

Counseling Training Practices in School Psychology Programs in the United States**Lori N. Fernald, D.Ed. and Timothy A. Hanchon, Ph.D.**

The Citadel

Abstract: Counseling training practices in school psychology graduate programs were examined via an internet survey of representatives ($N = 158$) from NASP-approved programs. The survey addressed programs' emphasis on counseling training, training practices related to counseling, and trainers' perceptions regarding the importance of counseling preparation. Most respondents ($n = 102$; 73.1%) agreed that counseling training is "highly important"; nevertheless, programs placed less training emphasis on counseling than on other activities such as consultation/problem-solving, assessment, prevention/intervention, and curriculum-based assessment. Only 48.6% of respondents ($n = 69$) indicated that their programs were training students to provide counseling services "well" or "very well." Most programs (95.2%, $n = 139$) offered students opportunities for practical counseling experiences, but the types of experiences varied. The majority of respondents reported that counseling is a responsibility that school psychologists will be expected to perform in schools in the future as much or more than they are today.

Addressing the mental health and wellness needs of children and youth is a critical concern for educators, particularly school psychologists. According to Hoagwood and Johnson (2003), as many as 22% of children and adolescents through the age of 18 have a diagnosable condition, with an estimated four to eight percent of youth between the ages of 9 and 17 meeting criteria for a 'severe' psychiatric disorder. Similarly, a recent investigation indicated that approximately 17% of children and youth had at least one diagnosable mental health condition (Roberts, Roberts, & Xing, 2007). Costello and colleagues (2003) estimated that more than one-third of children and adolescents will have met diagnostic criteria for one or more mental health disorders by the age of 16. These estimates are worrisome on many levels, but in particular they are distressing to educators due to the potential adverse consequences such conditions have on students' ability to function both in school and in life (e.g., Davis, Kruczek, & McIntosh, 2006; Doll & Cummings, 2008; Perfect & Morris, 2011).

Students' Needs vs. Availability of Services

Although the need for child and adolescent mental health services has been thoroughly documented (e.g., Knopf, Park, & Mulye, 2008; Splett, Fowler, Weist, McDaniel, & Dvorsky, 2013) and positive gains have been made with respect to the implementation of evidence-based interventions to address students' dysfunction (e.g.,

Merrell, Ervin, & Peacock, 2012), the need for services continues to be exceeded by the availability. As observed by Kazdin (2008; cited in Merrell, Ervin, & Peacock, 2012), "we do not reach the vast majority of youth in need with any treatment" (p. 202). School psychologists, in particular, have been called upon to play a central role in the provision of services geared toward improving students' mental health (e.g., Hanchon & Fernald, 2013; Splett et al., 2013). Given their knowledge of child development, academic and behavioral interventions, school operational structure and practice, and mental health/wellness, school psychologists are ideally situated to provide a range of mental health services to students (Crespi & Demeyer, 2010; Suldo, Friedrich, & Michalowski, 2010), to include tertiary-level mental health services, namely individual and group counseling. Yet, most school psychologists report spending a small portion of their working time providing counseling services to students, and a significant number of school psychologists report that they provide no counseling services at all (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012; Hanchon & Fernald, 2013).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that school-based counseling services yield beneficial outcomes to students (Zirkelback & Reese, 2010; Whiston & Quinby, 2009; Reese, Prout, Zirkelback, & Anderson, 2010; Prout & Prout, 1998), and schools are the most frequent and logical location to provide counseling to children (Farmer et al., 2010; Perfect & Morris, 2011). Nevertheless, school psychologists continue to focus most of their efforts on tasks such as those related to special education identification, rather than on mental health services for students (e.g., Reschly, 2008; Castillo et al., 2012). A number of salient factors have been implicated in school psychologists' lack of involvement in practices geared toward improving students' mental health. Along these lines, one of the impediments most frequently identified by practicing school psychologists is insufficient training (Hanchon & Fernald, 2013; Suldo, Friedrich, & Michalowski, 2010). In fact, in a recent survey of school psychologists, 40% considered themselves insufficiently prepared to provide counseling services to students based on the training they received during their graduate programs (Hanchon & Fernald, 2013).

The School Psychologist's Role

Traditionally, mental health counseling has been considered one of the primary roles of the school psychologist (Hughes & Theodore, 2009). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) promotes school psychologists' involvement in mental health service provision in numerous documents including the most recent *Blueprint for Training and Practice* (Ysseldyke et al., 2006), the *Model for Comprehensive and Integrated School Psychological Services* (NASP, 2010a), the *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* (NASP, 2010b), and a position statement titled *The Importance of School Mental Health Services* (NASP, 2008). Despite the obvious need for universal as well as intensive, targeted school mental health services in schools,

complicated with a clear end goal, questions exist regarding the most recent national survey of school psychologists who reported that the number of students has doubled from 2002 to 2012. Those who acknowledge their work time engaged in counseling. Another recent survey and training found that school psychologists provide counseling services, and that they spend about 1.4 hours per week (Hanchon & Fernald, 2013).

In general, school psychologists perform a variety of professional roles (Pryzwansky, 2004); however, many school psychologists as they would like to provide more counseling services, and they spend about 1.4 hours per week providing counseling services, which is about four hours more than what they currently spend. In addition to the obstacles, one of the most unfortunate from the perspective of the relationship between school psychologists and students is that "working one-on-one with students is not endorsed as two of the most frequent activities." The most frequently cited obstacles are:

Graduate Preparation in Counseling

As noted above, many school psychologists from delivering services; lack of support in the schools; competing responsibilities; and inadequate training as a key obstacle to these obstacles, as noted by Hanchon & Fernald, 2013. School psychologists, in general,

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sampled with a clear endorsement from the field's foremost advocacy body (i.e., NASP),
questions exist regarding school psychologists' level of involvement in service provision.
The most recent national survey of school psychologists indicated that the number of
school psychologists who reported they were not providing counseling services to
students has doubled from 16% to 32.2% in the last 20 years (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley,
2012). Those who acknowledged providing counseling services estimated spending 5.8%
of their work time engaged in individual counseling and 3.1% engaged in group
counseling. Another recent survey of school psychologists focusing on counseling
practices and training found that only 58% of school psychologists reported providing
any counseling services, and those who were providing counseling to students averaged
5.47 hours per week (Hanchon & Fernald, 2013).

In general, school psychologists consider counseling to be one of their principal
professional roles (Pryzwansky, Harris, & Jackson, 1984; Hosp & Reschly, 2002;
Agresta, 2004); however, most are not spending as much time delivering counseling and
related services as they would prefer (e.g., Curtis, Grier, & Hunley, 2003). In a survey of
school psychologists, school social workers, and school counselors, Agresta (2004) found
that school psychologists preferred to spend an average of 11.86% of their working time
in individual counseling but estimated they were spending only 7.83%. Likewise, Hosp
& Reschly (2002) found that the school psychologists surveyed expressed a preference to
spend 11.4 hours per week providing direct interventions to students, which amounted to
almost four hours more than their actual level of service provision (i.e., 7.6 hours per
week). In addition to the obvious loss of benefit to students, the lack of involvement is
also unfortunate from the perspective of school psychologists, as there appears to be a
positive relationship between providing direct services to students and feelings of job
satisfaction. In a survey of Utah school psychologists, Dickison and colleagues (2009)
found that "working one-on-one with students" and "opportunity to counsel students"
were endorsed as two of the three reasons that school psychologists stayed in their
careers. The most frequently endorsed reason was "feeling of success and joy in helping
students."

Graduate Preparation in Counseling Service Provision

As noted above, numerous barriers have been documented that prevent school
psychologists from delivering counseling services. Briefly, these include school site
limitations; lack of support from administrators, teachers, and parents; insufficient time;
high caseloads; competing responsibilities; and turf issues with other professionals. In
addition to these obstacles, school psychologists also frequently identify a perceived lack
of adequate training as a key reason why they do not counsel students more frequently
(Hanchon & Fernald, 2013). Although, counseling has long been considered a key role
for school psychologists, in recent years questions have arisen regarding the level of

emphasis it receives in training and practice (Crespi & Demeyer, 2010). Many school psychologists do not perceive themselves as having adequate knowledge of counseling content, methods, and experiences, perhaps in part due to a gap between graduate program curricula and skills necessary for counseling practice in schools (Splett et al., 2013, Fuhrman & Burlingame, 2001). In a survey of urban school psychologists, Pryzwansky et al. (1984) reported that more than half of respondents had taken more than three courses related to counseling, and 36% had over 100 hours of counseling as part of their practicum experience. More recently, a national survey of practicing school psychologists found that 92% reported having received some type of formal training in counseling, with a mean of 2.68 counseling related courses (Hanchon & Fernald, 2013). Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that they had counseled students during their practica or internships, and 55.5% had counseled students in both. Clearly, these data indicate that school psychologists are receiving at least some training to engage in counseling practices. However, existing training does not appear to be sufficient for the purpose of engendering practitioners' perceptions of competency and effectiveness. In this regard, despite their reported counseling coursework and practical training, 40% of respondents in the Hanchon and Fernald (2013) study considered themselves insufficiently prepared to conduct counseling in their work settings. The desire for additional counseling training also applies to postgraduate professional development. In a survey of 86 urban school psychologists, "therapeutic interventions" were rated as the second highest choice for priority for professional development (classroom-based behavioral intervention was first) with 46% of respondents rating it as a priority (Stoiber & Vanderwood, 2008).

The Current Study

Though school psychologists report a perceived lack of training in counseling and a notable obstacle preventing them from providing services, little is known about current counseling training practices from the school psychology program perspective (Perfect & Morris, 2011). NASP offers minimal guidance regarding counseling training; therefore, specifics regarding coursework, curricular content, and trainee experiences are left to individual programs. It seems apparent that school psychologists' willingness to engage in counseling practices, as well as their perceptions of competency and effectiveness, are on some level tied to the formal training they received to provide such services. Given this context, the purpose of the current study was to survey representatives (i.e., school psychology trainers) from NASP-approved school psychology training programs to explore current practices and attitudes regarding the preparation of candidates to engage in counseling service delivery. Three broad ideas guided the present study. First, we sought to establish the perceived level of emphasis, as rated by school psychology trainers, that counseling receives as a focus of training relative to other common areas of

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candidates (e.g., number o
Third, we examined trainee
preparing school psycholo
as the field moves for

Participants

Trainers ($N = 158$) were contacted by e-mail a
survey. Fifty-seven (36.1%
identified themselves
identify their profession
designated by the United
school psychology program
number representing progr
respondents by geograph
programs indicated that the
national programs were NA
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Responses ranged from zero

Distributi

Region	Number of Trainers
North Central (IN, IL, MI, OH)	10
Mid-Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)	15
South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA)	20
West South Central (AR, LA, OK)	12
Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	18
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT)	14
West North Central (IA, KS, MN)	16
East South Central (AL, KY, MS)	11
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH)	13

Note: $N=156$ (2 no responses)

school psychological service provision. Second, current counseling training practices in school psychology graduate programs were explored, including requirements for candidates (e.g., number of hours, curricular content, and experiential components). Third, we examined trainers' perceptions and opinions with regard to the importance of preparing school psychology candidates to provide counseling services both presently and as the field moves forward.

Method

Participants

Trainers ($N = 158$) from NASP approved school psychology graduate programs were contacted by e-mail and provided with a link to a researcher-developed online survey. Fifty-seven (36.1%) respondents identified themselves as program directors, 98 (61.2%) identified themselves as school psychology trainers, and three respondents did not identify their professional role. Respondents represented all nine geographic regions designated by the United States Census, with the largest number of participants from school psychology programs in the East North Central region ($n = 30$) and the smallest number representing programs in New England ($n = 6$). Table 1 contains the distribution of respondents by geographic region. All respondents from Master's and Specialist level programs indicated that their programs were approved by NASP, whereas 83.1% of doctoral programs were NASP approved. Of the 53 respondents who worked in universities with doctoral programs, 81.5% ($n = 53$) indicated that their programs were accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA). Respondents were asked to identify the number of full-time faculty employed in their training programs. Responses ranged from zero to 11 ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 1.92$).

Table 1
Distribution of respondents by United States region

State	N	Percentage of responses
East North Central (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI)	30	19.2%
Middle Atlantic (NJ, NY, PA)	28	17.9%
South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	27	17.3%
West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)	20	12.8%
Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	14	9.0%
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY)	12	7.7%
West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	12	7.7%
East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)	7	4.5%
New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)	6	3.8%

Note: $N=156$ (2 no responses)

Measure

A 32-item survey was published using an online survey program (i.e., SurveyMonkey; see Appendix A). A logical-content strategy (for review, see Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2009) was employed to create the survey. Item content selected for the survey was based on a review of previous related studies dealing directly as well as indirectly with school psychologists' counseling practices (e.g., Castillo et al., 2012; Hanchon & Fernald, 2013; Suldo et al., 2010). Directors and trainers of NASP approved school psychology programs were contacted by email and asked to access the survey via a link provided in the email. The survey contained questions regarding demographic characteristics (i.e., professional role, geographic location, accreditation, number of faculty), as well as items pertaining to the content of training, with particular focus on counseling training practices and experiences. More specifically, the survey contained items addressing requirements of training programs (e.g., training methods, theoretical models covered, practical experiences available to candidates) and trainer perceptions regarding the delivery of counseling training (e.g., quality program counseling training, importance of training candidates in counseling). It should be noted that the survey presented to respondents also included questions regarding training in neuropsychology, which were analyzed separately.

Procedure

For the purposes of the current study, trainers from NASP-approved school psychology programs were specifically targeted. A database of current training programs and their affiliated directors and trainers was compiled using information provided on program websites. Program directors and school psychology faculty were contacted via email and asked to access the survey via a web link. Participants were not provided compensation or incentive in return for their participation. Consent to collect data for the current study was secured through the *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) of the authors' home institution prior to commencement of the study. The survey link was emailed to 938 program faculty members resulting in an overall response rate of 16.84%. The faculty members who were emailed the survey included 186 directors of NASP-approved programs, of whom 57 responded, resulting in a response rate of 30.65% for program directors.

Results

Plan of analysis

The purpose of this study was to conduct a wide-scale exploration of training practices within school psychology training programs, with particular emphasis on trainers' attitudes regarding the importance of counseling training. As this was an

exploratory study, data are presented in order to examine notable findings. **Emphasis of Counseling Training**

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of counseling training on a scale from 1 (Not at all important) to 5 (Highly important). Table 2 presents the mean ratings of counseling training importance. Participants' ratings of counseling training importance were significantly higher ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.13$) than ratings of other areas of training ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.23$). An examination of the ratings of counseling training importance by equal number of responses by equal number of responses with a "2" or below, indicating that 25% of respondents assigned a rating of "1." By comparison, the mean rating of intellectual assessment ($M = 2.1$) was significantly lower.

Program Requirements for Counseling Training

Respondents were asked to indicate the number of counseling training courses required for candidates to be eligible for certification. Respondents reported an average of 2.3 courses ($SD = 1.6$) or two (20%, $n = 11$) courses. Most programs reported an average of one (28.3%, $n = 15$) or two (20%, $n = 11$) courses. Respondents from doctoral programs reported an average of three (30.6%, $n = 16$) or four (30.6%, $n = 16$) courses. Table 3 for response frequency.

program (i.e., for review, see Kaplan & [unclear] selected for the survey as well as indirectly [unclear], 2012; Hanchon & [unclear] approved school [unclear] the survey via a link [unclear] demographic [unclear] titation, number of [unclear] particular focus on [unclear] the survey contained [unclear] g methods, theoretical [unclear] and trainer perceptions [unclear] am counseling training, [unclear] ted that the survey [unclear] ng in neuropsychology.

2-approved school [unclear] current training program [unclear] mation provided on [unclear] ulty were contacted via [unclear] were not provided [unclear] ent to collect data for the [unclear] (IRB) of the authors' [unclear] link was emailed to [unclear] e of 16.84%. The [unclear] ctors of NASP-approved [unclear] 30.65% for program

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exploratory study, data analysis consisted primarily of calculation of descriptive statistics in order to examine notable trends across the sample of respondents.

Emphasis of Counseling Training

Respondents were asked to rate several roles and activities typically expected to be performed by school psychologists based on their program's level of emphasis. The intent of this item was essentially to ascertain an estimate of the extent to which counseling is regarded as a focal point of training relative to other areas of practice, as rated by school psychology trainers. A 5-point scale ranging from (1) *Not at all emphasized* to (5) *Highly emphasized* was used to measure perceptions of program emphasis. Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and frequency counts for each area rated. Participants' ratings suggested that counseling is not a prominent focal point relative to other areas of training. Among the nine areas rated by respondents, counseling ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.13$) placed eighth in terms of level of program emphasis based on a rank ordering of means for each domain measured, exceeding only neuropsychology ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.23$). An examination of response frequency indicated that only 23.1% of respondents rated counseling as "highly emphasized" ($n = 34$). The most frequent rankings of counseling emphasis were "4" (28.6%; $n = 42$) and "3" ($n = 42$), each endorsed by equal numbers of respondents. Almost 20% of respondents rated counseling with a "2" or below, indicating minimal training emphasis. More specifically, 15.6% ($n = 25$) of respondents assigned counseling a rating of "2," while 4.1% ($n = 6$) reported counseling was not at all an emphasis within their training program, assigning counseling a rating of "1." By comparison, consultation/problem-solving ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.89$) and intellectual assessment ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.87$) were identified as the highest rated areas of training.

Program Requirements for Counseling

Respondents were also asked to identify the number of courses school psychology candidates were required to take that specifically emphasized the provision of counseling services to students. Respondents from master's level programs ($n = 50$) reported an average of 2.3 courses ($SD = 2.49$), though the most programs reported having one (32%, $n = 16$) or two (20%, $n = 10$) courses in their curricula. Representatives of specialist level programs reported an average of 2.19 courses ($SD = 1.35$), with most programs also reporting one (28.3%, $n = 32$) or two (35.4%, $n = 40$) courses. Perhaps not surprisingly, respondents from doctoral programs reported offering candidates more counseling-focused classes, with an average of 2.97 courses ($SD = 1.85$). Most respondents from doctoral programs reported two (30.6%, $n = 22$) or three (19.4%; $n = 14$) courses, but a substantial minority (30.6%, $n = 22$) reported four or more counseling-related courses. See Table 3 for response frequencies by program level and number of courses.

Table 2
Frequency of Training Activities By Level of Emphasis

	Highly emphasized (5)				(4)				(3)				(2)				Not at all emphasized (1)				<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%			
Consultation/ Problem- Solving	86	57.7	41	27.5	17	11.4	2	1.3	3	2.0	4.37	0.89											
Intellectual Assessment	79	53.0	44	29.5	35	23.6	14.9	22	5	3.4	4.32	0.87											
Behavioral Assessment	65	43.6	55	36.9	18	12.1	10	6.7	1	0.7	4.16	0.93											
Social- Emotional, Personality Assessment	63	42.3	48	32.2	31	20.8	6	4.0	1	0.7	4.11	0.92											
Prevention & Intervention of Academic Problems	41	27.9	57	38.8	36	24.5	11	7.5	2	1.4	3.84	0.96											
Prevention & Intervention of Social- Emotional Problems	34	23.1	65	44.2	40	27.2	7	4.8	1	0.7	3.84	0.86											
Curriculum Based Assessment	42	28.4	44	29.7	35	23.6	22	14.9	5	3.4	3.65	1.14											
Counseling	34	23.1	42	28.6	42	28.6	23	15.6	6	4.1	3.51	1.13											
Neuro- psychology	10	6.8	19	13.0	29	19.9	44	30.1	44	30.1	2.36	1.23											

When asked about ad-
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embedded into other courses
were offered other forms of
did not receive such opportu-
nities including the p
majority of respondents (95.9
4.4% ($n = 7$) reported that pr
programs. Required counsel
respondents included case co
consultation/group supervisio
of counseling sessions ($n = 6$
sessions ($n = 63$). Table 4 pr
experiences.

Number of Counseling C

Number of counselors	0		1	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
0	8	16.0	16	32.0
1	5	4.4	32	28.3
2	2	2.8	12	16.7

When asked to identify
covered in current courses, th
Behavioral (95.9%, $n = 140$),
Solution-Focused (63.7%, $n =$
Social Cognitive (47.3%, $n =$
23.3%, $n = 34$). Additional
Biological, Jungian, Gestalt.

emphasis

all
red

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Total <i>N</i>
0	4.37	0.89	140
4	4.32	0.87	140
7	4.16	0.93	140
7	4.11	0.92	140

When asked about additional forms of direct training related to counseling provision outside of specific courses (e.g., lectures, workshops, training materials embedded into other courses), 77.4% of respondents ($n = 113$) indicated that candidates were offered other forms of training, whereas 22.6% ($n = 33$) indicated that candidates did not receive such opportunities. With regard to practical and/or field-based training experiences including the provision of direct counseling services to clients, the vast majority of respondents (95.2%, $n = 139$) positively endorsed such experiences, while 4.8% ($n = 7$) reported that practical experiences were not offered in their respective programs. Required counseling training experiences most frequently endorsed by respondents included case consultation/role play with classmates ($n = 131$), case consultation/group supervision with classmates ($n = 129$), submission of audio recordings of counseling sessions ($n = 66$), and submission of video recordings of counseling sessions ($n = 63$). Table 4 presents response frequencies of required counseling training experiences.

Table 3
Number of Counseling Courses Taken By Level of School Psychology Program

Number of courses:	0		1		2		3		4		5		6 or more		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Masters ($n=50$)	8	16.0	16	32.0	10	20.0	6	12.0	5	10.0	1	2.0	4	8.0	2.30	2.49
Educational Specialist ($n=113$)	5	4.4	32	28.3	40	35.4	20	17.7	11	9.7	2	1.8	3	2.7	2.19	1.35
Doctorate ($n=72$)	2	2.8	12	16.7	22	30.6	14	19.4	9	12.5	4	5.6	9	12.5	2.97	1.85

When asked to identify the models and/or theoretical orientations of counseling covered in current courses, the most frequently identified model was Cognitive-Behavioral (95.9%, $n = 140$), followed by Behavioral (74.0%, $n = 108$), and Brief Solution-Focused (63.7%, $n = 93$). Theoretical models endorsed less frequently included Social Cognitive (47.3%, $n = 69$), Humanistic (37.0%, $n = 54$), and Psychoanalytic (23.3%, $n = 34$). Additional models written in by respondents included Family Systems, Ecological, Jungian, Gestalt, Adlerian, Reality, and Narrative.

3.65	1.14	140
3.51	1.13	147
2.36	1.23	146

periences

Percentage of responses

94.9%
93.5%
47.8%
45.7%
45.7%
36.2%
32.6%
31.2%

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h more training than

they had previously. Only seven respondents (5.0%) noted that they were currently providing less training than they had in the past, and four respondents (2.8%) indicated that their programs did not provide counseling training. Respondents were then asked to provide their opinions on whether counseling should be included among the roles and responsibilities assumed by school psychologists. The overwhelming majority (91.6%, $n = 131$) expressed agreement with this sentiment, whereas only three respondents (2.1%) did not agree that counseling should be among the roles and responsibilities of school psychologists. Nine respondents (6.3%) indicated they were unsure. Likewise, when prompted to indicate along a four-point scale how important it is that candidates receive formal training to provide counseling services in the school setting, 71.3% of respondents ($n = 102$) rated training as "highly important." Of the remaining respondents, 18.2% ($n = 25$) rated counseling training as "generally important," 9.8% ($n = 14$) rated counseling training as "somewhat important," and 0.7% ($n = 1$) rated counseling training as "not at all important." Finally, respondents were asked to consider the context of the various shifts that are occurring in the field of school psychology and rate the extent to which they anticipate that school psychologists will be called upon to provide counseling services in the future. A four-point scale, anchored at (1) *not at all*, (2) *less than they are currently*, (3) *equally as much as they are currently*, and (4) *more than they are currently*, was used to rate respondents' perceptions of need. The largest number of respondents (43.4%, $n = 62$) endorsed "more," although almost as many (41.3%, $n = 59$) endorsed "equally as much." Twenty-one respondents (14.7%) endorsed "less than," and only one respondent (0.7%) endorsed "not at all."

Lastly, a series of four, one-way ANOVAs (with Bonferroni correction to account for multiple comparisons) were calculated to determine whether participants' perceptions about counseling training varied by geographic region. For these analyses, due to unequal cell sizes the U.S. regions indicated in Table 1 were clustered into five similarly sized groupings that were intended to reflect relatively similar geographic regions of the United States. Specifically, the Middle Atlantic and New England groups were combined to form a "Northeast" group. Similarly, the South Atlantic and East South Central groups yielded a "Southeast" group, while the West North Central and West South Central groups were combined to form a "West Central" group. A "West" grouping emerged from combining the Mountain and Pacific regions, whereas the East North Central region remained isolated and was labeled "Midwest." For each of the four ANOVAs calculated, geographic region served as the independent variable.

Table 5 presents summary statistics for the series of ANOVAs. Of the four analyses calculated, a significant main effect emerged only for respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which school psychologists will be called upon to provide counseling services in the future (i.e., "future of counseling"), $F(4, 136) = 3.34, p < .01$.

Post hoc analyses revealed that the West group rated this item significantly higher than the West Central group. Otherwise, the geographic regions used for comparison were statistically indistinguishable from one another in all aspects of counseling perceptions.

Table 5
Mean Ratings of Trainer Perceptions by Geographic Region

<i>Perception (df)</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>
Importance of counseling (4, 136)					1.77
	Northeast	31	3.77	0.50	
	North	25	3.44	0.77	
	Southeast	33	3.57	0.75	
	West Central	29	3.41	0.82	
	West	23	3.78	0.51	
Future of counseling (4, 136)					3.34
	Northeast	31	3.32	0.70	
	North	25	3.12	0.72	
	Southeast	33	3.42	0.66	
	West Central	29	2.93 ¹	0.80	
	West	23	3.56 ¹	0.73	
Level of Training (4, 134)					2.28
	Northeast	30	3.13	0.43	
	North	25	2.88	0.72	
	Southeast	33	3.12	0.78	
	West Central	28	3.35	0.48	
	West	23	3.30	0.63	

Quality of training
(4, 136)

Northeast
North
South
West Central
West

* = main effect significant
superscript are significantly different

Over the past decade, school psychologists have provided services geared toward the needs of students (e.g., Cummings et al., 1998) as well as to advocate that schools make an integrated effort to enhance the overall health of students for mental health services. Recently a United States Surgeon General is expected to expect that the United States Department of Education will make for school psychologists. Concerning trends with respect to the needs among school-age children, school psychologists are well-prepared to address mental health.

Previous studies (e.g., Cummings et al., 1998) have shown that many school psychologists are not fully prepared to provide services of service provision (e.g., Cummings et al., 1998). In addition, a notable percentage of school psychologists are not sufficiently trained to provide services. The adequacy of formal training programs. The results of the study indicate that school psychologists' views of their field of study are relatively new and novel. The results of the study indicate that the perspectives of school psychologists are relatively new and novel.

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2.28 .06

0.43
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0.78
0.48
0.63

Quality of training
(MSS)

1.19 .32

Northeast	31	3.74	1.06
North	25	3.32	1.07
Southeast	31	3.51	0.96
West Central	28	3.53	1.03
West	23	3.91	1.08

* = main effect significant at $p < .05$ level; mean values sharing a common superscript are significantly different from each other

Discussion

Over the past decade, school psychologists have increasingly been called upon to provide services geared toward enhancing students' mental health and psychological well-being (e.g., Cummings et al., 2004; NASP, 2008). Ysseldyke and colleagues (2006) went as far as to advocate that school psychologists assume a leadership role in a coordinated and integrated effort to enhance students' mental health and general welfare. Indeed, the need for mental health service provision among children and youth is significant, whereby a United States Surgeon General's Report estimated that 20% of school-aged children are expected to experience mental health problems within the course of one year (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). In light of the calls made for school psychologists to address students' mental health needs, coupled with the concerning trends with respect to the prevalence of disorders and functionally impairing conditions among school-aged children and youth, it is imperative that school psychologists are well-prepared to competently provide services that promote students' mental health.

Previous studies (e.g., Hanchon & Fernald, 2013) have established that although many school psychologists are indeed receiving training and subsequently engaging in forms of service provision (e.g., school-based counseling) to address students' mental health needs, a notable percentage of practitioners do not perceive themselves as sufficiently trained to provide such services. These findings raise important questions about the adequacy of formal training that school psychologists receive within their graduate training programs. Yet, previous research has focused exclusively on practitioners' views of their formal preparation, which results in an incomplete understanding regarding the nature and scope of graduate training. The current study adds a relatively new and novel angle to the extant literature base by exploring the perspectives of school psychology trainers regarding critical foundational components of

school mental health provision, in particular the extent and sufficiency of counseling preparation that pre-service school psychology candidates receive within the context of their graduate training programs.

Several notable and interesting results emerged from the current study. Despite the growing need for mental health services for school-aged youth, coupled with the documented desire of school psychologists to provide direct counseling services (e.g., Agresta, 2004), findings revealed herein suggested most school psychology training programs are focusing less on preparing their candidates to provide counseling services than other professional roles. For example, counseling ranked eighth out of nine training domains measured. Moreover, less than one-quarter (i.e., 23.1%) of the trainers surveyed in this study rated counseling as "highly emphasized" by their programs, with most respondents indicating low to moderate emphasis on counseling.

Given the almost universal agreement that counseling is a service that school psychologists should be providing and that training candidates to provide such services is essential to addressing students' documented needs, the relative lack of emphasis on counseling by school psychology training programs is disappointing, especially in light of previous findings suggesting that many field-based practitioners are being asked to engage in these forms of service delivery, yet perceive themselves as ill-prepared to do so (e.g., Hanchon & Fernald, 2013). Of course, it is entirely possible that pre-service candidates are receiving other forms of training that reflect a broader continuum of mental health-related services as opposed to a more intensive tertiary service activity such as counseling. As an example, in the current study "Prevention and intervention of social-emotional problems" was tied for fifth out of the nine areas measured based upon ranking of mean ratings. Yet, it is notable that trainers in the current study rated activities associated primarily with problem identification (e.g., problem-solving, assessment) as more prominent focal points of training relative to treatment/intervention activities. Certainly, school psychology candidates must continue to be appropriately trained in these areas of service delivery; thus, advocating that such training be diminished in an effort to bolster other areas would be neither prudent nor recommended.

Moving forward, in response to field-based practitioners' perceptions of their training to deliver competent and effective counseling services to students, it is important that trainers take stock of the current state of their respective graduate programs, evaluate their training missions, and address their associated needs individually, such that their candidates can be optimally positioned to counsel students when called upon to do so. Along these lines, the variability in training practices reported among respondents was striking. For example, at the Specialist level, 35.4% ($n = 40$) of respondents indicated that their programs provided two counseling courses, although the responses ranged from zero ($n = 5$; 4.4% of respondents) to six or more courses ($n = 3$; 2.7%), suggesting a

rather wide disparity among candidates. Notably, 15% of respondents reported that their programs provide more than two counseling courses.

The majority of respondents (65.9%; $n = 51$) reported that their programs provide more than two counseling courses. Twenty respondents (14.2%) reported that their programs provide two counseling courses, and 14.2% (11 respondents) reported that their programs provide one counseling course. Finally, 10.9% (8 respondents) reported that their programs provide no counseling courses. Thus, approximately half of respondents reported that their programs provide two or more counseling courses, and approximately one-third of respondents reported that their programs provide one or more counseling courses. Unfortunately, a significant number of respondents reported that their programs provide no counseling courses, and thus, are unable to make improvements in their training programs.

With melioration of current study suggest programmatic experiences their candidates' quality of counseling services. Their programs utilized target areas (e.g., assessment, intervention) and case consultation. Approximately half of respondents reported that they had experience with the supervision of counseling services, and approximately half of respondents reported that they had experience with focused individualized supervision regarding their candidates' counseling services.

As noted by Hanchon (2013), the current study's findings suggest that specific coursework into a program's training mission simply cannot be reduced to a single responsibility to address the training needs of candidates. These training needs (e.g., assessment, intervention, supervision, and case consultation) are perceived by practitioners as necessary for the development of adequate competency, representing

rather wide disparity among programs in the amount of counseling course content offered to candidates. Notably, 15 respondents reported that their programs provided no counseling courses whatsoever (8 Masters, 5 Specialist, and 2 Doctorate).

The majority of respondents reported that the amount of training their programs currently provide is consistent with the amount they had provided in the past ($n = 93$; 61.2%), and, on a somewhat encouraging note, 26.2% of respondents ($n = 37$) perceived their programs provide more training than in the past. Only seven respondents (5.0%) reported that their programs had reduced the amount of counseling training, and four respondents (2.8%) indicated that their programs provided no counseling training. Though most programs are providing the same amount or more counseling training as in the past, the overall quality of training being delivered to candidates appears tenuous. Less than half of respondents (48.6%; $n = 69$) in the current sample reported that their programs trained candidates "well" or "very well" in counseling, while a little over one-third (35.9%; $n = 51$) reported that their program trained candidates "sufficiently." Twenty respondents (14.2%) indicated that their programs trained candidates "poorly" or "very poorly." Thus, approximately half of those responding rated the effectiveness of their program's counseling training as mediocre to poor, clearly suggesting need for improvement. Fortunately, a number of respondents made qualitative comments regarding their respective programs' need to enhance counseling training along with plans to make improvements to training in counseling skills for their students.

With melioration of candidates' preparation in mind, findings emerging from the current study suggest programs (i.e., trainers) may wish to review the breadth and depth of practical experiences their candidates receive as an avenue toward improving the overall quality of counseling training. The strong majority of respondents indicated that their programs utilized targeted training experiences such as role-play with classmates (94.9%) and case consultation/group supervision with classmates (93.5%). However, less than half of respondents reported employing more intensive supervised counseling experiences such as the submission of audio- or video-recorded counseling sessions, real-time supervised counseling sessions, or submission of written transcripts. The relative lack of focused individualized supervision likely contributes to candidates' lack of confidence regarding their counseling proficiency.

As noted by Hanchon and Fernald (2013), implementing additional counseling-specific coursework into a program's existing curriculum is likely to be a hindrance that many programs simply cannot afford to bear, especially considering programs' overarching responsibilities to holistically train their candidates across a diverse array of service areas. These training burdens, juxtaposed against previously cited data showing many practitioners perceive themselves as lacking sufficient training (and, consequently, adequate competency), represent a rather significant confound to be reconciled. An

obvious resolution toward this end would be to ensure that candidates receive ample opportunities to engage in counseling service delivery within their practicum and internship settings. Stated slightly differently, candidates must be afforded multiple authentic opportunities to provide students with counseling services as early in their training as possible (e.g., during practicum), and over a prolonged period of time across their formal training (i.e., through internship). Intuitively, one would expect that foundational training coupled with targeted opportunities for experience and practice will help to yield a sense of competency on the part of the emerging practitioner (e.g., Ysseldyke et al., 2006).

Although practical experience is a vital component in any endeavor to develop a practitioner's sense of competency, experience when considered in isolation can only be regarded at best as a necessary yet insufficient variable. A second crucial consideration on the way to training school psychologists who feel sufficiently prepared to engage in counseling services is through ongoing, intensive, supervision, preferably within field-based settings (e.g., Harvey & Struzziero, 2008). Indeed, effective field-based supervisors who are responsive to the developmental level of their supervisees and are sensitive to their individual needs can be greatly influential in cultivating candidates' sense of competency in all areas of service delivery (e.g., Cochrane, Salyers, & Ding, 2010), in particular counseling.

Of course, the selection of capable and qualified field-based supervisors who are committed to promoting professional development in their supervisees can be challenging on many levels. Within the context of the current study, two salient observations are worth noting. First, from a broader perspective, previous literature has suggested that field-based supervisors in many instances lack either formal or informal training in supervision, meaning they may not be adequately prepared to take on this professional role (e.g., Cochrane et al., 2010; Harvey & Struzziero, 2008; Hunley et al., 2000; Russell Goh, 1993). Second, from a more acute perspective relating specifically to developing candidates' counseling skills, a lack of training in supervision is likely to be exacerbated by supervisors' perceived limitations and/or lack of confidence in their own counseling skills. It stands to reason that if a supervisor has questions about the training he/she received and subsequently his/her own competency to effectively deliver counseling services within the school setting, he/she may be uncomfortable, if not ill-prepared to oversee a supervisee in the same role. To address this concern, an immediate recommendation that comes to mind is for university-based trainers to offer support and professional development opportunities (e.g., continuing education, professional workshops, in-service trainings, counseling case consultations) to field-based supervisors. Although the extent to which these types of measures are already taking place within training programs cannot be determined from the current study, such actions should pro-

vide dividends to both the effectiveness of the services and the training of candidates.

Adequately training school psychologists is a concern shared by NASP and many other stakeholders in the field. However, for school psychologists, the lament of one program to do everything, "I am a generalist-based practitioner," is a concern that exists with respect to candidates receive to provide services. Practitioners and trainers, respectively, agree that counseling services, given their numerous professional roles, remain consistent, if not inconsistent mental health services. The requisite training, knowledge, and youth placed in the field (e.g., Rich, & Michalowski, 2002) are perceived barriers related to the training of practitioners from providing such a notion, as there are many who need is enough such as the need to serve as integral parts of the greatest benefit to the network that includes and supports the field.

The current study provides a glimpse into school psychology trainers' views regarding the training of candidates receive to engage in counseling services. Although that our target sample of school psychology programs included only house doctoral programs (i.e., we were not asked to identify any other programs), we are confident that the findings are representative from a given program. Although a limitation to our study is that we did not have a given program provide program content. Because of

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Adequately training candidates to be competent in *all* professional roles that are endorsed by NASP and commonly assumed by school psychologists is not a realistic endeavor for school psychology programs (e.g., Ysseldyke et al., 2006). In this regard, we share the lament of one respondent who commented that it is "hard to find time in the program to do everything." However, the current study, coupled with previous surveys of field-based practitioners (e.g., Hanchon & Fernald, 2013), lends evidence to the notion that concerns exist with respect to the overall state of training and level of preparation that candidates receive to provide school-based counseling services. Moreover, both practitioners and trainers, regardless of the geographic region they represent, appear to generally agree that counseling is a service that school psychologists should provide among their numerous professional roles, and that the demand for such services is likely to remain consistent, if not increase in the years to come. As the demand for child and adolescent mental health services increases, it is imperative that school psychologists have the requisite training, knowledge, and clinical skills to serve the needs of the children and youth placed in our care. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Suldo, Friedrich, & Michalowski, 2010), some trainers surveyed in the current study commented on perceived barriers related to professional role identity (e.g., turf issues) that limit field-based practitioners from providing counseling services in their school districts. This is a disturbing notion, as there are clearly many students who require mental health services, and the need is enough such that school psychologists can bear at least a portion of the load, thus serving as integral professionals in these students' overall well being. Indeed, students are the greatest beneficiaries of an integrated and coordinated service provision framework that includes and readily embraces the efforts of school psychologists.

The current study provides a novel and informative glimpse into school psychology trainers' views regarding the extent and adequacy of preparation their candidates receive to engage in school-based counseling service provision. It is worth noting that our target sample consisted entirely of trainers who represent NASP-approved school psychology programs (a significant percentage of these hailed from institutions that also house doctoral programs accredited by APA). Because respondents to our survey were not asked to identify their institutional affiliations (in order to ensure their personal anonymity), we are unable to determine the extent to which multiple representatives from a given training program completed the survey. This should be regarded as a limitation to our study's findings, given the possibility that multiple trainers from a given program provided inconsistent responses to survey items relating to program content. Because of this confound, we attempted to place a stronger emphasis

on respondents' perceptions about the counseling training their programs offer. Moreover, although the findings presented herein may lack generalizability to other regions of the world, which is potentially another limiting factor, perhaps this study can serve as the impetus for additional research that examines similar aspects of school psychologists' counseling preparation and practices from an international perspective.

As extensions of the current study, three prominent lines of future research are worth mentioning. First, a similar investigation related to training in the provision of counseling services, with school psychology programs residing outside of the United States serving as the target of interest, would be compelling and informative. Second, research that allows for comparisons and contrasts among regions internationally with respect to practitioners' engagement in school-based counseling services is warranted. In particular, relative to the documented estimates of counseling service provision among school psychologists in the United States, a more internationally-focused examination of the frequency of service provision, role identity among school psychologists, and perceived competency to provide counseling services would be intriguing. Last, an outcome-based experimental study that examines candidate as well as field-based supervisor efficacy, comfort level, and competence within the context of counseling service provision as a function of level of university-based trainer support would be informative.

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Appendix

Survey instrument used for data collection

(Format modified for Publication Purposes)

1. In addition to your role as a SP trainer, do you serve as a program director? (Yes/No)

If you serve as a program director, please identify the level of program you direct (e.g., M.A., Ed.S.):

2. Where is your school psychology program located? (as determined by the US Census Bureau):

New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT); *Middle Atlantic* (NJ, NY, PA); *East North Central* (IN, IL, MI, OH, WI); *West North Central* (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD); *South Atlantic* (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV); *East South Central* (AL, KY, MS, TN); *West South Central* (AR, LA, OK, TX); *Mountain* (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY); *Pacific* (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)

3. What terminal school psychology degree(s) does your school psychology program offer? (Check all that apply)

Masters (M.A., M.S., etc.); Educational Specialist (Ed.S.); Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.Ed., etc.)

Other (Specify)

4. Is your school psychology training program accredited/approved by any of the following? (Mark all that apply)

	NASP	APA
Masters		
Specialist		
Doctorate		
Other		

5. How many full-time equivalent faculty does your school psychology program employ?

6. On average, how many active candidates are enrolled in your program each year?

Masters Specialist Doctorate Other

7. Presented below are broadly defined activities that are typically performed by school psychologists. Based on your program's curriculum and training mission, please rank order each of these activities according to the level of emphasis they are given (1 = activity that is most emphasized within your program; 2 = next most emphasized activity, etc.)

Behavioral assessment (e.g., FBA, BIP)

Consultation / problem-solving

Counseling

Curriculum based assessment
Intellectual assessment (e.g.,
assessment of social, emotional
intervention design and imple-
mentation
Neuropsychology
Other (Specify)

8. In order to partially fulfill
your candidates required to
students? (If your program
degree offered)

Masters (M.A., M.S., etc.)
Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.Ed., etc.)

9. Beyond any specific co-
training in the provision of
services, how are these
services woven into courses, works

10. What models and/or training
methods? (Mark all that apply)

Psychoanalytic
Behavioral Social Cognitive

11. In your school psychology
program, which do they provide direct

12. In what type of setting(s) do

School setting – practicum
Hospital setting
Other (Specify)

13. In being trained to provide
services, how do they engage in any of the following

14. Submit an audio recording of a
counseling session

15. Submit an observational fac-
toring

16. Submit an audio recording of

17. Submit a video recording of

Curriculum based assessment

Intellectual assessment (e.g., cognitive, academic achievement)

Assessment of social, emotional, and personality functioning

Intervention design and implementation – academic-based concerns

Intervention design and implementation – social and/or emotional-based concerns

Neuropsychology

Other (Specify)

Yes/No)

(e.g., M.A., Ed.S.):

Census Bureau):

North Central (IN, IL, MI,

DE, DC, FL, GA, MD,

AR, LA, OK, TX);

A)

Program offer? (Check all that

D., D.Ed., etc.)

Following? (Mark all that

APA

Employ?

Year?

School psychologists.

Of these activities

Serialized within your

11. In order to partially fulfill the requirements of their school psychology degrees, how many courses are your candidates required to take that are designed to train them in providing counseling services to students? (If your program offers multiple degrees, please note the number of courses required for each degree offered)

Master's (M.A., M.S., etc.)

Educational Specialist (Ed.S.)

Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., D.Ed., etc.)

Other (Specify)

12. Beyond any specific courses, are candidates in your program(s) provided any other form of direct training in the provision of counseling services to students? (e.g., lectures and/or other training materials woven into courses, workshops) (Yes/No)

13. What models and/or theoretical orientations of counseling are covered in your courses and/or other training methods? (Mark all that apply)

Psychoanalytic

Humanistic

Brief Solution Focused

Cognitive Behavioral

Behavioral

Social Cognitive

Other (Specify)

14. In your school psychology program(s), are candidates provided with practical training experiences in which they provide direct counseling services to students and/or clients? (Yes/No)

15. In what type of setting(s) do candidates receive training? (Mark all that apply)

School setting – practicum

School setting – internship

Community mental health agency

Hospital setting

Private practice

On-site clinic (i.e., university or program-based)

Other (Specify)

16. In being trained to provide counseling services, please indicate whether your candidates are required to engage in any of the following:

	Yes	No
Sit in on a counseling session conducted by a trained counselor		
Use of an observational facility (e.g., one-way viewing)		
Submit an audio recording of a counseling session		
Submit a video recording of a counseling session		

Submit a written transcript of a counseling session		
Role play with classmates		
Case consultation / group supervision with classmates		
Other (Specify):		

14. In your opinion, how well does your program(s) prepare candidates to provide effective counseling services to students in the school setting?

Unsure Very poorly Poorly Sufficiently Well Very Well

Please provide any comments you feel would be helpful:

15. Of the following, please mark the item that best reflects your perception of your program's level of training for school psychology candidates to provide counseling services in the school setting.

- Our program(s) does not train candidates to provide counseling services
 Our program does not provide candidates with as much training as it had historically
 Our program provides candidates with as much training as it has historically
 Our program provides candidates with more training than it had historically

If your program provides candidates with either more or less training than it had historically, please explain any changes that have been made:

16. In your opinion, should the provision of counseling services within the school setting be included among the roles/responsibilities assumed by school psychologists? (Yes/No/Unsure)

Please provide any comments you feel would be helpful:

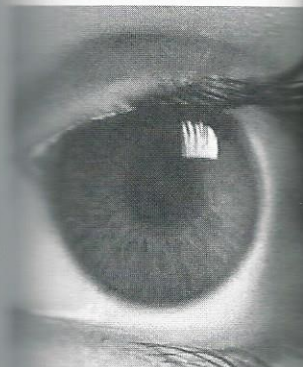
17. In your opinion, how important is it that candidates receive formal training within the school psychology programs to provide counseling services in the school setting?

Unsure Not at all important Somewhat important Generally important Highly important

18. As you look forward, in the context of the various shifts that are occurring in the school psychology field, to what extent do you anticipate school psychologists will be called upon to provide counseling services in the school setting?

Not at all currently Less than they are currently Equally as much as they are currently More than they are currently

19. Please provide any additional comments that you think would be helpful regarding the training of school psychologists to provide school-based counseling services.



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