Results From the NASP 2015 Membership Survey, Part One: Demographics and Employment Conditions

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ABSTRACT

This report presents demographic and employment conditions for school psychologists in the 2014–2015 school year and trends in these conditions over time. The findings are organized around two of the five Strategic Goals of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), so as to inform advocacy initiatives and guide the work of the association. NASP has been conducting membership surveys every 5 years since 1990. In this most recent survey, 20% of NASP's regular and early career members were randomly selected by state of residence and invited by e-mail to participate. The final sample consisted of 1,274 respondents, representing a 48% response rate. Results indicate no change in the ratio of students per school psychologist since 2010, modest increases in the diversity of the workforce, and a decline since 2010 in the average age of school psychologists. Findings also suggest limited opportunities for leadership development and mentoring within school districts and minimal release time and financial reimbursement for professional development. Implications of the survey findings for how best to address workforce shortages and leadership development are discussed.

Keywords: School Psychology, Professional Personnel Characteristics, Workforce Demographics

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In 1989, the National Association of School Psychologists established a policy to regularly study nationwide demographic and professional trends in school psychology on a 5-year cycle. Thus, beginning with a 1989–1990 survey, NASP membership data have been collected every 5 years on key variables (Graden & Curtis, 1991). This serves the profession as a whole, as well as NASP's organizational interests, in that it allows for better understanding of the current demand for school psychologists, examination of demographic trends, and analysis of how research advances and broad changes in policy and law translate into typical school-based practices. Surveys such as these provide data that can be useful in advocacy

efforts conducted at state and federal levels. This is an initial report of the NASP 2015 Membership Survey data.

At the time of the NASP 2015 Membership Survey, and during the 2-year period since, NASP has focused its attention on four key initiatives or strategic goals. (A fifth strategic goal related to social justice was approved by the NASP Leadership Assembly in September 2017 after implementation of this survey.) NASP linked each strategic goal with three to six outcomes, which have been refined over recent years into the current Strategic Plan: 2017–2022 (NASP, 2017). The Membership Survey reports organize survey results around these strategic goals as presented in Table 1. The current report (Part One) describes demographics and employment conditions as revealed in the 2015 survey, framed in the context of the strategic goals of workforce shortages and leadership development. School psychologists' professional practices and their relationship to the NASP *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (NASP Practice Model; 2010) and mental/behavioral health will be discussed in a subsequent publication (Part Two).

Table 1. NASP Strategic Goals: 2017–2022

Workforce Shortages: A high-quality and diverse school psychology workforce is available to meet an increasing demand for school psychological services.

Leadership Development: School psychologists possess the leadership skills to effect change at the local, state, and national levels.

NASP Practice Model: School psychologists, state education agencies, and local education agencies implement the NASP *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services*.

Mental/Behavioral Health Providers: Advance the role of school psychologists as qualified mental and behavioral health providers.

Social Justice: Ensure that all children and youth are valued and that their rights and opportunities are protected in schools and communities.

Note. For more information, see National Association of School Psychologists Strategic Plan: 2017–2022 (NASP, 2017).

Strategic Goal: Workforce Shortages

Although school psychology workforce shortages may be garnering greater attention today, scholars agree that shortages have represented a challenge to the profession since its inception, and will likely continue to remain a problem for the foreseeable future (Bocanegra, Rossen, & Grapin, 2017; Castillo, Curtis, & Tan, 2014; Fagan, 2004). The larger the shortage, the less likely it is that practicing school psychologists will have time to engage in the more comprehensive, integrated roles outlined in the NASP Practice Model (NASP, 2010). The NASP Practice Model recommends a 1,000 to 1 student-to-school psychologist ratio regardless of a school psychologist's role; however, if a school psychologist is to carry out the broad-based role articulated in the model, a 500–700 to 1 ratio is recommended (NASP, 2010). Research shows that if school psychologists are able to engage in the range of activities that comprise this broader role, they can contribute more effectively to positive outcomes for children and their families, including improved instruction and learning; support for healthy, successful students; safe, positive school climates; strong family–school partnerships; and improved assessment and accountability (NASP, 2010, 2015). Past NASP

membership surveys have indicated that the average age of practitioners has been steadily increasing, likely leading to increased retirements in the near future and a subsequent intensification of the shortage

problem (Curtis, Castillo, & Gelley, 2012). Current survey results were examined to determine if this trend has continued. Shortages of graduate educators also are a growing concern (Clopton & Haselhohn, 2009). If faculty shortages continue, programs in the future are likely to produce even fewer graduates, exacerbating the already critical practitioner shortages.

School psychologist shortages threaten to have a particularly severe impact on culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Training in culturally sensitive practices for all school psychologists has improved significantly in recent years, and research shows that, regardless of a practitioner's background, such training can increase the effectiveness of school psychologists in meeting the needs of CLD students (Jones, 2014). CLD students also benefit from exposure to educators who look like them (Reschly, 2000), but the increase in the proportion of school psychologists from diverse backgrounds has not kept pace with the increase in CLD students in our nation's public schools (Curtis et al., 2012; Grapin, Lee, & Jaafar, 2015). If the results of the current survey confirm this trend, it will be critical for the profession to re-examine ways to effectively recruit not only a larger, but a more diverse and representative workforce for the future.

Strategic Goal: Leadership Development

The NASP Practice Model calls for school psychologists to transition from their traditional test-and-place, special education roles to a more comprehensive and integrated service delivery model. This call aligns with recent federal legislative and policy changes promoting the need for these alternative roles (e.g., the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, multitiered systems of support [MTSS]). Promotion of new service delivery models by NASP, state school psychology associations, and graduate education programs has contributed to a greater number of school psychologists seeking systems-level leadership opportunities through which they might effect greater change in the scope of school psychology practice. Despite the zeitgeist for new models of service delivery, results from the *NASP Self-Assessment Tool for School Psychologists* (SATSP) suggest that school psychologists may be having difficulty making this transition (Rossen & Charvat, 2011). The SATSP is an online self-report survey available to NASP members. It asks participants to rate (a) the degree to which they engage in activities related to each of the 10 domains of the NASP Practice Model, (b) the importance of those activities to their overall effectiveness as school psychologists, and (c) the degree to which they see a need for professional development regarding each of the activities (Eklund, Rossen, Charvat, Meyer, & Tanner, 2016). Analyses of these results show that many school psychologists continue to engage in a more traditional role, and they report a need for continued training in the systems-level roles advocated within the NASP Practice Model (Rossen & Charvat, 2011). Shrinking budgets have made it increasingly difficult for school psychologists to access the training in systems-level roles, according to the SATSP results. Past NASP membership surveys suggest that ongoing supervision and mentoring for school psychologists is conducted in most cases by supervisors who are not school psychologists and who, thus, have a limited knowledge of school psychologists' training and suggested roles and responsibilities (Curtis et al., 2012). The current survey will help to determine if this pattern has continued.

Even if school psychologists do receive adequate training and mentoring in systems-level leadership roles, practitioner shortages make it difficult for them to take on these additional responsibilities. If administrators support school psychologists taking on broader roles, they often expect them to do so in addition to all of the traditional roles they have always fulfilled. Professional associations can offer some school psychologists opportunities outside of their "day jobs" to take on these systems-level leadership

roles, but data from two recent surveys of NASP leaders and members suggest that the opportunities offered through associations today may not match the needs of the younger generation of school psychologists. One of these surveys was the ASAE Foundation survey, a project funded by the American Society of Association Executives. In February 2016 current and former NASP leaders, as well as members who had never volunteered with NASP, participated in the survey. They were asked about their experiences and perceptions regarding volunteer activities (Hyson, Malone, & Vekaria, 2018). Another was the Net Promoter Score® (NPS®), a tool used by businesses across the globe to measure customer experiences and predict business growth (see www.netpromoter.com). In March 2016, NASP leaders, members, and external stakeholders completed the survey, which included both 10-point Likert scale and open-ended questions. Results were presented to the NASP Leadership Assembly in September 2016 (Johnson, 2016). Findings from both of these surveys suggested that early career practitioners are more likely to seek out short-term, more targeted leadership opportunities as opposed to the long-term commitments in which their veteran counterparts are more likely to engage.

These trends may be contributing to a significant number of school psychologists seeking administrative or other alternative systems-level positions (e.g., MTSS or data coach roles), further exacerbating the practitioner shortages and making the problem even more complex (Bocanegra et al., 2017). Data from the current survey were examined in context of these issues as well.

As a result of NASP's policy to survey members every 5 years, data are now available for six consecutive cycles (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015). Preliminary results were presented at the NASP 2016 Annual Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana (Walcott, Charvat, McNamara, & Hyson, 2016). This report represents a more comprehensive description of the field of school psychology in the United States, as well as an examination of trends since 1990, particularly as they relate to two NASP Strategic Goals.

METHODS

This study was conducted by the NASP Research Committee. The first author applied for and received approval for human subjects research from her University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sample

NASP is a professional association that represents a significant proportion of practicing school psychologists, graduate educators, graduate students, and related professionals throughout the United States and 25 other countries. Inclusionary criteria for eligibility to participate in this Membership Survey were (a) active NASP membership in the 2015–2016 membership year, (b) status as a regular or early career member, and (c) having a valid e-mail address in the NASP membership database. These criteria resulted in a pool of 13,270 eligible participants. Consistent with methods employed in the past five cycles, 20% of this pool (n = 2,654) were then randomly selected by state of residence using a commercially available software package that is integrated with the NASP membership database. Members' state of residence was used as a basis for random sampling to ensure sufficient national representation of the final sample because characteristics and practices tend to differ somewhat based on geographic region.

The final sample consisted of 1,274 surveys (of which 161 were partially completed). This represented a response rate of 48.0%. Basic demographics are presented in Table 2. Additional characteristics of the final 2015 sample are provided in the Results section, given that a description of the demographics of the school psychologist workforce is one main purpose of this survey. The current U.S. Census method was used to classify Hispanic origin separately from race, which was a procedural change from previous

versions of the survey. Additionally, this was the first Membership Survey cycle that employed electronic-only recruitment, delivery, and response methods. For response rate comparison, the 2010 Membership Survey used a mix of mailed paper surveys and electronic methods, which yielded a response rate of 44.1% (37.7% online; 45.7% mailed; Curtis et al., 2012). The first four survey cycles (1990–2005) employed traditional mailing methodologies.

Table 2. Basic Demographic Information for the Total Sample (N = 1,274)

	n	Percentage of Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Age	--	--	42.4	12.0	24–78
Years of Experience	--	--	12.2	10.1	0–48
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	73	6%			
Race					
White	1,079	88.2%			
Black /African American	62	5.1%			
Asian	35	2.9%			
Other	46	3.8%			
Gender					
Female	1,032	83.7%			
Male	200	16.2%			
Agender	1	0.1%			
Highest Degree in School Psychology					
Specialist or Equivalent	680	54.9%			
Doctorate	312	25.2%			
Masters	235	19.0%			
Primary Job Role/ Setting					
School-based School Psychologist	1,017	82.9%			
University Faculty	87	7.1%			
School Administrator	56	4.6%			
State Department of Education	5	0.4%			
Other	62	5.1%			

Note. Sample sizes vary by item because not all participants answered all items.

2015 Membership Survey Development

A team consisting of members of the NASP Research Committee, a NASP leader, and two staff liaisons met via Web conferencing during the summer of 2015 to review the 2010 survey instrument on an item-by-item basis, and to determine changes to the survey that would align with organizational priorities and

goals. Resulting changes were minimal; the committee wished to maintain consistency in content across survey cycles to enable examination of trends over time. Thus, there are many consistencies across all six iterations of the NASP Membership Survey. In the 2015 survey, minor changes included updating language to provide clarification and to reflect the most current U.S. Census terminology (e.g., for *Gender* and *Race* items). A few items were added to assess perceived support afforded by NASP membership as well as the use of contracted psychological services in school districts. Substantial changes were made to two items that previously asked for the percentage of total time spent in specific work activities (e.g., special education evaluations, consultation, student counseling); these were edited to ask for the degree to which participants engaged in activities that directly map onto the NASP Practice Model (NASP, 2010). A draft of the survey was reviewed by NASP leadership for suggested revisions prior to being finalized in August 2015 (a copy of the survey is available on the NASP website: http://www.nasponline.org/ research-and-policy/nasp-research-center/nasp-studies).

The 41-item survey includes questions about the demographic characteristics, employment conditions, and professional practices of respondents during the 2014–2015 school year. Items 1–21 are aimed at all participants, while items 22–41 are only for those who endorse being employed full-time in a school setting during 2014–2015. Items 1–5 request basic demographic information and languages spoken by the participant. Items 6–10 ask about years of experience, job title, annual salary, location of employment, and highest graduate degree earned. Items 11–13 ask which credentials the participant holds, as well as the professional organizations in which participants hold membership. Items 14–15 ask for the average hours per week spent in primary and secondary (if applicable) employment settings. Items 16–20 request the number of years until the respondents' plan to retire from the profession, and about the importance of NASP in supporting their work. There also are items in this section requesting the number of release days provided for professional development, and whether district support is available for attending NASP annual conventions.

The second part of the survey is aimed only at participants employed full time in a school setting. Item 21 asks, "Was your primary employment in 2014–2015 FULL TIME in a SCHOOL SETTING such as a public, private, or faith-based preschool, elementary school, middle/jr. high school, and/or high school?" If the participant responds *no*, then a "Thank You" page signals the end of the survey. If the participant respond *yes*, then items related to school-based practices are presented. Items 22–24 ask about characteristics of the school setting and the number of days in the respondent's annual employment contract. Items 25–29 ask about characteristics of the student population in schools served by the respondent, as well as the ratio of students per school psychologist. Items 30–31 ask whether the respondent's district used contracted psychological services during the 2014–2015 school year, and the perceived reasons for doing so. Items 32–37 ask participants to report counts of particular services provided during the past school year (e.g., how many psychoeducational evaluations and reevaluations completed, students counseled). Items 38 and 39 are new to this edition of the Membership Survey and require participants to rate the degree to which they engage in various activities related to the NASP Practice Model. Finally, items 40–41 ask about evaluation, mentorship, and supervision of one's professional practice as a school psychologist.

Procedure

The membership survey was launched on September 23, 2015, and remained active for a 2-month period that ended on November 23, 2015. For the 2,654 members invited to participate, several steps were taken to encourage survey completion, including notices in *Communiqué*, in *NASP in Brief*, on the NASP website, and via e-mail messages from NASP State Delegates. These notices and messages relayed the importance

of collecting Membership Survey data every 5 years to track demographic trends, employment conditions, and changes in professional roles and functions of school psychologists over time, and to support advocacy and legislative efforts. As an incentive, those invited to participate in the survey were notified that all who completed the survey would be entered into drawings for one $100 gift certificate, five $50 gift certificates, and 30 $20 discounts for NASP-sponsored continuing professional development webinars via the NASP Online Learning Center. Weekly e-mail reminders were sent over the 2-month survey period to each member who had not yet completed the survey. At the conclusion of the survey, the NASP Director of Research downloaded the data file from the survey site and sent it to the Research Committee for analysis and dissemination.

RESULTS

For the 1,274 school psychologists who participated in the 2015 Membership Survey, basic demographic data such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, education, and years of experience are presented in Table 2. Because members' state of residence was used as a factor in sampling, the final sample was representative of various geographic regions across the United States. Historical trends were examined using data obtained in previous survey cycles (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012; Curtis et al., 2012; Curtis, Grier, Abshier, Sutton, & Hunley, 2002; Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2004; Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker, 1999; Curtis et al., 2008). Results are presented in the context of NASP Strategic Goals.

Strategic Goal: Workforce Shortages

Sufficient workforce supply, in terms of the ratio of students per school psychologist. The reported ratio of students per school psychologist has remained essentially the same since the 2010 survey period. In the current survey, the ratio was assessed in two ways: participants either self-reported the ratio (*n* = 394), the method used in previous surveys, or, if they were uncertain, they reported the number of full-time equivalent school psychologists on staff as well as the total number students in the district. For responses using the latter option (*n* = 342), the ratio was calculated by the researchers post hoc. Because the mean ratios for the two different methods were similar, the data were combined to yield an overall average student-to-school psychologist ratio of 1,381 to 1 (*n* = 736). This is similar to the ratio reported in the 2010 Member Survey (1,383 to 1), and these represent improvements from previous years (see Figure 1).

Only 37.2% of respondents reported ratios that meet the NASP-recommended ratio of 1,000 to 1 or less, which is a lower percentage than that reported in the 2010 survey. However, the proportion of those reporting a student-to-school psychologist ratio less than or equal to 1,500 to 1 continues to increase. It is worth noting the dramatic improvement in the ratio since 1990, when only 43% of respondents served 1,500 students or fewer, versus 71% in 2014–2015.

Diversity and representativeness. Overall, the 2015 sample of survey respondents was predominantly White and female. The average age of respondents was 42.4 years (*SD* = 12 years), with the minimum age of 24 and maximum of 78. Just under 12% of the sample reported being age 60 or older. Trends in demographic characteristics across historical iterations of the membership survey were examined as well. In terms of gender, the pattern observed over the last several decades persists: there continues to be an increase in the proportion of female school psychologists and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of male school psychologists. In 1990, 35% of survey respondents were male, while only 16% of current respondents were male. Also new to the 2015 version of the survey, a gender category labeled "agender" was added and endorsed by 0.1% of the sample. Some participants (0.4%) did not respond to the gender item.

The average age of school psychologists has declined from previous reports. For years, experts have discussed a "graying of the profession" and how this phenomenon would affect shortages of school-based practitioners (e.g., Curtis, Hunley, & Grier, 2004). The average age of school psychologists responding to NASP surveys had been steadily increasing to a peak of 47.4 years in the 2010 survey period. However, as

Figure 1. Trends in the Ratio of Students to School Psychologists: 1990–2015
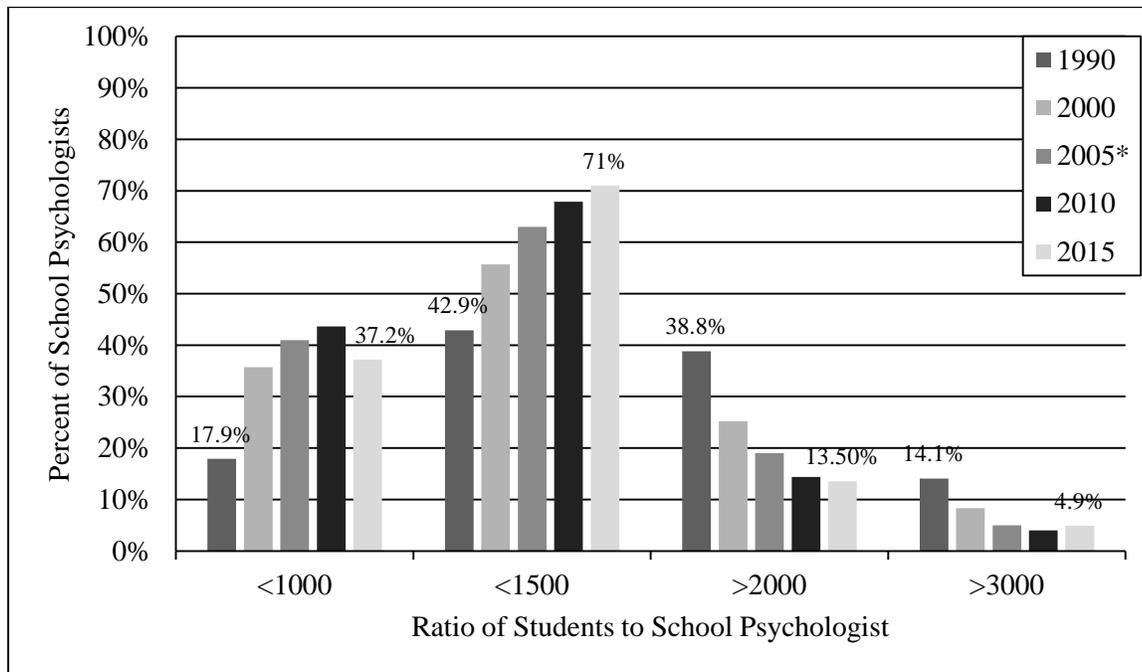
*2005 percentages were estimated from a figure in Curtis et al. (2008).

Figure 2 illustrates, that trend is changing with a 2015 report of the lowest average age (42.4) of survey respondents since 1990.

Six percent of the respondents reported being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. See Table 3 for gender-by-race data. Of 1,238 responses to an item about spoken languages, almost 14% reported fluency with a language other than English. Although 27 different languages were reported, Spanish was the most common (7% of the entire sample). The second most commonly endorsed second language was American Sign Language (1.3% of the entire sample). About 8% of the total sample reported that they provide multilingual school psychology services.

Increased diversity of the profession of school psychology has been a goal of recruitment and retention efforts on the part of school districts, graduate education programs, and NASP. Trends in this area seem to be showing an improvement. Although the vast majority of school psychologists are still White and speak only English (87%), there have been noticeable increases in the number of Black, Asian, and Hispanic school psychologists (see Figure 3), and a corresponding increase in the proportion of school psychologists who report fluency in languages other than English. Indeed, almost 8% of 2015 survey respondents reported that they provide multilingual school psychology services. Overall, changes in reported race/ethnicity over time reflect a steady increase in diversity, with a 7% increase in non-White school psychologists since 1990, when 94% of respondents were White.

Other workforce characteristics. The average number of years of experience in school psychology (not including graduate preparation and internship) reported by the sample was 12.2 ($SD = 10$ years; $n = 1,230$). Some reported 2014–2015 as their first year of experience; the maximum reported number of years of experience was 48. As expected, the majority of participants (55%) reported having a specialist degree (PsyS, EdS, SSP, etc.) or its equivalent (MA + CAS, MA + CAGS, etc.) as their highest level of

Figure 2. Demographic Trends in the Average Age of School Psychologists: 1990–2015
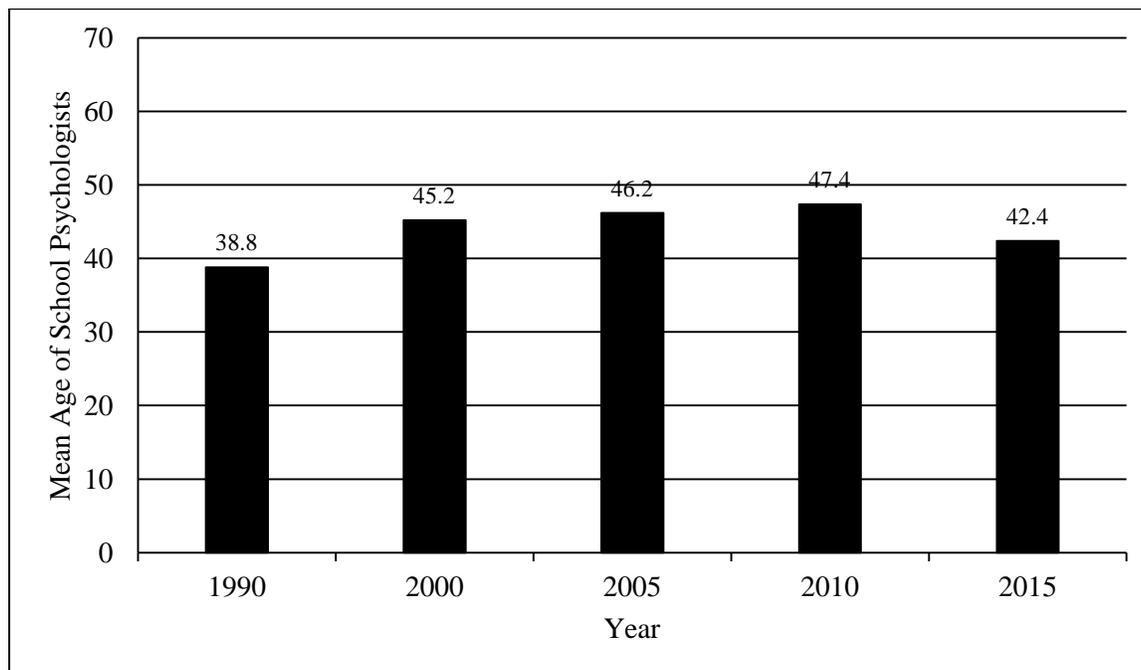

Table 3. Gender-by-Race Data for School Psychologists in the 2014–2015 School Year

	Male	Female	Total
White	175 (14.4%)	898 (73.8%)	1,074 (87.2%)
Black or African American	6 (0.5%)	56 (4.6%)	62 (5.1%)
Asian	5 (0.4%)	30 (2.5%)	35 (2.9%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	3 (0.2%)
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	2 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)
Identified as Multiracial	7 (0.6%)	22 (1.8%)	29 (2.3%)
Other (not listed here)	3 (0.2%)	9 (0.7%)	12 (1%)
Total	197 (16.2%)	1,019 (83.8%)	1,217 (100%)

Note. 1.1% of the sample gave no response to one or more demographic items.

Figure 3. Demographic Trends in Race/Ethnicity of School Psychologists: 1990–2015
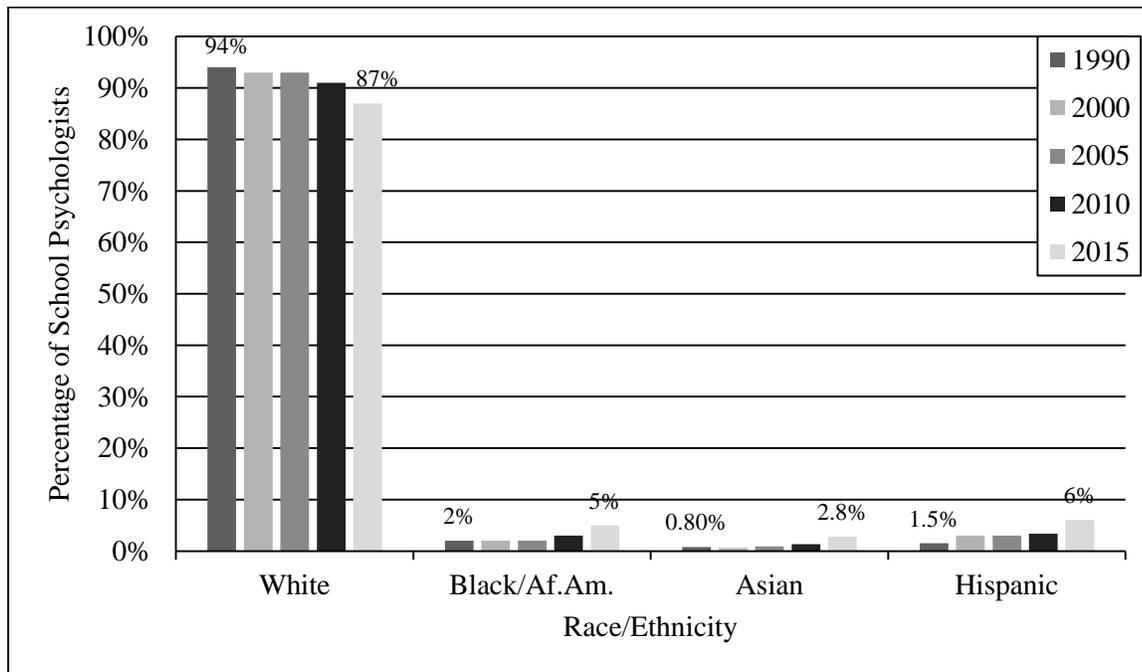

educational attainment in school psychology (see Table 4). A terminal master's degree or a doctoral degree were reported as their highest degree by 20% and 25% of respondents, respectively. Trends in the highest degree earned in school psychology show that the specialist-level degree has become the most commonly held degree for school psychologists, with the master's-only degree declining in prevalence. Interestingly, there also is a declining trend in the percentage of doctoral-level school psychologists, with only a quarter of respondents reporting this as their highest school psychology degree.

Table 4. Trends in Highest Degree Earned in School Psychology: 2000–2015

Highest Degree	Percentage of Respondents by Year			
	2015	**2010**	**2005**	**2000**
Master's level *(e.g., MA, MS, MEd)*	20.3%	25.1%	32.6%	41.0%
Specialist-level *(e.g., PsyS, SSP, CAS, CAGS, EdS)*	54.9%	45.8%	34.9%	28.2%
Doctoral-level *(e.g., PhD, PsyD., EdD)*	24.8%	24.2%	32.4%	30.3%

The majority of respondents (96%) held school psychology certification awarded by their state departments of education. Figure 4 depicts the array of other licenses and certifications held by respondents, with only 11% of respondents reporting state board of psychology licensure and 67% reporting national certification (Nationally Certified School Psychologist, or NCSP, awarded by the National School Psychology Certification Board).

Figure 4. Percentage of School Psychologists Holding Various Certifications/Licensure in the 2014–2015 School Year (*N* = 918)
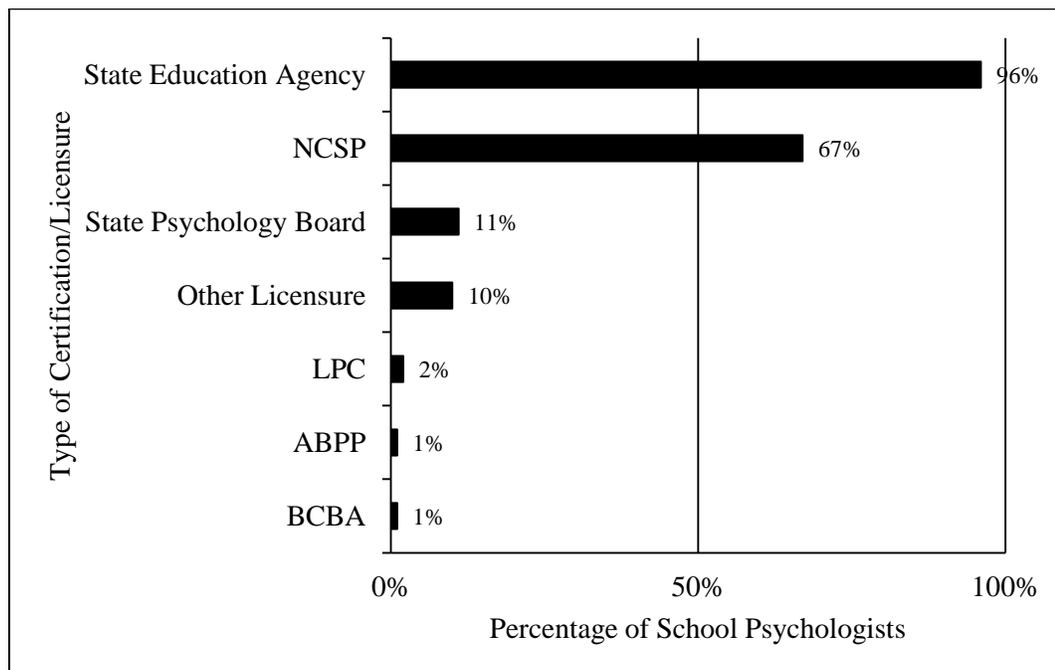
Note. NCSP = Nationally Certified School Psychologist; LPC = Licensed Professional Counselor; ABPP = American Board of Professional Psychology; BCBA = Board Certified Behavior Analyst

Significantly more respondents reported holding the NCSP in the current survey period (67%) than in the 2010 survey period (56%). For other employment conditions, such as one's primary position, job setting, contract length, and most common credential held, there have been no significant changes since the last survey period. The vast majority of respondents were school-based practitioners, with 165- to 190-day employment contracts, and holding certification from state departments of education. Most respondents identified their primary employment title as School Psychologist (83%). The other employment positions endorsed included University Faculty (7%), Administrator (4.6%), and Other (5%). The percentage of respondents who identified as school psychology program faculty (Graduate Educators; 7%) did not change significantly in the past several years; in 2005 and 2010, the percentages were 6% and 7%, respectively.

Salaries of school psychologists by region. State-level participation varied widely, and sample sizes by state were generally too small to make possible any state-level analyses. Thus, participants were grouped by state into U.S. regions for broader comparison purposes. (Figure 5 displays states and their corresponding regions.) Of the 1,219 respondents who provided their state of residence, 29.4% resided in the Northeast; 23.7% in the Midwest; 19.3% in the Southeast; 17.0% in the West; 7.6% in the Southwest; and 1.4% in Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, or the Armed Forces–Europe.

Salaries of school psychologists were examined for a subsample of participants who reported their primary job title to be School Psychologist, and who worked full-time in schools during the 2014–2015 school year (*n* = 792). Because length of contract could influence salary, differences in annual salary were analyzed by contract length (10-, 11-, and 12-month contracts) in addition to U.S. geographic region. Results of a 3 (contract length) × 6 (geographic region) ANOVA using annual salary as the dependent variable found no main effects for contract length, F(2) = 0.55, p = 0.58; the 12-month group did report the highest mean

salary, but differences between contract length groups were not statistically significant. Regardless of the number of days in one's employment contract, the median annual salary reported by school-based school psychologist practitioners was $63,000. There were, however, significant effects of geographic region on mean reported annual salary, $F_{(5)} = 4.58$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc comparisons revealed that respondents from the Northeast and West, on average, reported significantly higher salaries than all other regions

Figure 5. Breakdown of States by Geographic Region
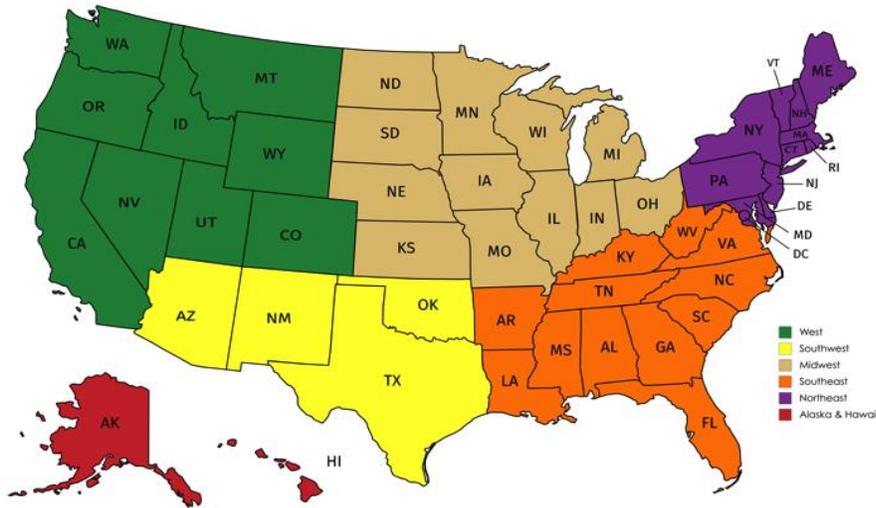
except for Hawaii and Alaska (see Table 5). There was, of course, great variability in reported salaries regardless of region, as reflected in the minimum and maximum statistics appearing in Table 5, due in part to variation in respondents' years of experience. There were no statistically significant contract length-by-region interaction effects, $F_{(7)} = 1.56$, $p = 0.13$.

Table 5. Salaries of School Psychologists by Geographic Region in the 2014–2015 School Year

Geo Region	Mean	N	SD	Min	Max	Median
Northeast	$73,352	228	$20,557	$30,000	$140,000	$70,000
Hawaii & Alaska	$69,160	10	$10,974	$52,000	$93,600	$69,000
West	$68,019	148	$18,074	$21,000	$108,000	$65,000
Midwest	$63,772	184	$17,778	$28,000	$143,000	$61,400
Southwest	$60,427	56	$11,779	$30,000	$97,000	$59,800
Southeast	$59,963	158	$14,182	$25,000	$110,000	$59,000

Strategic Goal: Leadership Development

Leadership within the profession. It is interesting to note that 10% of those responding to the 2015 survey reported a primary role other than school psychologist or graduate educator, most of which were

leadership positions (i.e., administrator, state department employee). Although this is a slight decline from 2010 when 11.9% of respondents reported primary roles of this kind, it still represents a substantial minority of respondents. The data may underestimate the true percentage of those who are educated as school psychologists but currently engaged in nontraditional roles because only NASP members participated in the survey, and one would expect that those engaged in nontraditional roles may be less likely to have retained NASP membership.

Access to professional development and mentoring. Survey participants' responses suggest that rates of state association membership may be declining, with approximately three quarters (75.4%) of 2015 respondents indicating that they were members of their state school psychology association, compared to 86.6% in 2010. The provision of professional development, mentoring, and support does not appear to be widespread either, with fewer than half (49.5%) of respondents reporting that they received systematic professional support, mentoring, and/or peer supervision for their professional activities. In addition, only 31.6% reported that the person responsible for their performance evaluation was a credentialed school psychologist.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (64.5%) reported having four or fewer days of annual release time to attend conventions, conferences, or other professional development activities not provided by their district. In fact, almost one fifth (17.8%) reported not having any such days at all. Approximately three quarters (74.9%) of respondents do not receive any reimbursement to cover the cost of their participation in these opportunities. The situation is particularly dire for practitioners, with almost four fifths (78.4%) reporting having no financial reimbursement available at all. More than 80% of all respondents indicated that the availability of cost reimbursement affected their decision about whether to attend a conference or other professional development event.

DISCUSSION

The NASP 2015 Membership Survey and historical trend data reviewed in this report have important implications for NASP's Strategic Goals addressing workforce shortages and leadership development. As described in Table 1, the workforce shortages strategic goal calls for NASP, its leaders, and its members to ensure that a "high-quality and diverse school psychology workforce is available to meet an increasing demand for school psychological services." For this report, we examined whether there was a sufficient supply of school psychologists to support the recommended ratios and the broad-based role as articulated in the NASP Practice Model. We also examined the diversity and representativeness of the workforce. The NASP 2015 Membership Survey and historical trend data indicate that the average student-to-school-psychologist ratio has remained virtually unchanged from 2010 to 2015. Unfortunately, it still exceeds the recommended ratio for school psychologists practicing a traditional role (1,000 to 1), and is well above the recommended ratio for school psychologists intending to play a comprehensive and integrated role (500–700 to 1). Fewer than half of 2015 survey respondents met the 1000 to 1 recommended ratio, making it less likely they can make significant contributions to the attainment of broad range services for children and families as highlighted by NASP (2015). It is difficult to ascertain whether these ratios are impacted by workforce shortages alone, or whether state- and district-level hiring practices may restrict the number of school psychologists hired. The steady increase in the average age of practitioners noted in past reports of NASP membership survey data (Castillo et al., 2012; Curtis et al., 2012) appears—at least temporarily—to be reversing. This may reduce one threat to a sufficient supply of school psychologists. Although no data have been reported relative to this trend, some school districts choose to hire non-psychology support personnel who are deemed more affordable (e.g., behavioral specialists, instructional coaches), a trend the authors have noted in some school districts within their states.

The 2015 survey results revealed encouraging increases in the diversity and representativeness of respondents in terms of race/ethnicity, ability to speak a language other than English, and engagement in providing multilingual school psychology services. However, these increases still do not match the changing demographics of the student population in our public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). School psychologists serve an increasing number of students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as noted in the past (Castillo et al., 2012; Grapin et al., 2015). Thus, the profession is trending toward greater diversity, but not at a rate that keeps pace with the growing diversity of our public school student population.

Another phenomenon that reflects limited diversity and representativeness of the school psychology workforce is its increasing proportion of women, with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of men. This trend has been noted throughout the fields of education and psychology within the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Several explanations for this gender gap have been posited, ranging from attitudes learned through socialization, internalization of widely held cultural attitudes about men's and women's competencies, beliefs about work–family conflicts that are embedded in some job fields or organizational structures, and perceived opportunities (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, & Corrigall, 2000; Morgan, Gelbgiser, & Weeden, 2013). Another interesting fact that may help to explain the gender gap is that women now outperform men academically at all levels of school, and are more likely to obtain college degrees and enroll in graduate school (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Thus, the issue is multifaceted and complex. Although efforts have been made to encourage girls to engage in typically male-dominated fields, such as math and science, boys have not been given similar incentives to engage in traditionally female-dominated professions, such as education (Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015). Strategies are needed to more purposely recruit males into the field of school psychology to better match the characteristics of students served by school psychologists, especially in special education programs.

Table 1 presents leadership development as a strategic goal that calls for NASP, its leaders, and its members to ensure that "school psychologists possess the leadership skills to effect change at the local, state, and national levels." For this report, we examined whether school psychologists act as leaders in their work settings, as well as their access to leadership development opportunities and mentoring. One finding from the 2015 survey with both positive and negative implications for the field is that a significant minority of those trained as school psychologists play a primary role other than school psychologist or graduate educator (e.g., as an administrator or another systems-level employee such as an MTSS or data coach). Although having school psychologists engaged in these administrator or systems-level roles certainly might increase the likelihood that school psychologists could view themselves and act as leaders in their work within the profession, it also could exacerbate the problem of workforce shortages because these school psychologists would not be filling the numerous practitioner vacancies. This finding regarding the growing number of school psychologists working in other roles is consistent with the findings of other surveys (Bocanegra et al., 2017). The percentage of trained school psychologists employed in these administrative or alternative roles may actually be even greater than this survey indicates, since (as suggested earlier) those employed in non-school psychologist positions may be less likely to have maintained NASP membership and would therefore not have been included in the participant sample.

Survey results indicated that more than half of school psychologists employed in school-based practitioner roles are not being supervised, mentored, or evaluated by a school psychologist. This replicates a finding from past surveys (Curtis et al., 2012). Not only do many school psychologists report lacking access to leadership development and mentoring opportunities within their school districts, but they also report being less likely to have access to those opportunities outside of their districts. This may be related to

respondent reports suggesting a decline in state association membership and minimal release time and financial reimbursement for professional development. This is particularly concerning given NASP SATSP data indicating a need and desire for professional development in systems-level work (Rossen & Charvat, 2011). Opportunities for leadership development may be especially important if the American Psychological Association Model Licensure Act (2010) exemption for school psychologists is challenged once again (as it was in 2009), because an overwhelming majority (75%) of survey respondents report a nondoctoral degree as their highest level of education.

Limitations

Although these survey findings are important for identifying trends in the school psychology workforce, survey studies are not without limitations. The self-report and retrospective nature of the study may have posed a threat to the internal validity of findings due to potential for socially desirable responding or subjective recall for retrospective reporting. Nevertheless, the survey was conducted to assess broad NASP membership characteristics and perspectives, and to track changes in these over time. Despite the study's limitations, this type of survey offers a picture of the school psychology workforce in 2015.

CONCLUSION

This report summarizes key demographic trends and employment characteristics of school psychologists using data from the NASP 2015 Membership Survey. A companion article is planned for NASP's newspaper, *Communiqué*, highlighting NASP resources readers can use to address identified trends and to advocate for change at the school building and district level, or at the state and national level. A second article for *NASP Research Reports* is planned to present 2015 survey findings regarding trends associated with school psychologists' professional practices, and discussing implications for NASP Strategic Goals regarding implementation of the NASP Practice Model and advocacy for school psychologists as qualified mental and behavioral health service providers.

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