



RECRUITING AND TRAINING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY TO ADDRESS SHORTAGES: RESEARCH, PRACTICAL, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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TASP TRAINERS SESSION, 2021

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Learn about current, Texas-specific research related to recruiting new school psychologists.
- Understand facilitators and barriers in recruitment, particularly for non-traditional students.
- Explore concrete ways to strengthen connections between training programs and field-based sites for recruitment and retention efforts, including both practical applications and research collaboration possibilities.

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION - SHORTAGES

- The shortages in the field of school psychology that be conceptualized into two areas:
 - overall number of school psychologists entering the workforce
 - a lack of school psychologists who identify as racially, culturally and linguistically diverse.
- NASP (2021) recommends a ratio of 1:500 for school psychologists to students.
 - Current data estimates are 1:1,211 - Variability exists among states
 - Texas ratio: 1:2,656 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019-2020)
 - Additional Texas data: 1:2,792 with some rural areas noting 1 school psychologist for every 7,500 students (Barbre, 2019).

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- Lack of diversity in the field (Graves et al., 2021; Barrett et al., 2020)
 - 13% of school psychologists self-identify as being from either a racial or ethnic minority group (Walcott & Hyson, 2018).
 - 8% of school psychologists report being fluent in a language other than English (Goforth et. al, 2021)
 - 86% of graduate students are female (NASP, 2021).
- The ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity of school psychologists differs sharply from the student populations served (McFarland et al., 2017)
 - By 2024, racially and ethnically diverse students will be the numerical majority, constituting nearly 55% of public-school students (Kena et al., 2015).

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- Trainers must be to help establish a workforce that is equipped to meet the mental health needs of individuals from all backgrounds.
- Traditional programs may attract traditional students.

Non-traditional students may be:

- Older than average
- Parents
- Full-time employees
- Attend school part-time
- Have other life circumstances that may interfere with educational attainment

**Students who are identified as non-traditional are more likely to belong to a racial-ethnic minority group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Non-traditional students may be:

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- Parents
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**Students who are identified as non-traditional are more likely to belong to a racial-ethnic minority group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021).

How well does your program attract non-traditional students?

How do you recruit non-traditional students into your program and how successful are these efforts?

RECRUITMENT OF EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

- NASP (2016) has noted the field should consider increasing recruitment of professionals working or holding a graduate degree in related fields.
- When thinking about recruitment of non-traditional students from diverse backgrounds who are in allied fields, professionals already working in education may be a target group.
- What about concerns related to poaching?
 - Well-qualified teachers, specifically those who teach children with behavioral and emotional disorders, often experience significant amounts of stress and burnout, leading to transfer requests or ultimately leaving the profession (Gonzalez et al., 2008).
 - Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 6 teachers were likely to leave their job (Preidt, 2021).
 - In March 2021, 42% of teachers stated they have considered leaving their position or retiring within the last academic year (Zamarro et al., 2021).
- Yet, these teachers have valuable experience that may translate well into a role as a school psychologist.

CURRENT STUDY

- The current study sought to uncover how school psychology programs may better attract non-traditional students, thus potentially increasing the diversity within the profession.
- The focus of the study was on current school employees.
- This study sought to determine:
 - If school personnel are knowledgeable about school psychology as a field.
 - If school personnel are interested in obtaining graduate training to become a school psychologist.
 - The qualities and characteristics of graduate training programs that might entice current school personnel to pursue a graduate degree in school psychology.

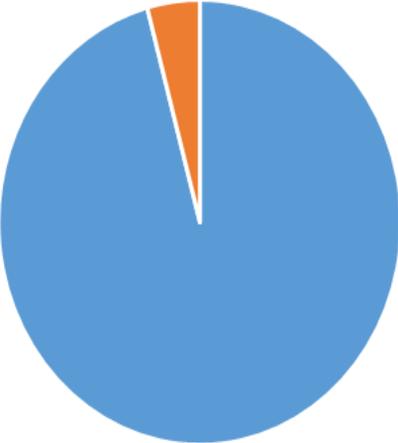


METHOD

- Current school employees (N = 213) participated in an online measuring knowledge, interests, and preferences for school psychology graduate training.
 - The “Interests and Preferences for School Psychology Graduate Training” researcher-developed survey = 31 items
 - The survey was modeled after surveys conducted by Bocanegra and colleagues (2016; 2017).
 - Items examined knowledge of school psychology, exposure to school psychology and outcome expectations of pursuing a degree in school psychology
 - Cronbach’s alpha ranged from 0.79-0.93 on scales
 - Additional items measured interest, and desire to attend graduate training
 - Those that indicated interest also answered questions related to factors influencing participants decision to pursue school psychology.
 - The current study focused on graduate program variables that may increase the likelihood of enrolling and attending a program for those already employed in a school setting.
 - Cronbach’s alpha was 0.76.
 - Participants were primarily solicited through social media sites for teachers and education professionals.

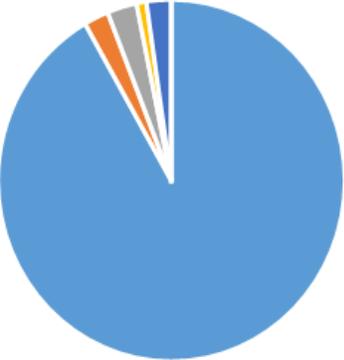
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Biological Sex



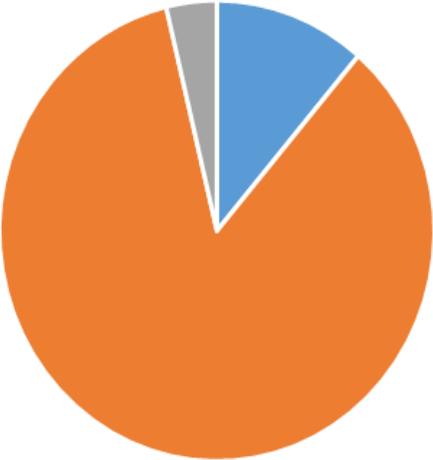
■ Female ■ Male

Racial Background



■ White/Caucasian ■ Black or African American
■ American Indian or Alaskan Native ■ Asian
■ Other ■ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

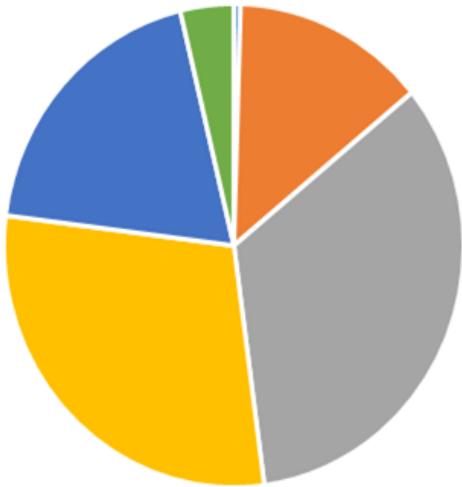
Ethnicity



■ Hispanic or Latino ■ Non-Hispanic or Latino ■ Other

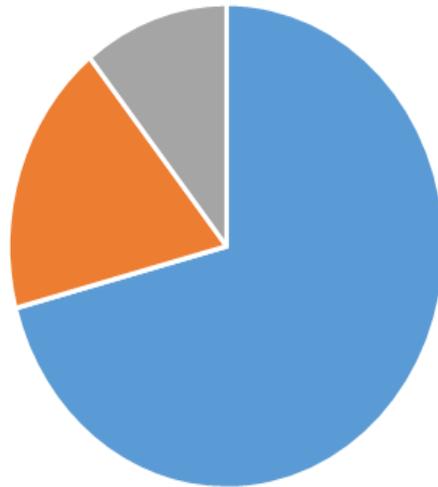
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Age



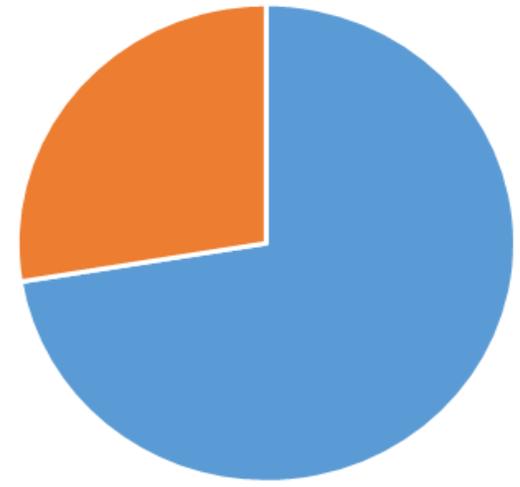
■ 18-20 ■ 21-30 ■ 31-40 ■ 41-50 ■ 51-60 ■ 61 and above

Marital Status



■ Married ■ Single ■ In a committed long-term relationship

Parental Status



■ Parent ■ Non-parent

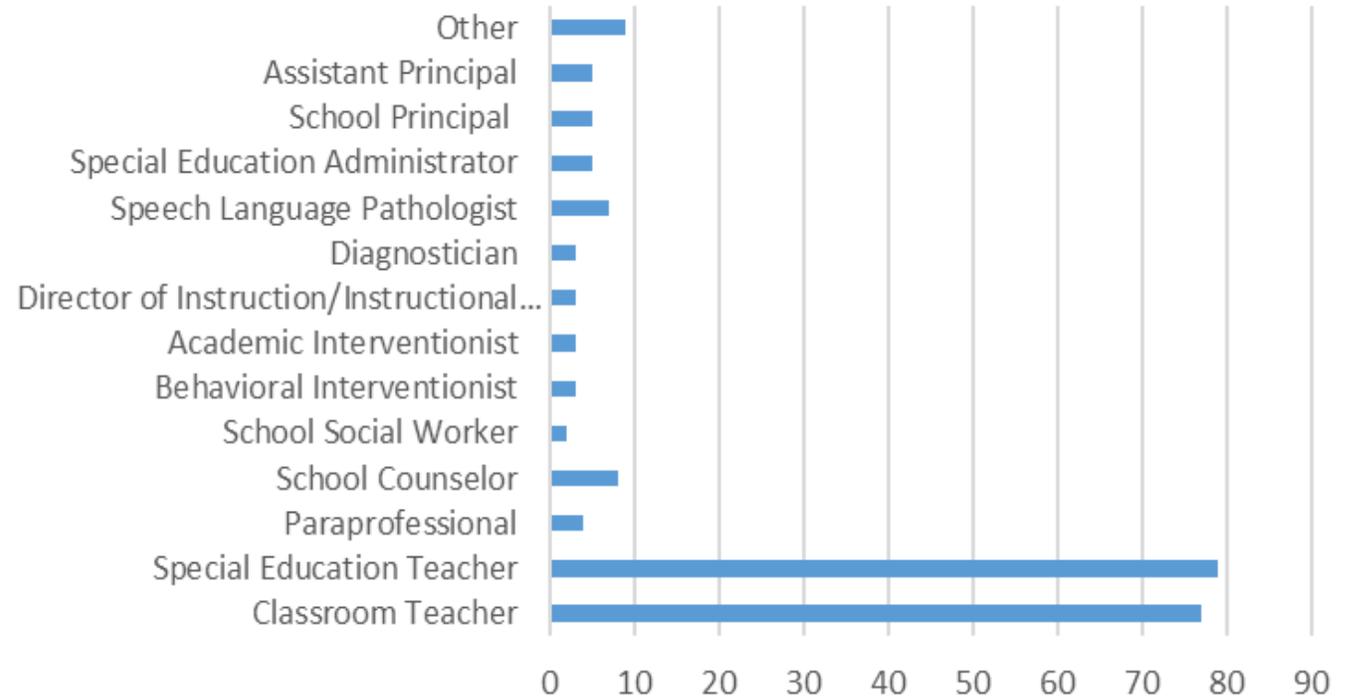
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Educational Attainment



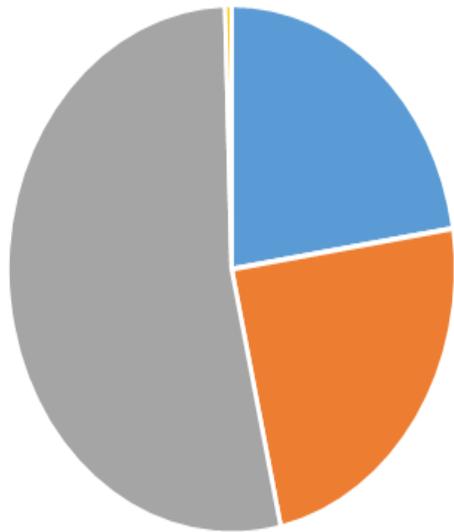
■ High School Diploma ■ Bachelor's ■ Master's ■ Specialist ■ Doctorate

Current Job Role



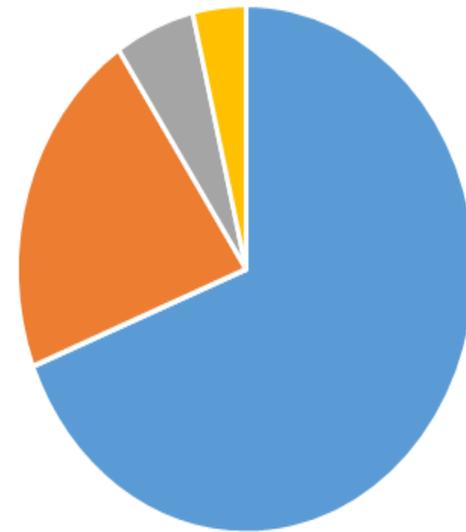
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

District Type



■ Urban ■ Rural ■ Suburban ■ Frontier

U.S. Location



■ South ■ Midwest ■ Northeast ■ West

RESULTS

- Nearly the entire sample (95.3%, $N = 203$) endorsed hearing about the field of school psychology.
- Nearly half of the sample felt they could describe in at least some or great detail:
 - Where school psychologists work (46%, $N = 98$)
 - What they do (42.2%, $N = 90$)
 - Who their clients are (43.7%, $N = 93$)
 - The importance of the profession (51.6%, $N = 110$)
 - A smaller percentage of respondents felt they had perceived knowledge about training requirements (21.6%, $N = 46$).
- Participants could endorse various ways they had received information about school psychology. The top three endorsed manners that participants had either “a lot” or a “great deal” of prior knowledge about school psychology was from working with school psychologists in their professional roles (44.6%, $N = 95$), knowing someone personally who is a school psychologist (31.5%, $N = 67$), and prior coursework (11.3%, $N = 24$).

RESULTS

- Respondents were asked if they had interest in obtaining graduate training to become a school psychologist.
 - 16.7% ($N = 34$) responded either “agree” or “strongly agree.”
 - Approximately 24% indicated they “neither agree nor disagree”
- Of those noting interest:
 - Ages 31-40 (44.1%, $N = 15$)
 - Working in suburban school districts (58.8%, $N = 20$)
 - Classroom or special education teachers (70.6%, $N = 24$)
 - Married (67.6%, $N = 23$) with 1-2 children (52.9%, $N = 18$).



RESULTS

- Approximately 80% of participants who indicated interest noted to either “agree” or “strongly agree” that the following variables would positively impact their decision to return to school:
 - Financial assistance (88%, N = 30)
 - Scholarships (82%, N = 28)
 - Courses offered in the evenings (85%, N = 29)
 - Length of the program (79%, N = 27)
 - Overall cost (85%, N = 29)
- When seeking a specific university training program, approximately 80% of interested participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that courses offered completely online (79%, N = 27) would positively impact their decision to choose a specific program, in addition to the results noted above.

DISCUSSION: RECRUITMENT

Finding: Results indicate that most school employees are already aware of the profession of school psychology, and a little under half of respondents had worked with a school psychologist before. Additionally, approximately 32% knew a school psychologist personally.

Interpretation: Practicing school psychologists may have great influence in recruiting people into the field and making people aware of their job role.

Discussion: How can you partner with current school psychologists and school districts in your area to aid in recruitment?

DISCUSSION: EDUCATION

Finding: Respondents were less knowledgeable about training requirements for school psychologists.

Interpretation: This may be due to the fact that many school employees come from an educational background and not a psychology background.

Discussion: How can we effectively educate prospective students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds and those currently working in schools, about the training requirements for school psychology programs?

DISCUSSION: BARRIERS & FACILITATORS

Finding: Approximately 16% of participants were interested in obtaining a graduate degree in school psychology.

Interpretation: Recruitment efforts and programs that have re-specialization programs that target current public-school employees may be a fruitful source of non-traditional students for graduate training programs. However, we have to be cognizant of the barriers and facilitators to recruiting and retaining these potential students.

***Discussion:* How can programs facilitate enrollment and retention of these student populations? What facilitators and barriers exist in your program? Where are areas for further data collection, growth or discussion in your specific programs or geographical areas?**

Financial assistance
Overall cost
Length of the program
Scholarships
Courses offered in the evenings
Courses offered completely online

SUMMARY/TAKE HOME IDEAS

- What can you take away from today's discussion?
- Write down 1-3 action items that you could start next week or next month to positively impact your program, your geographic area, the school psychology work force or the diversity of the profession.
 - What barriers may exist in achieving these action items?
 - What support do you need from TASP, other programs/faculty, or NASP to help achieve your goals?

If you don't like
something, change it.

If you can't change it,
change your attitude.

Maya Angelou

THANK YOU!



Please contact us with any questions or further discussion.

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