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Keywords

Continuing professional development, school psychologists, school psychology

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The Continuing Professional Development of School Psychologists in Georgia: A Comparison to the National Practice and Preference Survey

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The Continuing Professional Development of School Psychologists in Georgia: A Comparison to the National Practice and Preference Survey

Armistead, Castillo, Curtis, Chappel, and Cunningham (2013) explored the continuing professional development (CPD) activities of a sample of members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) to determine their practices and preferences with regard to continuing professional development. The current study utilized the same instrument as Armistead et al. (2013) with the purpose of determining the perceptions of and self-reported engagement in CPD of school psychologists practicing within the state of Georgia to their counterparts across the nation.

The determination of current CPD practices is critical for the creation of future continuing professional development opportunities that enhance competencies, address deficiencies, and increase the probability of best practice of the school psychologists in Georgia. This information would be particularly helpful to state and national organizations that provide CPD for school psychologists in Georgia. The current study also offers an opportunity for individual school psychologists to reflect on the CPD preferences to ensure that there is a match between their needs, selection, and application of CPD content for best practice. On a larger scale, a comparison between the preferences and practices of school psychologists in Georgia to their peers across the nation is important because any consistencies with and inconsistencies from the national sample have implication with regard to training, practice, and needs specific to a particular area (in this case, Georgia). Finally, these data shed light on the appropriateness of CPD opportunities offered on a national scale to specific state audiences through conferences or online training opportunities. Researchers suggest the need for just this type of study to continue

exploration of CPD to address future planning and policies (Fowler & Harrison, 2001; Lam & Yuen, 2004; Neimeyer, Taylor & Philip, 2010; Neimeyer, Taylor, & Wear, 2009).

The Need for CPD in School Psychology

There is consensus in the school psychology literature that completion of a graduate-level training program is only the first step in attaining competency as a school psychologist. Authors agree that the depth and breadth of the job description, roles, and functions of the school psychologist are too great to achieve mastery of the skill set through the didactic and experiential training offered through the graduate program of study. Thus, the need for CPD is clear (Armistead et al., 2013; Armistead & Smallwood, 2010; Lionetti, Snyder, Christner, & McLaughlin, 2010; Reynolds, 2011; Snyder, Lionetti, & Christner, 2010) and summarized by Lionetti, et al. (2010) who indicate that "...we do not believe that training programs can adequately train all individuals to be competent in all domain areas to an expert level, and thus, it is imperative that practicing school psychologists continue to develop their skills (p.4)."

Beyond graduate school, it is suggested that school psychologists progress through developmental stages in acquiring advanced levels of practice (Armistead & Smallwood, 2010; Macklem, Kalinsky, & Corcoran, 2001). Although those professional stages may vary based on theoretical model, the consensus is that school psychologists need CPD as a professional and ethical requirement (Armistead, 2008; Armistead et al., 2013; Armistead & Smallwood, 2010; NASP, 2010a) to develop competencies (Armistead, 2008; Armistead et al., 2013; Daniels & Walter, 2002), meet certification requirements (Armistead, 2008; Armistead et al., 2013; Zins & Murphy, 1996), cope with professional isolation (Armistead & Smallwood, 2010; Guest, 2000; Macklem et al., 2001), and maintain current knowledge in a rapidly changing field (Armistead, 2008; Armistead et al., 2013; Daniels & Walter, 2002; Fowler & Harrison, 2001; Reynolds,

2011; Zins & Murphy, 1996). Survey research on psychologists' perceptions of CPD indicates that psychologists believe that their CPD participation does, in fact, lead to more effective practice (Neimeyer et al., 2009; Neimeyer et al., 2010), particularly when the CPD includes an experiential learning component (Daniels & Walter, 2002).

CPD Requirements – National

In addition to the need for CPD to address competencies beyond the standard training experience, many school psychologists are motivated by certification requirements to engage in professional development throughout their careers (Armistead, 2008; Armistead & Smallwood, 2010; Armistead et al., 2013; Fowler & Harrison, 2001; Lam & Yuen, 2004; Zins & Murphy, 1996). Once a school psychologist has earned the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential offered through the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), he/she must develop a personal plan for professional development, encompassing a variety of activities beyond his/her job requirements, and covering multiple foundation areas. According to NASP (2010b), CPD activities may include the following: workshops, conferences, and inservice training; college and university coursework; training and inservice activities; research and publications; supervision of graduate students; supervised experience; program planning and evaluation; self-study; and professional organization leadership. In order to renew the NCSP, its recipient must complete 75 hours of CPD for every three-year period. One CPD credit is accrued per one hour of engagement in CPD activities. Those 75 hours must include at least 10 hours of CPD from NASP- or American Psychological Association (APA) - Approved CPD providers. NCSPs must also attain three hours of CPD training in ethics or law for school psychologists in every three-year period (NASP, 2010b). Currently, 31 states recognize the NCSP in full or partial fulfillment for credentialing for practice within those states, and eight states consider the

maintenance of the NCSP credential as sufficient for meeting their CPD requirements (NASP, 2014).

CPD Requirements – Georgia

In the state of Georgia, school psychologists who hold the NCSP credential may receive a certificate for practice upon passing the state-level exam for certification. Thus, the NCSP serves as partial fulfillment for initial certification purposes. However, the maintenance of the NCSP (and its affiliated CPD requirements) is considered sufficient for renewal of state certification in Georgia (GaPSC, 2014) along with meeting other certification requirements beyond CPD including employment in a local unit of administration in Georgia, criminal record check, and satisfactory performance evaluations.

For those school psychologists in Georgia who do not hold the NCSP, the state requires 10 Professional Learning Units or 10 Continuing Education Units (CEU) per five year period for certificate renewal along with the aforementioned certification requirements beyond CPD completion. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC, 2014) has defined one CEU as 10 contact hours of CPD. Thus, the school psychologist in Georgia must complete 100 hours of CPD per five-year period in order to renew his/her certificate for practice. Despite the current state and national requirements for CPD, Reynolds (2011) noted that, “Continuing education demands, if you are to stay current in all areas of science that underlie practice, are far beyond what is required for continuation of licensure or certification (p. 925).”

Practices

Research suggests that psychologists’ CPD is most often self-directed (Daniels & Walter, 2002; Neimeyer et al., 2010; Snyder, et al., 2010). School psychologists in particular may learn best when they have control over CPD selection (Fowler & Harrison, 2001), and CPD that is not

considered stimulating may actually impair professional growth (Macklem et al., 2001). These findings are consistent with the policy of NASP that school psychologists should develop and implement a plan for their CPD that is revisited and updated annually (NASP, 2010b).

With regard to CPD, clock hours of completion in a one-year time period is one of the most frequently addressed topics in the literature. Neimeyer et al. (2009) and Neimeyer et al. (2010) found that psychologists (including school psychologists) complete an average of 22.5 and 21.77 hours of CPD respectively per year with those psychologists who are mandated to attain CPD credits completing significantly more than those psychologists who are not required to complete CPD for maintaining their licensure or certification. While this would be sufficient to meet most state licensing requirements, it would not provide the number of CPD hours needed for a school psychologist to maintain his/her NCSP. This discrepancy may explain why Armistead et al. (2013) found a median of 40 hours per year of CPD completion among a recent national sample comprised solely of school psychologists. In that sample, approximately 80% of school psychologists noted completion of greater than 25 hours of CPD in the reporting year.

CPD activities for the practicing psychologist may take a variety of forms. Research suggests that the most common form is that of didactic instruction with little to no interaction by the participants. Although most CPD workshops and presentations take this form, concern has arisen over the apparent lack of effectiveness when CPD does not include an experiential component (Daniels & Walter, 2002).

For the practicing school psychologist, many factors impact CPD participation and completion beyond requirements for certification and/or licensure. According to Fowler and Harrison (2001) compensated leave, financial reimbursement of expenses, perceived need, and personal interest increase the likelihood that school psychologists will seek CPD. Similarly,

Armistead et al. (2013) found that the school psychologists' sense of "personal responsibility" and "enjoyment of new learning" motivated their participation in CPD. School psychologists in the recent national survey also noted the impediments to their participant in CPD including financial expenditure, heavy workload, and personal/family obligations (Armistead et al., 2013).

Preferences

Survey research demonstrates that psychologists are satisfied with their CPD experiences (Neimeyer et al., 2010; Neimeyer et al., 2009; Fagan, Ax, Liss, Resnick, & Moody, 2007).

Among school psychologists, preferences in CPD topic selection seem to mirror trends and areas of focus in the field as a whole. Data collected in the 2004 – 2005 school year showed school psychologist preference for CPD focused on behavioral intervention and psychoeducational assessment. However, the most recent exploration of CPD topics for school psychologists indicated that behavioral intervention remains in the top two topics for engagement, but Response to Intervention (RtI) is now the CPD topic with the most participation (Armistead et al., 2013). RtI and behavioral intervention were also noted as the two topics for CPD with the greatest continuing need for school psychologists. While the aforementioned topics represent those typical of the field of school psychology, Guest (2000) found that engaging in a diversity of CPD topics (including those that may be only tangentially related to the discipline) has a positive impact on career development.

Prior research has indicated a preference among psychologists for on-site delivery of CPD activities such as workshops, conferences, and presentations (Neimeyer et al., 2010). With regard to conference attendance, Armistead et al. (2013) reported that more than 74% of their participants had attended a state or national conference in the previous year. In addition to face-to-face CPD activities, Guest (2000) and Lionetti et al. (2010) noted the importance of self-study

through professional reading as important in the development of school psychologists beyond their years of graduate training. Additionally, the use of online CPD is becoming increasingly common and viable as a method of delivery (Armistead et al., 2008; Neimeyer et al., 2010). Erickson, Noonan, and McCall (2012) found that rural educators who had participated in online CPD significantly increased their classroom effectiveness.

Current Study

In an effort to understand how the CPD practices and preferences of school psychologists relate to their national counterparts, the current study compared their CPD engagement and perceptions to that of the sample within the recent survey research by Armistead et. al (2013). The comparisons are made based on the descriptive statistics reported in the Armistead et. al (2013) study; comparisons based on inferential statistics were not possible due to lack of access to data from the national sample of school psychologists. The study also investigated potential differences hours of completed CPD between Georgia school psychologists who hold the NCSP credential and those who do not. Finally, given the rapid expansion of online professional development opportunities, the present survey addressed the online CPD completion of its participants.

Method

Participants

Participants in the current study were professional members of the Georgia Association of School Psychologists (GASP). Professional members are certified by GaPSC in the service field of school psychology, or licensed by the Georgia Board of Examiners of Psychology and have completed a formal graduate program in school psychology. The sample did not include retired members, graduate students, or affiliate members.

The authors distributed 442 surveys via email in January 2014. In response to the first electronic mailing, 57 surveys were returned (12.8%). One follow-up email was sent two weeks after the first contact. The follow-up contact collected 38 more responses (8.5%) for total of 94 usable surveys with a total return rate of 21.5%. The sample included 83 participants who identified themselves as Caucasian (88.3%), 10 (10.6%) participants who self-identified as Black/African American and one (1.1%) participant who identified as Hispanic. With regard to educational attainment, twenty-six participants (28.3%) reported training at the doctoral level. Sixty-five respondents (70.7%) have earned the Education Specialist degree in school psychology, and one participant (1.1%) reported having a Master's degree with fewer than 60 graduate credits. All 94 respondents reported primary employment in a public or private school with 47 (50.0%) in a rural setting, 35 (24.4%) in a suburban setting, and 12 (12.8%) in an urban setting. All 95 participants (100%) hold some license/credential for practice in the state of Georgia, and 37 participants (38.9%) hold the credential of Nationally Certified School Psychologist. Table 1 offers a side-by-side comparison of the demographic data from the current sample and that of the national sample in Armistead, et, al (2013).

Table 1

Demographic Data for Georgia and National Samples

| Demographic Variable | Georgia | National |
|--|---------|----------|
| <i>n</i> | 94 | 510 |
| Specialist-Level Training | 70.7% | 59.0% |
| Doctoral-Level Training | 28.3% | 33.7% |
| School-Based Employment | 100% | 88.2% |
| Rural Setting | 50.0% | 24.9% |
| I enjoy traveling to other places for professional activities. | 13 | 13.7 |
| My employer provides paid leave to participate. | 12 | 12.6 |

Instrument

A survey instrument was used to measure Georgia school psychologists' practices and preferences with regard to CPD activities for the period of December 2012- December 2013. The first author of Armistead et al. (2013) granted permission for use of the untitled survey previously developed and used to evaluate CPD activities of a national sample of school psychologists. The survey primarily focused on the format of professional development that participants engage in, the most frequent topics of CPD, the level of need for various CPD topics related to school psychology, the motivation for engagement in professional development, and the impediments to participation in CPD activities. The survey consisted of 24 items in total. Of those items, 16 were demographic in nature. The remainder of the items was check-list, rank order, or Likert-scale items (See Appendix).

Due to the numerous item formats on the survey it is difficult to calculate reliability in a statistical manner; however, content validity of the survey instrument was established through several stages of expert panel review, revision, and field testing. A panel of staff and leaders from NASP with experience in professional development reviewed early drafts of the survey instrument. An expert panel of practitioners from several states reviewed a subsequent draft. A third draft was pilot tested with a small group of school psychology practitioners in North Carolina and South Carolina. The final survey instrument comprised 24 items. Due to the original author's request, Hispanic was added to the demographic content area, which is the only difference between the current instrument and that used previously by Armistead et al. (2013).

Consistent with the initial study by Armistead et al. (2013), means, medians, and standard deviations were calculated to describe the sample's demographic characteristics and employment conditions. Additionally, both Armistead et al. (2013) and the current study authors used t-tests

to determine the difference between those participants who reported earning national certification versus those participants who do not hold that credential.

Procedure

The Georgia Southern University IRB permission was secured prior to data collection. A pilot test was completed to ensure that the language was appropriate, the links were in working order, and the duration predicted for completion of the survey was accurate. The survey was administered via Qualtrics (a secure, survey data collection program) and sent by email to all professional members listed in GASP's membership database. Surveys were sent in January 2014 with a follow-up email which occurred two weeks after the initial email.

Data Analyses

The data were used to compare practices and preferences of Georgia school psychologists to the sample of national school psychologists from the Armistead et. al (2013) study. Data analysis was in the form of descriptive statistics, as the answers were in a Likert scale. Several of the questions were open answers such as age, years of experience in school psychology, and graduate hours completed when the participants entered the profession. The data collected were considered continuous. For Likert scale items, means and standard deviations were calculated.

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine Georgia school psychologists' CPD practices and preferences and to what extent they compare to a national sample of school psychologists. The number of CPD hours completed by the sample of Georgia school psychologists is displayed in Table 2. The median number of hours reported for respondents was 40.00. The mean was 51.39 hours with a standard deviation of 62.46. It is important to note that the large standard deviation is attributed to one participant who reported 525 hours of CPD. The median for the

Georgia sample and the national sample were consistent at 40.00 hours. The largest percentage of Georgia respondents (40.6; $n = 30$) reported participation in 26 to 50 hours of CPD activities. Despite the fact that 67.6% of the participants in Georgia reported greater than 26 hours of professional development in the previous year, 74.6% of participants in the national sample noted participation in over 26 hours of CPD from their reporting year.

Table 2

Georgia School Psychologists' Hours of CPD Completed During 12/31/2012-12/31/2013

| Hours | <i>n</i> | % |
|---------|----------|------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1-25 | 24 | 32.4 |
| 26-50 | 30 | 40.6 |
| 51-75 | 7 | 9.6 |
| 76-100 | 10 | 13.6 |
| 101-125 | 1 | 1.4 |
| 126-150 | 1 | 1.4 |
| 151-175 | 0 | 0 |
| 176-200 | 0 | 0 |
| >200 | 1 | 1.4 |

As reported in Table 3, respondents were asked to rank their personal “top three” reasons for engaging in CPD. All responses were included in the data analysis, even if more than three reasons were given. The most frequently reported motivation for participation in CPD was that Georgia school psychologists enjoyed new learning (69.5%, $n = 66$). The second and third most frequent responses by Georgia participants for motivation to complete CPD was a professional responsibility (64.2%, $n = 61$) to do so, and that CPD credit is a requirement for renewing the state credential for practice (54.7%, $n = 52$), respectively. In the national sample, the aforementioned reasons for engaging in CPD were also the most frequently endorsed by participants. However, the order was slightly different with professional responsibility first

(78.8%), enjoyment of new learning second (67.7%), and requirement for state credentialing third (45.7%).

Table 3

School Psychologists' Motivation for Engaging in CPD

| Statement | Georgia | | National | |
|--|----------|------|----------|------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| I enjoy new learning. | 66 | 69.5 | 345 | 67.7 |
| I believe CPD is a professional responsibility. | 61 | 64.2 | 402 | 78.8 |
| I need CPD credit to renew my state credential(s). | 52 | 54.7 | 233 | 45.7 |
| I want to maintain my NCSP credential. | 20 | 21.1 | 218 | 42.8 |
| I need further professional development in my specialty area. | 19 | 20 | 197 | 38.6 |
| I enjoy traveling to other places for professional activities. | 13 | 13.7 | 60 | 11.8 |
| My employer provides paid leave to participate. | 12 | 12.6 | 51 | 10.0 |

Across the field of school psychology, CPD occurs through a variety of activities in a number of formats. As reported in Table 4, respondents were asked to identify whether participation in each activity had occurred throughout the previous year. The largest percentage of respondents had attended the GASP state conference (67.4%, $n = 64$) and participated in a live webinar or distance learning activity (67.4%, $n = 64$). In contrast to the Georgia sample of school psychologists, the most frequent CPD activity for the national sample of school psychologists was attendance at a school district staff development program (67.7%). In fact, less than half of the national sample participants (42.4%) reported attending their state association conference.

Table 4

Participation by Type of CPD Activity for School Psychologists

| Activity | Georgia | | National | |
|---|----------|------|----------|------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| State School Psychology Association Conference | 64 | 67.4 | 215 | 42.4 |
| Live Webinar or Distance Learning | 64 | 67.4 | 187 | 36.7 |
| Self-study using journals, books or other text materials | 59 | 62.1 | 167 | 32.8 |
| Other school district in-service activities | 54 | 56.9 | 345 | 67.7 |
| Other Conference or Convention | 49 | 51.6 | 197 | 38.6 |
| School District Staff Development Intended for School Psychologists | 38 | 40.0 | 266 | 52.2 |
| Conducted Workshops | 34 | 35.8 | 259 | 50.8 |
| Online self-study module | 13 | 13.7 | 77 | 15.1 |
| Wrote for publication | 8 | 8.4 | 32 | 6.3 |
| Graduate study at a university or college | 7 | 7.4 | 60 | 11.8 |
| NASP Convention | 7 | 7.4 | 82 | 16.1 |
| Study/ Supervision Group | 6 | 6.3 | 70 | 13.7 |
| Commercial/Profit CPD Program | 5 | 5.3 | 61 | 12.0 |
| Other | 4 | 4.2 | 61 | 12.0 |
| NASP Summer Conference | 1 | 1.1 | 20 | 3.9 |
| APA Convention | 1 | 1.1 | 11 | 2.2 |

With regard to the topics of CPD, participants were asked to identify the top three topics of CPD activities from the reporting year. However, some respondents included more than three topic selections, and these additional responses were included in the data analysis. As displayed in Table 5, the most frequently attended CPD topics related to standardized psychoeducational assessment (51.6%, $n = 49$), Response to Intervention (46.3%, $n = 44$), and academic interventions (30.5%, $n = 29$). Some similarities are noted between the topic selection for CPD of the Georgia school psychologists and their national sample peers. In the Armistead et al. (2013) study, the most frequently attended CPD activities focused on Response to Intervention (61.0%), behavioral intervention (44.1%), and academic intervention (29.2%). CPD on

standardized psychological assessment was much less prevalent in the national sample of school psychologists (21.4%) than the sample from the current study.

Table 5

Topical Focus of CPD Activities for School Psychologists

| Topic | Georgia | | National | |
|--|----------|------|----------|------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Standardized Psychoeducational Assessment | 49 | 51.6 | 109 | 21.4 |
| Response to Intervention | 44 | 46.3 | 309 | 61.0 |
| Academic Interventions | 29 | 30.5 | 149 | 29.2 |
| Behavioral Intervention | 25 | 26.3 | 225 | 44.1 |
| Neuropsychology | 18 | 18.9 | 61 | 12.0 |
| Academic Screening and Progress Monitoring | 14 | 14.7 | 136 | 26.7 |
| Crisis Prevention and Intervention | 13 | 13.7 | 84 | 16.5 |
| Consultation/Problem Solving | 12 | 12.6 | 103 | 20.2 |
| Ethical and Legal Issues | 11 | 11.6 | 93 | 18.2 |
| Behavioral Assessment | 10 | 10.5 | 96 | 18.8 |
| Social/ Emotional Intervention | 8 | 8.4 | 135 | 26.5 |
| Social/Emotional Assessment | 6 | 6.3 | 65 | 12.8 |
| Diversity in Development | 5 | 5.3 | 57 | 11.2 |
| Other | 1 | 1.1 | NA | NA |

In addition to their previously completed CPD, participants were asked to project their CPD content needs for the future. The Likert-scale ranged from 1 = *No CPD Needed* to 5 = *Extensive CPD Needed*. The data for projected need are displayed in Table 6. The most identified content for future CPD needs among Georgia school psychologists was behavioral intervention (41.3%, $n = 29$), neuropsychology (37.7%, $n = 26$), and social/emotional intervention (34.9%, $n = 23$). Georgia participants reported the least amount of need for CPD topics related to Consultation and Problem Solving (69.8%; $n = 44$). Again, some similarity was noted between the two samples with national school psychologists projecting the greatest need for Response to Intervention (47.2%), behavioral intervention (45.9%), and social/emotional

intervention (45.5%). In contrast, Response to Intervention was only noted as a projected need by 38.7% of Georgia participants, ranking fifth by frequency of endorsement.

Table 6

School Psychologists' Projected Need for CPD by Topic

| Topic | Georgia | | | | National | | | |
|--|---------|------|-------------------|------------------|----------|------|-------------------|------------------|
| | M | SD | % High Need | % Low Need | M | SD | % High Need | % Low Need |
| Behavioral Intervention | 3.27 | 1.02 | 41.4 | 21.4 | 3.35 | 1.17 | 45.9 | 22.6 |
| Neuropsychology | 3.24 | 1.1 | 38.8 | 23.9 | 2.76 | 1.35 | 30.8 | 44.4 |
| Academic Intervention | 2.98 | 1.02 | 32.4 | 33.4 | 3.20 | 1.25 | 42.9 | 30.1 |
| Social/Emotional Intervention | 3.19 | 0.98 | 36.5 | 23.8 | 3.31 | 1.17 | 45.5 | 25.1 |
| Response to Intervention | 2.97 | 1.19 | 32.3 | 38.7 | 3.33 | 1.36 | 47.2 | 27.6 |
| Social/Emotional Assessment | 2.74 | 1.02 | 25.8 | 45.2 | 2.74 | 1.10 | 23.9 | 43.1 |
| Crisis Prevention/Intervention | 2.82 | 1.23 | 25.8 | 44.0 | 2.71 | 1.15 | 43.2 | 24.9 |
| Diversity in Development and Learning | 2.52 | 1.14 | 22.5 | 56.5 | 2.42 | 1.13 | 54.7 | 17.2 |
| Ethical and Legal Issues | 2.73 | 1.21 | 22.2 | 42.9 | 2.61 | 1.25 | 24.0 | 48.7 |
| Standardized Psychoeducational Assessment | 2.44 | 1.23 | 19.1 | 63.3 | 2.05 | 1.01 | 9.3 | 70.9 |
| Consultation and Problem Solving | 2.32 | 1.16 | 14.3 | 69.8 | 2.61 | 1.17 | 22.7 | 48.4 |
| Academic Screening and Progress Monitoring | 2.25 | 1.06 | 13.1 | 65.5 | 2.65 | 1.27 | 26.6 | 47.7 |
| Behavioral Assessment | 2.54 | 0.88 | 11.1 | 47.6 | 2.76 | 1.16 | 24.8 | 43.6 |

Participants were also asked to express their perception (in Likert-scale format) about various statements related to CPD. The perception statements and percentage agreement/disagreement are highlighted in Table 7. Ratings of 1 and 2 were calculated as *Agree*, while ratings of 4 and 5 were calculated as *Disagree*. Remarkable consistency was noted between the Georgia school psychologists and their national counterparts in this area. The highest percentage of respondents in both samples expressed agreement with the following statement, "My employer should pay for my professional development program" (Georgia - 81.4%, $n = 75$; national - 80.5%). In contrast, the highest percentage of participants in both

samples also expressed disagreement with the statement that, “My school district provides enough CPD activities that I don’t really need to attend state conferences of national conventions” (Georgia - 75.3%, $n = 61$; national - 77.0%).

Survey respondents identified the barriers that impede their participation in CPD. Rank order data were processed according to frequency of response among the survey participants. The data displayed in Table 8 demonstrate that 75.8% of Georgia respondents noted a heavy workload as the greatest impediment to the completion of CPD, and cost of travel and registration fees as the second most endorsed item (70.5%). Among the national sample of participants, the aforementioned categories were also the two most frequently endorsed barriers with cost of travel and registration fees as the greatest impediment (83.9%) and heavy workload ranking second (79.6%). Finding childcare was selected by the fewest percentage of Georgia participants (8.4%; $n = 8$) and their national counterparts (7.8%) as a barrier to completion of CPD.

Table 7

School Psychologists' Perceptions of CPD-Related Statements

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>Georgia M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>% Agree</i> | <i>% Disagree</i> | <i>National M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>% Agree</i> | <i>% Disagree</i> |
|---|----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| My employer should pay for my professional development program. | 1.67 | 0.79 | 91.4 | 3.6 | 1.85 | 0.87 | 80.5 | 4.6 |
| I'd like to get more of my CPD online. | 2.31 | 0.98 | 59.2 | 9.9 | 2.61 | 1.09 | 47.7 | 21.4 |
| My state association meets most of my CPD needs. | 2.52 | 1.03 | 54.3 | 21.0 | 3.23 | 1.07 | 25.8 | 42.7 |
| I have difficulty finding CPD opportunities in my area. | 3.13 | 1.23 | 26.6 | 47.6 | 3.46 | 1.25 | 27.2 | 57.6 |
| Most CPD activities are too basic for my stage of professional development. | 3.21 | 0.98 | 25.9 | 44.5 | 3.07 | 1.03 | 30.6 | 37.6 |
| In my work setting, it's difficult to use new learning from CPD activities. | 3.49 | 1.08 | 26.8 | 61.0 | 3.61 | 1.04 | 17.7 | 65.2 |
| Summer conferences are more appealing to me than conventions and conferences during the school year. | 3.65 | 1.12 | 17.8 | 59.2 | N/A | | | |
| My school district provides enough CPD activities that I don't really need to attend state conferences or national conventions. | 3.91 | 1.15 | 17.3 | 75.3 | 4.01 | 1.05 | 11.6 | 77.0 |

Table 8

Factors That Impede School Psychologists' Participation in CPD

| Factor | Georgia | | National | |
|---|----------|------|----------|------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Heavy Workload | 72 | 75.8 | 406 | 79.6 |
| Cost of Travel and Registration Fees | 67 | 70.5 | 428 | 83.9 |
| Family Obligations | 42 | 44.2 | 232 | 45.5 |
| Difficulty Getting Paid Leave from My Employer | 28 | 29.5 | 194 | 38.0 |
| Personal and Social Obligations Such as Church, Clubs, Sports, and Civic Activities | 13 | 13.7 | 89 | 17.5 |
| Finding Child Care | 8 | 8.4 | 40 | 7.8 |
| Other | 1 | 1.1 | 43 | 8.4 |

Respondents were also asked to estimate their personal CPD expenses including registration fees and travel expenses, and their financial support from employers for CPD-related expenses. Those data are specified in Table 9. Amounts ranged from \$0 - \$5,000. The mean of personal expenses across the Georgia sample of school psychologists was \$402.42 (compared to \$532.06 in the national sample) while the mean of employer support was \$341.05 (compared to \$585.18 in the national sample). It is important to note that 17 Georgia respondents (17.8%) reported that personal and employer expenditure on CPD was \$0. Armistead et al. noted that among their national sample of participants, many of the respondents with \$0 personal expenditure had considerable employer expenditure for their CPD activities. This is inconsistent with the findings of the current study. The greatest percentage of respondents in both the Georgia and national samples (Georgia - 57.8%, *n* = 44; national – 55.7%) reported that \$1 - \$500 was at personal expense and employer expense (Georgia - 51.0%, *n* = 35; national – 41.6%).

With regard to online CPD, 67.4% Georgia school psychologists (*n* = 64) reported having participated in CPD in an online format in the year of interest compared to 36.7% of the national sample of school psychologists. This would show that Georgia school psychologists' have participated in considerably greater online CPD activities than the national sample.

Table 9

School Psychologists' Personal and Employer Financial Expenses for CPD

| <i>Expenditure</i> | <i>Georgia Personal</i> | | <i>Georgia Employer</i> | | <i>National Personal</i> | | <i>National Employer</i> | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|
| | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> |
| \$0 | 17 | 20.8 | 17 | 24.6 | 102 | 22.7 | 131 | 33.9 |
| \$1 – 500 | 44 | 57.8 | 35 | 51.0 | 250 | 55.7 | 161 | 41.6 |
| \$501 – 1000 | 7 | 9.7 | 13 | 18.7 | 46 | 10.2 | 44 | 11.4 |
| \$1001 – 1500 | 3.0 | 3.9 | 3.0 | 4.3 | 18 | 4.0 | 13 | 3.4 |
| \$1501 – 2000 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 8 | 1.8 | 17 | 4.4 |
| \$2001 – 2500 | 3 | 3.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 6 | 1.3 | 5 | 1.3 |
| \$2501 – 3000 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 19 | 4.2 | 10 | 2.6 |
| >\$3000 | 3 | 3.9 | 1 | 1.4 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1.6 |

The current study also investigated whether CPD preferences and practices differ between those who hold the Nationally Certified School Psychologist credential and those who do not hold that national certification. The dependent variable was the total number of hours of CPD reported. NCSP licensure status was entered as the independent variable. Alpha was set at .05. Results showed a non-significant relationship between whether respondents held a NCSP credential compared to the completion of CPD [$t(80) = -1.19, p > .05$] with those holding the NCSP averaging 38.93 CPD hours ($SD = 21.53$) in the prior year and a mean of 46.71 CPD hours ($SD = 30.93$) for participants without the NCSP credential. Armistead et al. (2013) also found no significant difference in the number of CPD hours reported by those who hold the NCSP credential to those who do not.

Discussion

Given the aforementioned results, it becomes apparent that Georgia school psychologists have many similarities with their peers nationwide in their CPD practices and preferences. Specifically, Georgia school psychologists are similar to their national counterparts in the Armistead et al. (2013) student with median number of CPD hours completed and higher than psychologists in general as demonstrated in Neimeyer et al. (2010). Georgia school psychologists

are also similar to the Armistead et. al (2013) sample in the following perceptions: employers should be financially responsible for CPD, school districts do not provide adequate CPD, and childcare is the least reported barrier to completing professional development. Additionally, Georgia school psychologists who hold the NCSP credential do not differ from their in-state peers who do not hold the NCSP credential in CPD completion. Armistead et. al (2013) found this to be true in their national study as well.

However, the differences between Georgia school psychologists and their peers in the nationwide sample offer more insight into state-level practice implications and needs. Encouragingly, Georgia school psychologists seem more intrinsically motivated to continue their professional development based on the fact that they report “enjoyment of new learning” as the most endorsed reason for completing CPD [whereas school psychologists in the Armistead et al (2013) survey noted professional responsibility as the most endorsed factor for completing professional development].

Additionally, Georgia school psychologists report higher participation in their state conference and less personal expenditure on CPD than their national counterparts. Taken together, these findings are interesting given that school psychologists in the national sample reported the highest participation in school district sponsored CPD (which would presumably have no cost to the participant). Thus, it appears that the school psychologists in Georgia are able to take advantage of state level CPD that is both popular for participants and economical relative to expenditures in other states.

The results from the current study also highlight another difference between Georgia school psychologists and those in the Armistead et al. (2013) study that might contribute to the lower personal CPD expenses among those in the Georgia sample. It appears that Georgia school

psychologists are participating in online CPD at a much greater rate than their peers. While most online CPD modules require a registration fee, the elimination of travel costs often makes this a much less expensive option. In addition to lower cost, a number of other factors may contribute to a greater participation in online CPD by Georgia school psychologists including CPD access for many school psychologists practicing in rural areas, significant and rapid growth in online CPD offerings even in the short time since the data collection by Armistead et al. (2013), and greater acceptance for online learning among practitioners. This may signal a shift away from the trend noted by Neimeyer et al. (2010) that psychologists prefer on-site delivery of CPD activities.

Unfortunately, for Georgia school psychologists, there appears to be a greater disconnect between the CPD topics that they are participating in and their perceived learning needs than there is with their national-level peers. In the Armistead et al. (2013) sample, school psychologists noted the highest participation in CPD related to RtI, behavioral intervention, and academic intervention, and they ranked their CPD needs similarly with RtI, behavioral intervention, and social/emotional intervention. However, Georgia school psychologists noted the highest participation in psychoeducational assessment, RtI, and academic interventions. This represents no overlap with their expressed CPD needs for behavioral interventions, neuropsychology, and social/emotional interventions. Yet, it suggests that the similarity between the needs expressed by both the national sample and Georgia school psychologists indicate that national-level conferences or online training modules appear appropriate for meeting the needs of all school psychologists when directed at the aforementioned topics of need/interest.

The disconnect between Georgia school psychologists' CPD participation and CPD needs may be reflective of the roles and functions of school psychologists within the state. While

school psychologists have advocated for and succeeded in broadening their roles in the schools, the role of the school psychologist in most school systems in Georgia continues to be highly traditional and tied closely to psychoeducational assessment and special education eligibility. Since the data indicate that school psychologists are relying heavily on state-level conferences, it is not surprising that their CPD completion is also linked with those traditional roles. However, their expressed desire for CPD related to less traditional roles and functions may signal that Georgia school psychologists are attempting to prepare themselves for a broader role and job description in the future.

In addition to practicing primarily in a traditional role, Georgia school psychologists also report having to contend with a heavy workload. In fact, the school psychologists in the current sample noted this heavy workload as the primary barrier to their completion of CPD. Both the traditional role of school psychologists in Georgia and the heavy workload are likely related to the ratio of school psychologists to students within the state. In Georgia, the most recent estimate of funding for school psychologists to students is 1 : 2475 despite NASP's recommendation of 1 : 500 - 700 (GASP, 2013; NASP, 2010c). With almost nearly four times the recommended ratio and many open positions in the state, school psychologists will have a difficult challenge in overcoming the workload and role limitations.

Limitations

Limitations of the current study include those of sampling bias inherent in survey research. The population for the research was limited to members of GASP. Those school psychologists holding membership in their state association may differ from school psychologists at large in the state of Georgia. Given that GASP offers discounted CPD opportunities for its members, those who choose to join may already place a higher value on

completing CPD. Additionally, those GASP members who chose not to participate in the current study may have done so based on the low priority that they place on the topic of CPD. Thus, the participation and preference data may be positively skewed.

Directions for Future Research

This research is the first of its kind to investigate the CPD practices and preferences of school psychologists in one state to compare to the national-level findings. Similar research should be conducted in other states or geographic regions to specify how those data would compare to aggregated data of school psychologists across the nation.

Like other researchers (Neimeyer, et. al, 2009; Neimeyer, et. al, 2010), we believe that an important next step in CPD research is the connection between CPD participation and improvements in job performance. Future research should go beyond self-reported perception measures and monitor/quantify changes in role effectiveness for school psychologists after specific CPD completion.

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Appendix

Survey Instrument

1. Gender Female Male
2. Age ____
3. Ethnicity (optional) American Indian/Alaska Native
 Asian American/Pacific Islander
 Black/African American
 Caucasian
 Hispanic
 Other

Please respond to the following items based on the period 12/2012- 12/2013

4. State in which employed ____
5. Years of experience in school psychology ____
6. Graduate hours completed when you entered the profession ____
7. Graduate hours completed since entering the profession ____
8. Level of graduate training:
 - Masters (fewer than 60 graduate credits)
 - Specialist (e.g., MA + 30, EdS, CAS, SSP)
 - Doctoral
9. Certification/Licensure (Check all that apply):
 - Nationally Certified School Psychologist
 - Credentialed (certification, license, etc.) by state education agency as school psychologist, specialist in school psychology or similar title
 - Credentialed (certification, license, etc.) by state education agency as psychometrist, educational diagnostician, or similar title
 - Licensed psychologist (doctoral, State Board of Psychology)
 - Licensed school psychologist (non-doctoral, State Board of Psychology)
 - Licensed Psychological Associate or similar title (non-doctoral, State Board of Psychology)
 - Other, specify _____
10. Membership (Check all that apply):
 - State school psychology association
 - Local or regional school psychology association
 - American Psychological Association (APA)
 - APA Division of School Psychology (16)
 - American Counseling Association
 - Council for Exceptional Children
 - Other, specify: _____

11. Type of setting in which you practice most of the time:

Urban Suburban Rural

12. Percentage of clients you serve who are ethnic minority ____

13. Primary employment: Please estimate the average hours per week that you are employed in **one** of the following settings.

___ Public, private or faith-based school system ___ Private Practice
___ College/University ___ Other, specify: _____

14. Secondary employment: Please estimate the average hours per week that you are employed in each of the following settings.

___ Public, private or faith-based school system ___ Private Practice
___ College/University ___ Other, specify: _____

15. **If** you are employed in a school system, please estimate the average hours per week that you serve these settings:

___ Preschool ___ Elementary School ___ Middle/Jr. High School
___ High School

16. If you have a professional specialty area, please specify: _____

17. During the 12 months prior to 12/31/13, in which of the following professional activities did you engage? (Check all that apply):

- State school psychology association conference
- NASP convention
- NASP summer conference
- APA convention
- Other conferences/conventions. Specify _____
- Live webinar or other distance learning activity
- School system in-service specifically intended for school psychologists
- Other school district in-service activities
- Self-study using journals, books, or other text materials
- Online self-study module
- Graduate study at a university or college
- Study/supervision group
- Conducted workshops or inservice training
- Conducted research
- Wrote for publication
- Participated in a commercial/for profit CPD program
- Other, specify: _____

Please estimate the total hours you engaged in the preceding activities: ____ hrs

Please estimate how much you *personally* spent on these activities including registration fees and travel expenses: \$____

Please estimate how much financial support your employer provided toward the preceding activities including registration fees and travel expenses: \$_____

18. Please *rank the top three* topics of your CPD in the 12 months prior to 8/31/09:

- Standardized psychoeducational assessment
 - Academic screening and progress monitoring (e.g., CBM, DIBELS)
 - Academic interventions
 - Behavioral assessment
 - Behavioral intervention
 - Social/emotional assessment
 - Social/emotional intervention
 - Consultation/problem solving
 - Diversity in development and learning
 - Ethical issues/legal regulation of school psychology
 - Neuropsychology
 - Response to intervention (or school-wide practices to promote learning...)
 - Crisis prevention and intervention
 - Other, specify: _____
-

19. Please *rate your need* for each of the following CPD topics over the next year using a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 = no CPD needed and 5 = extensive CPD needed.

- Standardized psychoeducational assessment
 - Academic screening and progress monitoring (e.g., CBM, DIBELS)
 - Academic interventions
 - Behavioral assessment
 - Behavioral intervention
 - Social/emotional assessment
 - Social/emotional intervention
 - Consultation/problem solving
 - Diversity in development and learning
 - Ethical issues/legal regulation of school psychology
 - Neuropsychology
 - Response to intervention
 - Crisis prevention and intervention
 - Other, specify: _____
-

20. Please *rank your top three* reasons for engaging in professional development:

- I enjoy traveling to other places for professional activities.
- My employer provides paid leave to participate.
- I want to maintain my NCSP credential.

- I believe CPD is a professional responsibility.
- I need CPD credit to renew my state credential(s).
- I need to further professional development in my specialty area.
- I enjoy new learning.
- Other, specify: _____

21. Please rank the three most important factors that impede your engaging in CPD:

- Difficulty getting paid leave from my employer
- Cost of travel and registration fees
- Family obligations
- Heavy work load
- Finding child care
- Personal & social obligations such as church, clubs, sports, civic activities, etc.
- Other, specify: _____

22. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements about CPD using this scale:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

- In my work setting, it's difficult to use new learning from CPD activities.
- I have difficulty finding CPD opportunities in my area.
- My employer should pay for my professional development program.
- My school system provides enough CPD activities that I don't really need to attend state conferences or national conventions.
- My state association meets most of my CPD needs.
- Summer conferences are more appealing to me than conventions and conferences during the school year.
- I prefer summer conferences in vacation locations.
- NASP should provide CPD credit for reading their publications and passing tests.
- I'd be willing to pay up to \$10 per hour for CPD credit for reading NASP publications.
- NASP should provide online videos of previous convention sessions.
- I'd be willing to pay up to \$15 per hour to watch online video of NASP convention sessions and receive CPD credit.
- Most CPD activities are too basic for my stage of professional development.
- I'd like to get more of my CPD online.
- I'd be willing to pay up to \$10 per hour to participate in live "webinar" CPD sessions with nationally known speakers.

23. Does your state department of education require CPD credit for credential renewal? Yes No

If "yes," how many CPD credits are required per year? _____

If "yes," please specify any required content areas: _____

24. Please write in any comments you have about the NASP CPD program: