the calls. Each call was recorded. Following the call, helpees were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire assessing their perceptions of the telephone counselor.

The results indicated that novice counselors used significantly less advice than did more experienced counselors and tended to talk longer with their clients. Both experienced and less experienced counselors tended to use leading responses, closed questions and very little affective responses when speaking with clients and were rated as equally effective.

Howell and Highlen (1981) asked 20 introductory psychology students (untrained), 20 graduate psychology students (trained), and 20 professional counselors to respond to 12 pre-recorded affective self-disclosures. Each self-disclosure was preceded by a description of the client's concern. Responses were recorded and rated by four independent judges for the personalness of the information revealed and the strength of the emotion expressed.

The results indicated that responses provided by professional counselors were qualitatively better and quantitatively different than those provided by untrained and trained counselors. Furthermore, professionals used more reflection, open-ended questions, and restatements. Professionals were also more likely to be attracted to the client no doubt due to the emphasis placed on the development of a warm, caring, and accepting attitude toward the client.

Brody and Farber (1996) have examined the effects of experience on the phenomenon of countertransference, which are the feelings or conflicts aroused in therapists as they work with patients. A total of 495 questionnaires were mailed to graduate students in clinical psychology programs, while 915 were mailed to members of the Clinical Division of the New York State Psychological Association. A total of 336 usable questionnaires were returned and analyzed. The questionnaire assessed the psychotherapists' background, counseling experiences, and attitudes toward their emotional reactions within treatment.

The results indicated that students were more likely to report regretting saying things to patients, feeling that their emotions were too strong, too frequent, and needed to be defended against, and feeling that with more experience that they would not be feeling strong emotions toward their patients. The results also confirmed that therapists become more comfortable with their emotional reactions to patients. More experienced therapists were more likely to use their emotional reactions to understand what was going on in treatment and less likely to feel that

these reactions were in any way inappropriate. In general, the results supported the researchers' hypothesis that countertransference reactions would vary as a function of therapist experience.

Summary. All in all, research examining the effects of experience level on the counseling profession has provided quite consistent data. Generally, the more experienced counselors are perceived as more helpful as compared to novice counselors. This seemed to be true in most areas except in the paraprofessional domain where differences were not as apparent. In general, professional counselors used more open-ended questions and restatements, were more reflective, were more accepting of the client, and were better able to attend to both words and actions and the clients' intended message than novice counselors. Some of the studies were plagued by problems such as non-random sampling. Furthermore, the research also suffers from the lack of realism which is likely to affect the generalizability of the results to real life counselling sessions. The fact is, we have no idea of knowing whether these results would hold up in a real counseling session. And, it is in this writer's point of view that more realistic counseling situations could have been designed by these authors.

Experience and Counseling Supervision

Related to the topic of counseling is that of counseling supervision. Counseling students, in fulfillment of their Master's or Doctoral Degrees, must usually fulfill a specified amount of hours of practical experience in the counseling field under direct supervision. However, would differences in their supervisors' experience level affect the quality of training and instruction received? Marikis, Russell, and Dell (1985) attempted to answer this question by examining the effects of a counseling supervisor's experience level on planning and in-session verbal behavior. Participants for the study consisted of 10 graduate counseling students who had never provided any supervision to other students (no-experience), 10 advanced graduate counseling

students who had provided 16 to 100 hours of supervision (low experience), and 10 experienced counselors who had performed at least 500 hours of supervision (high experience). Participants were asked to listen to a 30 minute audiotape of a counselor-client interaction, verbalize, on an audiotape, what their thoughts and plans would be if they were to supervise the counselor, and conduct a 30 minute interview with the counselor they had heard on the cassette.

The results indicated that experience level had no affect on supervisor planning behavior. Low and high experienced supervisors made significantly more statements than did the no-experience group in the subject-matter, supervisor, and productivity categories. More experienced supervisors not only had more to say but said more about themselves and the skills of counseling. More experienced supervisors were also rated more positively by the counseling student.

Kruger, Cherniss, Maher, and Leichtman (1988) studied 2 novice supervisors and 2 experienced supervisors, who had at least over 1 year of experience in supervision who were responsible for the supervision of 5 counseling students. Verbal behavior was collected by audiotaping group supervision meetings of all four teams over a 45-day period. Randomly selected segments of these sessions were then analyzed by 2 independent raters based on the presence of problem solving and counselor problems. Counselors were also asked to complete a questionnaire regarding interpersonal climate and satisfaction of their supervisor.

The results indicated that, in general, counselors with experienced supervisors were more satisfied of their supervision than counselors with novice supervisors. Counselors in experienced supervisors' teams were more likely to actively participate in meetings and met for more total time than those in novice supervisors'

Summary. Although brief, the previous literature review does signal differences that may exist between experienced and novice counseling supervisors. Experienced counseling supervisors were more likely to spend more time with students, were more willing to train and reveal themselves as counselors, and were rated more positively than novice supervisors were by students. Although both studies presented did lack in terms of sample size, designs were much more realistic in contrast to those presented in the counseling research. It is important to mention that only two studies were presented which limits our conclusions as to whether true differences exists between experienced and non-experienced counseling supervisors.

Experience and School Psychology

More pertinent to the present thesis, though, is the issue of expertise in the area of school psychology. Although, studies have not examined the effects of expertise on the production of psychological reports, research has examined expert/novice differences in other job-related areas of school psychology. Gerken and Landau (1979), for example, examined the effects of level of training and experience on the school psychologist's effectiveness as perceived by classroom teachers, supervisors of psychological services, and administrators.

Participants consisted of 162 school psychologists who all had at least one year of professional experience. Supervisors of psychological services (N=11), classroom teachers (N=213), and school principals (N=44) were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing the effectiveness of psychological services.

Their results indicated that school psychologists with moderate years of experience in the field (4-9 years) were rated as more effective in terms of preschool/kindergarten screening, remedial prescriptions, research, and overall effectiveness. School psychologists with 10 to 29 years of professional experience were as being more effective in only one area, that of

counseling. Gerken and Landau (1979) stated that more experienced school psychologists may need retooling through inservice and continuing education programs.

Martin and Curtis (1980) examined whether a school psychologist's level of experience would have an effect on his or her success as a consultant. The participants consisted of three groups of school psychologists including 78 psychologists with a mean of 6.0 years of professional experience, 65 school psychologists with a mean of 9.5 years of professional experience, and 21 school psychologists with a mean of 13.6 years of professional experience. All participants were provided with The Flanagan Critical Incident Technique in order to elicit responses concerning the psychologists' most and least successful consultation experiences.

Surprisingly, the results indicated that the age and experience level of the teacher had more to do with the success of the consultation as compared to the age and experience level of the school psychologist. Consultation experiences that were successful were reported to involve a psychologist and teacher of similar age or an older and more experienced school psychologist with a younger, less experienced teacher. Consultation experiences that were less successful, on the other hand, involved an older and more experienced teacher with a younger, less experienced school psychologist. Martin and Curtis (1980) stated that older teachers may be more difficult to work with since they may be more set in their professional behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions.

Short, Moore, and Williams (1991) asked 115 female and 38 male classroom teachers with a mean age of 38.4 years and 12.4 years of teaching experience to watch a videotape depicting a consultation between a female teacher and a male school psychologist. Prior to viewing the tape, teachers received a verbal description of the consultant they were about to observe which varied in degree (doctoral vs. master's), experience (high vs. low), and teaching experience (present vs. absent). After having viewed the videotape, teachers were asked to

complete a questionnaire which assessed their perceptions of expertness, social attractiveness, and trustworthiness of the consultant.

The results indicated that teachers rated the psychologist with a doctoral degree higher in terms of expertness, while the one with more experience as being higher in terms of trustworthiness and expertness. Teachers, however, did not perceive the school psychologist presented as an experienced teacher as having greater referent power or social attractiveness. Short et al. (1991) therefore stated that the consultant's social influence may be just as important to effective change as his or her skill and knowledge as they may have more persuasive powers in the consultation process.

Sattler, Andres, Squire, Wisely, and Maloy (1978) examined whether the degree of professional experience would be related to scoring agreement on the Similarities, Comprehension, and Vocabulary subtests of the WISC-R. A total of 1,886 high school students were asked to answer 5 or 6 questions from the above subtests. A total of 726 of these responses, which permitted the authors to have 11 responses for each of the 66 items comprising the three subtests, were randomly selected. A total of 110 school psychologists, with varying degrees of experience, were asked to rate 1/11 responses from each of the 66 items.

The results indicated that unanimous agreement occurred on only 13% of the 726 responses. When the criterion level was lowered to 80%, agreement occurred on 44% of the responses. Furthermore, the results suggested that school psychologists with more professional experience did not have significantly higher rates of scoring agreement than those with less experience. For example, unanimous agreement occurred on 25% of the items in the experienced group and on 34% of the items in the inexperienced group.

McDermott (1977) examined whether the time used to examine particular pieces of diagnostic data and the confidence expressed subsequent to such examination would differentiate between groups of school psychologists varying by experiential level. McDermott (1977) asked 24 prepracticum trainees, 24 postpracticum trainees (who had received no more than 10 full-time weeks of practice, and 24 experienced (2-5 years) school psychologists to read 3 case studies, provide a diagnosis for each case, and a statement of confidence of their diagnosis. Case studies included such information as the reason for referral, family information, achievement test information, observations, and intelligence test information.

The results indicated that more experienced school psychologists spent less time reading each of the case studies in order to formulate a diagnosis. Experienced psychologists, though, failed to report more confidence in their diagnostic decisions. Although able to make more efficient and quicker decisions as to the particular diagnosis, experienced psychologists felt just as confident about the latter diagnosis compared to school psychology students.

Ward, Ward, and Clark (1991) also examined the diagnostic agreement among school psychologists of different experiential levels. A total of 175 school psychologists (with a mean of 9.89 years of experience) to read five cases of children which included two non-exceptional (NE), one learning disabled (LD), one emotionally disturbed (ED), and one mentally retarded (MR). Each case study included VIQ, PIQ, and FSIQ of the WISC-R, Reading and Arithmetic scores of the WRAT and Underreaction and Overreaction scores of the Bristol Social Adjustment Guides. In addition, two referral questions were constructed for each case, one behavioral and the other academic. After reading the cases, participants were asked to determine their eligibility for a classification of LD, MR, ED, or NE.

The results indicated that school psychologists were correct two-thirds (66.9%) of the time in their classifications and were accurate in identifying exceptional cases regardless of referral question. Their accuracy decreased in the determination of appropriate category of exceptionality. Non-exceptional cases, for example, were more likely to be determined as eligible for special education. Furthermore, the type of referral question impacted on the latter results in that school psychologists presented with a behavioral referral question were more likely to classify the NE child as LD. Surprisingly, this effect was more pronounced in psychologists with more years of experience.

According to Ward et al. (1991), these results supported the idea that school psychologists become more influenced by the workplace as their professional experiences increase. The authors stated that school psychologists are often viewed by teachers, parents, and administrators as the individual who will step in to “fix” the child. The power structure of the work environment may place pressure on the psychologist to comply with this expectation. A teacher presenting a student with a behavioral referral problem may wish the student to receive special education. The school psychologist may be forced to comply or suffer the consequences of possible decreased cooperation from the teacher, decreased social acceptance, and increased pressure from administrators supporting the teacher. This would explain the previous results.

Mesquita (1992) also compared the effects of experience on diagnostic problem solving processes by asking 25 doctoral school psychologists, 25 nondoctoral school psychologists, 25 educational diagnosticians, 25 doctoral school psychology students and 25 masters school psychology students to determine a diagnosis after having read a case study. The case study included typical information the psychologist would require to make a diagnosis. Participants were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which assessed their age, degree, years

of experience, etc. Finally, after a diagnosis had been chosen, participants were asked to think aloud as to what was going through their head as they were solving the diagnostic problem.

These responses were recorded for further analyses.

The results showed little variation among groups diagnostic performance and accuracy. Though, significant differences were apparent in the amount of time taken to solve the diagnostic problem. More experienced school psychologists were more efficient in their processing of diagnostic information. The author stated that practitioners may have routinized their cognitive processes and are more efficient than those less experienced. Mesquita (1992) stated that training programs could aim to facilitate the development of diagnostic problem solving expertise by providing students with a better-organized, domain-specific knowledge base and the cognitive skills to access the latter efficiently and accurately.

Chevalier and Lyon (1993) examined school psychologists' ethical decision-making skills by asking 111 school psychologists of whom 47.7% had more than 12 years of experience to make a decision regarding each of seven vignettes describing an ethical dilemma. Participants were also required to choose between six possible reasons for making a particular decision. In the second part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the perceived seriousness of the problem and the frequency with which they had encountered similar problems.

Demographics were also assessed by the questionnaire.

The results indicated a general lack of agreement among respondents about preferred course of action and reasons to support such actions. Chevalier and Lyon (1993) stated that practitioners may be struggling with a lack of clear guidelines in the face of serious ethical dilemmas. The results also indicated that the reported lack of agreement in decision making and reasons supporting them was present regardless of level of training or professional experience.

Summary. According to the literature reviewed above, school psychologists with more professional experience may be more likely to be perceived as trustworthy and credible by teachers. Though, in some cases of consultation, the age and experience of the teacher may be a very important consideration in evaluating the persuasive powers of the school psychologist. Studies providing these conclusions were limited in their methodology more research is necessary in this area. In terms of diagnostic decisions, the literature implied that although more experienced school psychologists may be more efficient in their decision making, they do not necessarily feel more confident about the latter. Furthermore, more experienced school psychologists will not necessarily make more accurate diagnostic or ethical decisions. Finally, one study provided readers with evidence that more experienced school psychologists are not necessarily better equipped in scoring ambiguous test responses.

Research results must be interpreted with caution. Research studies were plagued by such problems as non-random sampling, selection biases, and lack of generalizability. Furthermore, in those studies assessing possible experiential differences in diagnostic decision making skills, psychologists rarely had contact with a real child. Questions for clarification or further information could not be asked. As school psychologists are used to seeing a particular child before making a diagnosis, the lack of contact characteristic of these studies might have affected the results.

Purpose of the Study

A review of the existing literature did not yield information on the effect of expertise on the quality of school psychologists' reports. Similarly, there is no available research on the effects of expertise on report quality of other school clinicians, such as speech/language pathologists, social workers, and reading clinicians, who undertake a similar assessment process

as that taken by a school psychologist. Based on the information that we have been able to gather, it would make sense to predict that more experienced school psychologists would be in a better position to write reports of higher quality as compared to novice school psychologists. According to Wood (1977), as cited by Jacob (1995), a competent communicator must take his or her audience into consideration if his/her message is to be encoded as intended. If this is the case, then one would expect more experienced school psychologist to be better able to take classroom teachers' perspectives into consideration. Due to their extensive training in the area of psychology, they may be in a better position to take another person's perspective when completing the psychological report. Over the years, the school psychologist would come to know the classroom teachers in his/her school division including their attitudes, policies, and perspectives. Furthermore, the school psychologist would become knowledgeable of the school divisions philosophies and position pertaining to various issues. Over the years, the school psychologist may even come to support these philosophies and positions himself/herself. Nonetheless, in writing psychological reports, the school psychologist would come to take these factors into consideration in order for messages to be supported by those reading the reports. These hypotheses however, are only speculation and have not been examined by any research. It is also possible that expertise would create differences in the way the school psychologist, or any other clinician, chooses to conduct his/her assessment. Though, these differences would likely translate to differences in the quality of the psychological report. Considering the lack of research in the area of effects of expertise on psychological report quality, the present study will be exploratory.

The goal of the present study shall be twofold. First, it will be attempted to examine possible differences in the overall quality of psychological reports written by novice school

psychologists as opposed to those written by experienced school psychologists. Second, the study will examine any possible characteristics or patterns in the reports that may have contributed to their quality as determined by classroom teachers' perceptions (evaluations).

In order to achieve both goals of the study, two classroom teachers will be asked to individually read a set of 30 psychological reports and rate them according to their overall quality. From the total of 30 psychological reports, 15 will have been written by novice school psychologists and 15 by experienced school psychologists. After having read each of the reports, both teachers will be asked to individually rate each of the reports on a scale of 1 to 3 (excellent, good, poor). Teachers will then discuss their evaluations of the reports and sort them into three separate piles varying by quality. The proportion of reports written by novice and experienced school psychologists in each of the three qualitatively different piles will then be analyzed to study any possible effects of experience on report quality.

Method

Procedure

Data Collection

The collection of data occurred in a two-stage process, which included selection of the psychological reports written by novice and experienced school psychologists and identification of teachers to evaluate these same reports.

Stage 1 – Collection of Reports. The collection of psychological reports written by novice and experienced school psychologists was conducted by the Child Guidance Clinic of Greater Winnipeg (CGC). The CGC governs school psychological services in the majority of Winnipeg school divisions. During a departmental meeting, which all CGC school psychologists attended, Al

Kircher (external advisor and CGC area service director) made an announcement informing school psychologists of the study and its purpose. School psychologists were informed that psychological reports would be read by two classroom teachers and were asked to let Mr. Kircher know if they had any misgivings if their own reports were read. Since no school psychologists contacted Mr. Kircher, it was assumed that all school psychologists were willing to participate.

Mr. Kircher then went to each CGC divisional office asking secretaries to hand in all recently written psychological reports. These reports included those that had been handed in by psychologists and typed by CGC divisional secretaries within a 3-week period. Mr. Kircher then proceeded to sort reports by school psychologists' experience level.

For purposes of the present study, novice school psychologists were defined as those with up to 2 years of professional experience. In the Province of Manitoba, beginning school psychologists are certified provisionally for their first two years in the field. Since these school psychologists must still develop professionally, work conducted during these first two years is done under supervision. Experienced school psychologists, on the other hand, were defined as those with more than five years of experience in the field. In contrast to the novice group, these school psychologists are fully certified and have had numerous opportunities to fully develop as school psychologists, including in the writing of psychological reports.

In sorting psychological reports by experience level, Mr. Kircher identified the school psychologists who had written each of the reports. Mr. Kircher then looked at each of the psychologists' CGC files in order to determine their experience level. Reports were then sorted into three piles: 1) reports written by psychologists with up to 2 years of experience; 2) reports written by psychologists with between 2 and 5 years of experience; and 3) reports written by psychologists with more than 5 years of experience. Only reports sorted in the first and third groups would be

kept for the study. Since the researcher wanted to collect approximately 15 reports written by novice school psychologists and 15 reports written by experienced school psychologists, Mr. Kircher returned to CGC divisional offices until sufficient numbers of reports in each of the groups had been collected.

A total of 29 psychological reports, of which 14 had been written by novice school psychologists and 15 had been written by experienced school psychologists, were collected. The novice group consisted of reports written by school psychologists with up to 2 years of professional experience. The experienced group consisted of reports written by school psychologist who had been working in the field for an average of 12 years ($SD = 6.10$).

Once reports had been collected and sorted by experience level, Mr. Kircher proceeded to code each of the reports by randomly assigning them letters of the alphabet. Different letters of the alphabet represented the various authors of the reports. For example, A represented a particular novice school psychologist, B represented a particular experienced psychologist, C represented a particular experienced psychologist, and so on and so forth. Mr. Kircher kept these codes secret. Therefore, the researcher was blind as to the groupings of each of the reports. Once coded, novice and experienced reports were then shuffled into two piles each containing mixed novice and experienced reports. Reports were then handed in to the researcher in these piles.

Stage 2 – Identification of Teachers. While psychological reports were being collected, the researcher began contacting schools in order to identify teachers that would be willing to participate in the study. Resource teachers in five schools (in the River East School Division) were contacted by telephone by the researcher. Resource teachers were informed of the study, its purpose, and its procedure. Each resource teacher was asked to inform classroom teachers, during staff meetings, of

the study, its purpose, and its procedure and request any volunteers willing to participate in the study. Resource teachers were contacted, by telephone, by the researcher asking whether volunteers had been identified. Three volunteers were identified by resource teachers. Each volunteer was then contact (by telephone) by the researcher and were asked of their availability to meet after school hours. Two of the three volunteers were chosen simply based on their availability and willingness to meet after school hours.

Both teachers selected as independent raters taught at the elementary level. The first teacher graduated with a Bachelor of Education Degree. She had been teaching for a total of 11 years and had extensive experience in referring children to CGC; reading psychological reports, as well as attending support teams meeting and interpretation meetings. At the time the study was conducted, was teaching in a grade 4 classroom but had also taught grade 5 in the past. The second teacher graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree with an additional year of education. She had been teaching for a total of 9 years and had extensive experience in referring children to school psychologists and reading psychological reports. At the time the study was conducted, she was teaching in a grade 3 classroom but had also provided instruction in second, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.

Group Sessions and Teachers' Instructions. The researcher and both classroom teachers met, after school hours, at a school located in the River East School Division. During the first session, both teachers were given verbal instructions describing their role in the study. A detailed copy of these instructions are located in Appendix A. Both teachers were told that they would each be requested to read a total of 29 psychological reports and evaluate them in terms of their quality as a whole. In reading and evaluating the reports, teachers were asked to take the perspective of their own classrooms. That is, teachers were asked to read and evaluate the reports as if each were

written for them about one of the children in their classrooms. In evaluating the reports, teachers were asked to individually rate the reports on a scale of 1 to 3 where 1 represented an “excellent” report, 2 represented a “good” report, and 3 represented a “poor” report. Teachers were also asked to keep notes on their comments and perceptions of each of the reports.

Evaluation Form. In order to facilitate the teachers' evaluation of each of the reports in terms of their quality, a form consisting of guidelines and criteria was developed based on the literature review of teachers' preferences and expectations regarding psychological reports (Table 1 in Appendix B). Effects of such things as gender and years of experience of the writer of the report on teachers' preferences and expectations were not taken into consideration when constructing this form. Rather, expectations and preferences as a whole were considered. The form was organized to reflect the organization of a psychological report.

Insert Table 1 About Here

While referring to Table 1 in Appendix B, the reader will notice subheadings of the form including Reason for Referral, Background Information and Behavioral Observations, Test Results and Interpretation, and Summary and Recommendations. Below each of these subheadings are guidelines, presented in the form of a question, that can be used as a reference to evaluate the quality of that particular section of the report. Both raters were provided with a guide to the form in order to ensure clarity of each of the criteria present in it. It is important to note that teachers were specifically instructed not to rate the reports according to the individual criteria. Rather, these criteria were only used as guidelines and teachers were asked to evaluate the quality of the reports in their entirety.

Training of the Teacher-Evaluators. In training the teachers for rating the quality of the reports they were about to read, the researcher explained the guidelines in order to clarify any misconceptions or answer any questions they might have had. The researcher read through each of the sections of the evaluation form and answered any questions the teachers might have had.

Individual Report Reading and Evaluation. Once both teachers felt comfortable with the evaluation form and with the task at hand, they were each given a pile of psychological reports as they had been given to the researcher by Mr. Kircher. Thus, not only was the researcher blind as to the groupings of the psychological reports, but so were the teachers. They then went into two separate classrooms and began reading each of the reports and rating them based on their quality while referring to the guidelines they were provided. When both teachers were done reading and evaluating their pile of reports, they exchanged with each other and continued the process. Both teachers spent 3 sessions, each lasting approximately 2 to 2½ hours individually reading and evaluating the reports.

Group Discussion. After both teachers had finished individually reading and evaluating all of the 29 reports, they, along with the researcher, met for a fourth session. During this fourth session, both teachers discussed their evaluations of each of the 29 reports. At this point, teachers were asked to sort the reports into 3 separate categories varying by report quality: 1) “excellent”; 2) “good”; and 3) “poor”. Teachers were asked to share their thoughts and evaluations on each of the reports and together come up with 3 separate piles of qualitatively different reports. As the teachers discussed, the researcher took notes of their verbal discussion. These data would later be considered in the analyses.

Data Analyses

Data analyses occurred in a two-stage process. The examiner first analyzed the proportion of reports written by novice school psychologists and those written by experienced school psychologists in each of the qualitatively different piles. The existence of such differences would ultimately translate to some sort of effects of expertise on the quality of the psychological reports. Second, the examiner evaluated the reports in each of the three piles according to their characteristics. Teachers' comments and perceptions of each of the reports that were discussed during the fourth session were taken into account in this second stage. The examiner analyzed the extent of specific patterning in the reports written by novice school psychologists and those written by experienced school psychologist. If specific patterns existed, how are these reports qualitatively different? What was it about the reports that made both raters place them in the qualitatively different piles?

Results

Inter-rater Reliability

Values (1 to 3) that had been assigned by each of the teachers to each of the reports were used to calculate an inter-rater reliability coefficient. An inter-rater reliability coefficient represents the amount of agreement between two independent raters. The following equation was used to calculate the inter-rater reliability:

$$\frac{\sum XY - (\sum X \bullet \sum Y / N)}{N \bullet sdX \bullet sd Y}^2$$

Using these values, calculations resulted in an inter-rater reliability of 0.52. It is obvious that an inter-rater reliability of this value is not impressive although some discussion is warranted.

First, the number of reports ($N = 29$) rated by the teachers was not very high. As the reader can see from the formula presented above, N plays a part in the equation in that the larger the number of cases are used, the stronger will be your inter-rater reliability coefficient.

Second, values assigned to each of the reports by both classroom teachers were quite subjective. That is, it was sometimes quite difficult to distinguish between a “good” report and a “poor” report. On many occasions, values assigned to the reports by both teachers only differed by a small margin. For example, one teacher may have assigned a value of 3, while the other assigned a marginal 2 on the same report. On only one occasion did ratings differ dramatically on the same report when one teacher assigned a value of 1 while the other assigned a value of 3. Specific criteria defining the difference between “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” reports would perhaps have been needed to increase inter-rater reliability.

Although teachers' ratings of each of the reports did not vary significantly, it is important to question whether their perceptions were the same compared to each other for each of the reports. That is, for example, even though both teachers assigned a value of 2 to the same report does not necessarily mean they shared the same perceptions of the latter. In order to answer this question, a table was constructed whereby both teachers' comments of each of the reports were compared to one another (see Table 2 in Appendix C).

Insert Table 2 About Here

An examination of this table revealed that on some reports, both teachers shared the same opinions or had the same comments to make while on others they failed to. However, although this may be difficult to quantify, both teachers complimented each other when discussing the final evaluations of each of the reports. That is, major disagreements on the same report rarely occurred. Rather, both teachers helped each other out in understanding each of the reports. What one teacher may have not realized about a report, the other had made comment to it. In this manner, both teachers complimented each other while discussing their perceptions of each of the reports. This, however, is difficult to quantify and ascertain and therefore the table has been included in order to let the reader evaluate for him/herself inter-rater reliability.

Experienced vs. Novice Psychological Reports

Table 3 in Appendix D presents the totals for each of the report groups (novice vs. experienced reports) in each of the qualitatively different piles. This table represents the results of teachers' consolidated sortings. After teachers had individually read and evaluated the reports, this is how they sorted them as a team.

Insert Table 3 About Here

A total of 6 psychological reports were considered of "excellent" quality of which 3 (50%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 3 (50%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 13 psychological reports were considered of "good" quality of which 6 (46%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 7 (54%) that had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 10 psychological reports were considered of "poor" quality by the classroom teachers of which 5 (50%) had been written

by novice school psychologists and 5 (50%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. Further analyses revealed that psychological reports written by novice school psychologists received a mean rating of 2.14 ($SD = 0.74$) and that those written by experienced school psychologists received a mean rating of 2.13 ($SD = 0.72$).

When both teachers together discussed and sorted the reports into three qualitatively different piles, the results indicated no effects of experience level on psychological report quality. These results, though, ignore both teachers' individual ratings of the psychological reports. Given the low inter-rater reliability, it is possible that teachers' individual ratings could have changed when they discussed the reports as a team. How would the results in Table 3 compare to teachers' individual ratings? Tables 4 and 5 (Appendix E and F respectively) present these results.

Insert Table 4 About Here

Table 4 in Appendix E (Rater 1) indicate that a total of 8 psychological reports were considered of "excellent" quality by of which 4 (50%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 4 (50%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 12 psychological reports were considered of "good" quality of which 6 (50%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 6 (50%) that had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 9 psychological reports were considered of "poor" quality by the classroom teachers of which 4 (44%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 5 (66%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. Furthermore, rater 1 assigned

psychological reports written by novice school psychologists a mean rating of 2.00 (SD = 0.51) and a mean rating of 2.07 (SD = 0.43) to reports written by experienced school psychologists.

Insert Table 5 About Here

Table 5 in Appendix F (Rater 2) indicate that a total of 6 psychological reports were considered of “excellent” quality by of which 3 (50%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 3 (50%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 14 psychological reports were considered of “good” quality of which 7 (50%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 7 (50%) that had been written by experienced school psychologists. A total of 9 psychological reports were considered of “poor” quality by the classroom teachers of which 4 (44%) had been written by novice school psychologists and 5 (66%) had been written by experienced school psychologists. Furthermore, rater 2 assigned psychological reports written by novice school psychologists a mean rating of 2.07 (SD = 0.67) and a mean rating of 2.13 (SD = 0.82) to reports written by experienced school psychologists.

Therefore, even when teachers’ ratings of the reports are individualized, no effects of experience level on overall report quality appear significant. Furthermore, teachers’ individual ratings are almost identical to ratings given as a team meaning that their initial evaluations were changed very little by the team discussion.

Although job experience level did not influence teachers’ ratings of the overall quality of the psychology report, the question that could then be asked was whether “good experienced” reports were similar to “good novice” reports, or whether “poor experienced” reports were similar to “poor novice” reports. That is, were teachers’ perceptions or comments made for

reports, varying in job experience level, similar to each other. In order to answer this question, a table was constructed (see Table 6 in Appendix G) whereby reports were grouped by quality and by their authors' job experience level.

Insert Table 6 About Here

Although only qualitative, an examination of this particular table did not reveal any significant differences between reports sharing the same evaluation rating, while being written by authors varying in job experience level. That is, "good experienced" reports shared the same comments and teachers' perceptions as did "good novice" reports. On the same note, "poor experienced" reports shared the same comments and teachers' perceptions as did "poor novice" reports. The same held true for "excellent experienced" reports and "excellent novice" reports. Job experience level seemed to have little effect on teachers' perceptions of the overall quality of psychologists' reports.

Participants Perceptions of Psychological Reports

General Content. In terms of their general content, the teachers who rated the psychological reports preferred those that were well organized, clear, understandable, easy to read, generally useful, and in which the writer provided support for decisions made throughout the assessment, such as providing reasons why results were inaccurate. They also preferred reports in which the writer took factors into consideration which likely affected the assessment such as culture and hearing loss and that presented sufficient information in each of the sections. In one particular report, one of the teachers commented on the fact that information was lacking which left it necessary for the reader to fill unnecessary gaps.

On the other hand, the teachers disliked reports which contained unexplained jargon and technical language, in which assumptions were made by the writer without any support by the interviews or test results, and in which general statements rather than behavioral statements were presented. For example, the statement “the child was out of control and exhibited dangerous behaviors” was questioned due to its lack of clarity. How was the child out of control? What constituted dangerous behaviors?

Reason for Referral. Both classroom teachers preferred when the reason for referral was clear, understandable, to the point, and clearly answered in the Summary section. In some instances, many words were used to describe the reason for referral the teachers still lacked a sense of why the assessment was taking place.

Background Information and Behavioral Observations. As with the previous section, teachers preferred Background Information sections and Behavioral Observations sections which were clear, thorough, relevant to the reason for referral, and offered a clear picture of the child being assessed. In several reports, information was lacking from sources the teachers thought would have been important such as parents, schools, and doctors, or from environments in which to observe the child such as in the classroom rather than simply in the music room or gymnasium.

Test Results and Interpretations. As with the previous sections, the teachers preferred Test Results sections which were easy to read, clear, thorough, as well as free of any technical language. Furthermore, the teachers preferred the Test Results sections in which results were either presented by test or functionally such as intellectual, behavioral, and emotional, in which the child’s strengths and weaknesses were clearly delineated, and in which tests were described to some detail. The teachers found it very important to know exactly what the child could and

could not do on the basis of the tests administered and how the results would have an impact on the child's ability to function in the classroom.

Summary and Recommendations. In terms of a summary and a set of recommendations, the teachers also preferred those that were clear, appropriate, and easy to read. In terms of recommendations, the teachers preferred those that were useful, that is which presented new information to the classroom teacher, those that were implementable, took the limitations of the classroom into consideration and those which dealt with issues discussed in the report. In a few cases, issues of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Effects, or a Learning Disability were mentioned in the report, no recommendations could be found which addressed these issues.

Comparison with Review. In discussing the teachers' perceptions of the reports presented to them, it would be important to consider how these compared to those discussed in the review which appeared earlier in the present article. When comparing both groups of teachers' perceptions, it was apparent that several similarities existed.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, participants in the present study did seem to place considerable emphasis on the importance of recommendations in the psychological report. When discussing their evaluation of one particular report, the teachers mentioned that the moderate quality of its recommendations was the main reason why they considered the report to be of overall average quality.

As the reader might recall from the previously discussed review, results also indicated that teachers preferred reports in which the referral question was answered appropriately. This was also the case in the present study. Teachers in the present study also preferred reports in which the reason for referral was clear, easy to find, and to the point.

Teachers in the present study disliked reports that lacked form and organization. This was also discussed in the earlier literature review. In one case, teachers disliked a particular report which was characterized by scattered thinking. Also similar to teachers in the earlier literature review, teachers in the present study preferred test results which were organized functionally and in which strengths and weaknesses were clearly differentiated.

Finally, the issue of jargon had been discussed in the earlier review and also became an issue in the present study. As you might recall from the literature review, results were inconclusive as to whether jargon had an effect on teachers' comprehension of psychological reports. In the present study, both teachers disliked the use of technical language especially in the presentation of test results. The teachers also disliked the use of jargon, especially when definitions were never provided. Some examples of terms which were unfamiliar to the classroom teachers included *sensorineural hearing loss*, *little intersubtest scatter*, *Gestalt*, and *skilled speech movements*. The teachers also disliked when abbreviations were presented without clarification. These included such things as SLP (speech language pathologist) and DAP (draw-a-person).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether a school psychologist's level expertise, defined by the length of professional experience, had an effect on the quality of his or her psychological reports. Two classroom teachers were asked to read psychological reports written by novice and experienced school psychologists and rate them according to a set of evaluation guidelines. The results indicated that job experience level had little, if any, effect on teachers' perceptions of the psychological reports. The results also indicated that teachers'

perceptions of psychological reports written by novice psychologists versus those written by experienced psychologists were similar to each other. How are we to explain these results?

We may be able to explain these non-significant results, in part, by looking at the methodology and characteristics of the present study. It is possible, for example, that if a larger sample of psychological reports and classroom teachers, serving as raters, would have been used, that significant results might have been found. Future research may take this into consideration. As was mentioned in the previous section, more specific guidelines or criteria differentiating between “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” reports might have also been beneficial. As mentioned, differentiations between a “good” and “excellent” report or a “good” and “poor” report were sometimes difficult to make. Values assigned to each of the reports by the teachers were quite subjective. More specific and stringent criteria might have helped create greater differences among groups.

It may also be the case that these non-significant results accurately depict the effects of job experience level on psychological report quality. That is, differences may truly not exist between psychological reports written by novice school psychologists and those written by experienced school psychologists. Novice school psychologists may be able to write psychological reports as well, if not better, than experienced school psychologists. The results also indicated that not all experienced school psychologists are able to write “excellent” reports. A school psychologist’s writing skills do not necessarily improve with experience. They may actually decrease, although further research would be necessary to investigate this hypothesis, and as a result requiring re-training. These results, though, do not state that novice school psychologists are equal to experienced school psychologists in all facets. These individuals may

differ in the assessment procedures used, their organizational skills, or their ability to manage their time and resources effectively.

The lack of differences may also be attributable to the quality of practicum supervision. School psychologists in training must complete a specified amount of hours of practical work under supervision. At the University of Manitoba, for example, Masters students must complete approximately 250 hours of practical experience. Students in Doctorate programs would complete even more hours of practical experience. It is quite possible then that the skills necessary to write psychological reports of "good" or "excellent" quality are acquired during practicum. A major advantage of practicum work is the opportunity given to the student to work with an experienced school psychologist. Taking from my own experience, students are likely to adopt their practicum advisor's style and quality of report writing, therefore resulting in "good" or "excellent" report writing skills when entering the profession.

Although results of the present study were non-significant, one particular aspect of the latter does warrant some discussion. As the reader might have noticed, the majority (79%) of the psychological reports read by both classroom teachers were rated as either being of "good" or "poor" quality, while a small minority (21%) were considered "excellent". It is therefore apparent, based on the psychological reports included in the present study, that some improvement is necessary in the quality of psychological reports written by school psychologists. But, some precautions must be taken in interpreting this statement.

First, it is evident that the sample size of both raters and psychological reports was small and these results must be treated with caution. Second, these ratings, both individual and group, are based on those of two classroom teachers. As discussed in the first part of the present study, teachers' perceptions and preferences for psychological reports are likely to be different than

those of parents, school administrators, school psychologists, and other school clinicians. This fact should always be kept in mind when interpreting the results of the present study. Results are likely to have been different if raters would have been parents or other school psychologists. The present study was interested in teachers' perceptions and preferences. Readers interested in parents' or school psychologists' could undertake further research.

Hypothesizing that these results are accurate, that is that the majority of these reports are of "good" or "poor" quality, we are assuming that this is the psychologists' faults. When writing psychological reports, they are not considering the expectations and preferences of the classroom teachers. Therefore, it is up to the school psychologists to change and improve their reports. This, however, should not be assumed. If these results are accurate, it is from this writer's point of view that teachers should also share in the responsibility. Teachers should perhaps learn more of the psychologist and what he/she is trying to say in the psychological report. It is possible that school psychologists' messages and goals of their reports are misinterpreted and, as a result, negatively viewed and rated by teachers. Thus, whether these results are accurate or not, change should come from both sides.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

In terms of limitations, the present study is characterized by several. The first of these would have to do with sample size. A larger sample of psychological reports from each of the groups would have perhaps resulted in larger differences between psychological reports written by experienced school psychologists and those written by novice school psychologists since there would have been a greater variability in the reports. More reports would have meant a

greater range in “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” reports perhaps resulting in greater differences between groups.

A larger sample of raters would also have been necessary to increase variability. More raters involves bringing more individuals into the study which involves more ideas, different experiences, different perceptions, and different opinions. All these factors would have affected both individual and group ratings of reports. Therefore, with more raters, it is possible that greater differences would have been found between groups of reports.

A second limitation of the present study was the poor inter-rater reliability coefficient. It is quite evident that a larger sample size of reports as well as raters would have been beneficial in increasing this value. Upon closer inspection, teachers’ evaluations of the reports never varied by much. The teachers usually agreed with each other and complimented each other’s comments and evaluations of the reports. As mentioned earlier, more specific criteria differentiating between “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” reports would have perhaps been necessary to increase inter-rater reliability. Teachers could also have been questioned, before reading and evaluating reports, regarding their thoughts of criteria necessary for “excellent”, “good”, and “poor” reports.

More extensive teacher training could also have improved inter-rater reliability. In the present study, the researcher simply went over the guidelines with the teachers before they were asked to individually read and evaluate the overall quality of the reports. Teachers could have been given 3 sample reports to individually read and evaluate. An inter-rater reliability coefficient could then have been calculated, based on these three initial ratings, to analyze the strength of this value. A low value could have resulted in extra teacher training by the researcher. Future research should take this suggestion into consideration before replicating the present study.

Related to the issue of increased criteria is the issue of the quality groups. Some readers might suggest that more qualitatively different groups could have been used in the present study. Therefore, rather than simply sorting reports into three groups, they could have been sorted into five groups with fewer differences or distinctions between each of these. This might have solved some of the problems experienced by the raters where, for example, they could not categorize a particular report as either “good” or “poor”. In order to implement this suggestion, though, researchers would need more reports since sub-group sizes would be too small.

The present study is also characterized by several confounding factors which make it so that results must be interpreted with caution. A few problems do exist with the raters that were chosen for the present study. The first problem is the fact that the raters knew each other prior to meeting for the study. This was a confounding factor in the group discussion, following individual ratings of reports. Since the raters knew each other, they were probably aware of each others’ personalities which might have affected the group discussion. Rater 1 (or vice versa) might not have been as vocal in the group discussion knowing rater 2’s personality. A comparison between individual and teamed ratings of each of the reports, though, did show very little differences. That is, individual ratings did not change very much when teachers consolidated their choices. This factor should still be taken into consideration.

Another compounding factor is the fact that the purposes of each of the reports were not taken into consideration when collecting the data. It is possible that school psychologists’ report quality could have varied as a function of the purpose of the report. A report assessing a child’s availability for Special Education designation, for example, could have received greater attention by the school psychologist in terms of quality as compared to a report assessing a child’s

academic strengths and weaknesses. This is only speculation and further research would be necessary to support such hypotheses.

Another confounding factor is the fact that both teachers were provided with guidelines, that they could reference, when evaluating the psychological reports. The problem that exists is that we are unable to separate, in comments made, those genuinely coming from the teachers and those coming from the guidelines. That is, we have no idea what teachers' own preferences or perceptions of the reports would have been had we not shown them these guidelines. It is likely that the guidelines contaminated teachers' reports of preferences and perceptions. Future research might like to keep participants naïve about what is expected of a report and rather, obtain their true perceptions and preferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the present study indicated little differences in the quality of the psychological reports written by novice school psychologists and those written by experienced school psychologists. According to the results, novice school psychologists are able to write reports that are as good qualitatively as those written by experienced school psychologists. It is possible that a school psychologist's ability to write psychological reports of "excellent", "good", or "poor" quality depend on the quality of the practicum training received at the Masters or Doctorate level. Further research would be necessary to support this hypothesis. The results may also mean that an individual's writing skills do not improve with experience. However, it may also mean that the more experienced school psychologists may need some re-training or re-tooling when it comes to psychological report writing. Further research would be necessary to examine these hypotheses.

Also briefly discussed was the fact that the majority of the reports were rated as either “good” or “poor”. At first, this may reflect negatively on CGC school psychologists. However, two things must be kept in mind before making such conclusions. First, participants in the present study consisted of teachers whose perceptions of psychological reports are likely to be different than those of school psychologists or other school clinicians. Second, hypothesizing these results are accurate, we should not put all the blame on school psychologists’ writing skills. Teachers too must learn more about the school psychologist and what he/she is trying to communicate in the psychological report.

The present study was characterized by several limitations and confounding factors which increased the difficulty in interpreting results. Limitations included small sample sizes (teachers and reports) and poor inter-rater reliability. Confounding factors included the fact that both teachers knew each other, teachers were provided with an evaluation form, and that purposes of the reports were not taken into consideration. As suggested by the present study, future researchers might consider correcting these limitations and addressing the confounding factors if wanting to study the effects of experience level on school psychologists’ report writing skills.

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Appendix A

Teachers' Instructions

I will be asking you to read 29 psychological reports. This will be done in two of the classrooms in the school. Therefore, you will be reading them individually. In reading the reports, you will be asked to take the perspective of your classroom. Therefore, imagine that the child that you are reading about is one of your own students. This child is in your classroom and the reports has been written for you as a consumer.

After you will have read each of the reports, you will rate them based on their overall quality on a scale of 1 to 3 where 1 would be an "excellent" report, 2 would be a "good" report, and 3 would be a "poor" report. I will also ask you to write your comments, thoughts, or perceptions of each of the reports on paper. Please make sure to identify the report. As you will notice on the front cover of each of the reports is a code. For example, this one is report 98-H(1) and this one is report 98-B(2). So please make sure your notes correspond to the correct report code. Again, I stress to take the perspective of your own classroom. If this report would have been given to you about a child in your classroom, what would be your overall perceptions of it? What do you think of the recommendations? At first, one of you will be given a pile of 15 reports while the other will be given 14 reports. After you will each have finished reading the reports in your pile, I will ask you to exchange with each other and continue the process.

In order to help you rate the reports, I will give you this evaluation form which you may use as a reference when evaluating each of the reports. The form is organized just like a psychological report with a Reason for Referral section, a Behavioral Observations and Background Information sections, and so on and so forth. In each of the sections of the form are questions you might ask yourself about that particular section of the psychological report. You

are not to evaluate the reports you will read based on these individual guidelines. Rather, you must rate them as a whole. Thus, these guidelines should only be used as a reference in order to come up with a global evaluation of each of the reports.

Once you will have each read, individually, all of the 29 reports, we will meet together for a final session. During this last session, we will discuss each of the reports. You will discuss your perceptions, opinions, and evaluations of each of the reports. Then together, as a team, you will sort all of the 29 reports into three separate piles: 1) including the “excellent” reports; 2) including the “good” reports; and 3) including the “poor” reports. Therefore, even though you will have already rated them on an individual basis, you will get together, discuss, and agree upon a final evaluation of each of the reports. If you don’t have any questions, I will go through the evaluation form with you.

Appendix B

Table 1

General Guidelines to Evaluating the Quality of a Psychological Report

General Content
1. Is report content generally clear? 2. Is content relevant and significant? 3. Is the report logically and effectively organized? 4. Is the report written to be as meaningful and useful? 5. Is the child's learning style clearly described? 6. Is information organized into functional domains? 7. Are technical terms clear and understandable? 8. Is word usage appropriate (absence of jargon, overly technical language)?
Reason for Referral
1. Is the reason for referral clearly explained? 2. Does the explanation include sufficient information so that the rationale for the assessment is clear?
Background Information and Behavioral Observations
1. Are these sections elaborated? 2. Is the background information relevant to the purpose of the assessment? 3. Are observations sufficiently explained so that the clients' behavior can be readily visualized or understood? 4. Are observations clearly related to the purpose of the assessment?

Test Results and Interpretations

1. Are sources of assessment information listed and clearly identified?
 2. Are test results reported?
 3. Are test results explained?
 4. Are test results interpreted clearly and meaningfully?
 5. Are strengths and weaknesses described in clear behavioral terms?
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Summary and Recommendations

1. Does the summary provide a restatement of all results relevant to the reason for referral and recommendations that follow?
 2. Do recommendations consist of a well-rounded program characterized by a variety of specific suggestions?
 3. Are recommendations clear?
 4. Are recommendations elaborated?
 5. Are recommendations clear to carry out?
 6. Are recommendations concrete, specific and realistic to carry out?
- Are recommendations specific enough to provide teachers with some direction?
7. Are recommendations too specific, which might thus make them difficult to implement?
 8. Do recommendations take the practical workings and limitations of the classroom into consideration?
 9. Are recommendations clearly related to the problems addressed in the report?
 10. Are conclusions supported by data?
 11. Is the reason for referral clearly and concisely answered or addressed?
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Appendix C

Table 2

Comparison of Raters Comments on each of the Reports.

Excellent Reports		
Report	Rater 1	Rater 2
98-F(2)	✓ Good reason for referral ✓ Good background ✓ Good test results ✓ Summary and recommendations appropriate.	✓ Reason for referral a little limited in detail. ✓ Good background information, offers clear picture of child. ✓ Good description of test behavior. ✓ Great the way each test is delineated from the others. ✓ Excellent recommendations
98-E(1)	✓ Reason for referral clear. ✓ Background thorough ✓ Test results appropriate. ✓ Recommendations appropriate	✓ Referral rationale given but no extra information to explain what has prompted this request. ✓ Some jargon not explained. ✓ Good observations ✓ Innacurate results explained as innacurate and why. ✓ Good summary and recommendations.
98-J(3)	✓ Reason for referral clear, provides sufficient information. ✓ Background – good and appropriate, both academic and emotional discussed. ✓ Test results well explained. ✓ Summary and conclusions clear, meet referral requirements.	✓ Reason for referral fine – enough information given. ✓ Students motives seem to be concluded about without testing for those items. ✓ Test results excellent. ✓ Summary and recommendations good, clear, and possible to reach.

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| 98-L(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Would prefer background and reason for referral separate.✓ Liked how results were divided up as intellectual, behavioral, and emotional.✓ Liked the way strengths and weaknesses are listed separately.✓ Balances test results with teacher and parent reports.✓ Recommendations appropriate, clear, specific, and realistic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Excellent report, very well organized. |
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| 98-A(2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Wide variety of information sources.✓ Reason for referral clear.✓ Background relevant, includes home, school, and health.✓ Observations relevant✓ Discussion of test results good.✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Good assessment, well written.✓ Test discussion clinical.✓ Recommendations general✓ Could focus more on strengths. |
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| 98-A(4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reason for referral rather vague.✓ Background not specific enough – “out of control and dangerous behavior” not described.✓ Good details in observations.✓ Good explanation of WIPPSI-R.✓ Very good explanation of student’s strengths and weaknesses.✓ Summary and recommendations appropriate, practical, and detailed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Excellent report, well written and described. |
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Good Reports

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| 98-C(3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good reason for referral ✓ Good assessment methods ✓ Good background ✓ Good observations ✓ Good explanation of test results ✓ No mention of dyslexia concern despite “some difficulty processing abstract visual material” and “difficulty attending to details in visual material”. ✓ Only 2 brief paragraphs of recommendations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reason for referral clear. ✓ Good background ✓ Good observations although some observation of paper/pencil tasks would have been good to add another dimension. ✓ Some tests not explained. ✓ Some jargon not explained. ✓ Recommendations – suggestions for school sketchy. ✓ No suggestions as to how to address some of her reading problems. |
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| 98-C(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good reason for referral ✓ Good background ✓ Good observations ✓ Recommendations not helpful for teachers. ✓ May have considered a single language program because of auditory and verbal difficulties. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reason for referral sketchy – need more information. ✓ Background not organized well. ✓ Behavioral observations good. ✓ Test results very good – tells what is going on and gave lots of details without using jargon. ✓ Summary gives answers to reason for referral. ✓ Recommendations do not specify teaching modifications but rather general structural modifications. |
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| 98-A(5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reason for referral clear ✓ Sources of information included classroom observations yet this was not described in relevant section. ✓ Sources also included cum file, yet no description of how she did in other grades or schools. ✓ Background information mentions one person's concerns that child may have FAS however no comments are made regarding the latter. ✓ WISC well explained ✓ Summary does not address junior high placement question and reason for referral. ✓ More suggestions on how to help the student catch up the 2 grade delay would have been helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good reason for referral ✓ Some tests not explained enough ✓ Summary and recommendations absolutely useless. Little emphasis on what could be done. |
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| 98-B(2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reason for referral and background okay ✓ Jargon not explained ✓ Summary addresses academic and emotional. ✓ Certain recommendations lack clarity, more specific information needed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reason for referral good. ✓ Information lacking in background. ✓ Good observation, provides good picture of child. ✓ Good the way each test is delineated specifically so you know what you are looking at. ✓ Summary good ✓ Recommendations – more ideas as to how to address her specific learning difficulties would be helpful. |
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| 98-A(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sources of information included cum file and CGC file however no information was supplied in this report to explain why the school decided to have this student repeat grade 1. ✓ Observations and discussion good ✓ Recommendations not helpful for the classroom teacher ✓ Only 2 sentences of recommendations to the family. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No examples of problem areas in academic development which would suggest why assessment is being done in first place. ✓ Good background ✓ Good observations – gives reasoning behind the exclusion of some results and concrete examples of behavior in testing situation. ✓ Good discussion of data. |
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98-K(2)	✓ Reason for referral clear ✓ Good background ✓ Jargon not explained ✓ Report does not seem to tell us anything new regarding the child. ✓ Recommendations include information already known, obvious, or something that is already being done.	✓ Reason for referral seems solid, gives enough information. ✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Some information lacking in background. ✓ Test results given with content are excellent – tells exactly what you need to hear to make connections. ✓ Recommendations fine – fairly general.
98-F(1)	✓ Some information lacking that would like to be known. ✓ Recommendations are good – address self-esteem and social-emotional needs	✓ Reason for referral to the point. ✓ Tests not explained. ✓ Results very clinical, jargon used. ✓ Big difference between performance and verbal however this is not discussed anywhere.
98-J(2)	✓ Background well done and helpful. ✓ Test results – is one test sufficient? ✓ Are the differences between verbal and performance significant? ✓ Is it reasonable that this child be considered special ed.?	✓ Well done although recommendations were weak as well as the test results.
98-C(2)	✓ No explanations given for “presents as immature and manipulative”. ✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Summary does not seem to match reason for referral. ✓ Disagree with certain recommendations.	✓ Fine write up, well done, informative. ✓ Good background. ✓ Does not seem to take french immersion placement into consideration when examining reasons for difficulties.
98-I(2)	✓ Background weak and lacks important information. ✓ Little explained other than “currently struggling academically”. ✓ No information provided regarding parental input.	✓ Limited number of tests – only 1. ✓ Otherwise, good report.

98-K(1)	✓ Some questions regarding the goal of the assessment. ✓ Reason for referral not clear. ✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Recommendations and test interpretations good. ✓	✓ Reason for referral good. ✓ Background good. ✓ Some recommendations may be difficult to implement in regular classroom.
98-H(1)	✓ WISC well explained, scores included. ✓ Summary good ✓ Recommendations not particularly helpful for classroom teacher.	✓ Reason for referral general. ✓ Test description good. ✓ Really helpful report, good write up.
98-B(5)	✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Few specifics about WISC, no scores. ✓ Awkward wording in summary, lack of clarity. ✓ Recommendations not well explained.	✓ Big difference between performance and verbal however no recommendations taking this into consideration. ✓ Some recommendations not possible in the classroom.

Poor Reports

98-A(3)	✓ Report deals to large extent with sexual concerns rather than RR. ✓ Unusually lengthy background and observation with more than necessary information. ✓ Thorough discussion of assessment data. ✓ Is this psychologist in the position to state that it is not possible to provide the necessary supervision in a regular classroom for this child? ✓ It is good that mention was made that placement in a center for behavioral difficulties could put this child at risk. ✓ Minute by minute daily management plan unrealistic. ✓ Recommendation for treatment to repair the damage, can it be repaired?	✓ Information lacking in background. ✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Information lacking in observations. ✓ Reason for referral includes to assess cognitive functioning but report focuses on sexual behaviors. ✓ Recommendations not great for regular classroom.
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98-I(1)	✓ Background lacks information, particularly regarding academics. ✓ Techniques of assessment need to include school records, teacher interview, classroom observations, and parent interview. ✓ Number of assessment tools used seem limited.	✓ Good reason for referral ✓ Number of assessment tools seems limited. ✓ Good observations ✓ Results section – drawing conclusions where results only need to be recorded and shared. ✓ Information lacking in background. ✓ Special ed term used loosely.
98-G(2)	✓ No background school information given. ✓ Confusion all the way through report. ✓ Recommendations not great for classroom. ✓ Wording and explanations awkward.	✓ Reason for referral very vague – no information given as to what is wanted. ✓ Family background and behavior description fine. ✓ Test results a little hard to grasp, not a real idea of what they are talking about. ✓ Recommendations do not take limitations of classroom into consideration.
98-B(4)	✓ Good reason for referral ✓ School placement not addressed. ✓ Information lacking ✓ Recommendations require some serious questioning. ✓ Do not understand reasoning of school psychologist.	✓ Inconsistencies throughout the report. ✓ Rorschach InkBlot hard to figure out. ✓ Drawings need to be explained to support conclusions. ✓ Tests not explained, what do they measure? ✓ Report not organized very well. ✓ Summary does not review WISC results.
98-B(1)	✓ Don't like organization of report – WISC summary on first page, tests administered on page 3. ✓ Jargon not explained. ✓ Are these instruments sufficient to assess ADHD?	✓ Good report ✓ Recommendations focused and attainable.

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| 98-J(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ School background good✓ Did not consider language disorder rather than special ed.✓ Recommendations brief and not helpful. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reason for referral weak. No focus indicated and too general.✓ School history seems to be lacking information. Some organizational difficulties here.✓ Good description of test behavior.✓ Test results – a lot of information is left out making it necessary to fill in the gaps. Difficult to make classroom connections.✓ Recommendations not very helpful – place the child in special ed class but no indications given as to what he should do there. |
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| 98-L(2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Prefer background and referrals to be separate.✓ Wording poor✓ Differences between Conners' scores from grade 2 to 3 not addressed.✓ Behavioral observations limited.✓ Lack of consistency between summary and test results.✓ Some recommendations not helpful – probably already known by classroom teacher. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Well written in general.✓ Very long, hard to find reason for referral.✓ Intellectual results were okay but did not explain the tests themselves to the teachers so that she/he could make necessary connections between the test results and observed classroom behaviors.✓ Test not well explained. Without having the Conners with you, it is difficult to know what to make of the information.✓ Jargon not explained.✓ Recommendations not great for classroom, don't take limitations of the classroom into consideration. |
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| 98-G(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Information left out.✓ Abbreviated terms not explained.✓ What accommodations were made during testing for profound hearing loss?✓ Seems that hearing loss not taken into consideration when examining classroom behaviors.✓ Recommendations lack such as special education designation or hearing enhancement in regular classroom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Does not seem to take hearing loss into consideration when interpreting test scores.✓ Almost seems to want her to fit the mold of special ed designation rather than actually assessing where she is at. |
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| 98-B(3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Testing seems limited✓ Does not address parental input.✓ No recommendations to teach child to self-praise.✓ Other recommendations lack specifics, information. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reason for referral not specific enough.✓ Testing results not informative. No discussion of drawings.✓ Generally needs more information to give a more enlightened picture. |
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| 98-D(1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Eating habits and hygiene not addressed in recommendations or summary although presented in reason for referral.✓ Jargon not explained✓ ADHD mentioned but recommendations do not address.✓ Not a particularly helpful report except that there are plans to meet and share information and strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reason for referral weak✓ Very unfocused write up – inconsistent with reason for referral.✓ Whole report seems useless, no help whatsoever. |
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Appendix D

Table 3

Psychological Report Quality by Experience Level - Overall

Job Experience Level	Psychological Report Quality		
	Excellent	Good	Poor
Novice	3	6	5
Experienced	3	7	5

Note. The novice group is made up of a total of 14 reports, while the experienced group is made up of a total of 15 psychological reports.

Appendix E

Table 4

Psychological Report Quality by Experience Level - Rater 1

Job Experience Level	Psychological Report Quality		
	Excellent	Good	Poor
Novice	4	6	4
Experienced	4	6	5

Note. The novice group is made up of a total of 14 reports, while the experienced group is made up of a total of 15 psychological reports.

Appendix F

Table 5

Psychological Report Quality by Experience Level - Rater 2

Job Experience Level	Psychological Report Quality		
	Excellent	Good	Poor
Novice	3	7	4
Experienced	3	7	5

Note. The novice group is made up of a total of 14 reports, while the experienced group is made up of a total of 15 psychological reports.

Appendix G

Table 6

Raters' Comments as a Function of Psychological Report Quality

Excellent Experienced Reports

98-F (2)

- ✓ Good organization
 - ✓ RR a little limited in detail
 - ✓ Thorough
 - ✓ Background information offered a clear picture of child
 - ✓ Good test behavior description. It was complete and offered required information
 - ✓ Loved the way tests were delineated from one another. You know what this kid can do and what his weaknesses are.
 - ✓ Excellent recommendations.
 - ✓ Overall excellent assessment
-

98-E (1)

- ✓ RR was clear
 - ✓ Background was thorough
 - ✓ Observations were good
 - ✓ Tests were appropriate
 - ✓ Innacurate results explained as innacurate and why
 - ✓ Recommendations were appropriate. They explained why they cannot make an assessment based on what she can do because she cannot hear.
 - ✓ Some jargon not explained (sensorineural hearing loss)
-

98-J (3)

- ✓ RR was fine. Enough information was given
 - ✓ History was good, appropriate. Both academic and emotional discussed.
 - ✓ Test behavior and interview - Students motives seem to be concluded about without testing for those items.
 - ✓ Test results were quite good, well explained.
 - ✓ Summary and conclusions answered the questions as posed in the RR. Recommendations are good and possible to reach.
 - ✓ Nothing negative to say about report.
-

Excellent Novice Reports

98-L (1)

- ✓ Excellent report. Very well organized and set up.
 - ✓ Would have preferred background and RR separate.
 - ✓ Liked the way results were presented as intellectual, behavioral, and emotional.
 - ✓ Lists student's strengths and weaknesses.
 - ✓ Recommendations were clear, appropriate, specific, and realistic.
-

98-A (2)

- ✓ RR clear
 - ✓ Wide variety of information sources
 - ✓ Background was relevant, included home, school, health
 - ✓ Observations were relevant
 - ✓ Test discussion was too clinical
 - ✓ Could focus more on strengths
 - ✓ Recommendations were general
 - ✓ Generally well written
-

98-A (4)

- ✓ RR was vague
 - ✓ Background not specific enough.
 - ✓ General rather than behavioral descriptors used (out of control and dangerous behavior).
 - ✓ Observations were in good detail.
 - ✓ Good explanation of WIPPSI-R.
 - ✓ Very good explanation of student's strengths and weaknesses.
 - ✓ Recommendations were appropriate, practical, and detailed.
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Good Experienced Report

98-C (3)

- ✓ RR - clear rationale stated
 - ✓ Good background, was related to the RR.
 - ✓ Observations gave good mental picture although some observations of paper/pencil task would have added another dimension to the observations.
 - ✓ Test results - VMI and DAP not explained as to what they tested and why she was average. This does not allow for comparisons between what is seen in the school and what the test results would indicate. CTRS not explained. What is a T score? Why is 70 a significant result?
 - ✓ Summary and recommendations repeated the findings. Suggestions for school sketchy, no suggestions as to how to address reading problems.
 - ✓ Recommendations brief and weak. (main reason why average)
 - ✓ Dyslexia is a concern in the background but is not considered later on.
-

98-C (1)

- ✓ RR was sketchy, need more information.
 - ✓ Behavioral observations were good
 - ✓ Test results were very good. Tells what was going on and gave lots of detail without going into lots of lingo.
 - ✓ Summary gave the answers to the question stated.
 - ✓ Recommendations weak, do not specify teaching modifications but rather general structural modifications.
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98-F (1)

- ✓ RR is to the point
 - ✓ Tests not explained
 - ✓ Results very clinical
 - ✓ Addressed self-esteem (good)
 - ✓ Social emotional mentioned (good)
 - ✓ Mentions family problems (good)
 - ✓ Language disorder not even a recommendation (big difference between PIQ and VIQ)
-

98-J (2)

- ✓ Background well done, helpful
 - ✓ Test results weak
 - ✓ Is the difference between verbal and performance significant?
 - ✓ Is 1 test sufficient?
 - ✓ Recommendations weak
-

98-C (2)

- ✓ never says get kid out of immersion
 - ✓ Well written
 - ✓ Good background, includes family
 - ✓ General rather than behavioral descriptors used (presents as immature).
 - ✓ Results good - explained what kid could do, explained tests and scores
 - ✓ Summary was confusing and did not seem consistent with the RR
 - ✓ Recommendations good and possible in classroom setup
 - ✓ Fact that he is in Immersion is not addressed as possible factor
 - ✓ Jargon not explained
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98-I (2)

- ✓ Report brief
 - ✓ Background weak
 - ✓ No other test scores or background information was presented.
 - ✓ Parents view not presented.
 - ✓ Assumes not able to attend regular high school from results of only one test.
-

98-H (1)

- ✓ RR was general.
 - ✓ WISC well explained, scores included.
 - ✓ Summary good – acknowledged that delays may be due to ADHD or other factors which were listed.
 - ✓ Recommendations not helpful for classroom teacher
 - ✓ Says what teacher already knows
 - ✓ At a second glance, there don't seem to be any recommendations.
-

Good Novice Reports

98-A (5)

- ✓ RR was clear.
 - ✓ Sources of information (Cum file) included in data sources but never mentioned in report.
 - ✓ FAE mentioned but never addressed.
 - ✓ Observations limited, 5 sentences long.
 - ✓ WISC explained well, sufficient information.
 - ✓ DAP could be explained more.
 - ✓ Does not address junior high placement question (referral) in summary.
 - ✓ Recommendations useless.
 - ✓ Little emphasis on what could be done to bridge the academic delay mentioned.
-

98-B (2)

- ✓ Already in special education, so testing must have already been done but this is never mentioned
 - ✓ Background is good, lots of information given.
 - ✓ Good description of behaviors, gives a good picture of child.
 - ✓ Jargon not explained (gestalt).
 - ✓ Good the way each test is delineated specifically so you know what you are looking at and what these tests meant for the girl and mean for her teachers in the future.
 - ✓ Summary is good.
 - ✓ More ideas on how to address her specific learning difficulties would be helpful.
-

98-A (1)

- ✓ Need more information on background school. No examples of problem areas in academic development which would suggest why assessment is being done. No information was supplied in this report to explain why the school decides to have this student repeat grade 1
 - ✓ Observations are good. Gives reasoning behind exclusion of some results and concrete examples of behavior in the testing situation.
 - ✓ No recommendations appropriate for classroom teacher.
 - ✓ Only 2 sentences of recommendation to the family. Needs elaboration and stronger emphasis.
 - ✓ French immersion placement not considered as problem.
-

98-K (2)

- ✓ RR seems solid, gives enough information to go into assessment.
 - ✓ Background good
 - ✓ Jargon not explained (adaptive functioning).
 - ✓ Test not explained.
 - ✓ Test results given with content are excellent
 - ✓ Recommendations not helpful, fairly general, not anything new.
 - ✓ Didn't learn anything from report.
-

98-K (1)

- ✓ Background good
 - ✓ Why focus on ADHD if intellectual abilities appear as RR.
 - ✓ Already diagnosed with ADHD and on Ritalin but testing for ADHD, lack of clarity due to the latter.
 - ✓ Student is on Ritalin at the time so are test results reliable?
 - ✓ Jargon not explained (very little interest scatter).
 - ✓ Good recommendations and test interpretation.
-

98-B (5)

- ✓ Jargon not explained.
 - ✓ Few specifics about WISC, no scores.
 - ✓ No explanation for difference between VIQ and PIQ.
 - ✓ Special Education designation used very loosely.
 - ✓ Awkward wording in summary.
 - ✓ Recommendations questionable, some not possible in classroom.
-

Poor Experienced Reports

98-D (1)

- ✓ RR weak – why get psych referral for eating habits but never mention it later on.
 - ✓ Lack of focus in report, couldn't see point of report.
 - ✓ Jargon not explained (KSD).
 - ✓ Not helpful to teacher.
 - ✓ Mentions the issue of ADHD once. Does not mention it again in summary or recommendations. ADHD but no recommendations to deal with it
-

98-G (1)

- ✓ Jargon not explained (SLP).
 - ✓ What accommodations were made during testing for her profound hearing loss?
 - ✓ Is it surprising that, considering her profound hearing loss, she says or does little in class
 - ✓ Her relatively high score in one of the subtests is « not truly meaningful and spuriously high », what does this mean
 - ✓ Her visual memory seems to be an area of strength, is this a surprise?
 - ✓ Recommendations do not include special education or hearing enhancement in regular classroom.
-

98-J (1)

- ✓ RR weak, no indication of what specifics need addressing, nor what areas will be considered, lot of words but what are you doing?
 - ✓ History – nothing on what's happening now.
 - ✓ Setup is poor.
 - ✓ No input from parents.
 - ✓ A lot of information is left out in test results leaving reader to fill gaps.
 - ✓ Not enough recommendations – include suggestions to go into a special education classroom, but no indication given as to what he should be doing there.
 - ✓ Difference between V and P but not addressed in summary or recommendations.
-

98-I (1)

- ✓ Loose background information, no school history or student history.
 - ✓ No observations.
 - ✓ No parent interview.
 - ✓ Number of assessment tools used seems limited - need to include school records, teacher interview, classroom observations, parent interview.
 - ✓ Not a lot of help given in understanding the difficulty that she is having.
-

98-G (2)

- ✓ Confusion all the way through report, not sure who was saying what, very scattered thinking, overall hard to grasp.
 - ✓ No real RR, not clear.
 - ✓ No background on previous schools.
 - ✓ Jargon not explained.
 - ✓ Test results – wording and explanations awkward
 - ✓ Recommendations not great for classroom.
 - ✓ Reports that student is a special education candidate, but this is never supported by test results.
-

Poor Novice Reports

98-A (3)

- ✓ RR weak
 - ✓ Report did not deal with cognitive functioning although in RR.
 - ✓ Jargon not explained (skilled speech movements).
 - ✓ Unusually lengthy background and observation with more than necessary.
 - ✓ Thorough discussion of assessment data.
 - ✓ Recommendations were outside of regular school experience - minute by minute daily management plan unrealistic.
 - ✓ Generally, a lot of stuff not needed
-

98-B (4)

- ✓ RR weak, what is the problem?
 - ✓ Background – school placement not addressed.
 - ✓ Inconsistencies between WISC scores and special education designation.
 - ✓ Rorshack ink blot difficult to figure out
 - ✓ Recommendations unreasonable, useless, do not make any sense.
-

98-B (1)

- ✓ RR good
 - ✓ Background good
 - ✓ Recommendations easily attainable in classroom.
 - ✓ Poor vocabulary, difficulty with verbal instructions, ADHD, and academic delay not addressed in recommendations.
 - ✓ Didn't like organization of report, layout
 - ✓ Jargon not explained.
-

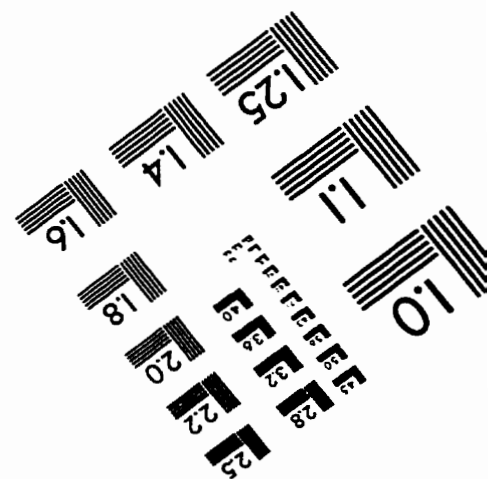
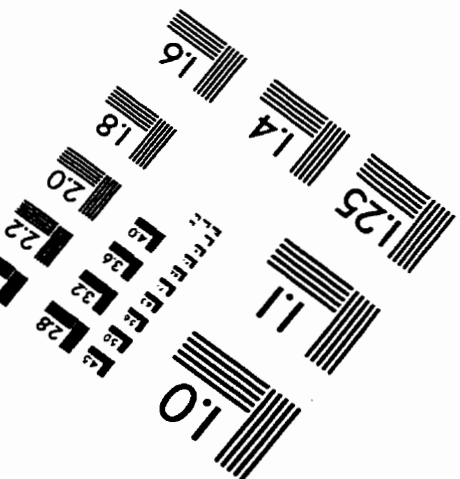
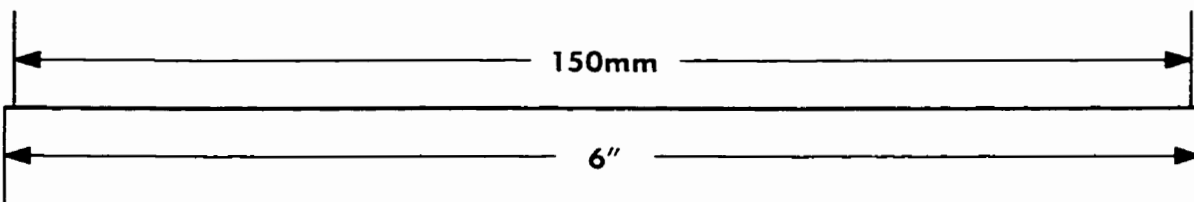
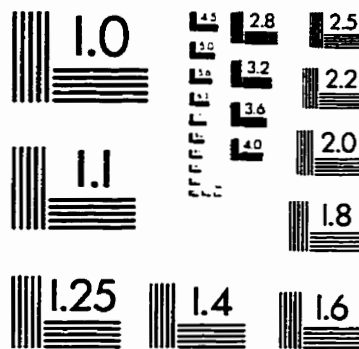
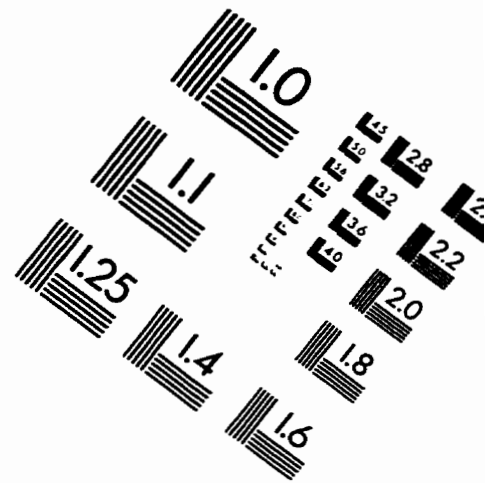
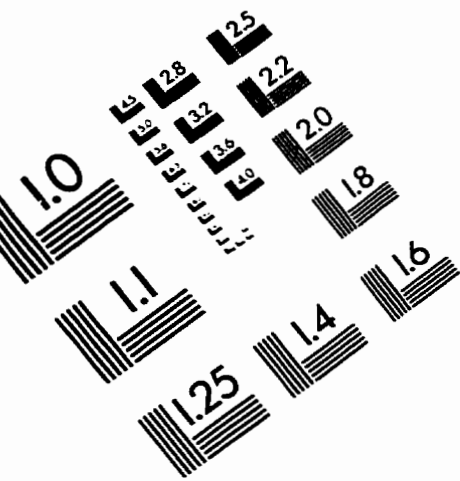
98-L (2)

- ✓ RR and observations should be separate, hard to find RR.
 - ✓ More observations would have been needed especially in regular classroom environment.
 - ✓ Tests not explained enough, without having the Conners with you, it is difficult to know what to make of the information.
 - ✓ Difference exists in Conners from grade 2-3, but this is not addressed.
 - ✓ Inconsistency between results and summary.
 - ✓ Not crazy about recommendations.
 - ✓ Recommendations 4 and 5 are helpful but seems that teacher would already be doing both.
 - ✓ Some recommendations not natural, not good for other kids.
 - ✓ Jargon not explained.
-

98-B (3)

- ✓ RR lacked clarity, not specific enough.
 - ✓ No parental input in background.
 - ✓ Minimized school concerns.
 - ✓ Testing seems limited.
 - ✓ Test results very clinical, not informative.
 - ✓ HFD not explained in results but listed.
 - ✓ Tests not described.
 - ✓ No recommendations to teach child to self-praise.
 - ✓ Suggests books and games in recommendations but does not mention specifics.
-

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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