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Commissioned Article

An overview and analysis of journal operations, journal publication patterns, and journal impact in school psychology and related fields☆,☆☆

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the results of three studies designed to understand better the journal operations, publishing practices, and impact of school psychology journals in recent years. The first study presents the results of a survey focusing on journal operations and peer-review practices that was completed by 61 journal editors of school psychology and aligned journals. The second study presents the results of review and classification of all articles appearing in one volume year for nine school psychology journals (i.e., *The California School Psychologist*, *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, *Journal of Applied School*

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☆☆ The former Editor of the Journal of School Psychology (JSP), Dr. Edward Daly III, commissioned this article to be developed as part of a special issue of JSP. All manuscripts were subjected to masked peer review. Reviews were coordinated by Dr. Tanya Eckert and Dr. John Hintze without using the JSP manuscript submission portal, the Elsevier Editorial System, to ensure that the manuscript authors were blind to reviewers' identities.

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Psychology, *Journal of School Psychology*, *Psychology in the Schools*, *School Psychology Forum*, *School Psychology International*, *School Psychology Quarterly*, and *School Psychology Review*). The third study employed multilevel modeling to investigate differences in the longitudinal trends of impact factor data for five school psychology journals listed in the Web of Science (i.e., *Journal of School Psychology*, *Psychology in the Schools*, *School Psychology International*, *School Psychology Quarterly*, and *School Psychology Review*). The article addresses implications for authors, editors, and journal editorial teams as well as the status and impact of school psychology journals.

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1. Introduction

The development of professional literature in the field of school psychology has followed the characteristics of the field's history in general. That is, in comparison to other professional psychology fields (e.g., clinical psychology), the literature of school psychology developed in the latter half of the twentieth century, followed the rapid growth in employment demand and practitioner preparation, and witnessed rapid expansion. The early history of this literary development has been chronicled by Fagan (1986). Although there were a few books specifically about school psychology prior to the 1960s, its journal literature was broadly scattered across psychological and educational publications until the field matured to the point where a specific literature could be supported. The first journal devoted to school psychology was the *Journal of School Psychology* (JSP) in 1963, which was followed by *Psychology in the Schools* (PITS) in 1964. Table 1 provides a chronology of the journal literature specific to school psychology as well as a list of the journals' publishers and editors. A more expansive chronology of the literature in school psychology appears in Fagan and Wise (2007), and a review of contributors to journal editorial service appears in Runge and French (1999).

This article describes the results of three studies designed to better understand this journal literature. First, we wanted to understand better the widening breadth of peer-reviewed journals in school psychology and related fields that have surfaced during the past decade (cf. Robinson, Skinner, & Brown, 1998; Bliss, Skinner, Hautau, & Carroll, 2008; Strein, Cramer, & Lawser, 2003, which targeted three, four, and five school psychology journals, respectively). We know of no other publication that has outlined these journals' basic characteristics (e.g., number of issues published per year and distribution), operations (e.g., number of manuscripts reviewed and rejection rates), and evidence of impact on other publications, and we envisioned that an overview of these journals would benefit the field as a whole. Second, we wanted to increase the knowledge of manuscript authors about school psychology and related journals so that they would be better able to (a) select journals to which to submit their manuscripts and (b) anticipate the immediate and long-term outcomes of the publication process. Finally, we wanted to increase understanding of those engaged in the peer-review process for journals (e.g., editors and reviewers) by comparing and contrasting practices and outcome indexes across journals. In striving to meet these goals, we focused primarily on school psychology journals targeting a general audience and focusing on a range of topics. We also considered the practices and outcomes of journals highlighting more specific content areas (e.g., assessment and consultation) as well as journals representing related fields (e.g., developmental psychology and educational psychology).

Our first study reports the results of a survey of journal editors of the nine school psychology journals listed in Table 1 as well as editors of related journals. The survey targeted journal operations and peer-review practices during roughly the 2007 volume year of these journals as well as the perspectives of editors about quality submissions and their expectations for reviewers. In order to enrich the picture of the outcomes of the peer-review process and to make concrete the results from the first study, our second study yields results from the coding and analysis of each article appearing during the 2007 volume year for the journals listed in Table 1. In particular, this study focused on analysis of general publishing information (e.g., the number of issues, articles, and pages published) as well as analysis of the general and specific types of articles published during this volume year. Finally, in order to elucidate the citation patterns of

Table 1
Descriptive information about the school psychology journals.

Journal	Date initiated	Publisher	Editors
Journal of School Psychology	1963	Pergamon-Elsevier Science	Donald Smith Jack Bardon Beeman Phillips Thomas Oakland Raymond Dean Joel Meyers Robert Pianta Edward Daly III Randy Floyd
Psychology in the Schools	1964	Clinical Psychology Publishing, Wiley	William Hunt B. Claude Mathis Gerald Fuller, Jr. LeAdelle Phelps David McIntosh
School Psychology International	1979	Sage Publications	Ludwig Lowenstein Caven Mcloughlin Robert Burden
School Psychology Review (formerly *School Psychology Digest*, 1972)	1980	NASP	John Guidubaldi Liam Grimley Daniel Reschly George Hynd Stephen Elliott Edward Shapiro Patti Harrison Susan Sheridan Thomas Power Mathew Burns
Canadian Journal of School Psychology	1985	Sage Publications	G. Gerald Koe Henry Janzen Donald Saklofske Jeffrey Derevensky Marvin Simner Joseph Snyder
School Psychology Quarterly (formerly *Professional School Psychology, 1986*)	1990	Sage Publications, APA	Thomas Kratochwill Joseph Witt Terry Gutkin Rik D'Amato Randy Kamphaus
The California School Psychologist (now *Contemporary School Psychology*)	1996	Cal SP	Shane Jimerson Marilyn Wilson Michael Hass
Journal of Applied School Psychology (formerly *Special Services in the Schools*, 1984)	2002	Routledge-Haward, Taylor & Francis	Charles Maher David Wodrich
School Psychology Forum	2006	NASP	Ray Christner Steven Shaw

Note. The peer-reviewed journal *Trainers of School Psychologists*, published quarterly by the Trainers of School Psychologists, was unintentionally omitted when surveys for Study 1 were distributed in 2008 and when the 2007 volume year of journals were reviewed and coded for Study 2. The *European Journal of School Psychology*, published by Firera and Liuzzo Group, was omitted because it was discontinued in 2007 after publication of four volumes (S. Salvatore, personal communication, September 22, 2011). NASP = National Association of School Psychologists. APA = American Psychological Association. Cal SP = California Association of School Psychologists.

articles published in school psychology journals, our third study reports analyses of journal impact factor values for the five school psychology journals listed in the Web of Science – JSP, PITS, *School Psychology International* (SPI), *School Psychology Quarterly* (SPQ), and *School Psychology Review* (SPR) – from 1997 to 2009. Impact factor values reflect citations of journal articles in other subsequently published journal articles across varying lengths of time (e.g., during the same year of publication, one and two years following publication, and one to five years following publication).

2. Study 1

The first study was designed to better understand the behaviors and perspectives of journal editors in school psychology and related fields. This understanding is important because journal editors hold positions that have great influence on many others in their field and related fields (Hames, 2007). They are the mediators of what is published in the pages of their journals. They develop specific goals for their editorial terms, determine what types of manuscript submissions are acceptable for consideration, construct an editorial team to facilitate processing of manuscript submissions and peer review, and implement methods for determining which articles are accepted or rejected for publication. It is important for both authors and journal editorial teams to understand editors' visions for their journals, standard journal operations and practices, and the rationales supporting them.

It appears that the operations and peer-review practices employed by specific journals are not fully transparent to potential authors. For instance, it is rare that journal editors – at least outside of those published by the American Psychological Association (APA; see APA, 2010b) – publish their journal operations summaries. It may be that the senior journal editorial team and the entire editorial board know of journal operations, such as the number of submissions received each year and the rejection rate for manuscripts reviewed, but these results are not often made available to potential authors or the public as whole. In light of this observation, the specific goals of this study were to increase understanding of these journal operations as well as journal editors' decision making, expectations for manuscripts submitted to their journals, and expectations for those who review for their journals. This study is an extension of other studies focused on educational journals conducted on a bi-yearly basis by Henson (e.g., Henson, 2003, 2005, 2007, as described in Henson, 2005). Additional studies reporting results obtained from journal editors have been published (e.g., Brewer, Scherzer, Van Raalte, Petitpas, & Andersen, 2001; Lounds et al., 2001; Mayrath & Robinson, 2006; Nickerson, 2005; Wilczenski, Phelps, & Lawler, 1992), but they have been narrower in focus or are outdated. Commentaries by editors (e.g., Campbell, 1982; Roberts, 1992) have also included a portion of such information, but these commentaries are typically anecdotal and based on a particular editor's experiences with a single journal. We targeted editors of nine peer-reviewed school psychology journals listed in Table 1 and, in addition, editors of an array of journals focusing on related content areas.

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Recruitment and participants

Editors of journals focusing on school psychology, kindergarten-to-grade-12 education, preschool education, abnormal child psychology and special education, cognition and learning, and individual differences as well as roles associated with school psychology, such as assessment, applied behavior analysis, counseling and psychotherapy, and consultation were targeted as participants. Journals were identified based on reviews of a variety of sources, including textbooks describing the history of school psychology (e.g., Fagan & Wise, 2007), prior surveys of journal editors (e.g., Wilczenski et al., 1992), reference sections of articles in prominent school psychology journals, online curricula vitae of prominent school psychology researchers, and keyword searches of lists of journals included in the PsycInfo data base (see http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycinfo/coverage.aspx). These strategies yielded 106 journal editors to target as participants, and working email addresses were obtained for 99 of these editors. During March and April of 2008, all editors were contacted via email by the first author, and follow-up emails were sent through August of 2008. By the end of November 2008, responses were received from 63 journal editors (64% of those contacted). Although some editors did not complete all items on the survey, only 2 editors actively declined participation. As a result, 61 journal editors completed at least several items on the survey for a final participation rate of 62%. Journals whose editors participated are listed in Table 2.

2.1.2. Instrumentation

Editors were provided a one-page Word document survey that included items devoted to the following: (a) types and length of manuscripts accepted, (b) manuscript submission methods, (c) journal distribution and subscriptions, (d) length of review periods and time to publication, (e) editorial decision making, (f) journal operations (e.g., the number of manuscripts submitted and rejected for publication), (g) reasons why manuscripts are returned to authors or rejected without full review and reasons why manuscripts are

rejected after full review, (h) general recommendations for potential contributors, and (i) desirable characteristics of manuscript reviewers. All initial items were reviewed and critiqued by seven former editors of journals in school psychology and related fields. In addition, these former editors were asked to offer additional items to ensure comprehensiveness. Revisions to the survey were made based on their feedback.

2.1.3. Procedure

Editors were contacted by email by the first author. They were asked to respond to the survey by checking boxes and entering responses directly into a document. Participants returned the completed surveys by email and fax to the first author.

All editors' responses to four of the open-ended survey questions were transferred to a spreadsheet by the second author and coded for content by two coders. The four questions targeted (a) reasons why manuscripts are returned to authors without full review, (b) reasons why manuscripts are rejected after full review, (c) general recommendations for potential contributors, and (d) desirable characteristics of manuscript reviewers. Coders included one master's level graduate student in school psychology (i.e., the last author) and one undergraduate honors student in psychology (i.e., the third author). Both coders participated with the first author in developing the initial coding scheme based on a priori categories, and the coding scheme was refined by the first author based on a review of the responses from the first 15 editors who responded. Coders completed practice exercises, led by the first author, involving coding responses to each question. After training was completed, the two coders coded all responses independently and later met with the first author to evaluate discrepancies in coding and, in such cases, to determine, based on consensus, the correct coding category. Inter-rater agreement indexes across the two coders, based on initial coding, are as follows: (a) reasons why manuscripts are returned to authors or rejected without full review (95%), (b) reasons why manuscripts are rejected after full review (94%), (c) general recommendations for potential contributors (84%), and (d) desirable characteristics of manuscript reviewers (92%).

2.2. Results

2.2.1. Types of submissions and distribution

Table 2 presents information about the types of submissions that editors considered for publication as well as distribution information for all journals. (We present this information about both the school psychology journals and all comparison journals in Tables 2 and 3 for reference, but we highlight primarily the results for the school psychology journals in text.) As evident in the Types column in Table 2, all of the school psychology journal editors conveyed that they accepted full-length research manuscripts. All but one editor (for SPR) conveyed that they accepted full-length narrative manuscripts, and all but one editor (for *Journal of Applied School Psychology;* JASP) conveyed that they accepted brief research manuscripts. Both the editors of *School Psychology Forum* (SPF) and SPR indicated that they accept commentaries for publication. Only the editors of *Canadian Journal of School Psychology* (CnJSP), PITS, and SPI indicated that they accepted historical articles, and only a few editors indicated that they accepted test reviews and book reviews (CnJSP) and narrative case studies (PITS and SPF). All editors but those for JSP and SPQ reported publishing themed issues.

The recommended length of manuscript submissions ranged from a lower limit of 16 pages to an upper limit of 45 pages. The preferred manuscript length for the three journals recommending the fewest number of pages (i.e., JASP, SPI, and SPQ) is notably lower than that for those journals allowing the greatest number of pages (i.e., CnJSP, JSP, and SPR). At the time the survey was distributed, the school psychology journals were varied in their use of on-line submission portals, email communication, or traditional mail services for submitting manuscripts (see Method column in Table 2).

It is notable that all school psychology journals but JASP and PITS were associated with professional organizations (see Members subscriptions column in Table 2). Most notably, members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) receive copies of SPR each quarter and have electronic access to SPF. Although several editors did not report information about or estimate the number of individual subscriptions and institutional subscriptions for their journals, reports of the number of these subscriptions varied substantially. Based on the information reported by the editor of SPR, it appears that its more than 25,000 subscriptions (primarily those of NASP members) was exceeded by only that of the *American Psychologist* ($n = 105{,}626$ in 2007; APA, 2008), the flagship journal of the APA distributed to all its members. Furthermore, the 3000

Table 2
Submission and Distribution Information for Participating Journals.

Journal	Submissions				Distribution			
	Types	Themed issues	Length (in pg)	Method	Member subscription	Individual subscriptions	Institutional subscriptions	On-line access
School psychology journals								
The California School Psychologist	A, B, C	Y	25	EM	Cal SP	3272	11	Y
Canadian Journal of School Psychology	A, B, C, D, E, F	Y	30–35	EM	Can SP	175	NR	Y
Journal of Applied School Psychology	A, B	Y	16–25	HC	None	NR	NR	Y
Journal of School Psychology	A, B, C	N	40–45	OL	SSSP	NR	NR	Y
Psychology in the Schools	A, B, C, F, G	Y	30	HC	None	25–50	3000	Y
School Psychology Forum	A, B, C, G, I	Y	30	EM, HC	NASP	NR	NR	Y
School Psychology International	A, B, C, F, K	Y	16–18	HC, EM	ISPA	~100	500+	Y
School Psychology Quarterly	A, B, C	N	20[a]	OL	APA D16	1904	208	Y
School Psychology Review	A, C, I	Y	30	OL	NASP	25,211	365	Y
Comparison journals								
American Journal on Mental Retardation	A, B, C, E	Y	20–35	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Applied Neuropsychology	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I	Y	20–30	EM, OL	ACPN, HNS, PNS	NR	NR	Y
Assessment	A, C	Y	NR	EM	APA D12	NR	NR	Y
Assessment for Effective Intervention	A, B, C, D, E, F	Y	30	OL	LEDS, ADCEC	2000	200	Y
Behavior Therapist	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J	Y	16	EM	ABCT	4000	~20	Y
British Journal of Developmental Disabilities	A, B, C, D, E, I	Y	NR	EM	NR	NR	NR	Y
British Journal of Developmental Psychology	A, B, C	Y	~27[a]	OL	BPS	NR	NR	Y
British Journal of Educational Psychology	A,B	N	25	OL	BPS	NR	NR	Y
Child Maltreatment	A, B, C, E, I	Y	30	OL	APSAC	NR	NR	Y
Child Neuropsychology	A, B, C, D, E, G, I	Y	20–25	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry	B, C, F, G, I	Y	17	OL	BPS, BA Psychotherapy, BA Psychiatry	NR	NR	Y
Developmental Psychology	A, B, C, I	Y	35	OL	NR	NR	NR	N
Developmental Disabilities Bulletin	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I	Y	30	EM, HC, OL	NR	200	100	Y
Early Child Development and Care	A, B, F, H, J	Y	20	EM, HC	NR	NR	NR	Y
Early Childhood Research Quarterly	A, B, C, E, I	Y	30–40	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Early Education and Development	A, B, I, K	Y	30–50	OL	NR	NR	NR	N
Education & Treatment of Children	A, B, C, E, J	Y	20–30	EM	NR	6	245	N

Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities	A, B	N	25	HC	CEC, DDD	4000	1000	Y
Educational Assessment	A, B	Y	4–6	EM	NR	NR	NR	Y
Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice	A, B, H, I, J	Y	25	OL	NR	NR	NR	N
Educational Psychologist	B, I	Y	30	OL	APA D15	92	534	N
Educational Psychology Review	B, I, K	Y	NR	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Educational Research and Evaluation	A, B, C, D, F	NR	7–27[a]	NR	NR	NR	NR	Y
International Journal of Testing	A, C, D, E, F	Y	20	EM	ITC	400	500	Y
Journal for the Education of the Gifted	A, B, E, F	Y	30	EM	CEC TAG	1600	400	Y
Journal of Adolescence	A, B, C, E	Y	17[a]	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Adolescent Research	A, B, C, E, F, G	Y	35	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis	A, B, C, E, I	Y	11+	OL	NR	1842	1358	Y
Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology	A, B, E, I	Y	NR	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Attention Disorders	A–K	Y	30	EM	NR	73	5133	Y
Journal of Behavioral Education	A, B, C	Y	25	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	A, B, C, G	Y	30–35	OL	APA D53	648	109	Y
Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology	A, B, C, D, E, G	Y	20	EM	IACEP	300	40	Y
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology	A, B, C	Y	35	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Early Adolescence	A, C, I	Y	25	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Educational Measurement	A, B, E	Y	20	OL	NCME	NR	NR	NR
Journal of Educational Psychology	A, B	N	40–70	OL	APA	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	A, B	Y	25–35	OL	NR	~1000	~1000	Y
Journal of Learning Disabilities	A	Y	35–40	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions	A, B, C, E, G	Y	20–30	EM	APA D25	NR	NR	N
Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment	A, B, C, D, E	Y	17–20[a]	EM	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment	A, B, C, E	Y	35–40	HC, EM	NR	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Research in Childhood Education	A, B	Y	30	EM	ACEI	NR	NR	Y
Journal of Special Education	A, B, C, F, G, H, I	Y	25–35	OL	CEC DR	~500	~1100	Y
Journal on Developmental Disabilities	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K	Y	10 + tables	OL	OADD	Freely available	14	Y
Learning and Instruction	A	Y	NR	OL	EARLI	>2000	NR	Y
Learning Disabilities Research & Practice	A, B, F, G	Y	20–25	EM	DLD	~7000	>600	Y

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Journal	Submissions				Distribution			
	Types	Themed issues	Length (in pg)	Method	Member subscription	Individual subscriptions	Institutional subscriptions	On-line access
Psychological Assessment	A, C	Y	35	OL	APA D5	2469	570	N
Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties	A, B, E	Y	30	EM	NR	NR	NR	Y
Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal	A, B, C, D, E	Y	~30	OL	IDA, SSSR	NR	NR	Y
Reading Research and Instruction	A, D, G	N	25	OL	ALER	420	550	N
Topics in Early Childhood Special Education	A, B, C, D, F	Y	NR	OL	NR	NR	NR	Y

Note. NR = not reported. A = full-length research articles (i.e., descriptive, correlational, meta-analysis, causal-comparative, and causal-experimental), B = full-length narrative articles (e.g., narrative review articles, theoretical articles, professional development articles) , C = brief research articles, D = test reviews, E = book reviews, F = historical articles, G = narrative case studies (not employing research designs), H = obituaries and commemorative reports, I = comments, commentary, reaction articles, or letters to the editor, J = award addresses, and K = other. HC = hard copy by mail, EM = electronic copy by email, OL = on-line submission via website. ABCT = Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies, ACEI = Association for Childhood Education International, ACPN = American College of Professional Neuropsychology, ALER = Association Of Literacy Educators And Researchers, APA = American Psychological Association, APSAC = American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, BPS = British Psychological Society, BA Psychotherapy = British Association of Psychology, BA Psychiatry = British Association of Psychology, Cal SP = California Association of School Psychologists, Can SP = Canadian Association of School Psychologists, CEC = Council for Exceptional Children, D5 = Division 5: Division of Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics, D12 = Division 12: Clinical Psychology, D15 = Division 15: Educational Psychology, D16 = Division 16: School Psychology, D25 = Division 25: Behavior Analysis, D53 = Division 53: Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, DDD = Division of Developmental Disabilities, DLD = Division for Learning Disabilities, DR = Division of Research, EARLI = European Association for Research on Learning Instruction, IACEP = International Association for Cognitive Education and Psychology, IDA = International Dyslexia Association, ISPA = International School Psychology Association, ITC = International Test Commission, NASP = National Association of School Psychologists, NCME = National Council on Measurement in Education, OADD = Ontario Association of Developmental Disabilities, SSSP = The Society for the Study of School Psychology, SSSR = Society for the Scientific Study of Reading, and TAG = The Association of the Gifted. We were unable to confirm the meaning of several abbreviations reported by editors (included in the Member subscription column): ADCEC, HNS, LEDS, and PNS.

[a] Word counts were converted to manuscript pages by dividing the number of words by 300 and rounding to the nearest whole number.

institutional subscriptions reported for PITS (a) are second to only one other journal for which data were reported for this study (i.e., *Journal of Attention Disorders*) and (b) more than double the subscriptions of all but one journal (i.e., *Journal of Educational Psychology*) listed as an APA general or division journal (APA, 2008). All school psychology journal editors reported on-line access to their articles.

2.2.2. Number of submissions and rejection rate

Table 3 presents data from editors about their manuscript load, rejection rates, review periods, and publication lags in 2007. Data for SPF were not reported by its editor, so no results for this journal are included in Table 3. (Missing data are also evident for other journals in Table 3.) Again, our goal was to highlight information about the school psychology journals and compare and contrast them with a reasonably sized sample of related journals. To facilitate comparisons to the other journals, we calculated *z* scores ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$) for each variable of interest using data from the school psychology journals and the descriptive statistics (i.e., *M* and *SD*s) derived from data obtained from editors of 45 other journals (87% of such journals) listed in Table 2. Although the distributions of variables for the comparison journals were non-normal in every case, these distributions were not corrected because we maintain that the obtained distributions best represented the population of journals in these related areas.

As evident in Table 3, across the eight school psychology journals, the average number of manuscript submissions received was 95.75 ($SD = 52.70$), but the range was substantial—from 21 (for *The California School Psychologist*; CalSP)[4] to almost eight times that number: 165 (for JSP). Based on comparison data from the other journals included in this study, all of the school psychology journals except JSP received fewer submissions than average, with negative *z* scores ranging from −1.02 (CalSP) to −0.01 (PITS). However, all school psychology journals but CalSP were within one standard deviation of the comparison group mean ($M = 151$, $SD = 128$). JSP, which received the largest number of submissions in 2007, was associated with a *z* score of only 0.11.

When considering the number of manuscripts accepted in comparison to the number of manuscripts received, overall rejection rates averaged to about 72% ($SD = 15\%$) across the eight school psychology journals and ranged from 48% (CnJSP) to 92% (JSP; see Table 3). When compared to an average rejection rate of 69% ($SD = 21\%$, range = 5% to 95%) across 45 comparison journals, all school psychology journals but JSP ($z = 1.11$) and CnJSP ($z = -1.01$) were within one standard deviation. Thus, JSP had a notably higher rejection rate, and CnJSP had a notably lower rejection rate than the comparison journals.

When the number of manuscripts rejected without full review were considered for the school psychology journals, results indicated that an average of 18% of manuscripts ($SD = 16\%$) were not distributed for full review. As evident in Table 3, the range was 0% (CnJSP and PITS) to 47% (SPQ). Across those six journals that engaged in this practice, an average of 24% of manuscripts ($Mdn = 23\%$) were returned to authors without full review. Editors of three of the eight school psychology journals reported rejecting at least one quarter of new submissions without full review (SPI, 27%; SPQ, 47%; and SPR, 31%). Based on comparison data, both of the school psychology journals that did not reject manuscripts without full review during the targeted year (i.e., CnJSP and PITS) are more than one standard deviation below the mean ($zs = -1.01$), whereas SPQ exceeded one standard deviation ($z = 1.84$) in its rejection of manuscripts without full review.

When we targeted journals whose editors reject manuscripts without full review and considered the rejection rates for manuscripts that passed initial screening by editors and had been distributed for full review, we found that rejection rates dropped sharply for some school psychology journals (range = 42% for SPI to 91% for JSP). (See Table 3 for reference to both overall rejection rates and rate of rejection after full review.) Across the school psychology journals, manuscripts that were distributed for review were about 13% less likely, on average, to be rejected than the typical manuscripts submitted for publication. The differences between the overall rejection rate and the rejection rate for those manuscripts distributed for full review differed by as much as 34% (SPQ) to as little as 3% (JASP) and 1% (JSP). Based on results presented in Table 3, trends in the differences between these types of rejection rates were similar to across comparison journals, *M* difference = 8%, $SD = 11\%$, range = 0% to 55%.

[4] *The California School Psychologist* has recently changed its title to *Contemporary School Psychology*, but we retained its original title throughout this article to accurately represent the information provided about the journal in 2008.

Table 3
Journal operations data for participating journals.

Journal	No. ms received	Overall rejection rate	Rate of rejection without full review	Rate of rejection after full review	Review period (in months)	Publication lag (in months)	Annual operations report
School psychology journals							
The California School Psychologist	21	58%	19%	47%	2	4	N
Canadian Journal of School Psychology	24	48%	0%	–	6	NR	N
Journal of Applied School Psychology	97	77%	9%	73%	11	12–14	N
Journal of School Psychology	165	92%	14%	91%	2	3	N
Psychology in the Schools	150	74%	0%	–	1–2	10–14	Y
School Psychology Forum	NR	–	–	–	2	NR	N
School Psychology International	89	59%	27%	42%	4	6	N
School Psychology Quarterly	94	87%	47%	53%	2	6	Y
School Psychology Review	126	81%	31%	72%	2	7	Y
Comparison journals							
American Journal on Mental Retardation	100	80%	27%	73%	3–4	12	N
Applied Neuropsychology	82	66%	4%	65%	3	12	N
Assessment	244	82%	9%	80%	2	10–12	N
Assessment for Effective Intervention	18	15%	28%	–	~1	9–12	N
Behavior Therapist	~60	~13%	10%	2%	3–4	3–6	N
British Journal of Developmental Disabilities	28	42%	7%	36%	3	3	N
British Journal of Developmental Psychology	125	–	13%	–	2	9	N
British Journal of Educational Psychology	180	82%	45%	67%	–	10	N
Child Maltreatment	120	70%	19%	63%	2.1	6–12	Y
Child Neuropsychology	83	55%	0%	–	2[a]	12–15	N
Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry	84	41%	7%	35%	6	9	N
Developmental Disabilities Bulletin	10	–	–	–	2–4	6	N
Developmental Psychology	500	~80%	10%	78%	4–5	~3[a]	N
Early Child Development and Care	500	85%	2%	84%	~1.5[b]	5	Y
Early Childhood Research Quarterly	200	85%	–	–	~2[a]	6	N
Early Education and Development	130	74%	2%	73%	2.5	9–18	N
Education & Treatment of Children	70	90%	3%	90%	3	12	Y
Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities	75	46%	5%	42%	2	12	N
Educational Assessment	40	69%	5%	68%	4	4	N
Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice	NR	–	–	NR	NR	12	N
Educational Psychologist	53	47%	15%	36%	1.5	5	N

Educational Psychology Review	42	68%	26%	56%	~1.5[a]	~4	Y
Educational Research and Evaluation	92	83%	51%	58%	3–5	3–4	Y
International Journal of Testing	59	95%	22%	92%	5	12	N
Journal for the Education of the Gifted	~100	~83%	–	–	3	9	Y
Journal of Adolescence	~350	83%	50%	66%	4–6	6–9	N
Journal of Adolescent Research	170	80%	65%	25%	4	6	N
Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis	235	65%	2%	65%	>3	9	N
Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology	NR	–	–	–	NR	NR	N
Journal of Attention Disorders	150	–	0%	–	>1	<12	Y
Journal of Behavioral Education	45	38%	4%	35%	3	6	N
Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology	250	88%	8%	86%	2	6–9	Y
Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology	30	82%	0%	82%	2–3	4–12	Y
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology	510	75%	45%	43%	1.75	3	Y
Journal of Early Adolescence	120	71%	26%	61%	~2[a]	3–6	N
Journal of Educational Measurement	NR	–	–	–	NR	NR	N
Journal of Educational Psychology	412	69%	–	–	2	6–9	N
Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	~75	~72%	–	–	1	9–12	Y
Journal of Learning Disabilities	157	81%	11%	78%	3–4	12	N
Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions	61	74%	3%	73%	1.9[b]	4–12	N
Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment	100+	~65%	~15%	~57%	1–2	~9–12	N
Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment	92	78%	36%	63%	1.5	8	N
Journal of Research in Childhood Education	144	74%	3%	73%	3	4–6	Y
Journal of Special Education	88	80%	9%	77%	2	10	Y
Journal on Developmental Disabilities	42	5%	39%	–	8	4–24.5[a]	N
Learning and Instruction	200	80%	26%	70%	2.5[a]	8–12	Y
Learning Disabilities Research & Practice	NR	–	–	–	3–4	6–9	N
Psychological Assessment	338	84%	26%	76%	2.5	5	Y
Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties	100+	~80%	~5%	79%	4	12–13.5[a]	Y
Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal	~200	~88%	~8%	86%	~2	~0.5[a]	N
Reading Research and Instruction	102	72%	7%	69%	~2[a]	12	N
Topics in Early Childhood Special Education	NR	–	–	–	NR	NR	N

Note. NR = not reported. When an approximate value was indicated by editors, these values were marked accordingly. Values that could not be computed accurately were omitted. The overall rejection rate indicates the percentage of submitted manuscripts not accepted for publication in a journal. It was calculated by dividing the number of manuscript accepted for publication by total submissions (omitting manuscripts pending decision) and subtracting from 100%. Rate of rejection without full review was calculated by dividing the number of manuscripts rejected without full review by total submissions. Rate of rejection after full review was calculated by dividing the number of manuscript accepted for publication by total submissions omitting both manuscripts rejected without full review and manuscripts pending decisions and subtracting from 100%. Review period in months refers to the period between receipt of a manuscript by the journal and the date of the editorial decision letter offered by an editor. Publication lag in months refers to the period between acceptance of a manuscript and its publication (in the hard copy form or on-line publication of the journal issue).

[a] Days were converted to months by dividing the number of days by 30 and rounded to the nearest half-month interval.

[b] Weeks were divided by 4 and rounded to the nearest half-month interval.

2.2.3. Review periods and publication lag

Based on results presented in Table 3, editors of the school psychology journals reported that their review periods – the time from submission to decision – averaged 3.6 months. The variance across journals was substantial ($SD = 3.2$ months), with a range from 1 month (PITS) to 11 months (JASP). The review periods of comparison journals averaged 2.9 months ($SD = 1.5$ months) with a range of 1 month to 8 months. Several school psychology journals also varied significantly from the comparison group mean, including JASP, $z = 5.34$; CnJSP, $z = 2.04$; and PITS, $z = -1.26$.

Editors of the school psychology journals reported that their publication lags – the time from acceptance of a manuscript to its appearance in print or in the official online publication of the journal issue – averaged 6.9 months ($SD = 3.8$ months), with a range of 3 months (JSP) to 12 months (JASP; see Table 3). The publication lag of comparison journals averaged 8.2 months ($SD = 1.5$ months) with a range of 3 months to 9 months. Several school psychology journals varied significantly from the comparison group mean, JSP, $z = -1.55$; CalSP, $z = -1.25$; and JASP, $z = 1.13$.

2.2.4. Journal operations

Table 3 also represents results from editors regarding whether they publish annual journal operations reports. A total of three of the nine editors of the school psychology journals (33%) reported publishing such journal operations reports. A comparable percentage of editors from the comparison journals (31%) reported such practices.

2.2.5. Reasons for rejection without full review

All editors but two (97% of respondents across all journals listed in Table 3) indicated that they screen manuscripts before sending them out for full review and occasionally reject manuscripts after such screening, and all but four editors reported rejecting manuscripts without full review during the volume year targeted in the survey (see Table 3). Recall that an average of 18% of manuscripts submitted to the school psychology journals and an average of 17% of manuscripts submitted to comparison journals were rejected without full review.

Editors' responses to the question about why manuscripts are returned to authors or rejected without full review were coded into the following categories. A total of 95% of the editors conveyed that manuscripts were rejected if they focused on inappropriate topics or research methodologies for their journal and its audience. Relevant responses conveyed that such manuscripts focused on an "inappropriate topic area, not relevant to the journal audience" and that such manuscripts were "outside of the scope of the journal" and that they displayed a "lack of match with the journal mission." These sentiments composed 50% of all sentiments coded in response to this question. A total of 39% of editors reported rejecting manuscripts without full review because they contained poor quality of writing and application of APA style. Many offered comments indicating that such manuscripts are often "very poorly prepared" and contain "very poor writing." They commented that manuscripts are rejected without full review when they display "egregious failure to meet style requirements" and poor "professional preparation of the manuscript, attending to APA format." One editor wrote that rejected papers are "really in the draft stage and would not warrant more than 70% out of 100 [if graded]." In the same vein, other editors noted that these manuscripts display an absence of specific content recommended in APA style. They noted problems such as "poor definition of sample" and "missing limitation section," and such comments are consistent with the recent Journal Article Reporting Standards (APA, 2010a; Cooper, 2009). These sentiments composed 20% of all sentiments coded in response to this question.

A total of 22% of editors reported that manuscripts were rejected when the research described in them was of poor quality and the interpretation of results by authors appeared to be incorrect. Editors noted that such manuscripts have "no research design" and that they may fail "to use effect size and statistical analysis when appropriate." Only 7% of editors indicated that the manuscripts were rejected when they had weak connectedness with prior research and contributions to science or practice. Finally, 29% of editors reported reasons for manuscript rejection that could be placed into other categories; these responses were too vague to warrant more specific categorization. For example, some editors reported that such manuscripts were "not ready for publication" and the "editorial judgment [was] that the paper would not survive the peer review process."

2.2.6. Reasons for rejection after full review

All editors provided responses to the question requesting that they list the three most common reasons why manuscripts are rejected after full review. The vast majority of editors (87%) indicated that manuscripts were rejected due to poor quality of research and interpretations, and these sentiments composed 40% of all of those reported. Editors reported problems related to flaws in research design and methodology, inadequate participant sampling or resulting data, and improper analysis of data. Comments about methodological problems included "flaws in design that can't be overcome by additional analyses," "inappropriate methodology (e.g., too many analyses, too few subjects, improper analysis)," and "flawed data [and] lack of demonstration of experimental control." A few editors mentioned statistical problems, such as use of antiquated or inapplicable statistics. In addition, most editors (69%) reported that rejected manuscripts demonstrated weak connectedness with prior research and did not contribute to science or practice; these sentiments composed 32% of all of those reported. Fewer than one-third of editors indicated that the problems were due to poor quality of writing and application of APA style (30%), the topic of the manuscript or research methodology being inappropriate for the journal and its audience (21%), or vague, idiosyncratic issues (10%) that did not warrant more specific categorization.

2.2.7. Recommendations for potential contributors

All editors but four (93%) provided responses to the question requesting that they list the three most important recommendations to potential contributors to their journal. The vast majority of these editors (75%) encouraged authors to ensure that their manuscripts contain high quality writing; 24% of their sentiments in response to this question were in this category. They focused on writing cohesion and perspective taking when writing in offering comments such as "Focus on straight-line thinking as you write up your research" and "Remember the readership does not have the same amount of knowledge as the author does, so describe the findings and keep it relevant." Other editors focused on the final stages of writing, reviewing and revising, in offering these recommendations: "Have the manuscript polished to the best of one's ability because lack of attention to detail can create negative impressions," "Have several colleagues give you feedback on the manuscript before you submit," "Have an experienced, published author review manuscript for content and style before submitting," and simply "proofread the manuscript." Others encouraged authors to follow APA style and provide detailed reports of study methods and outcomes.

More than a third of editors (40%) encouraged authors to ensure that their manuscripts were connected to prior research and that they contribute to science or practice. They recommended that authors "thoroughly ground the piece in existing theory and/or research" and to generally "plan their research—do not just do a study because you stumbled over a sample or some archival data." Others recommended that the contribution of the manuscript be made explicit via comments like "Be certain to clearly articulate the unique contribution of the manuscript to the science and practice of school psychology" and "Establish the conceptual and/or clinical contribution of the paper." An equal percentage of editors (40%) provided various recommendations for authors (a.k.a., "other comments"), which included perseverance and attention to detail, that did not warrant more specific categorization. More than a third of editors (37%) also encouraged authors to ensure high-quality research and interpretations. One editor conveyed, "Develop a coherent set of research questions and choose the best methodology to address them," and another stated, "If you are not statistically sophisticated, find a co-author who is and who can match the analyses to the research questions." Finally, about one-fifth of editors (21%) recommended that the authors better tailor or otherwise match their manuscript's topic or research methodology to the journal and its audience. One editor wrote, "Read the instructions on the websites, read through previous issues, [and] make sure you understand the journal's aims and procedures."

2.2.8. Desirable characteristics of reviewers

All but one editor (98%) provided responses to the question requesting that they list the three most desirable characteristics of reviewers who engage in the peer-review process. More than two-thirds of these editors (70%) conveyed that the best reviewers provide thorough, thoughtful, up-to-date, and constructive feedback and recommendations; 30% of the sentiments offered in response to this question fell into this category. Editors conveyed that these reviewers "write a constructive critique," have the "ability to write constructive and instructive reviews," are "willing to offer prescriptive suggestions to overcome the deficiencies," are helpful to the authors, and use a constructive tone in their comments. Next, more than two-thirds of editors (69%) conveyed that the best reviewers have experience in publishing, have

knowledge of field, and possess expertise in research design, methodology, and statistics. Some characteristics deemed important include "standing in the field [and] extensive publication record" and "knowledge of the content area of the manuscript." Also, more than two-thirds of editors (64%) conveyed that the best reviewers are available to review, prompt in responding to invitations to review, and dependable once they accept the invitation to review. They expressed these sentiments in comments indicating that these reviewers have "respect for deadlines" and that they "say yes [and] are timely." Responses in other categories were offered by fewer than 20% of editors. A total of 15% of editors conveyed that the best reviewers are unbiased and considerate yet critical. Their comments indicated that the reviewers have the "ability to provide a fair and balanced judgment," use a "professional tone in feedback," and are "respectful to authors." The two final categories of responses included (a) "other comments" (8%), which included sentiments such as possessing appropriate theoretical perspective, and (b) the ability to identify design, statistical, and other flaws in study or manuscript (7%).

2.3. Discussion

The results of this study offer some critical insights to potential authors of manuscripts as well as journal editorial teams, and it contributes to a small but emerging body of literature examining the peer-review process used by psychology journals.

2.3.1. Types of articles

There is variability in the types of submissions that journal editors accept. This variability, however, is not substantial, and there appears to be an absence of a definite niche (in terms of "article type") for the nine school psychology journals listed in Table 1. All editors reported accepting full-length research manuscripts, and all but one reported accepting brief reports. Only one journal editor reported publishing narrative case studies, three reported publishing historical articles, and one reported publishing test reviews and books reviews. No editors indicated that they publish only theoretically oriented, narrative review articles (e.g., like the APA journal *Psychological Review* as well as the *Educational Psychologist* and *Educational Psychology Review*) or summaries of research (like the APA journal *Psychological Bulletin*). Of course, editors' reports reflected only unsolicited manuscripts that are ultimately published. It is clear, however, from reviewing issues of these journals that many publish commentaries as part of themed issues (see also Study 2). In addition, it is clear that these other, less common types of articles are published in journals outside of the nine school psychology journals (e.g., test reviews in *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* and *Assessment for Effective Intervention*) and in newsletters (e.g., *Communiqué* and *The School Psychologist*).

The variability in page length requirements across the school psychology journals should motivate authors to consider carefully a journal's submission requirements when drafting their manuscripts. Submitting a manuscript that is too lengthy may be returned or rejected without full review by some journals. On the other hand, submitting a manuscript that is brief but contains too few details may lead it to be rejected by other journals after reviewers comment that Journal Article Reporting Standards (APA, 2010a) have not been met.

2.3.2. Manuscript load and rejection rates

There was substantial variability in the number of manuscripts submitted to the school psychology journals—from fewer than 2 a month to greater than 13 a month. However, when considering the operations of the school psychology journals in contrast to those from comparison journals, it appears that the school psychology journals receive submissions that are comparable to or lower than those of many other journals. In fact, only three (37%) of the school psychology journals for which submission data were reported received more than 100 manuscripts in 2007. Mayrath and Robinson (2006) reported that editors of educational psychology journals indicated a similar but perhaps much wider range of submissions across its journals in 2004—from 30 submissions (for the *Educational Psychologist*) to 320 submissions (for the *Journal of Educational Psychology*). Based on at least data from 2007, school psychology editors and editorial boards are not drowning in submissions. In contrast, rejection rates, on average, were slightly higher than the average across comparable journals (72% versus 69%, respectively), and all journals, barring JSP, were within one standard deviation of the comparison group average. In contrast, this rejection rate is notably lower than those for the educational psychology journals reported by Mayrath and

Robinson (2006), which were above 85% in three cases and above approximately 75% in five cases. Across all journals with information in Table 3, it appears that the relation between the number of submissions and the rejection rate is positive and *weak* but bordering on *moderate*, $r = .39$.

2.3.3. Reasons for rejection and the responsibilities of authors

The reasons that manuscripts are rejected after full review seem to be markedly different than the reasons why manuscripts are returned to authors or rejected without full review. Screening of manuscripts by editors seems to focus on surface-level characteristics of the manuscript, such as the general topic or research methodology as well as writing and formatting of the manuscript. In contrast, the full review of the manuscripts facilitated by multiple peer reviewers allows for in-depth evaluation of the quality of the content of manuscripts as well as their linkage with prior research and their contributions to science and practice. It appears that authors should focus substantially on the foundational skills associated with writing and application of APA style. Lack of sound writing and formatting is a common reason manuscripts are returned to authors without full review, and strong writing was the most prominent recommendation editors provided to potential contributors.

Authors should ensure that their manuscript corresponds well to the journal's goals and audience. Among the school psychology journals, particular emphasis seems to be placed on the match with and relevance of the scholarship to children and adolescents in school settings. Authors considering school psychology journals as outlets for their research may benefit from reviewing the APA's public description of school psychology as a specialty (APA, 2011). In addition, authors may review prominent books that are commercially available to learn more about school psychology: *The Oxford Handbook of School Psychology* (Bray & Kehle, 2011), *School Psychology: Past, Present, and Future* (Fagan & Wise, 2007), the *Handbook of School Psychology* (Gutkin & Reynolds, 2009), *School Psychology for the 21st Century: Foundations and Practices* (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimple-Peacock, 2011), and *Best Practices in School Psychology* (Thomas & Grimes, 2008). Such correspondence between manuscripts and the journals to which they are submitted seems vital for a manuscript to move beyond initial screening to full review.

Our findings are consistent with Nickerson's (2005) comments about editors' preferences. He conveyed that they desire "submissions that report interesting, scientifically sound, and theoretically/practically important work" (p. 662). Importantly, Nickerson added, "Cosmetics matter as well; [editors] expect manuscripts that represent what the submitters consider finished products. Editors (as well as reviewers) are likely to react negatively to an otherwise solid manuscript that shows signs of haste or lack of care in preparation" (p. 662). Martinez, Floyd, and Erichsen (2011) describe some of the best texts for assuring strong writing and proper formatting.

2.3.4. Expectations for reviewers

Understanding the array of editors' expectations for reviewers informs (a) other editors in determining if their standards and experiences are in line with those of their editor peers, (b) editorial board members and ad-hoc reviewers who are striving to display strong journal citizenship behaviors, and (c) authors and potential authors who may wonder what factors drive the selection of reviewers for their manuscripts, which affects the content and the quality of the reviews they receive. Our results indicate that editors value not only (a) reviewers who have experience and expertise in publishing and in the related areas of research and practice but also (b) reviewers who are dependable and quick to respond to requests for review and who take the time to review manuscripts thoroughly and to provide constructive feedback and recommendations to authors. These findings are consistent with Nickerson's (2005) comments that editors want "objective, insightful, constructive, tactful reviews—on time. Reviewers who commit to reviews and then fail to deliver or who deliver only after being hounded repeatedly are a source of frustration. Perfunctory or superficial reviews are a waste of everyone's time" (p. 662).

A number of well-developed resources for reviewers are available in psychology (e.g., Ramos-Álvarez, Valdés-Conroy, & Catena, 2008; Sternberg, 2005) and related fields (Alexander, 2005; Roberts, Coverdale, Edenharder, & Louie, 2004), and the ranking of criteria for judging manuscripts discussed in Albers, Floyd, Fuhrmann, and Martinez (2011) can also be used to guide reviewers. In addition, editors' comments stated or implied that some reviewers are excessively critical in their comments in a manner that is not constructive. Nickerson's statement about the costs of such reviews is noteworthy: "Caustic reviews, ad hominem comments, and imperious or insensitive phrasing of points can be worse than a waste of time—they can do

real harm." Sternberg's (2002) article about civility in reviewing provides examples of such harmful reviews, and editors and others processing manuscripts during peer review should maintain the integrity of the peer-review process by protecting authors from such caustic reviews (see Hames, 2007).

2.3.5. Limitations and future research

There are several limitations of this study. First is the reliance on the self-report of editors. It is likely that impression management affected editors' responses (Paulus, 1991); it is only natural that editors would want to present their journal operations and editorial practices in the best possible light. In this vein, one of the former editors who reviewed the earliest drafts of our survey wrote to us and commented, "I believe you'll get generalities, which you will then try to report as stated fact. It would be interesting to test the veracity of the claims made…. You are dealing with self-report data that likely is not very accurate and may be intentionally misleading." We did as this reviewer suggested for at least one variable from our survey for the APA journals listed in the APA Journal Operations Report (APA, 2008); we targeted for review the number of submissions for six of these journals. For three of the journals, editors' reports match perfectly those reported in the APA Journal Operations Report. However, the editors of three journals reported receiving 50 additional submissions, 3 additional submissions, and 24 fewer submissions in our survey than was reported for the APA Journal Operations Report. Our survey item read "How many new manuscripts were submitted to your journal (omitting resubmissions)?" but we suspect that some editors counted manuscripts resubmitted after initial rejection as new manuscripts, whereas other editors did not. In addition, the time periods considered during data analysis (e.g., calendar years and fiscal years) may have varied. We expect that other variables in our study have similar degrees of variation from their true values, and we marked clearly in our tables of results when approximations and ranges of values were reported by editors. We encourage researchers to develop ingenious ways to obtain journal operation data in an objective and increasingly accurate manner.

Our results are also surely affected by other sources of error (Stapleton, 2010). Although we sought to recruit all journal editors in school psychology and related fields by using multiple methods to identify relevant journals, our decision-making frame of what journals were considered "related" and "relevant" may not have been expansive enough. For example, although all of the editors of the targeted school psychology journals participated in the survey, we realized recently that *Trainers of School Psychologists* is a peer-reviewed journal and not a newsletter and that it should have been included in this study. Thus, coverage error is apparent. Furthermore, although 65% of editors we contacted responded, only 62% participated. Although participation rate in this study was higher than or comparable to other studies targeting journal editors (Brewer et al., 2001; Lounds et al., 2001), response error is certainly apparent. Thus, it is unknown how well this study's comparison journals represent the population of journals in fields related to school psychology. Additional research in this area should determine the extent to which sources of error affected our conclusions.

Finally, although we engaged in a rigorous double coding process when categorizing all of the editors' responses to select items from the survey and resolved discrepancies between coders through additional review and discussion, some evidence suggests that our categorization of editors' responses may be suspect. In particular, inter-rater agreement in categorizing general recommendations for potential contributors was only 84%. Thus, coding errors should be considered when interpreting our results.

3. Study 2

Journals vary in their missions (see Jennings, Ehrhardt, & Poling, 2008 for an example), and Study 1's results from editors indicated that it is very important for authors to match their manuscripts to the journal to which they are submitting—lest their manuscript be rejected without full review. Relatedly, journals vary in the types of submissions they encourage and the articles they publish. Furthermore, due to some editors publishing themed issues, articles appearing in print may differ somewhat from those described in directions to authors regarding the types of unsolicited manuscripts that are encouraged. Thus, de facto publication practices may differ from those anticipated based on submission guidelines. To address these issues, the goal of Study 2 was to provide a snapshot of articles published in nine school psychology journals across one volume year. We selected the 2007 volume year to correspond to the year of journal operations targeted in Study 1.

Some prior research has focused on publishing practices across a variety of journals in education. For example, Joyce and Joyce (1990) reviewed information about 39 journals focused on general education, special education, and related topics and highlighted the most common article types, content, and foci as well as stylistic requirements and description of the review process for each journal. However, no summary of patterns within and across journals was provided.

Although some research has focused on the content of school psychology articles (e.g., Kawano, Kehle, Clark, & Jenson, 1993; Reynolds & Clark, 1984), only a few projects have been more expansive and also focused on the general types of articles published in school psychology journals. For example, Robinson et al. (1998) reviewed articles published in JSP, SPQ, and SPR from 1985 through 1994 according to whether articles were research-based or expository in nature, the article content, and the types of research designs they employed. They found that, during their review period, JSP published between 60% and 90% research articles, that SPR published between 15% and 50% research articles, and that SPQ published between 0% and 40% research articles. Across years, the majority of articles in SPR and SPQ were expository in nature. Strein et al. (2003) focused on articles published in JSP, PITS, SPI, SPQ, and SPR from 1994 through 1998 using a coding scheme designed to identify research topics, multicultural themes, and publication types. When considering publication types, they coded articles as presenting original research, providing a formal research review, and representing expository or descriptive writing. They found that more than half of the articles across journals presented original research (56.4%), that more than one third were expositive or descriptive in nature (36.9%), and that a small minority were research reviews (6.7%).

Most recently, Bliss et al. (2008) reviewed articles published in SPQ, SPR, JSP, and PITS from 2000 to 2005. They expanded the Robinson et al. (1998) coding scheme and coded articles as either narrative or research-based in nature and then coded each research-based article as reporting descriptive, correlational, meta-analysis, causal-comparative, or causal-experimental research results. After omitting test reviews, book reviews, and editorials, they found that 60% of the articles across journals were research articles, whereas the remainder of the articles were narrative articles. About 29% of the articles described correlational research, 16% described descriptive research, 8% described causal-experimental research, 4% described causal-comparative research, and 2% described meta-analytic research. The current study was intended to extend these research projects by focusing on a greater number of school psychology journals than in previous studies and by expanding the coding scheme to include classifications for all types of published content (including test reviews, book reviews, and editorials) appearing in the pages of these journals.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Journals

Hard copies of each issue from the 2007 volume year of the nine school psychology journals listed in Table 1 were reviewed: volume 12 of CalSP, volume 22 for CnJSP, volume 23 for JASP, volume 45 for JSP, volume 44 for PITS, volume 2 for SPF, volume 28 for SPI, volume 22 for SPQ, and volume 34 for SPR.

3.1.2. Article coding

All articles were classified according to general article type using an extension of the classification scheme offered by Bliss et al. (2008), which included general categories for research articles and narrative articles.[5] In addition, the current coding scheme included two general research article categories (i.e., quantitative research and qualitative research), subcategories for quantitative research articles (i.e., descriptive, correlational, meta-analysis, causal-comparative, and causal-experimental) consistent with Bliss et al., and a wide variety of narrative article subcategories.

3.1.2.1. Quantitative research articles. Quantitative research articles were identified (a) if numerical data were collected as part of the research and reported as descriptive statistics or inferential statistics or if

[5] After re-reading Strein et al. (2003), we believe that the articles that we and others (Bliss et al., 2008) have labeled as narrative articles are probably better labeled expository or descriptive review articles. Future researchers should label such articles more accurately.

the study included at least one independent variable and at least one dependent variable derived from a sample described in the article or (b) if it used statistics to synthesize and re-analyze previous findings from three or more research articles. The following subcategories of quantitative research articles were also coded (Bliss et al., 2008). Descriptive articles report descriptive statistics but do not include an independent variable or examine the relations between or among variables. Correlational articles report correlations between variables and employ analyses such as bivariate correlations, multiple regression, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis, or structural equation modeling. Meta-analysis articles use statistics to synthesize and re-analyze previous findings from three or more research articles, and effect size estimates are reported. Causal-comparative articles include at least one independent variable and at least one dependent variable. In causal-comparative studies, the independent variable is not manipulated. The independent variable reflects characteristics, such as gender, age group, race, and presence or absence of a disorder, that existed before the experiment was conducted. Such studies often rely upon ex post facto designs or development designs, such as cross-sectional and longitudinal research. Causal-experimental articles include at least one independent variable manipulated as part of the research and at least one dependent variable. Such studies often use experimental designs, such as nonequivalent post-test only designs, pretest/posttest designs, and within-participants designs. They include random assignment (if group-based research) or utilize single-case research designs (e.g., ABA designs, reversal designs, multiple-baseline designs, and changing-criterion designs). Studies using Generalizability theory to examine variance components were considered causal-experimental if the variables associated with these components were manipulated.

Consistent with Bliss et al. (2008), if an article could be classified across categories, it was classified based on the following order that may reflecting the quality of the causal inferences drawn from them: (a) causal-experimental, (b) causal-comparative, (c) meta-analytic, (d) correlational, and (e) descriptive. Thus, an article that included both causal-experimental and causal-comparative procedures was coded as causal-experimental. Quantitative research articles were also classified as brief when they were labeled as a Brief Report, Research Brief, or the like or as full-length when they were not labeled as a Brief Report, Research Brief, or the like.

3.1.2.2. Qualitative research articles. Qualitative research articles present the results of analysis of qualitative data, such as words, pictures, documents, or other non-numerical data. Qualitative research employs an interpretive, multimethod approach to investigating people in their natural environments. Data stem from recollections of personal experiences, observations of an individual or individuals, written documents, photographs, and historical information, but the article does not report descriptive statistics or inferential statistics. The article does not describe any independent variables or any dependent variables derived from a participant sample and does not use statistics to synthesize and re-analyze previous findings from three or more research articles.

Subcategories under qualitative research included the following: case study articles and ethnographic articles. Case study articles include an intensive description and analysis of a single individual, organization, or event (or several such cases). If a single-case research design was employed, the article was classified as quantitative: causal-experimental. If the focus of the description was on listing the chronology of a person's life and contributions and the article was after the person's death, the article was classified as an obituary (see full category description under the Narrative articles heading that follows). In contrast, ethnographic articles include an in-depth description and interpretation of the culture of a group of people. The verbal or written statements of these persons may be recorded and analyzed to identify patterns. Participant observation, in which the researcher becomes an active participant in the group being studied, may be used.

If an article could be classified as both types of qualitative research, it was classified as an ethnographic article. Articles utilizing mixed methodology (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative approaches) were classified as quantitative articles for the purposes of this research; that is, any article that included any quantitative data was classified as quantitative even if it also included qualitative analyses.[6]

3.1.2.3. Narrative articles. Narrative articles do not report the results of studies yielding quantitative or qualitative data; instead, they primarily cite results obtained from research studies. Nine subcategories

[6] We appreciate Kate Price for developing the description of this coding rule.

were considered. Narrative review, theoretical, or professional development articles stem from an idiosyncratic process to synthesize information. These articles may provide recommendations for assessment or implementation of interventions and discussion of ethics or other matters related to professional practice. Editorials stem from the editor, a guest editor, or a series editor writing a commentary or an introduction to a themed issue. Editorials may include an editor's vision or goals for editorship or an editor's reflection on his or her service as editor. Commentaries, comments, reaction articles, or letters to the editor stem from an author (i.e., someone other than an editor) writing a response to or comment about an article or a themed issue. They follow (in a themed issue) or are otherwise published after the article or themed issue (in a later issue). Test reviews are descriptive evaluations of a test, rating scale, interview protocol, or other assessment instrument. Book reviews are descriptive evaluations of a book or treatment manual. Obituaries list the chronology of a person's life and contributions published after the person's death. Historical articles provide detailed summaries of the history of an organization, phenomenon, or effects of a person's efforts. If the article describes an intensive description and analysis of words, pictures, documents, or other non-numerical data, the article was classified as a type of qualitative research article (see description in previous section). Award addresses include writing from the recipient of an award. An "other" category was also included.

3.1.3. Training and reliability of coding

Each article was reviewed and coded by two coders who completed practice exercises with the first author and met weekly to discuss their progress. A primary coder (i.e., the third author, an undergraduate honors student in psychology) and several secondary coders (i.e., two master's degree students in school psychology and one undergraduate student) reviewed and classified each article into categories. They coded each article independently and submitted their results to the first author. The primary coder and the first author met to identify coding discrepancies and, when discrepancies occurred, they reviewed articles to determine the correct codes.

Inter-rater agreement based on initial coding was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of agreements and disagreements for each item category as well as across items. The resulting value was 98.9% across item categories focusing on the general article type (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, narrative, and other), manuscript length (i.e., full-length or brief), and article subtype (e.g., descriptive, case study, and editorial). For each journal, these values ranged from 97.5% agreement (for CalSP) to 99.5% agreement (for PITS). Items focusing on article subtypes produced the lowest agreement, and they ranged from 97.2% agreement (for CalSP) to 99.5% agreement (for PITS).

Table 4
Publishing information about the 2007 volume year for the school psychology journals.

	Pages	Issues	Articles and approximate pages per article	Themed issues	Articles published as part of themed issue
The California School Psychologist	125	1	9/14	1 (100%)	9 (100%)
Canadian Journal of School Psychology	269	2	23/12	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Journal of Applied School Psychology	377	2	18/21	1 (50%)	9 (50%)
Journal of School Psychology	666	6	39/17	2 (33%)	15 (38%)
Psychology in the Schools	890	8	72/12	4 (50%)	43 (60%)
School Psychology Forum	132	2	9/15	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
School Psychology International	636	5	39/16	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
School Psychology Quarterly	600	4	30/20	1 (25%)	7 (23%)
School Psychology Review	660	4	42/16	3 (75%)	22 (52%)

Note. Pages include all those devoted to articles, tables of contents, author indexes, lists of accepted manuscripts, title pages for themed issues, notices of upcoming themed issues, correction notices, lists of awards, and instructions to authors. This value is not necessarily the highest page number the volume. Because this value was used to calculate the approximate pages per article, it is likely that the pages-per-article values are overestimates of article length. Both *Journal of Applied School Psychology* and *School Psychology Forum* were paginated by issue and not across the volume year.

Table 5
Percentages of article types in school psychology journals during the 2007 volume year.

	Quantitative research articles							Qualitative research articles		Narrative articles				
	Full	Brief	Des	Cor	Meta	CC	CE	Case study	Ethn	NR	ED	Com	TR	BR
The California School Psychologist	56%	0	11%	11%	0	22%	11%	0	0	33%	11%	0	0	0
Canadian Journal of School Psychology	70%	0	4%	26%	0	26%	13%	0	4%	0	9%	0	17%	0
Journal of Applied School Psychology	39%	0	11%	0	0	6%	22%	6%	0	44%	11%	0	0	0
Journal of School Psychology	62%	0	0	5%	0	44%	13%	0	0	13%	26%	0	0	0
Psychology in the Schools	39%	0	6%	6%	0	14%	14%	3%	0	51%	7%	0	0	0
School Psychology Forum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100%	0	0	0	0
School Psychology International	79%	0	5%	10%	3%	51%	10%	0	3%	13%	3%	0	0	3%
School Psychology Quarterly	73%	0	0	17%	0	37%	20%	0	3%	10%	7%	0	0	7%
School Psychology Review	57%	7%	2%	7%	2%	19%	33%	0	0	14%	7%	14%	0	0

Note. Full = full length, Des = descriptive, Cor = correlational, Meta = meta-analysis, CC = causal comparative, CE = causal experimental, Ethn = ethnography, NR = narrative review, theoretical, or professional development article, ED = editorial, Com = commentary, TR = test review, and BR = book review.

3.2. Results

General publishing information is presented in Table 4, and the results from article coding are presented in Table 5. As evident in Table 4, the school psychology journals varied substantially in the number of issues they published in 2007—from 1 (CalSP) and 2 (CnJSP, JASP, and SPF) at the low end to 6 (JSP) and 8 (PITS) at the high end. Across these issues, a total of 281 articles ($M = 31$, $SD = 20$) were published. In a manner consistent with the number of issues published, CalSP published only 9 articles, whereas PITS published 72 articles. On average, articles were 16 journal pages in length ($SD = 3$). Two-thirds of the journals published at least one themed issue in 2007, and for four of those journals, more than half of the issues published that year were themed issues. For all journals but SPR, the percentage of articles published as part of the themed issues (relative to the total number of articles published) approximated the percentage of issues that were themed (relative to the total number of issues). The reason for the percentage of articles in themed issued being lower for SPR is that each issue – regardless of it being themed or not – included articles not linked to the themed issue.

As evident in Table 5, the majority of articles published in the school psychology journals presented quantitative or qualitative research (59% of all articles). The range for individual journals spanned 0% (SPF) to 82% (SPI). A total of 6 journals (CalSP, CnJSP, JSP, SPI, SPQ, and SPR) published more than 50% research articles, and 3 journals (CnJSP, SPI, and SPQ) published approximately 75% or more research articles. Across journals, 4% of articles were descriptive, 9% correlational, 1% meta-analysis, 27% causal-comparative, and 17% causal-experimental. In particular, meta-analyses were published in only SPI ($n = 2$) and PITS ($n = 1$), and causal-experimental studies accounted for 20% or more of articles appearing in JASP, SPQ, and SPR. When only (a) research articles and (b) narrative review, theoretical, or professional development articles were considered (like Bliss et al., 2008), the percentages of articles reflecting each type of quantitative research were similar to those percentages when considering all articles (including editorials, commentaries, test reviews, book reviews, and other narrative articles). A total of 5% of articles were descriptive, 10% correlational, 1% meta-analysis, 31% causal-comparative, and 19% causal-experimental. Thus, these percentages differed by no more than 4% points from those derived from consideration of all articles.

In contrast to the relatively high percentages of research articles when considering all articles, only four journals published qualitative research articles ($n = 6$), and only PITS published more than one such article ($n = 2$; see Table 5). When narrative articles (across subcategories) were considered, the percentages for each journal again varied substantially—from 19% (SPI) to 100% (SPF). SPF published only narrative review, theoretical, or professional development articles, and PITS published such narrative articles 51% the time. Of note, of the 39% of narrative articles published in JSP in 2007, 26% were editorials written by the editor and guest editors. There were only 4 test reviews (1% of total articles, in CnJSP) and only 3 book reviews (1% of total articles, in SPI and SPQ) published in 2007, and no narrative case studies, obituaries, historical articles, or awards addresses were published in 2007.

3.3. Discussion

Based on the review of the 2007 issues from nine school psychology journals, several patterns are apparent. First, there is substantial variance across journals in the number of issues (and articles) they publish each year; some journals are clearly low-volume journals, whereas others are high volume. Publication volume is one variable considered by Thomson Reuters when determining which journals should be indexed in its database used to calculate impact factor data (i.e., Web of Science and the Journal Citation Reports, see Study 3), and CalSP, the CnJSP, the JASP, and the SPF would seemingly need to increase their publication volume (from that of 2007) in order to be considered along with the five other journals currently indexed by Thomson Reuters.

Second, a sizeable number of journals in school psychology published themed issues, so there seem to be ample opportunities for authors to pursue and obtain approval to develop such issues and have them published in peer-reviewed journals. Third, we find it pleasing that research articles composed the majority of the articles published across journals and that the vast majority of the nine journals published more research articles than narrative articles and that a third published three quarters or more research articles in 2007. Although qualitative research articles were very rare in the collection of articles published in 2007 (i.e., 2% of the total), these articles were not isolated to one or two journals. Fourth, some publishing niches based on these publishing outcome data were apparent. For example, SPF published only narrative review articles, CnJSP published test reviews, and SPI and SPQ published occasional book reviews. Interested authors should certainly consider these journals if they hope to publish such works, but they should also examine these journals' recommendations to authors (or contact their editors) to ensure an optimal match before submitting (see Study 1 and also Martinez et al., 2011). Fifth, there appears to be little precedent for publishing narrative case studies, obituaries, historical articles, or awards addresses in school psychology journals. Newsletters in the field (e.g., the *NASP Communiqué* and *The School Psychologist*) appear to be more viable outlets for such publications.

3.3.1. Patterns of publication

Although the breadth of journals was much greater than those targeted in previous studies and a more encompassing coding scheme was applied, our results are similar in many ways to those from previous research. Despite the fact that one journal included in this study published only narrative review articles in 2007, the fact that 59% of the total articles we reviewed were research articles is a sign that the journal editorial teams value empiricism. There is some evidence of increasing sophistication of the quantitative research that is published; our results demonstrated that descriptive and correlational research articles (composing 4% and 9% of articles considering all articles and 5% and 10% of articles considering only articles like Bliss et al., 2008) are decreasing relative the results from Bliss et al. (2008). In contrast, causal-comparative and causal-experimental research articles (composing 27% and 17% of articles considering all articles and 31% and 19% of articles considering only articles like Bliss et al.) are increasing relative to the results of Bliss et al. However, it was surprising to us that so few of the articles were meta-analyses; they composed only 1% of articles in this study and 2% of articles in Bliss et al. Overall, authors and editors should be encouraged to publish more of the highest quality research in the pages of the school psychology journals.

3.3.2. Limitations and considerations

Although this study was more expansive in the number of journals it reviewed as well as more molecular in its coding of article types than many previous studies, its coverage was only a single year. Furthermore, its results are now dated, and these journals have changed in meaningful ways since the articles we coded were published. In many cases, the journals are now led by editors who did not publish the articles appearing in the 2007 volume year. Furthermore, some journals, such as PITS and JASP, have increased the number of issues they publish each year (from 8 reported here to 10 and from 2 reported here to 4, respectively), whereas some other journals seem to have published even fewer articles in the years that immediately followed. These results should be considered only in the light of their tentative and contextual nature. Finally, the Bliss et al. (2008) coding scheme, which we expanded, classified quantitative research articles according to a hierarchy reflecting the presumed quality of the inferences that can be drawn from varying research designs—with causal inferences being most highly valued. Following this coding scheme, the most high-quality research design was coded when multiple quantitative methods were used and quantitative research was coded when both quantitative research and qualitative research were identified. Thus, our coding may not represent well the primary analyses completed in these studies,

and as a result, it may overestimate the frequency of the presumed highest quality designs, such as causal-comparative and causal-experimental, as well as quantitative research.

4. Study 3

Each year, Thomson Reuters produces journal impact factors from Web of Science and the Journal Citation Reports databases. These impact factors provide an index of the effect of the corpus of articles appearing in a journal during a given period on citations appearing across all journals in the database during a select year that follows (see Garfield, 1955). These impact factor values provide only one index of journal quality, but they are the most prominent and perhaps the most objective index of quality. Thus, these values are heavily publicized by publishers and journal editorial teams, and reports of these values are commonly sought by prospective authors and others interested in publishing. Journal impact factor values are often considered by university faculty during deliberations regarding faculty appointments, promotion, and tenure; by librarians selecting journals to which to subscribe; and by funding agencies when evaluating the quality of grant application materials (Althouse, West, Bergstrom, & Bergstrom, 2009).

We believe that an analysis of the impact factors for school psychology journals across years is needed to understand baseline levels of these values and variation in these levels across years, to make comparisons across journals, and to clarify their nature and meaning. We identified only a few instances of such descriptive and longitudinal bibliometric research targeting journals in psychology. Most often, impact factor values are reported in articles authored by editors of specific journals (e.g., SPR; Power & Mautone, 2011) and by researchers targeting the impact of specific journals. For instance, Wicherts (2009) evaluated the impact factors for the journal *Intelligence* across the entirety of its publication history, and Flores, Rooney, Heppner, Browne, and Wei (1999) did the same for the journal *The Counseling Psychologist* across an 11-year span. In contrast to this focus on specific journals, there is at least one published study that reviews impact factor values across time for multiple journals. Carr and Britton (2003) reviewed impact factor values and other citation indexes for six journals focused on behavioral principles or behavioral interventions, including *Behavior Modification*, *Behavior Therapy*, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis,* and *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry,* that produced impact factor values for at least 10 years. Consistent with Carr and Britton, this study targeted journal impact data for five school psychology journals producing impact factors across 13 years, and it employed multilevel modeling to investigate differences in the longitudinal trends of impact factor data across time.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Data source

The Institute for Scientific Information Web of Science and the Journal Citation Reports Social Sciences Edition was accessed on January 31, 2011 to obtain journal citation information from the previous 13 years (1997–2009). This information was obtained for the five school psychology journals listed in Table 1 that are indexed in the Journal Citation Reports Social Sciences Edition: JSP, PITS, SPI, SPQ, and SPR.

4.1.2. Measures

Three measures of journal impact were considered. The 2-year impact factor (considered by many to be the impact factor and used in most prior research) for each journal represents the number of times its articles published during the preceding 2 years were cited within the single year in question, divided by the number of articles published during the preceding 2 years. For example, the 2009 impact factor values represent the number of times articles published during 2008 and 2007 were cited in 2009 divided by the number of articles the journal published during 2008 and 2007. Thus, an impact factor of 1.0 reveals that each article published during the preceding 2 years was cited, on average, once. Anseel, Duyck, De Baene, and Brysbaert (2004) and Carr and Britton (2003) reported that a journal with an impact factor of 1.0 or lower is considered "low impact." The 5-year journal impact factor for each journal represents the number of times its articles published during the preceding 5 years have been cited within the single year in question, divided by the number of articles published during the preceding 5 years. For example, analysis of the 5-year impact factor for 2009 would consider citations for articles from 2004 through 2008 that were cited in 2009 divided by the number

of articles published from 2004 through 2008. This 5-year impact factor was offered beginning only in 2007. In another variant of the impact factor, the Immediacy Index represents the number of times a journal's articles were cited in the year they were published.

Only articles from each journal that are considered *citable items* are included when determining the measures of journal impact. Both research articles and narrative review, theoretical, and professional development articles are typically considered citable items, whereas editorials, commentaries, news items, and errata are not typically considered to be citable items. However, regardless of article type, citations from the journal in question (i.e., self-citations at the journal level) and from other journals included in the database – considered *citing sources* – are counted when considering the total citations yielded by the select articles and calculating the measures of journal impact.

4.1.3. Procedure

Journal citation information for all targeted journals was obtained from Journal Citation Reports Social Sciences Edition by year, transferred to a spreadsheet by a research assistant and prepared for analysis. To ensure accuracy, another research assistant entered the journal citation information into a second spreadsheet. Comparison across the spreadsheets revealed 100% agreement in data entry.

4.1.4. Statistical analyses

To analyze linear trends over time on 2-year and 5-year impact factors and Immediacy Index values, multilevel models were fit with random intercepts and slopes at the journal level. The slopes were centered such that the model intercepts referred to the 2009 values of each variable. Because it is possible that adjacent errors (i.e., the residual for a particular journal at a particular year and the year following or preceding it) are not independent given that multiple years of data are included in the calculation of impact factors, alternate error covariance structures were evaluated by comparison of Bayesian Information Criterion values. Specifically, the fit of a first-order autoregressive model was compared to the default variance components specification, and the first-order autoregressive model fit better for both 2-year impact factors and Immediacy Index values, but not 5-year impact factors. In addition to the average intercept and linear slope value across journals, the statistical significance of the individual random effects (i.e., each journal's deviation from the average slope) was evaluated in the models by inspecting the empirical best linear unbiased predictors of the random effects. All analyses were conducted in SAS 9.3. Given the small sample size, the absolute magnitude of model coefficients in combination with consistency of the statistical results with visual inspection of plotted impact values were weighed more heavily than statistical significance in the presentation of results.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. 2-year impact values

Fig. 1 presents the 2-year impact factor values from 1997–2009 for the five targeted school psychology journals and the mean impact factor across journals for each year. Across 13 years and 74 2-year impact factor values across journals, 68.75% of these values were 1.0 or lower (indicating low impact; Anseel et al., 2004; Carr & Britton, 2003), the average value was 0.87, and the standard deviation was 0.51. Results of the multilevel model indicated that the average 2-year impact factor in 2009 was 1.14 ($p = .01$), the average linear trend was .04 per year ($p = .15$), and adjacent errors were highly correlated ($\rho = .41$, $p = .01$). Based on these results, there is some evidence for an increasing trend in impact factors across journals over time; although the trend was not statistically significant, this overall pattern is apparent in the plot of average impact values over time in the top left pane of Fig. 1. The positive and statistically significant autocorrelation coefficient indicates that subsequent impact factors for a journal can be, in part, predicted by impact factors in prior years. This positive autocorrelation could be expected given that citations of articles from the same year are included in impact factor calculations for multiple years (e.g., articles published in 2007 would be included in both the 2008 and 2009 impact factor calculations).

Although SPR did not yield impact factor values in 2007 because Thomson Reuters was not provided with relevant issues of the journal during that period (T. J. Power, personal communication, April 30, 2011), it produced the highest mean 2-year impact factor value ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 0.47$), and its impact factor values were 1.0 or higher during 6 of the 12 years considered in the analysis (see bottom right pane of Fig. 1). The journal

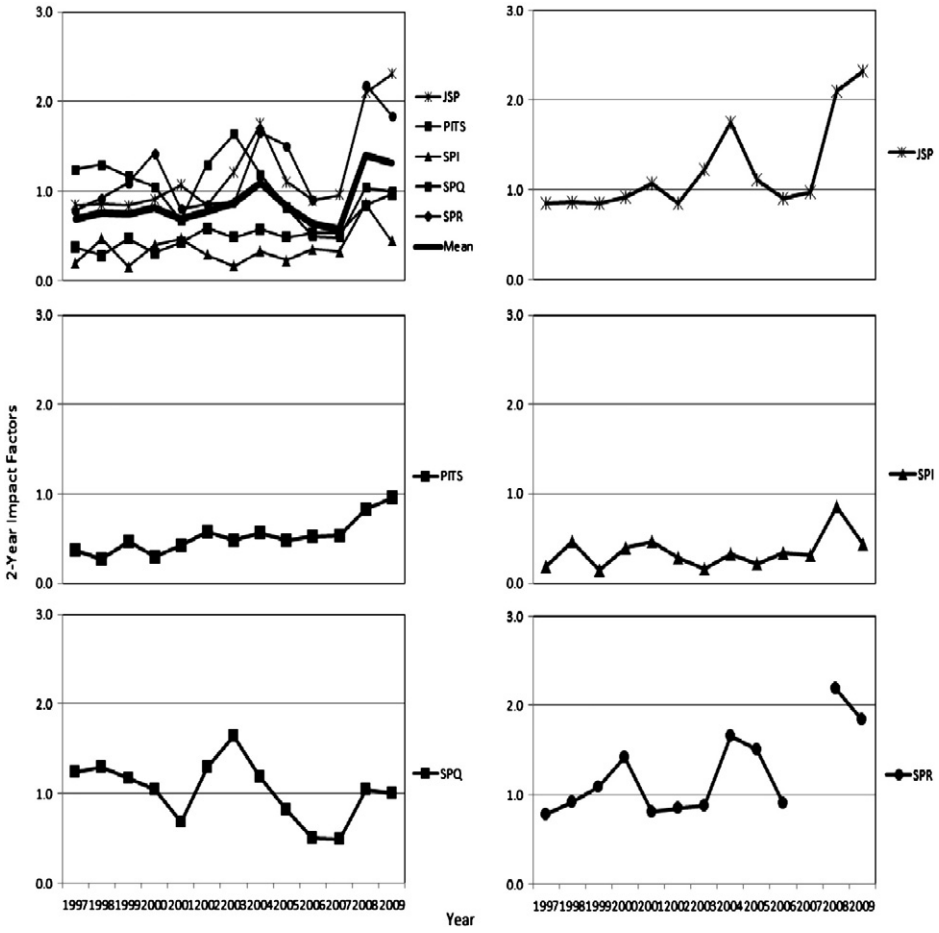

Fig. 1. 2-year impact factor values for Journal of School Psychology, Psychology in the Schools, School Psychology International, School Psychology Quarterly, and School Psychology Review across 13 years. In the top left pane, the bolded line represents the average impact factors each year.

recorded its highest 2-year impact factor value in 2008. Review of its deviation (.03) from the average linear slope (.04) in the multilevel model indicates greater, but not statistically significant ($p = .26$), increases in impact across time as compared to the average slope value across journals.

JSP produced the second highest mean 2-year impact factor value ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 0.51$), and its impact factor values were 1.0 or higher during 6 of the 13 years considered in the analysis and higher than 2.0 during the past 2 years (see top right pane of Fig. 1). The journal recorded its highest 2-year impact factor value – and the highest 2-year impact factor for these school psychology journals during the years targeted in this study – in 2009. Inspection of its deviation (.04) from the average linear slope (.04) indicates greater than average increases in impact across time, but the difference in trend was not statistically significant ($p = .16$).

SPQ produced the third highest mean 2-year impact factor value ($M = 1.03$, $SD = 0.34$), and its impact factor values were 1.0 or higher during 9 of the 13 years considered in the analysis (see bottom left pane of Fig. 1). Regarding linear trend line, its deviation (−.04) from the average linear slope (.04) indicates less, although not statistically significant ($p = .15$), growth than average. The two remaining journals, PITS and SPI both produced mean 2-year impact factor values under 1.0—0.53 ($SD = 0.19$) and 0.36 ($SD = 0.19$), respectively. As evident in the center panes in Fig. 1, neither journal yielded a 2-year impact factor exceeding

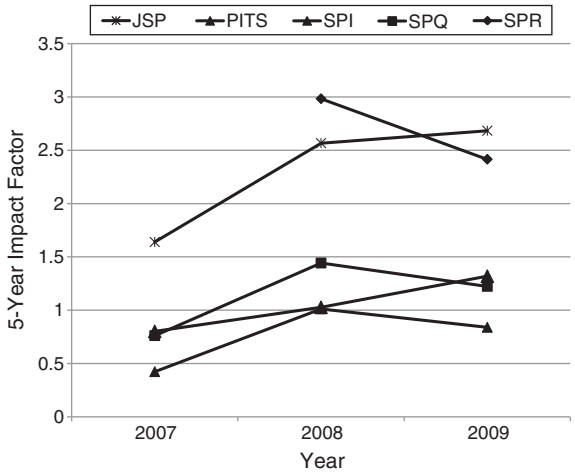

Fig. 2. 5-year impact factor values for Journal of School Psychology, Psychology in the Schools, School Psychology International, School Psychology Quarterly, and School Psychology Review across 3 years.

1.0 during the years targeted in this study. Both demonstrated, however, some of their highest 2-year impact factors in recent years and increases in impact across time near the average linear trend in impact across journals, deviation = −.01, $p = .80$ for PITS, and deviation = −.02, $p = .39$ for SPI.

4.2.2. 5-year impact values

Fig. 2 presents the 5-year impact factor values from 2007 to 2009 for the five school psychology journals. Across 3 years and 14 impact factor values, the average 5-year impact factor value was 1.51 and the standard deviation was 0.82. SPR (while not yielding a 5-year impact factor value in 2007) produced the highest median value ($Mdn = 2.70$), followed by JSP ($Mdn = 2.57$), SPQ ($Mdn = 1.22$), PITS ($Mdn = 1.03$), and SPI ($Mdn = 0.84$). Results of multilevel models indicated that there was near-zero variance in slopes across journals; consequently, the final model included only random intercepts and a fixed linear slope. Model results indicated an average linear trend of .27 per year ($p = .04$), demonstrating overall improvement across journals from 2007 to 2009. Journals were primarily differentiated in terms of overall level rather than trend, as is evident in Fig. 2.

4.2.3. Immediacy index values

Fig. 3 presents the Immediacy Index values for the five school psychology journals and the mean Immediacy Index values across journals each year. Across the 13 years and 74 Immediacy Index values, the average value was 0.39 and the standard deviation was 0.33. Results of the multilevel model indicated that the average Immediacy Index in 2009 was .57 ($p = .11$), the average linear trend was .03 per year ($p = .31$), and adjacent errors were negatively correlated although not to a statistically significant degree ($\rho = -.13$, $p = .38$). These results indicate that there is a slight trend toward increases in Immediacy Index values over time; this trend was not statistically significant, but is apparent in plots of the average Immediacy Index across journals in Fig. 3. It is important to note, however, that this trend may largely reflect the influence of outlying values for SPR toward the end of the series. The negative autocorrelation value, which is not statistically significant, suggests that there may be a slight tendency for Immediacy Index values that are below average in a particular year for a journal to be followed by a value that is above average in the next year and vice versa.

SPR (although not yielding results in 2006 or 2007) produced, by far, the highest mean Immediacy Index value on average ($M = 0.90$, $SD = 0.59$). In particular, the journal produced Immediacy Index values above 1.0 in 5 of the 13 years targeted in the analysis (see bottom right pane of Fig. 1). In terms of linear trend, the journal's deviation (.07) from the average trend across journals (.03) was statistically significant ($p = .001$), indicating greater growth in the Immediacy Index than average. SPQ (although not yielding

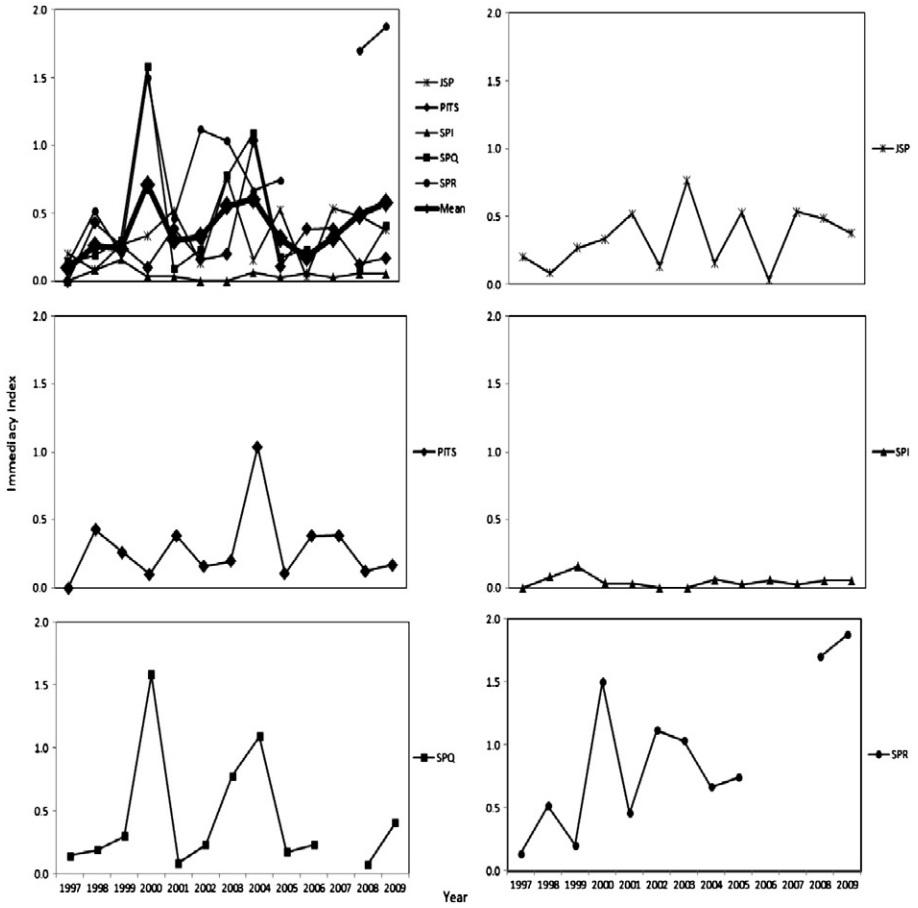

Fig. 3. Immediacy index values for Journal of School Psychology, Psychology in the Schools, School Psychology International, School Psychology Quarterly, and School Psychology Review across 13 years. In the top left pane, the bolded line represents the average impact factors each year.

results in 2007) produced the next highest value on average ($M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.47$) and yielded two values above 1.0 (see bottom left pane of Fig. 1). The journal's deviation from the average linear trend was near zero (.00, $p = .99$). SPR and SPQ were followed by JSP ($M = .34$, $SD = 0.22$), PITS ($M = 0.29$, $SD = 0.26$), and SPI ($M = .05$, $SD = 0.04$). Of this last group, PITS demonstrated an Immediacy Index value above 1.0 in a single instance. In reference to linear trend, SPI's deviation from the average linear trend was statistically significant (−.04, $p = .04$) and reflected less growth in the Immediacy Index than average, and both JSP's (−.01, $p = .63$) and PITS's (−.02, $p = .43$) deviations from the average trend across journals (.03) were minimal.

4.3. Discussion

Review of the 2-year impact factor values across the 13 years targeted by this study indicates that the five school psychology journals listed in Web of Science have typically produced impact factor values in the low impact range (Carr & Britton, 2003). In fact, the average impact factor value across journals and across time was only 0.87. This value should be one baseline for comparison for editors.

Differences in the impact factor values across journals tended to be relatively stable across time, but there were general trends toward increases in impact factor values across journals over time. These trends

suggest that, in general, the school psychology journals are moving in a positive direction by publishing articles that are more visible to researchers in school psychology and related disciplines. This pattern was particularly evident in the strong improvement in 5-year impact values across journals during the time interval considered in this study.

Although limited to only bibliometric analysis using a single set of databases, results from this study indicate that there are two groups of school psychology journals based on impact factor values. In the higher impact group, SPR and JSP both yielded 2-year impact factor values exceeding 2.0 in recent years, 2-year impact factor values above 1.0 almost as often as not across the review period, and evidence of increasing values across time. SPQ may also be included in this group due to its average impact factor values above 1.0 and its yielding some of the highest values across school psychology journals in many single years (e.g., 1997–1999, 2002, and 2003). In the lower impact group, PITS and SPI both yielded 2-year impact factor values that have been consistently below 1.0 during the review period (although they have yielded some of their highest impact factor values in recent years). Carr and Britton (2003) identified similar patterns across behaviorally oriented journals, but it appears that the impact values for the journals covered in their review were higher on average.

4.3.1. Limitations and other considerations

These results must be tempered through identification of potential limitations of the study. First, the journal impact measures reported were produced by Web of Science and the Journal Citation Reports Social Sciences Edition. It is possible that errors in citing articles by authors (e.g., misspelling author names and listing incorrect issue numbers), errors by Thomson Reuters staff involved in coding articles for consideration (e.g., narrative reviews versus editorials), and other factors contributed to somewhat unreliable impact factor values (see Anseel et al., 2004). For instance, Rossner, Van Epps, and Hill (2007) reported being unable to independently replicate impact factor values reported by Thomson Reuters—even when they were provided a citation database used by this group for calculation of the impact factor values. Second, this study focused on impact measures from only 1997–2009. It is possible that a more historically complete analysis of impact factor values would produce different patterns of results. At present, such an analysis is not feasible due to limited access to the values before 1997, but additional research in this area should be pursued. [7]Third, many would consider it a severe limitation that four of the other school psychology journals listed in Table 1 are not considered as citing sources, contributing to impact values for those journals targeted in this study, because they are not also indexed in the Web of Science. Fourth, neither seminal books (e.g., *Best Practices in School Psychology*; Thomas & Grimes, 2008) nor newsletters (the *NASP Communiqué)* in school psychology were considered as citing sources that would contribute to measures of journal impact, but this pattern should effect all journals equally. Thus, this study had a relatively narrow focus when considering potentially citing sources and is only one representation of journal impact. Finally, the multilevel models used to evaluate trends in impact factors and Immediacy Index values were underpowered given the small number of journals and years of data; however, model results were generally consistent with visual analysis of graphed values, lending additional confidence in the reported patterns.

4.3.2. Influences on impact factors and their meaning

So what do these results mean for editors and those involved in the peer-review process and for school psychology as a field? First, it is a pleasing finding that at (a) there is a general increasing trend across the five journals targeted in this study and (b) least two school psychology journals, SPR and JSP, appear to be both increasing in their 2-year impact factor values and reaching new heights for the journals in the field by obtaining 2-year impact factors higher than 2.0. (It is our belief that no school psychology journal produced a 2-year impact factor exceeding 2.0 at any point in these journals' histories before 2008.) Increases in impact factor values appear to reflect a general trend, and some (e.g., Althouse et al., 2009) attribute such increases to a greater number of citations in reference lists across time. We have a hunch that the increasing number of citing sources included in the Web of Science has increased these impact values over time. For example, in recent years, more than 1000 new journal titles were included in the database, and each additional journal title could produce more citations counted toward any journal's impact. We believe that, if other school psychology journals were indexed in the Web of Science, the impact factor values for all of the school psychology journals would rise (cf. Garfield,

[7] The first author was quoted a price of more than $1000 for a custom analysis by Thomson Reuters staff that would yield impact factor values across the history of these journals, but it is unclear how far back in history such values were produced for these journals.

1999). Promoting a more encompassing coverage of the school psychology journals listed in Table 1 by Web of Science should be a serious goal of school psychology journal editors.

We are not certain that editors and other editorial support members can engage in specific and ethical strategies to improve the impact of a journal. Based on our reading (e.g., Garfield, 1999), discussions with former editors, review of the most-cited articles identified by Price, Floyd, Fagan, and Smithson (2011), and consideration of the current results, we believe that editors' encouraging submission of the highest-quality research manuscripts for publication, reaching out to authors from related fields, and constructing themed issues or commissioning articles (especially review articles) on the hottest topics in the field would all increase the number of citations a journal generates. Furthermore, reducing the length of the manuscript review periods as well as publication lags (see Study 1) – so that citations of recent journal articles (e.g., from the previous two years) are included in other journal articles during the years that immediately follows their publication – should have an effect on impact factor values. Thus, it is hard work on the part of the editor, editorial team, and production staff that may ultimately increase 2- and 5-year impact factor values.

Other strategies for increasing impact factor values are more tenuous and less ideal. For example, it is not clearly evident that publishing higher quality research articles produces higher impact factor values. At present, there appears to be mixed evidence of such effects in medical journals (Barbui, Cipriani, Malvini, & Tansella, 2006; Lee, Schotland, Bacchetti, & Bero, 2002) We believe that acceptance and rejection rates – indicators of the quality of peer review – are probably better predictors of research quality (see also Lee et al., 2002), but selection bias (in terms of the quality of manuscripts submitted to a journal) cannot be controlled easily.

Alternately, impact factors are clearly affected by self-citations within the journal. Such citations are much maligned by many, but it is notable that the percentage of journal self-citations contributing to impact factor values are reported alongside the impact measures in the Web of Science and the Journal Citation Reports Social Sciences Edition reports. Although editorials and comments, common in themed issues, are not typically counted as citable items (i.e., the denominator of the formula for the impact factor), they are citing sources and do produce citations for the citable items. Thus, as self-citations within a journal – regardless of their type – increase, the impact factor values (and especially the Immediacy Index values) tend to increase. Of course, egregious practices by editors and reviewers designed to increase impact factor values, such as insisting that authors cite articles published recently in their journals or listing all articles published during previous years in a reference list in an editorial or commentary, reflect unethical behaviors. However, self-citations within a journal are signs of success if they occur through linkages across articles targeting related research questions across time and do not reflect the nefarious motives of editors when they provide cohesion across articles in a themed issue (which would not directly affect the 2-year or 5-year impact factor values), establish threads of consistency (e.g., in citing a methodological article for an innovative analysis) across issues and volumes, and enhance content-related publishing niches.

Finally, wide journal distribution (see Study 1) may be just as important – or more important – to consider than journal impact values. In particular, the more people reading the journal articles, the higher probability that they will cite them in one of their publications. In this age of electronic access, however, the effects of journal distribution on impact factors are unclear. Future research should examine the effects of these publishing practices and issues with school psychology journals (see, for example, Frisby, 1998).

5. General discussion

This manuscript describes the results of three studies designed to understand better the journal operations, publishing practices, and the impact of school psychology journals in recent years. In the general discussion that follows, we will address recommendations for authors, considerations for editors and journal editorial teams, and the status and impact of school psychology journals.

5.1. Recommendations for authors

Authors should be able to use the results of our studies to select the journals that best match the quality and scope of the manuscripts they have developed and the research supporting their work. They may benefit from reviewing Table 2 to identify potential outlets and then consulting journal websites and published resources, such as Cabell's Directories of Publishing Opportunities (http://www.cabells.com/index.aspx), to study the journals' mission statements and submission guidelines. Based on editors' comments, authors

should also carefully consider the match between the specific goals of the journal and the content of their manuscript, and they should read their instructions to contributors, consider the journals' missions and audiences, and use recent issues of the journal as blueprints for developing their manuscripts (see also Henson, 1999). Finally, authors should consider information from this study focusing on the volume of manuscripts handled by journal editorial teams, their journal operations, and journal impact. All of these factors should be considered in concert.

Authors should also be very cognizant of both the length of the manuscripts they submit as well as their writing and formatting. It was apparent that the recommended length of manuscripts varied substantially. Furthermore, authors should ensure that their manuscript is well formatted and well written, and they should consider the Journal Article Reporting Standards (APA, 2010a) when developing the Method and Results sections of their manuscripts (see Albers et al., 2011, and Martinez et al., 2011 for more recommendations).

Authors should also be prepared for a relatively lengthy review period when they submit their manuscripts for peer review. Based on our results, the editorial teams for the school psychology journals produced decisions in approximately 3 months and 1 week, on average, and this review period was slightly longer than expected based on data from comparison journals. In addition, authors should be prepared to have their manuscripts returned to them without full review. We believe that authors would rather have their manuscripts returned without full review in short order rather than waiting 3 or more months to receive a similar decision supported by reviewer comments because quick decisions allow authors to find an appropriate outlet for their manuscripts more immediately.

5.2. Considerations for editors and journal editorial teams

Based on our results (and general experience with the school psychology journals), we can offer a few general statements about possible publishing niches. For instance, we believe that research manuscripts consistent with NASP practices and policies are best suited to SPR, whereas professional development manuscripts offering practical recommendations for school psychology practitioners are best suited for SPF. Research manuscripts focused on international issues seems to be best suited to SPI. Lengthy and multiple-study research manuscripts are best matched with JSP, whereas brief and focused research manuscripts are best matched with SPQ. Furthermore, manuscripts describing test reviews should be submitted to CnJSP. Journal editors and their editorial teams should strive to enhance these niches and better differentiate their journals to take advantage of the number and breadth of forums for research and scholarship in school psychology. The Council of Journal Editors in School Psychology has recently been formed to address these and other relevant issues.

Based on editors' responses to our survey, it is recommended that editors communicate clearly to authors about their expectations for submissions so that authors can match manuscripts to their journals more accurately and save their editorial team members time and energy in reviewing and ultimately rejecting manuscripts submitted to them. Although we believe that the practice of editors rejecting manuscripts without full review benefits both the authors and the journal editorial team in the long run, we believe that rejecting one third of manuscripts submitted to a journal indicates that the standard of clear and meaningful communication of expectations for submissions is probably not being met. In addition, more editors should strive to publish summaries of their journal operations on a yearly basis to inform authors about their peer-review practices.

Editors should strive to facilitate higher quality reviews by those serving on their editorial boards as well as by ad-hoc reviewers. They should consider providing reviewing guidelines and reviewer training either on a journal-by-journal basis or, in concert, at national conferences (see Raelin, 2008). Graduate students should also be mentored in reviewing (Cooper, 2009), but their inclusion in the peer-review process should not slow down the review process or jeopardize the integrity and high standard of reviews by peers, per se. Furthermore, editors should consider broadening their editorial boards, assigning fewer reviewers to each manuscript (i.e., 2 or 3), and distributing manuscripts no more than twice to reviewers to prevent reviewer fatigue (Park, 2009). Relatively small fields, such as school psychology, are certainly affected by such reviewer fatigue. Finally, editors should strive to speed up the review process so that the average editorial decision lag is far shorter than those reported in Study 2, and they should encourage authors to contact them if they have not received an editorial decision within 3 months of submission (as suggested by APA, 2010a). Electronic manuscript processing systems (see Study 1 and Table 2) should allow for both more rapid distribution of

invitations to review and closer monitoring of the peer-review process. For example, automated reminders could be used to prompt reviewers days before deadlines and after deadlines have been exceeded (see Caruso & Kennedy, 2004). A goal of consistently providing editorial decisions in 2 months appears to be a reasonable goal in the electronic age (Henson, 2005); long review periods (and long publication lags) are detrimental to scientific progress (Cooper, 2009).

5.3. Status and impact

We believe that the field of school psychology should take pride in the progress that it has made to publish its research and scholarship across its peer-reviewed journals. There are many indicators of such progress. For example, although the 2-year impact factor values (the most prominent of the impact factor values) across the five school psychology journals yielded an average less than 1.0 – indicating generally low impact – there appears to be a trend toward increasing impact as a whole. This trend is evident not only across time but also in the absolute values of the 2-year impact factor in recent years. For instance, two school psychology journals have demonstrated values exceeding 2.0 in recent years, and we believe that these are record high values for school psychology journals.

Several school psychology journals seem to be processing a relatively large volume of manuscripts each year—with three of them receiving more than 125 new submissions in 2007. Furthermore, the school psychology journals seem to be upholding reasonable but high standards for publication as a whole, with an average rejection rate slightly exceeding the average rejection rate apparent across comparison journals. Furthermore, the journal with the highest average 2-year impact factor in school psychology, SPR, and its companion journal SPF, are accessible to approximately 25,000 NASP members and other subscribers, and this circulation to psychologists may be exceeded by only the flagship journal of the APA. There is a lot about which to be proud, and the editors listed in Table 1 should be honored for facilitating both stability and growth across approximately 50 years of the publication of school psychology journals.

5.4. Conclusion

The three studies presented in this article reveal details about the operations, status, and impact of school psychology and related journals. We hope that the resulting information can be used to increase the quality of authors' experiences with the peer-review process, the functioning of the journals' editorial teams, and, ultimately, the quality of the research published in these journals. We encourage editors and other researchers to pursue research projects to better understand these processes.

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