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Training to Work with Interpreters in US School Psychology Graduate Programs

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Abstract
Despite rapidly increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in US schools, the majority of psychoeducational evaluations will be conducted by monolingual, English-speaking school psychologists. As such, the appropriate use of interpreters has been identified as a critical skill in working with emergent bilinguals and their families. Surveys of practicing school psychologists conducting assessments with emergent bilinguals indicate a lack of knowledge and training in the use of interpreters; however, few studies have examined the extent to which school psychology graduate students are trained in the appropriate use of interpreters. Utilizing survey methodology, this study examined school psychology graduate students' training in and preparedness to work with interpreters, as well as their knowledge of best practices in the use of interpreters. Current graduate students and interns enrolled in school psychology master's, specialist, and doctoral programs in 36 states throughout the USA ($n = 364$) responded to the survey. The majority of participants were White (61.5%), monolingual (70.3%), and seeking a master's or specialist degree (71.2%). Survey responses suggest that graduate students and interns' training, knowledge, and preparedness to work with interpreters is lacking. A qualitative analysis of the open-ended question revealed that first-hand experience working with interpreters was among the most beneficial types of training experiences for graduate students and interns. Implications for how program directors and graduate-level faculty can provide better training for their students in the use of interpreters are discussed.

Keywords Emergent bilinguals · Nondiscriminatory assessment framework · Disproportionality in special education · Working with interpreters · School psychology graduate training

The percentage of individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds in the USA is growing daily. This growth is also reflected in US public schools, as an increasing number of emergent bilinguals enter the education system. Emergent bilinguals are students who speak predominantly in a language other than English and who are learning English in school (García & Kleifgen, 2018). Between 2000 and 2017, the number of emergent bilinguals in public schools increased in all but seven states and the District of Columbia to comprise more than 10% of the total student population, or approximately 5 million students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). This trend is expected to continue in the future, as the population increase due to international migration is projected to exceed that of the natural birth rate in the USA (Vespa et al., 2018). Emergent bilinguals come from a wide array of cultural and geographic backgrounds and speak more than 400 native languages; and yet, despite this growing cultural and linguistic diversity, most psychoeducational evaluations with emergent bilinguals will be completed by monolingual, English-speaking school psychologists (NASP, 2015). Recent estimates suggest that 92% of school psychologists in the USA speak English only, and of those who speak another language, only 12% use that language when providing services (Goforth et al., 2021).

Given a significant shortage of bilingual school psychologists, the sheer number of languages and dialects spoken by emergent bilinguals, and a lack of norm-referenced measures validated in languages other than English, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends that all monolingual school psychologists undergo training

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in the use of interpreters to assist with all aspects of the assessment process (2015). Interpreters can play an essential role by facilitating communication between the family and school, bridging a cultural gap, increasing trust and rapport, and empowering parents; however, improper use of interpreters may lead to distrust between students and school psychologists, invalid assessment results, inappropriate reporting of results, and poor data-based decision-making (Lopez, 2014). Despite this stated training need, no studies have examined the extent to which school psychology graduate programs are training students in the appropriate use of interpreters for assessment of emergent bilinguals. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine training experiences, knowledge of recommendations, and preparedness regarding working with interpreters among school psychology graduate students and interns in the USA.

Nondiscriminatory Assessment and the Need for Interpreters

Due to limited publicly available data, limitations in the process by which emergent bilinguals are assessed and identified, and the treatment of emergent bilinguals as a homogenous group, the exact number of emergent bilinguals receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) is unclear (Counts et al., 2018). However, several studies suggest that emergent bilinguals may be at risk for both over- and underrepresentation in special education, depending on grade level, geographic location, and disability category (Artiles et al., 2005; Gage & MacSuga-Gage, 2014; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Shifrer et al., 2011; Sullivan, 2011). Disproportionality is a complex, multidimensional issue that likely results from varying cultural, linguistic, and sociodemographic factors as well as systemic issues of bias within US school systems (Counts et al., 2018). One proposed explanation for the disproportionate representation of emergent bilinguals in special education is poor psychoeducational assessment practices (Elizalde-Utnik & Romero, 2017). These include failing to consider how relevant cultural and linguistic factors, such as language acquisition and acculturation, influence both learning and test performance for emergent bilinguals; utilizing standardized assessment measures that are not normed for a student's cultural or linguistic background or that have high cultural loading or linguistic demands; and modifying testing conditions in ways that may invalidate assessment results (Chamberlain, 2005; Elizalde-Utnik & Romero, 2017; Rhodes et al., 2005; Vega, et al., 2016). Unfortunately, studies examining common assessment practices with emergent bilinguals suggest that school psychologists frequently engage in these discriminatory practices (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006; Harris et al., 2015).

In an effort to create more equitable assessment practices for emergent bilinguals, a number of provisions have been added to federal legislation and to the professional and ethical guidelines of professional organizations involved in the assessment of children. For example, the 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of IDEA included several provisions to support appropriate service delivery and assessment practices for emergent bilinguals, including providing assessment and evaluation materials in the language most likely to yield accurate results, providing an interpreter for parents in eligibility and IEP meetings, and barring a child from being found eligible for a disability if the determining factor is limited English proficiency. Further, professional organizations such as NASP and the American Psychological Association (APA) have included in their ethics statements that assessments must be comprehensive and fair and that instruments must have demonstrated reliability and validity with the student's cultural and linguistic background (APA, 2017; NASP, 2010a). These sources of guidance, while important, include broad recommendations and unfortunately lack specific approaches, methods, and practices for conducting valid assessments with emergent bilinguals. To address this limitation, nondiscriminatory assessment has been proposed as a systematic framework for ensuring that all students, regardless of race, culture, or linguistic background, are assessed in a manner that is fair, equitable, and more likely to produce valid results (Ortiz, 2014).

Effective implementation of a nondiscriminatory assessment framework necessitates that school psychologists acquire a number of skills. These include, but are not limited to, the appropriate use of authentic and alternative assessment procedures, understanding and evaluating extrinsic factors that could be affecting classroom performance and/or behavior, assessing and evaluating student language proficiency and if a student has had ample opportunity to learn, reducing bias in traditional testing practices, and interpreting data based on the student's unique background. In addition, a nondiscriminatory assessment framework requires that a school psychologist have proficiency in all domains of a student's native language (Rhodes et al., 2005); thus, when assessing emergent bilinguals, it is best practice for a monolingual practitioner to obtain the services of a bilingual school psychologist competent in the clients' language and cultural background. Unfortunately, given the severe shortage of bilingual school psychologists (Goforth et al., 2021), the large number of languages spoken in schools, and gaps in the training of bilingual school psychologists, this is often unrealistic, necessitating the use of an interpreter (Lopez, 2008; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). Consequently, the appropriate use of interpreters has been

identified as a critical skill in working with emergent bilinguals and their families that both monolingual and bilingual practitioners should acquire (Blatchley & Lau, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2005).

Despite the importance of developing knowledge and skills regarding working with interpreters, some research suggests that practicing school psychologists often lack this important skillset. For example, O'Bryan and Rogers (2010) surveyed 276 practicing bilingual school psychologists about their assessment practices with emergent bilinguals. Participants reported that they were only somewhat comfortable in their ability to use interpreters. Even more troubling were the findings that participants reportedly engaged in a number of unethical practices when working with interpreters that violate standardization, including using untrained interpreters, employing relatives or friends to interpret, using interpreters to translate standardized measures, and failing to report the use of an interpreter in a psychological report. Vega and colleagues (2016) similarly found that more than 35% of the practicing school psychologists surveyed in their study reported working with an interpreter that was poorly or very poorly trained.

As described in the following section, a lack of training in the proper use of interpreters for the assessment of emergent bilinguals can lead to ethical violations, invalidate assessment results, and ultimately contribute to inaccurate educational decision-making that perpetuates the over- and underrepresentation of emergent bilinguals in special education. Consequently, proper training in the use of interpreters is not only crucial within a nondiscriminatory assessment framework, but also represents a critical social justice issue within the field of school psychology. A lack of training in the appropriate use of interpreters limits school psychology graduate students' ability to provide culturally responsive assessment practices for emergent bilinguals, underscoring a systemic need for school psychology graduate programs to provide this training.

Recommendations for Working with Interpreters

Several recommendations have been put forth by researchers in clinical and school psychology, as well as professional organizations such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA), APA, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, on best practices when working with interpreters. These recommendations, discussed in more detail in the following sections, generally fall under one of three broad areas: (1) ethical practices, (2) interpreter competencies, and (3) practitioner competencies.

Ethical Practices

A number of ethical standards guide the professional practice of school psychologists working with interpreters throughout the assessment process. According to Standard II.3.6 of the NASP Principles for Professional Ethics, "School psychologists should take steps to ensure that the interpreters are appropriately trained and are acceptable to clients" (NASP, 2010a, p. 7). Using an untrained interpreter increases the chance that an error or misunderstanding will occur, potentially compromising the validity of evaluation results and subsequently the appropriateness of decisions made about the student's academic services (Ochoa et al., 2004). Moreover, the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, 2014) includes several guidelines specific to working with interpreters, such as Standard 3.14 which states that interpreters should follow standardized testing procedures and, to the maximum extent feasible, be fluent in the examinee's native language and culture. Additionally, test users, such as school psychologists, are responsible for selecting an interpreter with appropriate qualifications, documenting the use of an interpreter, and reporting any ways in which the use of an interpreter may have altered standardized testing procedures (AERA, 2014). Finally, school psychologists have the responsibility of ensuring that interpreters understand and follow ethical standards guiding school psychologists' professional assessment practices. These include working within the bounds of their competency, maintaining neutrality when working with clients, protecting the confidentiality of students and their families, and maintaining test security (Lopez, 2014).

Applying these ethical standards to school psychologists working with interpreters, researchers have identified several ethical practices relevant to assessment (see Lopez, 2014 for a comprehensive list). School psychologists should not employ the services of untrained interpreters, including peers and relatives of a student (Blatchley & Lau, 2010; Lopez, 2014), as peers and relatives may not have the language skills or knowledge of important terminology needed to deliver an accurate interpretation, and their personal connection to the student and family may inhibit them from being objective (Lopez, 2008). Additionally, practitioners should not use interpreters without being trained in their appropriate use and should always document their use in psychological reports (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). Finally, there currently exists no test that is standardized for an interpreter to translate test items from English to another language (Vega et al., 2016); thus, school psychologists should not use interpreters to directly translate standardized instruments (Ochoa et al., 2004). Doing so invalidates test scores and can lead to erroneous conclusions such as misclassification of a disability or improper intervention recommendations.

Interpreter Competencies

Ethical guidelines state that school psychologists are responsible for ensuring that interpreters meet the necessary qualifications for education and training (AERA, 2014; Lopez, 2014; NASP, 2010a; Rhodes et al., 2005); however, a standardized set of qualifications and competencies does not currently exist for school-based interpreters. One tool available to school psychologists is the "Checklist for Interpreter Selection and Training" provided by Rhodes and colleagues (2005). In addition, school psychologists can also ensure that interpreters are being selected appropriately by their school administration. Additional recommendations for interpreter competencies come from recommendations based on past research. At the most basic level, interpreters should be fluent in both English and the student's native language. However, researchers have made other important recommendations, including that an interpreter understands the cultural and linguistic background of the student and their family (Lopez, 2008, 2014; Rhodes et al., 2005). Interpreters with cultural knowledge better facilitate communication between school psychologists and their clients by bridging the cultural gap (Randall-David, 1989) and understanding cultural nuances in both languages is needed to interpret the full meaning of what each person is saying and to follow appropriate etiquette (Okoro, 2012). Additionally, interpreters should understand terms related to education, special education, and assessment that are necessary for school-based interpretation (e.g., IEP, least restrictive environment, standard score; Lopez, 2008). Interpreters also need to be trained in the rationale for assessment and assessment procedures to ensure that they are interpreting appropriately and maintaining standardization. Lastly, interpreters should be knowledgeable of the critical issues that occur when interpreting from one language to another, such as certain concepts not having direct translations and word complexity increasing or decreasing when translated, to help avoid information being omitted, misinterpreted, or misunderstood (Lopez, 2014; Rhodes et al., 2005).

Practitioner Competencies

The appropriate use of interpreters during assessment also requires several practitioner competencies. In addition to knowing and adhering to legal and ethical guidelines related to assessment, school psychologists must also be aware of the challenges associated with the use of interpreters, potential issues that may arise, and the impact of these issues on the validity of assessment results. Lopez (2014) provides perhaps the most comprehensive list of necessary competencies for school psychologists working with interpreters, organized according to three different assessment phases. In the briefing phase, which occurs prior to any formal assessment session, school psychologists should evaluate the interpreter's background and qualifications, review important ethical issues such as confidentiality and test security, review relevant information about the examinee, and review the importance of standardized administration procedures. During the active phase, in which school psychologists and interpreters work directly with the examinee, it is recommended that school psychologists speak in short, clear, and complete statements to ensure the interpreter can keep pace and speak directly to the student or parent rather than the interpreter. Rhodes and colleagues (2005) also recommended maintaining rapport by monitoring facial expressions for confusion or unease and observing body language for discomfort or aversion. Additionally, practitioners should ask if the student, parent, or interpreter has questions or needs clarification to ensure understanding during the interpretation process. Practitioners should also supervise all activities with the interpreter and allow extra time for interpretation, since sessions with interpreters take longer, and interpreters should be encouraged to take breaks because interpreting is mentally and physically demanding (Rhodes et al., 2005). Finally, in the debriefing phase, school psychologists should discuss with the interpreter any terms or concepts that were difficult to translate, cross-cultural issues that may have influenced the examinee's responses, and ways in which the session could have been improved.

Training Need in School Psychology

Despite the growing number of emergent bilingual students in US public schools, and the importance of working with interpreters to complete assessments with emergent bilinguals, few studies have investigated the extent to which working with interpreters is being covered in graduate training programs. The scant research that is available has been largely retrospective and suggests that training and experience in working with interpreters is lacking (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Ochoa et al., 2004). In keeping with the NASP *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* (2010b), students need to be given opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills to effectively work with interpreters. This includes relevant coursework (e.g., reading, discussions, lectures), professional development (e.g., webinars, trainings, workshops), and practicum experiences (e.g., observing interpreter use or practicing with an interpreter). Much of this content becomes relevant early on in a training program, as the majority of school psychology students take assessment classes in their first year to prepare for practicum; however, this training would ideally take place throughout a training program.

The Current Study

School psychology graduate students must be trained to work with interpreters, as it is an important skill for providing equitable services to emergent bilinguals. Previous studies have focused primarily on practicing school psychologists; thus, the extent to which working with interpreters is being addressed within school psychology graduate programs is unclear. Understanding if and how school psychology graduate programs are providing training in the appropriate use of interpreters is critical to confirm that students are being amply prepared to provide services to an increasingly diverse student population. Thus, the purpose of this study was to take a first step in examining graduate student training, knowledge, and preparedness in this area by surveying current school psychology graduate students and interns. Graduate students were surveyed directly rather than reviewing program curricula or syllabi, as training models and materials may not match students' actual experiences. The specific research questions were as follows: (1) What types of training are school psychology graduate students receiving regarding working with interpreters? (2) What level of knowledge do school psychology graduate students have of best practices in working with interpreters? (3) What are school psychology graduate students' perceptions of their preparedness to work with interpreters? Given the limited research with practicing school psychologists that demonstrates a lack of knowledge and preparedness, we anticipated that graduate students would similarly lack knowledge of best practices and report feeling unprepared to work with interpreters.

It is possible that the breadth and extent of training in the appropriate use of interpreters varies based on characteristics of the graduate program; thus, in addition to the primary research questions, we also explored differences based on the number of semesters students have completed, degree type, program approval/accreditation, and geographic region. Training experiences may vary based on number of semesters completed due to the timing of coursework and practicum experiences. Similarly, training likely varies for doctoral programs, since they are longer and have the potential to provide students with more opportunities to work with interpreters before graduating. APA-accredited and NASP-approved programs must ensure their students acquire certain competencies to maintain their accreditation status, including working directly with individuals from various backgrounds, being knowledgeable of evidence-based strategies to improve services for culturally and linguistically diverse individuals, and understanding that respect for diversity and advocacy for social justice are foundational to service delivery (APA, 2015; NASP, 2010b). Additionally, percentages of emergent bilinguals differ by state, ranging from a low of 0.8% in West Virginia to a high of 19% in California (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Programs located in areas with a higher percentage of emergent bilinguals may have more opportunities to provide their graduate students with learning opportunities around interpreter use. As a result of these potential differences, a second aim of this study was to explore whether training experiences differed by semesters completed, degree type, accreditation, and geographic region.

Method

Participants

The sample in this study included current graduate students and interns enrolled in school psychology master's, specialist, and doctoral programs in 36 states throughout the USA ($n = 364$). Table 1 provides a full summary of participant demographic information. The majority of participants were White (61.5%), monolingual (70.3%), and seeking a master's or specialist degree (71.2%). Participant demographics are consistent with the demographics of the field at large. On average, participants had completed 3.2 semesters as a school psychology graduate student ($SD = 2.5$) and 37.4% were on internship at the time of the survey. Other than English, the most commonly spoken languages reported by participants were Spanish, Chinese languages (i.e., Mandarin, Taiwanese, Cantonese, and Hmong), French, and American Sign Language.

Measures

Data were collected in fall 2020 and spring 2021 via an online survey that was created for this study. Survey development took place in multiple steps. First, initial survey items were created based on an extensive literature review of recommended assessment practices with emergent bilinguals at the practitioner level and training at the graduate level, as well as best practices in working with interpreters. Other activities at this step included viewing examples of existing surveys (Aldridge, 2013; Bainter & Tollefson, 2003; Vega et al., 2016) within similar topic areas and consulting with two professionals in school psychology with research expertise regarding culturally and linguistically diverse students and educational equity. Next, the initial survey was administered to current school psychology graduate students and interns ($n = 14$) from a combined specialist and doctoral program in a southeastern state to collect pilot data and solicit feedback on survey items. These data were gathered solely for the purpose of improving survey items, and student responses were not included in the primary analyses.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants and graduate programs

Participant characteristic	Percentage	Program characteristic	Percentage
Race/ethnicity		**Degree sought**	
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3%	Master's or Specialist	71.2%
Asian	6.0%	Doctoral	28.3%
Black or African American	4.9%	Other	0.5%
Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin	17.0%		
Middle Eastern or North African	0.8%	**Program location by region**	
White	61.5%	Northeast	23.4%
Multiple heritage	8.5%	Southeast	15.1%
Prefer not to answer	0.8%	Midwest	20.1%
		Southwest	12.4%
Number of languages comfortable speaking		West	29.1%
One	70.3%		
Two	26.9%	**NASP-approved program**	
Three	2.2%	Yes	87.1%
Four or More	0.5%	No	7.4%
		I don't know	5.5%
Currently on internship	37.4%		
Master's or Specialist	87.5%	**APA-accredited program**	
Doctoral	12.5%	Yes	60.7%
		No	12.6%
		I don't know	26.6%

$n = 364$. Some percentages do not add to 100% because participants were able to select multiple options

Finally, modifications were made to the survey items based on pilot data results: three questions were removed from the survey, two new questions were developed, and the format of six questions was changed. Format changes included breaking a question down into multiple questions, making a question open-ended, and rewording a question.

The final survey contained 22 items, which were presented in three sections. In the first section, participants reported demographic characteristics such as racial/ethnic background and number of languages spoken. Additional items assessed characteristics of the graduate program in which participants were enrolled, including which type of degree they were seeking (i.e., master's, specialist, or doctoral degrees), program accreditation/approval, the US state or territory in which their program was located, and how many semesters they had completed in their program at the time of the survey.

The second section included 10 items asking about participants' training experiences and level of preparedness to work with interpreters. Through Likert scale and multiple-choice questions, participants rated the extent to which working with interpreters had been covered in their graduate program coursework, pre-internship practicum experiences, and professional development activities. One open-ended question asked participants to identify the type of training regarding working with interpreters that was most helpful to them and why. Additionally, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they felt their graduate training program prepared them to complete eight different responsibilities in working with interpreters, on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all Prepared*) to 5 (*Extremely Prepared*). These responsibilities were included based on the researcher recommendations and ethical guidelines reviewed in the introduction. Finally, participants were asked to rate their level of confidence in using interpreters in psychoeducational evaluations of emergent bilinguals on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all Confident*) to 5 (*Extremely Confident*).

The last section of the survey examined participants' knowledge of best practices in working with interpreters. These best practices came from recommendations by researchers and professional organizations such as APA, AERA, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. Participants were asked to read eight items and rate their level of agreement with each on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Participants were also given the option to select "*Not Sure*."

Procedure

Prior to data collection, approval for this study was granted through the Institutional Review Board at the lead author's academic institution. To identify potential participants, a list of known school psychology programs in all 50 US states and territories (Puerto Rico), regardless of approval/

accreditation, was obtained from NASP's website ($n = 234$). An email was sent to the program directors of all identified school psychology graduate programs, which included a brief description of the study and a link to the survey to forward to their graduate students. A reminder email was sent 3 weeks later, and a follow-up email was sent a few months later to encourage program directors to forward the survey invitation to their students and interns if they had not done so already. Each reminder garnered more responses to the survey. It is unknown how many program directors forwarded the survey to their students and interns; thus, a response rate could not be determined. Additionally, a link to the survey was advertised within a Facebook group for school psychology interns.

Surveys were completed electronically through Qualtrics with a consent form built into the online survey. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants had the option to provide their email address at the end of the survey if they wanted to be entered into a drawing for a $50 Amazon gift certificate. Their email addresses were not linked to their survey responses in any way. The winner was contacted and sent their gift certificate via email.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequency counts, means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations were conducted on multiple choice and Likert scale survey questions. A series of ANOVAs (analysis of variance) were additionally utilized to explore if there were differences in training experiences, knowledge of best practices, and level of preparedness by number of semesters completed, degree type, program approval/accreditation, and geographic region. All responses to the open-ended survey item, which asked participants to identify the most helpful types of training they had received in working with interpreters, were reviewed and assigned qualitative codes using a deductive thematic analytic approach (Braun & Clark, 2006). Two coders, the first and second authors, independently read through all responses and applied a series of predetermined codes to reflect the types of training that participants identified (i.e., coursework, practicum experiences, internship, or professional development). After discussing and coming to a consensus on codes in the first step, the lead author expanded the predetermined codes by identifying emergent codes, or common phrases that emerged in the data (Stuckey, 2015). Emergent codes were more representative, capturing specific training activities (e.g., course lecture, practicum supervision), the context in which these training activities occurred (e.g., assessment, parent meetings), and why a particular training activity was helpful (e.g., learning about best practices). A coding manual was created to provide a rationale for each of the emergent codes and to help remember their meanings. The second author then independently coded all responses using the emergent coding scheme developed by the lead author. Finally, independent coding was compared and discussed to ensure consensus between coders. Minor disagreements were resolved through further discussion and subsequent agreement (Hertlein, 2014).

Results

Types of Graduate Training Experiences

The first research question addressed the types of training experiences that graduate students and interns were receiving or had received regarding working with interpreters. Participants were asked to report on the extent to which working with interpreters had been covered in their graduate coursework, pre-internship practicum experiences, and professional development activities. Additionally, one open-ended question was included to gain insight into the types of training experiences related to working with interpreters that graduate students and interns found most helpful: "Of the different types of training you have received to work with interpreters (i.e., coursework, practicum experiences, internship, and professional development), which have been the most helpful to you, and why?" A total of 259 participants provided a response to this question. Nine responses could not be coded because they did not directly answer the question, and therefore were excluded from qualitative analysis. Of the remaining 250 usable responses, 96 participants indicated that they had not received any graduate training or experience working with interpreters or that none of their training had been helpful; however, of these participants, 10.4% ($n = 10$) provided responses illustrating what they thought *would be* helpful training, and 7.3% ($n = 7$) provided responses about what has been helpful outside of their graduate training. The remaining 250 participants who provided usable responses identified training activities falling into one of three broad categories as most helpful: (1) coursework, (2) practicum experiences and internship, and (3) professional development activities. Quantitative and qualitative responses are described together in more detail for each of these activities in the following sections.

Coursework

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which working with interpreters had been covered in their school psychology graduate program coursework on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 4 (*A great deal*). On average, participants ($n = 364$) reported that working with interpreters had been covered *Very Little* in their graduate coursework ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.81$); however, a small percentage (9.2%;

6.3% cumulative) of the 250 participants who responded to the open-ended question indicated that coursework had been their most helpful type of training. These participants ($n = 23$) most frequently reported that coursework was helpful due to learning about best practices in working with interpreters. For example, one participant specifically noted, "In my cognitive assessment course, we discussed the importance of testing in the primary language or having an interpreter to assist." These participants also reported learning about the benefits of working with interpreters in their coursework, including using interpreters to build trust and rapport with clients, as well as the limitation that interpreters may not deliver the intended message with integrity. Additionally, 60.9% of the 23 participants who identified coursework as the most helpful type of training mentioned class discussion and guest speakers specifically. For example, one participant noted, "Conducting case consultations with my fellow cohort members during class time to discuss varieties of interpreter experiences was helpful." Another participant noted, "I loved hearing from a practicing bilingual school psychologist. She shared her experience of working with interpreters and being one herself, and she shared some tools to use for future evaluations as well!"

Practicum and Internship Experiences

Respondents were asked to report the number of psychoeducational evaluations they had participated in or independently completed as part of their pre-internship practicum experiences, and how many of these assessments gave them the opportunity to work with an interpreter. A total of 358 participants responded to these survey items. The majority of these participants (60.3%) reported that they had participated in or independently completed five or more psychoeducational evaluations; however, only 27.9% indicated that they had the opportunity to work with an interpreter in any evaluation. An additional 9.6% indicated that an interpreter was needed for at least one evaluation, but that they were unable to work with one. Of those that had worked with an interpreter ($n = 100$), the majority (59%; 16.5% cumulative) reported working with an interpreter in only one to two of their pre-internship psychoeducational evaluations. Additionally, 61% (17% cumulative) of the participants that had worked with an interpreter selected reasons why an interpreter was needed in these evaluations. The most frequently reported reason was because a student, parent, or guardian had limited English proficiency (44.3%; 7.5% cumulative). Other reasons included improving the quality of assessments (21.3%; 3.6% cumulative), bridging a cultural gap (19.7%; 3.4% cumulative), and increasing trust and rapport (14.8%; 2.5% cumulative).

Of those who responded to the open-ended question ($n = 250$), 7.6% (5.2% cumulative) noted that their pre-internship practicum experiences were the most helpful type of training they had received in learning to work with interpreters. Additionally, 7.2% (4.9% cumulative) identified their internship experiences as most helpful, 3.6% (2.4% cumulative) identified a combination of both practicum and internship experiences, and 3.2% (2.2% cumulative) described activities that typically occur within the context of either practicum or internship (e.g., mentioning supervision without specifying if the supervision occurred as part of their practicum or internship experiences). Of those participants ($n = 54$) who identified pre-internship practicum experiences and/or internship experiences as most helpful, 38.9% (5.8% cumulative) specifically mentioned first-hand experience in working with an interpreter as being the most helpful. This included learning how to access an interpreter, using an interpreter for assessment purposes, and using an interpreter in parent meetings (e.g., IEP meetings). Participants also reported observing assessments and parent meetings with interpreters. Finally, 22.2% (3.3% cumulative) mentioned supervision, that is, asking their supervisor questions or talking to them about their experiences working with interpreters.

In terms of the reasons why these experiences were helpful, participants most frequently listed learning about best practices in working with interpreters. One participant specifically mentioned their practicum supervisor explaining "how to interact with interpreters in the room such as ensuring you are still looking at and talking to the parent, not the interpreter." Other participants reported learning about the benefits and limitations to working with interpreters such as the importance of working with interpreters, how to use them in family outreach, and how to use them to build trust and rapport with clients. For example, one participant described their internship experience in the following way: "Internship allowed me to understand how interpreters can assist with different meetings to bridge the gap and improve the understanding of the parent with special education and questions they may have with their child." Another participant identified "practicum experiences and supervision on how to navigate interpreter relationships to maintain relationships with interviewees" as most beneficial.

Finally, responses to the open-ended question that included what had been helpful outside of graduate training or what *would be* helpful were flagged for additional analysis ($n = 17$). These participants overwhelmingly (82.4%; 3.8% cumulative) noted that first-hand experience working with interpreters was or would be most beneficial. For example, one participant wrote,

> *I have not received any training in using interpreters in my graduate program, but I work with interpreters daily as a special education teacher. The most helpful information I've received has come directly from the*

interpreters. It's helpful to do a debrief after meetings to discuss what went well, and how we can better support the family and the student in the future.

Another stated, "Actually working with an interpreter would have been most beneficial. Reading about it isn't the same as experiencing it."

Professional Development Activities

Participants were also asked to indicate the types of professional development activities they had completed related to working with interpreters during their graduate studies. A total of 344 participants responded to this survey item. The majority of all respondents (58.4%) reported they had not participated in any professional development activities. The second most frequent response (23.3%) was reviewing books, journals, or manuals, followed by attending workshops or conferences (11.8%) and completing online modules (12.5%), presenting a workshop or training (2.6%), and conducting empirical research or contributing to a professional publication (2.3%). Participants were given the option to write in other professional development activities they have participated in regarding working with interpreters. These responses ($n=5$) included information sharing and consulting with seasoned school psychologists and other educators, including online consultation through platforms such as Facebook.

Of those who responded to the open-ended question, 9.2% (6.3% cumulative) identified professional development activities as being the most helpful in learning about working with interpreters. The most common types of activities identified were reading (i.e., reviewing literature, books, journals, articles, and/or manuals), online modules, and attending conferences. For example, one participant stated,

I think the online modules I completed as part of a course that addressed assessment concerns were the most helpful. At the end, I was able to view a meeting that included an interpreter. It was nice to see it play out, and I think it will help me know what to expect when I do have to work with an interpreter.

Participants also mentioned workshops 17.4% (12.1% cumulative) of the time. Among the responses that identified professional development activities, learning about best practices in working with interpreters was the only reason provided as to why the activities were helpful. The following quote from one participant illustrates this: "Online modules explained that when working with interpreters what the polite way to speak with individuals was."

Level of Knowledge

The second research question concerned the level of knowledge that graduate students and interns had of best practices when working with interpreters. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with eight statements related to best practices. These items were created based on recommendations from researchers in clinical and school psychology, as well as professional organizations such as the AERA, APA, and the National Council on Measurement in Education. A total of 343 participants responded to these survey questions. Results are presented in Table 2. For three of the eight items, a majority of respondents demonstrated knowledge of best practices: 73.9% indicated they *Strongly Disagree* that school psychologists do not have to report the use of an interpreter in a psychological report; 67.6% indicated they *Strongly Agree* that during a meeting or testing, the practitioner should talk directly to the student or parent, not the interpreter; and 58.9% indicated they *Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 Knowledge of encouraged and discouraged interpreter practices

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
Relatives or family friends of a client can interpret for psychoeducational testing	58.9%	29.4%	4.4%	0.6%	6.7%
Relatives or family friends of a client can interpret for school-based meetings	28.6%	30.6%	28%	3.8%	9%
School psychologists should only use an interpreter if they have been trained to	4.7%	25.9%	33.2%	19.8%	16.3%
During a meeting or testing, the practitioner should talk directly to the student or parent, not the interpreter	0.9%	4.1%	20.4%	67.6%	7%
Interpreters can translate permission forms for testing from English to another language	5%	8.2%	49.6%	14.7%	22.6%
Interpreters can translate test items on a standardized measure from English to another language	24%	29%	23.8%	4.7%	18.5%
School psychologists do not have to report the use of an interpreter in a psychological report	73.9%	20.2%	1.2%	0.6%	4.1%
Interpreters should take breaks when providing services in a meeting or testing	3.2%	13.5%	40.2%	11.7%	31.4%

$n=364$

that relatives or family friends of a client can interpret for psychoeducational testing. For the remaining five statements, there was greater variability in responses. For example, close to half (47.0%) responded *Agree*, *Strongly Agree*, or *Not Sure* when asked if interpreters should translate test items on standardized measures from English to another language. Similarly, almost a third of participants (30.6%) responded *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* when asked if school psychologists should only use an interpreter if they have been trained to do so, and another 16.3% responded *Not Sure*. Finally, 31.8% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that relatives/family friends of a client can interpret for school-based meetings. Overall, these results indicate a lack of knowledge among students and interns about some basic best practices in working with interpreters.

Perceptions of Preparedness

The third research question was concerned with graduate student and interns' perceptions of their preparedness to work with interpreters. Across all items assessing preparedness, more than half of the 344 respondents endorsed that they felt *Not at all Prepared* (see Table 3). Participants indicated that they felt least prepared to participate in pre-interpretation practice and review of materials with the interpreter (59.9%), followed by evaluating the interpreter's familiarity with the student's cultural and/or linguistic background (59.6%). Areas in which participants suggested feeling most prepared were in evaluating the interpreter's understanding of ethical guidelines surrounding assessment and understanding of legal requirements of unbiased assessment; however, even in these areas, only 8.1% of participants indicated that they felt very or extremely prepared. Finally, one item asked participants to rate how confident they felt in using an interpreter in psychoeducational evaluations of emergent bilingual students. On average, participants denoted that they were only *Slightly Confident* ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.91$).

Group Differences

Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to determine if variability in training experiences and level of preparedness existed by degree type, number of semesters completed, program approval/accreditation, or geographic region. Degree and number of semesters completed were combined into one variable by comparing three groups: master's/specialist students, doctoral students who had completed 1–4 semesters, and doctoral students who had completed 5 or more semesters. Groups were organized in this way because master's/specialist students typically finish four semesters of coursework before completing an internship and are therefore most like doctoral students enrolled in their first four semesters. NASP approval and APA accreditation were collapsed into one variable to create four groups: programs with NASP approval only, APA accreditation only, both NASP approval and APA accreditation, or neither. Finally, for geographic region, participants selected in which US state or territory their program was located, and responses were collapsed to create a new variable based on the US region: northeastern, southeastern, midwestern, southwestern, and western regions.

Results of a one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant main effect for degree and number of semesters completed on the extent to which working with interpreters was covered in graduate coursework, $F\ (2, 359) = 4.44$, $p = 0.012$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Post hoc analyses using a Bonferroni correction indicated a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.012$) in the extent to which master's/specialist students ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.81$) and doctoral students who had completed 1–4 semesters ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.88$) reported that working with interpreters was covered in their coursework.

Table 3 Perceptions of preparedness

Question	Not at all prepared	Slightly prepared	Moderately prepared	Very prepared	Extremely prepared
Find an interpreter	52.1%	29.2%	15.2%	2.5%	0.9%
Evaluate the interpreter's familiarity with the student's cultural and/or linguistic background	59.6%	22.3%	13.5%	3.4%	1.1%
Evaluate the interpreter's familiarity with education and special education	55.2%	22.4%	15.7%	5.8%	0.9%
Evaluate the interpreter's understanding of ethical guidelines surrounding assessment	53.8%	20.9%	17.2%	5.8%	2.3%
Evaluate the interpreter's understanding of the legal requirements of unbiased assessment	59%	17.4%	15.4%	6.1%	2%
Participate in pre-interpretation practice and review of materials with the interpreter	59.9%	17.7%	15.1%	6.1%	1.2%

$n = 364$

Similarly, a second ANOVA model revealed a statistically significant main effect for degree and number of semesters completed on the number of evaluations involving interpreters that students had completed as part of their pre-internship training, $F(2, 353) = 9.12$, $p = 0.003$, $\eta^2 = 0.03$. Post hoc analyses using a Bonferroni correction indicated that doctoral students who had completed 5 or more semesters reported participating in or independently working on significantly more evaluations with interpreters ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.98$) than master's/specialist students ($M = 1.51$, $SD = 1.19$, $p = 0.013$) and doctoral students who had completed 1–4 semesters ($M = 1.25$, $SD = 0.52$, $p = 0.003$). No significant group differences emerged among the accreditation groups or by geographic region.

Discussion

The number of culturally and linguistically diverse students entering the US education system is rapidly growing, underscoring the need for school psychologists to be trained in culturally responsive practices and the nondiscriminatory assessment framework. Given a significant shortage of bilingual school psychologists, the number of languages spoken in schools that bilingual school psychologists may be unfamiliar with, and gaps in the training of bilingual school psychologists, training in the appropriate use of interpreters for the assessment of emergent bilinguals is essential to preventing invalid assessment results and erroneous conclusions that can ultimately lead to disproportionalities in special education (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016). Previous research has demonstrated that practicing school psychologists often utilize interpreters in unethical ways, suggesting a lack of effective graduate preparation and training in this area; however, few studies have directly examined the extent to which school psychology graduate programs are preparing students to work with interpreters. The present study fills this gap by examining school psychology graduate student and interns' training experiences, knowledge, and level of preparedness regarding the use of interpreters. Overall, the findings suggest a lack of adequate graduate training, knowledge of best practices, and preparedness to work with interpreters among school psychology graduate students and interns.

Training Experiences

Participant reports of their graduate training experiences revealed that working with interpreters is being covered minimally, if at all, in school psychology graduate programs, with more than half of participants reporting that they had not received any graduate training to work with interpreters or that their training had been limited. These findings are consistent with past research (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Ochoa et al., 2004) of retrospective accounts of graduate training by practicing school psychologists. On average, participants in the present study reported that working with interpreters had been covered *Very Little* in their graduate coursework, although this finding varied by degree type. Compared to doctoral students who had completed 1–4 semesters, students in master's/specialist programs reported that working with interpreters had been covered to a greater extent in their coursework; however, this difference was between *Not at All* and *Very Little*. Conversely, this finding did not vary by accreditation status or geographic region. Collectively, these findings suggest that training related to working with interpreters is lacking within the core coursework for all types of school psychology graduate programs. Nonetheless, a small number of participants ($n = 23$) identified coursework as the most helpful type of training they had received surrounding working with interpreters. It is possible that these participants had not received any other types of training, and therefore could not identify anything else as being helpful; however, given that this is such a small proportion of those who answered the open-ended question (8.9%), it is difficult to draw conclusions based on this finding.

Similar to the findings for coursework, the majority of graduate students and interns reported that they had minimal or no opportunities to work with interpreters in their pre-internship practicum experiences. Although most had completed five or more psychoeducational evaluations prior to internship, only 27.9% had been given the opportunity to work with an interpreter in any of these evaluations. This finding varied by number of semesters completed, such that advanced doctoral students had participated in or independently completed significantly more pre-internship psychoeducational evaluations with interpreters than master's/specialist students or doctoral students who had completed 1–4 semesters. This finding is not entirely surprising, as students early in their graduate career may have limited practicum experience in assessment, and doctoral programs typically have more stringent practicum requirements than master's/specialist programs. Advanced doctoral students typically have more time within their program to complete a greater number of psychoeducational evaluations as part of these requirements. Nonetheless, even advanced doctoral students reported limited opportunities to work with interpreters, with more than half reporting that they had not participated in *any* evaluations with interpreters. Additionally, for a small percentage of students (9.6%), the services of an interpreter were needed but unavailable. Interestingly, the extent to which working with interpreters had been covered in participants' practicum experiences did not differ based on program accreditation or geographic region. Collectively, these results point to a significant lack of hands-on training

experiences across school psychology graduate programs in the USA.

A troubling finding was that participants did not appear to be supplementing a lack of coursework and practicum experience with additional professional development activities, as a large number of participants reported that they had not taken part in any professional development activities related to working with interpreters at the time of the survey. Of those that had, the most frequent type of professional development that students participated in was reviewing books, journals, or manuals, whereas few participants reported that they had presented a workshop/training, conducted empirical research, or contributed to a professional publication regarding working with interpreters. As practitioners, school psychologists are expected to engage in continuing education and take advantage of professional development opportunities to fill gaps in their training and knowledge. Ideally, graduate programs should be emphasizing the value of ongoing professional development and encouraging students to take advantage of opportunities during their graduate training. Unfortunately, graduate students and interns in the present study did not appear to be engaging in professional development activities related to working with interpreters.

Responses to the open-ended question provided additional insight into the types of training experiences that graduate students and interns found most beneficial. Over half of the participants indicated in their responses that they had not received any training or that their training to work with interpreters had been limited to one context or activity, most commonly coursework. Across all training activities, participants reported that first-hand experience was or would be most beneficial. Those who described first-hand experience in the context of their practicum and internship experiences reported learning about important practices and skills that will guide their future practice, such as how to access an interpreter and how to work with them to facilitate communication during parent meetings. Additionally, responses indicated that participants want first-hand experience to be part of their graduate training because they are not receiving opportunities for applied practice with interpreters.

Knowledge and Preparedness

Given their relative lack of training experiences, it is perhaps unsurprising that participants in the present study demonstrated an overall lack of knowledge regarding best practices in working with interpreters. There were some areas in which participants demonstrated more knowledge than others. For example, the majority of participants generally agreed that relatives or family friends should not interpret for psychoeducational testing, that practitioners should talk directly to the student or parent, and that school psychologists should report their use of interpreters. However, almost half agreed with or were unsure of the statement that interpreters should translate test items on standardized measures from English to another language. As noted by Vega et al. (2016), this practice violates standardized administration procedures and invalidates test scores, as no test has been standardized for translated use by interpreters. Additionally, almost half of the participants strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were unsure when asked if school psychologists should use an interpreter without being trained to do so. Without this training, school psychologists may use interpreters inappropriately and compromise the academic services and well-being of emergent bilinguals (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). A significant number of participants also agreed or strongly agreed that relatives/family friends can interpret for school-based meetings. Peers and relatives may not have the language skills to deliver an accurate interpretation, they may compromise confidentiality, and a personal connection may interfere with objectivity (Lopez, 2008; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010).

The majority of graduate students and interns also reported a lack of preparedness to complete any of the activities related to finding, selecting, and practicing with interpreters. In particular, participants reported feeling unprepared to evaluate an interpreter's qualifications and competencies, such as knowledge of relevant legal and ethical principles, familiarity with education and special education, and language proficiency. Ideally, interpreters will be selected and vetted for these qualifications by a school district's Office of Interpretation and Translation Services; however, not every school district has the resources to provide these services. Similarly, school psychologists may be tasked with finding an interpreter for languages not commonly spoken in their area. As such, it is critical for school psychologists to understand how to select an interpreter with appropriate qualifications, when needed (AERA, 2014).

Recommendations for Training Programs

Without adequate training, knowledge, and preparation to work with interpreters, school psychology graduate students are prone to going out into the field and engaging in unethical and discriminatory practices such as failing to consider how language acquisition influences learning and test performance for emergent bilinguals, using interpreters to translate standardized measures, using untrained interpreters, and failing to report the use of an interpreter (Chamberlain, 2005; Elizalde-Utnik & Romero, 2017; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2005; Vega et al., 2016). Poor assessment practices can ultimately compromise test scores, evaluation results, and decisions about a student's academic services, which may perpetuate the disproportionate representation of emergent bilinguals in special education (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016; Elizalde-Utnike & Romero,

2017). If future school psychologists are to be advocates for social justice and ensure equitable and just treatment in schools, then they must be well trained in culturally responsive practices, including working with interpreters.

Based on the results of this study, it appears that school psychology graduate programs are falling very short in preparing their students to work with interpreters. The field of school psychology could use more guidelines on training to work with interpreters that will prepare future school psychologists to engage in best practices, but we are not utilizing the existing guidance we have. Other fields and professions have models on how to train their practitioners to work with interpreters that school psychology could draw from. For example, many state departments of education require interpreters for the deaf or hard of hearing to be certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and/or to demonstrate competency on an assessment, such as the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. In addition, educational interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing are responsible for being knowledgeable about the client's culture, understanding how the school system operates, participating in the IEP process, collaborating with educators, explaining their role as an interpreter, monitoring and adjusting their accuracy while interpreting, and seeking feedback about their interpretation; interpreters should also be supervised, participate in professional development, and be periodically evaluated by an interpreter educator or credentialed interpreter (Nebraska Department of Education, 2002). Additionally, there are thorough guidelines for practitioners working within the medical field on selecting and evaluating interpreters, as well as working with interpreters on-site, by telephone, and by video conference. For example, practitioners should prioritize and limit their communication to three key points or fewer and have patients repeat back instructions to ensure understanding (Juckett & Unger, 2014). A similar set of guidelines within school psychology would help guide graduate programs on what their students need to know about working with interpreters and therefore how to provide the best training in this area.

Any training in working with interpreters would ideally take place within a larger framework of multicultural school psychology training. Newell and colleagues (2010) identify several key strategies that school psychology graduate programs can use to improve multicultural training, which include (a) providing independent courses that focus on multicultural school psychology, as well as integrating multicultural issues throughout the core curriculum; (b) helping students to apply their knowledge of education and psychology to their work with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; (c) ensuring that students have ample opportunities to work with students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and (d) formal evaluations through coursework, annual reviews, and student self-reports.

Using these recommendations as a framework, school psychology graduate programs can make sure that working with interpreters is included in courses related specifically to cultural and linguistic diversity (e.g., multicultural issues, cross-cultural counseling), as well as core assessment coursework (e.g., IQ, academic, and social-emotional assessment), core intervention coursework (e.g., applied behavior analysis, cognitive behavioral therapy), and core consultation coursework. Based on the present findings, graduate students need more targeted training in knowledge and skill preparation. Courses should cover why interpreters are needed, challenges inherent to the interpretation process, how to find an interpreter, interpreter qualifications, how to select a competent interpreter, best practices working with interpreters in the special education process, and how to use interpreters in other contexts such as parent advocacy and community engagement. These topics can be covered through reading articles and delivered through lectures. However, school psychology faculty can also introduce pedagogy that were identified as most helpful by participants in this study. For example, guest speakers such as bilingual school psychologists and interpreters can explain what it is like to interpret in different contexts and share resources with students. Additionally, students can discuss case studies (e.g., what they would do in a certain situation), as well as discuss the different experiences they have had with interpreters.

Graduate students should also be given opportunities to apply what they learn in their coursework during their pre-internship practicum experiences. Activities can include finding/scheduling an interpreter and following best practices, such as advocating for interpreters to be given documents that need translating prior to meetings and for extra time to be set aside for meetings involving interpreters. Further, students should be provided with opportunities for mentoring by practitioners who are experienced in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and have demonstrated competency in culturally responsive assessment, intervention, and consultation. Lastly, the majority of graduate students and interns are not participating in professional development regarding working with interpreters. This is of particular concern in conjunction with their lack of training, knowledge, and preparedness. Previous research has shown professional development to be the leading way to learn and follow best practices in working with interpreters (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010); thus, graduate students and interns should be given greater opportunities to engage in professional development activities by receiving information from faculty about online modules, conference sessions, and workshops related to this topic.

It is important to note that the nondiscriminatory assessment framework is multidimensional and working with interpreters represents just one narrow but important aspect of that. Utilizing bilingual school psychologists or interpreters should not preclude graduate students, interns, or practitioners from studying professional and research-based knowledge on appropriate assessment practices with emergent bilinguals (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006). In addition, it is critical for school psychology students and interns to build cultural humility, which encompasses individual and institutional accountability, as well as ongoing learning and critical reflection (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015).

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study serves as a critical first step in highlighting the lack of training that school psychology graduate students receive regarding working with interpreters; however, the findings should nonetheless be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, participants in the present study were asked to report their knowledge about the most basic of best practices when working with interpreters; thus, the survey was somewhat limited in scope. Many practices that school psychology graduate students should likewise be trained in were left out (e.g., ethical practices, as well as briefing and debriefing interpreters) and should be examined in future research. Second, because it was unknown how many program directors forwarded the survey link to their graduate students, a response rate could not be calculated. As in all survey research, it is possible that those who responded are dissimilar to those who did not in potentially confounding ways. Third, characteristics of the sample may have further limited the generalizability of the findings. More specifically, although there was good representation from respondents across the USA, responses were not collected from every state, and the low number of respondents in some states made it difficult to compare results across the various states that were represented. Certain states and geographic regions have higher percentages of emergent bilingual students and, therefore, graduate students and interns in these states may have more opportunities to work with interpreters. Additionally, this study did not differentiate between part-time and full-time students who may undergo different course trajectories, and participant demographic data were skewed toward early-career graduate students. To address these limitations and ensure the validity of the findings, future research should ensure representation among programs in states not represented in the present study, collect enough data to allow for comparisons across US states, inquire about number of graduate credit hours completed instead of number of semesters, and target more advanced graduate students. Additionally, differential findings may surface in future research if monolingual versus multilingual graduate students are compared, bilingual training programs are compared to other programs, and/or programs that have multilingual faculty are compared to programs with primarily monolingual faculty. Fourth, data collection for this study took place during the first year of the COVID-19 global pandemic when many clinics and schools were providing only virtual services. As a result, students' ability to engage in practicum experiences, including those that involved working with interpreters, may have been limited during this time. Nonetheless, the findings are consistent with prior research that included retrospective accounts of graduate training from practicing school psychologists prior to the pandemic. Fifth, given that consensus coding was used to code all qualitative responses, interrater reliability could not be calculated; however, consensus coding is a widely accepted method for analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, this study focused primarily on the quantity, rather than quality, of graduate training experiences. Future research can provide a more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the quality of training experiences within coursework, professional development, and practical experiences related to working with interpreters. More research is warranted with programs themselves to corroborate student experiences.

Conclusion

Working with interpreters is an important part of a nondiscriminatory assessment framework for emergent bilinguals. Improper use of interpreters can invalidate assessment results and subsequently perpetuate inequities as a result of discriminatory assessment practices; as such, providing training in the appropriate use of interpreters is a social justice issue within school psychology. The results of this study are a first step in demonstrating that this training is largely lacking among school psychology graduate programs in the USA. The field of school psychology must do better at training future school psychologists in this area through coursework, first-hand experience, and professional development opportunities, to ensure that students enter practice prepared to provide equitable and socially just services.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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