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Improving the Effectiveness of School Counselling: Consensus, Collaboration, and Clinical Supervision
Amélioration de l'efficacité du counseling scolaire : consensus, collaboration, et supervision clinique

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ABSTRACT

In this literature review, factors influencing the effectiveness of the services and programs provided by school counsellors are examined. Specific influences reviewed were professional identity, collaborative working practices, and clinical supervision. Analysis revealed that the principles of egalitarianism, relationship, and connectedness permeate everything that school counsellors do, and that collaborative working practices, clinical supervision, and the concept of professional identity are inextricably linked. Implications for practice are discussed and recommendations for future research are provided. Researchers are challenged to address the dearth of literature on Canadian school counselling practices.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette revue de la littérature, on examine les facteurs qui influencent l'efficacité des services et des programmes offerts par les conseillers scolaires. Les facteurs d'influence spécifiquement examinés sont l'identité professionnelle, les pratiques de travail collaboratif, et la supervision clinique. L'analyse a révélé que les principes d'égalitarisme, de relation, et d'interdépendance sont omniprésents dans tout ce que font les conseillers scolaires, et que les pratiques de travail collaboratif, la supervision clinique, et la notion d'identité professionnelle sont intimement liées. On discute des implications pour la pratique et l'on formule des recommandations pour les recherches à venir. On met les chercheurs au défi de s'attaquer à la pénurie de littérature sur les pratiques du counseling dans les écoles canadiennes.

Canadian schools are dynamic, energetic, and diverse. At the heart of Canadian schools are school counsellors, who act in many roles: educational leaders, advocates, and change agents (British Columbia School Counsellors Association, n.d.; Manitoba School Counsellors' Association, 2002; New Brunswick Department of Education, 2002; Northwest Territories Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2010; Ontario School Counsellors' Association, n.d.; Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2005).[1] Now, as their profession develops, school counsellors are taking on a broader range of duties and facing new challenges (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). Therefore, it is becoming increasingly necessary to reexamine how school counsellors will continue to support the students in their care.

In this article, I analyze and synthesize the literature on school counselling to determine what factors contribute to, or detract from, the effectiveness of the services and programs that school counsellors offer. I then evaluate this information to determine how the literature can inform—and ultimately improve— the practice of school counsellors. I review variations in conceptualizations of the school counsellor's role across Canada, as well as how these views have changed over time. School settings are unique in that many people are involved in the lives of students. Therefore, I also examine the extent to which school counsellors collaborate with other stakeholders in order to support students, as well as any barriers to collaboration. Finally, I discuss the nature of supervision that school counsellors receive, as well as how this helps to support them in their various roles.

The existing literature has not examined the role of Canadian school counsellors and the effectiveness of the services and programs they offer. In this article, I aim to highlight some of these knowledge gaps and make recommendations for future research studies. I propose that consensus on the role of the school counsellor, collaborative working practices, and clinical supervision are key factors influencing the effectiveness of school counselling.

THE STORY SO FAR

My main focus in this article is to examine how school counsellors help to make a difference to the lives of their students. For the purposes of this article, I have defined an effective school counselling program (SCP) as one that helps students to make positive changes in one or more domains of their lives. The definition is in line with this guideline in the Prince Edward Island (PEI) Department of Education's (2005) handbook for counsellors: "the primary goal of school counselling services is to enhance and promote student learning" (p. 5), and to address the personal, social, emotional, and career needs of students. The term has been similarly defined by Alberta Education (2012), the BC Ministry of Education (2013), the Manitoba SCA (2002), and the NS Department of Education (2010).

School counsellors face a double challenge: they must show how the services they provide positively influence student outcomes, and they must also demonstrate their worth in order to ensure that their services continue to receive funding (Oberman, Studer, & Womack, 2006). Oberman et al. (2006) offered a model to help school counsellors implement action research projects that would determine the effectiveness of the services they offer and improve accountability. Cain's (2013) research affirmed that such a model might be useful to Canadian school counsellors, who are also aware of the links between credibility and educational funding. The 41 school counsellors who participated in Cain's survey said that to develop effective SCPs, they needed to establish a clear professional identity and demonstrate how they contribute to the well-being of students in their care. Cain recommended that Canadian school counsellors establish a national network to advocate for their profession.

Such an organization could help focus research on SCPs in Canada, which until now has been lacking. In the absence of such research, I have used available international literature to gain insight into factors that contribute to effective SCPs. In a case study aimed at turning around a failing American high school, Salina et al. (2013) recognized that, because of their heavy workload, school counsellors were often unable to meet the students' needs. The researchers, in conjunction with the school-based team, decided to use an evidence-based approach to identify at-risk students. The team gathered data in order to track students who were at risk of not graduating. The school counsellors then made this information available to students, staff, and parents. By working collaboratively, rather than in isolation, the school counsellors were able to engage parents and staff, increasing support to these students and helping them to fulfill their graduation requirements (Salina et al., 2013).

Salina et al. (2013) argued that the more staff knew about their students, the more likely they would be to feel connected to them. In turn, this would increase the likelihood that they would build relationships and offer support (Salina et al., 2013). Their study showed how data-driven programs and collaborative working relationships could have a positive effect on student outcomes. The findings of this study were supported by Gruman, Marston, and Koon (2013) and Poynton and Carey (2006); these authors also advocated the practice of gathering data and using it to inform and improve SCPs. I therefore propose that, when developing or evaluating SCPs, educational staff should consider how to infuse collaborative working practices and data gathering into their approach.

According to Gruman et al. (2013), effective school counsellors take on the roles of leaders and advocates. This stance is endorsed by the American School Counselor Association (2010), and has also been adopted in many of the provincial guidelines for Canadian school counsellors (BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba SCA, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, n.d.; PEI Department of Education, 2005), making Gruman et al.'s study relevant to Canadian school counsellors. In their case study on a rural American high school, Gruman et al. found that the two school counsellors who participated in the study faced many barriers in providing students with the support they needed. Consistent with other literature (Brown, Dahlbeck, & Sparkman-Barnes, 2006; Shallcross, 2013), Gruman et al. asserted that school counsellors were often stretched too thin to provide mental health support to students on top of fulfilling their other duties. Cain (2013) also found that Canadian counsellors experienced difficulties meeting the needs of their students due to a lack of resources. Gruman et al. discovered that when school counsellors led the way in evaluating their programs and developing and implementing a data-driven decision-making model, their students experienced positive changes, including increased graduation rates. The data gathered provided school counsellors with the impetus to advocate on behalf of their students and obtain permission from management to redistribute their resources. As a result, counsellors spent less time on administrative tasks, and more time providing support to students (Gruman

et al., 2013). These studies demonstrate that when school counsellors challenge the status quo, and take on the roles of leaders and advocates, improvements can be made to how services are provided.

A survey of 415 secondary school students in the United Kingdom found that 84% of students rated their school counselling services positively. The respondents specifically cited the importance of having someone to talk to about problems such as bullying, home issues, and school issues. Following the survey component of the study, researchers conducted nine focus groups, with a range of three to seven students in each group. Responses from the focus groups indicated that many students valued the guarantee of confidentiality. However, some were more cautious about confidentiality, believing that others could find out what they had said in discussions with a school counsellor (Fox & Butler, 2007). Another common theme was that students shared a desire to get to know their school counsellor well, but noted concerns about the limited time the counsellor was available, as well as the lack of choice of whom they go to see (Fox & Butler, 2007).

These themes illustrate the importance of trusting relationships in effective SCPs. Fox and Butler's (2007) research indicated that students talk to school counsellors about a wide range of personal and sensitive issues that are difficult to discuss with other people. A precursor to students utilizing school counselling services is that they need to perceive the school counsellor as approachable and readily accessible (Fox & Butler, 2007). This finding suggests that school counsellors must maintain a visible presence in the school so that students can begin to build connections and foster relational trust. In addition, school counsellors must organize their workload so that that they are able to get to know the students they serve. I elaborate on these concepts in the next section on the importance of using a systemic approach to change.

Using a Systemic Approach to Change

A systemic approach toward improving SCPs is likely to be better than trying to implement change on a case-by-case, individual basis (Fitch & Marshall, 2004). A survey of 62 school counsellors in Kentucky found that participants in high-achieving schools allocated more time to program management, evaluation, and research, compared to participants in low-achieving schools. By gathering information and identifying themes across the school population, these school counsellors were able to place resources where they were needed most and implement systemic change that reached a large number of students (Fitch & Marshall, 2004). This American research is relevant to Canadian school counsellors because its focus on using data to drive change efforts would be easily replicable in Canadian schools. It is also important because it points to ways that school counsellors could make most efficient use of their time and resources; as mentioned, many Canadian school counsellors feel burdened by a workload that negatively impacts their ability to meet their students' needs (Cain, 2013). Salina et al. (2013) also concluded that a collaborative, systemic approach to school counselling improved outcomes for

students and increased staff morale, and noted the importance of relationship to educational practices generally.

In the many provinces and territories across Canada, school counsellors possess a high level of training (BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba SCA, 2002; NS Department of Education, 2010; PEI Department of Education, 2005), which empowers them to offer a unique perspective on school protocols. It is important that school counsellors have the opportunity to use their knowledge and training to improve outcomes in their work with students. However, ambiguity about the role of the school counsellor can act as a barrier, so consensus on the role of the school counsellor is important (Salina et al., 2013).

Consensus on the Role of the School Counsellor

Historically, the role of the school counsellor has lacked clear definition and has evolved to include a broad range of duties (Culbreth et al., 2005). Although school counsellors across Canada may have different responsibilities, some common themes do emerge from the literature. A review of publicly accessible provincial guidelines for Canadian school counsellors showed that most school counsellors are no longer responsible for simply implementing the classroom guidance curriculum; they are also providing counselling services, addressing mental health issues, intervening during crises, and providing support to students with regard to course choices and career goals. In addition, these guidelines also highlight the fact that school counsellors should consult and coordinate with teachers, parents, health professionals, and community agencies (Alberta Education, 2012; BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba SCA, 2002; NB Department of Education, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, n.d.; PEI Department of Education, 2005). The fact that school counsellors now take on such a broad range of duties has led the PEI Department of Education (2005) to ask "just what is a school counsellor?" (p. 5). Potential answers to this question are explored below.

The wide range of role demands (Gruman et al., 2013) faced by school counsellors include both counselling and noncounselling duties (Perera-Diltz & Mason, 2008). Perera-Diltz and Mason (2008) speculated that, when school counsellors perform noncounselling duties that do not match the typical job description of a school counsellor, they might be acting on direction given from their supervisors. In many schools, principals influence the design and purpose of SCPs (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Therefore, it would be important to understand how principals' views of the role of the school counsellor correlate with school counsellors' views of their own roles. A thorough review of the literature did not find any research on Canadian principals' views of the roles and responsibilities of a school counsellor. Therefore, I used American research to gain insight into the degree of agreement between the two stakeholders' opinions.

A survey of 53 school counsellors and administrators found that these important stakeholders often had different opinions on the role of the school counsellor

(Brown et al., 2006). Brown et al. (2006) discovered that, although some administrators recognized the role that school counsellors played in supporting the mental health needs of students, 35% of administrators who responded did not consider that intervening with the mental health needs of students was a primary function of school counsellors. In contrast, only 18% of school counsellors held this view (Brown et al., 2006). Brown et al. speculated that principals might be concerned about whether school counsellors were competent to provide mental health support, and also that providing mental health interventions could take up a large amount of school counsellors' limited time.

Given that principals are often the direct line-managers of school counsellors, this difference of opinion might prevent some school counsellors from using their training to meet the mental health needs of students (Armstrong, MacDonald, & Stillo, 2010). This difference in opinion, coupled with an inability to perform the functions important for school counsellors, might lead to low job satisfaction (Armstrong et al., 2010). Lack of clarity in job responsibilities has been shown to lead to burnout in counsellors who work in the area of sexual abuse or substance abuse recovery, a factor that in turn inhibits counsellor competence (Wallace, Jayoung, & Sang Min, 2010). Further research might possibly reveal that these findings are generalizable to school counsellors.

Contrary to the above findings, a study of American school principals in the rural Midwest found that principals valued counsellors' abilities to offer individual counselling and to intervene during a crisis (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). School principals in the state of Florida also found that supporting the mental health needs of students was an appropriate activity for counsellors (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). However, despite recognizing the importance of offering counselling, the Florida study raised concerns about the lack of time counsellors might have to dedicate to offering this type of support (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). Clearly, a divergence of opinions exists between counsellors and principals, and between principals and counsellors in different geographical areas. More research is needed on factors influencing principals' perceptions of the role of the school counsellor.

For Armstrong et al. (2010), trusting relationships between counsellors and their principals were vital to the success of SCPs. Survey findings indicated that, although both elementary and secondary counsellors felt supported by their principals, there were statistically significant differences between the perceptions of secondary counsellors and their principals regarding the roles and functions of school counsellors (Armstrong et al., 2010). For example, while 62% of school counsellors thought they had similar views as their principals on how to handle a crisis, 89% of principals thought they had similar views to their counsellors. Second, whereas 91% of principals believed they understood the role of the counsellor, only 67% of counsellors thought principals understood their role (Armstrong et al., 2010). Armstrong et al. asserted that a lack of consensus on the role of the school counsellor could be a contributing factor to poor relationships between counsellors and principals. Consensus (or lack of it) on the role of school counsellors is clearly an influencing factor in the effectiveness of SCPs.

Research by Meyers (2005) suggested that poor relationships between counsellors and principals could increase the stress levels of school counsellors. Previous research has identified links between high stress levels and compromised clinical practice (Barnett, Baker, Elman, & Schoener, 2007; Myers et al., 2012). Therefore, it is vital for school counsellors and principals to be consistent, to allow each member of the team to stay healthy and make positive contributions to student success and the overall school environment.

Perhaps the time has come for school counsellors to focus on establishing an identity that recognizes them as both educational leaders and mental health professionals (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013). However, there might be barriers to establishing such a "conjoint professional identity" (DeKruyf et al., 2013, p. 272). One barrier might be the perceptions of those who design and develop SCPs (Brown et al., 2006). That is, if principals (or others in charge of SCPs) prefer school counsellors to focus on academic and career counselling rather than on the mental health needs of students, it is unlikely that counsellors in such schools would be able to successfully establish the latter as part of their identity (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). Another barrier might be variations in the training level of school counsellors across Canada. Cain (2013) noted that training levels vary by jurisdiction. For example, school counsellors in the NWT require a bachelor's degree with a speciality in guidance, whereas school counsellors in PEI require a master's degree in counselling or a related discipline (PEI Department of Education, 2005). More research needs to be done in Canada to determine the extent to which training levels vary between jurisdictions and between individual school counsellors, as well as the impact this difference has on the ability of school counsellors to establish a clear professional identity.

Many of the concerns cited in the above research regarding role demands and the credibility of school counsellors are also identified in Cain's (2013) study of the school counselling profession in Canada. Cain's recommendation that school counsellors should establish a national network in Canada also suggests that she found a desire among Canadian school counsellors to establish and stabilize a strong professional identity for themselves.

Collaborative Working Practices

A key focus in this article is to examine how collaborative working practices can influence the effectiveness of SCPs. In this section, I examine the research to determine current collaboration practices that counsellors use with other stakeholders, the barriers to collaborative practice, and the links between collaborative working practices and the effectiveness of SCPs.

Collaboration, a bringing together of people to address a situation, is important to all organizations (Miller & Katz, 2014). For example, Miller and Katz (2014) proposed that collaboration between individuals in an organization allows people to share their knowledge and wisdom so that new solutions, which otherwise would have gone unrecognized, can be generated. However, Miller and Katz also

noted that many barriers to collaboration exist, including the fact that people have learned to work in an isolated fashion, either within their department or even completely on their own. They speculated that working in isolation bred fear and mistrust, ultimately decreasing people's desire to collaborate with others. Cain's (2013) Canadian research supported these ideas. It showed that many Canadian school counsellors felt isolated in their work, which might act as a barrier to implementing collaborative working practices.

In a phenomenological study, Trice-Black, Riechel, and Shillingford (2013) found correlations between trust and the desire to collaborate. The more trust a school counsellor had in a colleague's ability to treat shared information with respect, the more likely the school counsellor was to work in partnership with that person (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Participants in this same study said that trusting relationships were reciprocal in nature—one counsellor described having increased opportunities to connect with students because staff trusted her enough to bring up their concerns (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Another counsellor said that, as he gained experience, his administrator showed faith in his ability to meet the needs of students and did not question his decisions about the limits to confidentiality (Trice-Black et al., 2013). These findings suggest that collaborative working practices can improve the quality of services that students receive. If so, it is important for educational leaders to create and maintain the conditions for good collaboration (Cisler & Bruce, 2013).

Armstrong et al. (2010) asserted that the role of the school counsellor and the role of the principal were interdependent and that a positive relationship between them based on respect was likely to lead to improved outcomes for students. Research carried out by Salina et al. (2013) supported this finding. Their transformative program, fittingly named All Hands on Deck (AHOD), stressed the importance of collaboration among principals, counsellors, teachers, parents, and students. Specific to the relationship between counsellors and principals, Salina et al.'s research emphasized the importance of shared power and recognition of the expertise that counsellors contribute to the school setting. In this study, when the principal neutralized the power imbalance between himself and the counsellors, and listened to what the counsellors had to contribute, he engaged them in the process of making systemic changes to educational practice in the school. In turn, this raised student achievement and improved graduation rates, demonstrating how collaborative practice can lead to improved outcomes for students (Salina et al., 2013).

Despite the importance of collaborative practice, barriers to it exist. Principals and counsellors work in a hierarchical system and sometimes lack knowledge on how to work together because of their distinct roles and skill sets (Williams & Wehrman, 2010). School counsellors and principals are trained independently of each other, with little opportunity to find out about each other's roles in the formal education setting. Williams and Wehrman (2010) hypothesized that this lack of knowledge on how to work together could contribute to difficulties in navigating challenging issues such as how to manage confidential information. It is important

to examine how information is shared between educational stakeholders, and counsellors must seek a balance between confidentiality and collaboration that works in the school setting, because collaborative working relationships are important to the overall success of SCPs (Armstrong et al., 2010; Salina et al., 2013).

Managing the limits to confidentiality is one of the main challenges facing all counsellors (Bodenhorn, 2006). The literature suggests that confidentiality is a key component in successful therapy (Glosoff & Pate, 2002; Jenkins, 2010) and that students must be able to trust their counsellors if they are going to share sensitive information with them (Fox & Butler, 2007). A number of challenges to confidentiality are posed in the school setting (see Isaacs & Stone, 1999). The number of stakeholders involved in the lives of students is one such challenge. Principals and counsellors may have different perceptions of confidentiality, causing friction that can negatively affect school counselling services (Williams & Wehrman, 2010). Confidentiality is especially pertinent for those working with minors (Jenkins, 2010). While recognizing the importance of confidentiality in the counselling setting, Jenkins (2010) offered words of caution to counsellors in working with minors: "Their very age and vulnerability as a nonadult mean that their entitlement to unfettered respect for their right to autonomy, self-determination, and independence is unlikely to be fully implemented, without at least some degree of qualification" (p. 264). School counsellors must therefore find a balance between a student's desire for privacy and the vulnerabilities associated with his or her developmental age and stage.

For this reason, organizations have recognized the need for counsellors to be aware of ethical issues when working with young people, and have issued specific guidance to support helping professionals (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association [CCPA], 2011; College of Alberta Psychologists [CAP], 2010). It is important for school counsellors to be aware of the major variations between both provinces and employers. For example, the College of Alberta Psychologists (2010) advised their members that minors cannot legally consent to services until they are more than 18 years of age. In addition, CAP advised that minors should be made aware that their parents have a right to access all information disclosed during sessions. However, exceptions to the rule existed, and, in Alberta, school counselling was one of those exceptions. CAP highlighted a policy by Alberta Learning that defined guidance and counselling services as part of the school program. As such, students in Alberta do not need parental permission to see the school counsellor.

This example provides evidence of the challenge counsellors face when working in a school setting: they must balance the child's need for privacy with the rights of parents to be involved in their child's welfare (Isaacs & Stone, 1999). Counsellors should carefully consider what information is to be shared, and with whom. A legal precedent was set in 2000, when a parent in BC attempted to gain access to a school counsellor's notes pertaining to her children. The school counsellor refused access to the information, and this was supported by the local Board of Education (Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner,

2000). The provincial Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner (2000) investigated and supported the school counsellor's decision to withhold access to the information shared in the counselling sessions. The investigator asserted that children have a right to expect that such information will be kept private and that parental rights do not supersede this (Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, 2000).

Despite this ruling, there is a need for school counsellors to collaborate with the child's family (Bodenhorn, 2005). Bodenhorn (2005) identified families as the "primary providers of support for child development" (p. 319) and highlighted how children can benefit from a healthy modelling of partnership and good communication between school counsellors and parents. Although collaboration with parents may cause an ethical dilemma for counsellors, training in systems counselling can help to overcome these barriers (Bodenhorn, 2005). Research by Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2004) indicated that school counsellors recognize the importance of collaboration between school, family, and community. However, despite their willingness to be involved in family and community partnerships, school counsellors' lack of time creates a challenging barrier to effectively fostering such collaborative relationships (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy speculated that clearly defining the role of the school counsellor might reduce some of the barriers to collaboration. This finding suggests that consensus on collaborative working practices and on the role of the school counsellor could be reciprocal factors influencing the effectiveness of SCPs.

The information presented above suggests there are benefits arising from collaborative working relationships, including identifying students who may require additional support (Trice-Black et al., 2013), improved student outcomes (Salina et al., 2013), and modelling of healthy communication patterns (Bodenhorn, 2005). However, due to the inherent hierarchical nature of school systems, implementing collaborative working practices requires educational leaders and other stakeholders to recognize the value of a school culture founded on the belief that people are of equal value, regardless of their role in the school. A commitment to this philosophy creates space for people to form relationships and contribute to student success (Salina et al., 2013). Despite the benefits, embracing collaborative working practices can present school counsellors with some challenges, including ethical dilemmas related to the sharing of information (Bodenhorn, 2005). This research brings into focus the importance of adequate supervision for school counsellors, an issue that is examined in the next section.

Clinical Supervision

Although clinical supervision is not explicitly referred to in any of the provincial handbooks for Canadian school counsellors (Alberta Education, 2012; BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba SCA, 2002; NB Department of Education, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, n.d.; PEI Department of Education, 2005), the BCSCA (n.d.), the

NS Department of Education (2002), and the Ontario SCA (2009) do specify in their ethical codes that school counsellors should consult with other professionals in order to effectively help students. This guidance is in line with the ethical guidelines of other professional bodies that regulate the counselling and psychology professions in Canada (CCPA, 2007; Canadian Psychological Association, 2000). In addition, the PEI Department of Education (2005) acknowledged in their handbook that their school counsellors might also be affiliated with other regulatory bodies, such as the CCPA (2007). Because the CCPA requires certified counsellors to obtain supervision, it is likely that some of the school counsellors who work for the PEI Department of Education recognize the importance of clinical supervision in their practice. However, more research needs to be completed in this area to gauge the opinions of Canadian school counsellors with regard to clinical supervision and the extent to which they are accessing such services.

Dollarhide and Miller (2006) noted the distinct differences between clinical supervision and administrative supervision. These authors proposed that the latter focuses on broader organizational issues, while the former concentrates on counselling-related matters. Shepard and Martin (2012) supported this distinction, asserting that while administrative supervision focuses on "matters of organizational functioning" (p. 5), clinical supervision relates to the "development of the supervisee, as well as the safety and quality of the services delivered" (p. 5). For purposes of this article, I will use Shepard and Martin's definitions distinguishing the two types of supervision that school counsellors may encounter.

A review of the literature revealed that little has been written about clinical supervision and the Canadian school counsellor. In addition, gaps exist in the recent international literature on clinical supervision and school counsellors. In the absence of more recent literature, I have had to draw on foundational studies to gain insight into the clinical supervision of school counsellors. Research carried out in the United States in 2001 indicated that although the majority of school counsellors received administrative supervision from their principal, few had access to clinical supervision: only 13% of participants had access to individual clinical supervision, and only 10% had access to group clinical supervision (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001). The results from Page et al.'s (2001) national study were similar to previous results from state-level studies done by Sutton and Page (1994) and Roberts and Borders (1994). Interestingly, Page et al. found that the majority of participants in their study expressed a desire for clinical supervision in order to improve their practice. This finding shows that, although many school counsellors are knowledgeable about the benefits of clinical supervision, they may experience difficulty accessing it in their workplace (Page et al., 2001). Therefore, it is important to examine not only the perceived benefits of clinical supervision, but also the barriers to obtaining it. Further research in this area would likely help to illuminate the connections between clinical supervision and the effectiveness of SCPs.

It is evident from the provincial counselling guidelines that individual and group counselling is a function that many school counsellors across Canada

perform (Alberta Education, 2012; BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba School Counsellors' Association, 2002; NB Department of Education, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, n.d.; PEI Department of Education, 2005). For these counsellors, clinical supervision helps to enhance their clinical competence and improves their clinical skills (Ellis, 2010; Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002). In addition, "supervision is a rite of passage, the means by which skills are refined, [and] theory and practice integrated" (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006, p. 242). These findings are important, particularly because, in the American research, counsellors perceived that their training did not adequately prepare them to deal with the complex realities of working in the school system, especially in the area of resolving ethical dilemmas (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Nova Scotia research into ethical practice supported these concerns (Lehr, Lehr, & Sumarah, 2007). The authors of the Nova Scotia study found that school counsellors had concerns about how to manage the limits to confidentiality, which they believed could lead to inconsistencies in standards of practice between counsellors (Lehr et al., 2007). All the above concerns suggest that school counsellors could benefit from ongoing professional supervision; it would help them refine their skills, ensure they are adhering to ethical guidelines, and provide the best quality services for students in their care.

Self-awareness and Multicultural Competency

Clinical supervision is an effective method for helping counsellors to increase their levels of self-awareness (Vallance, 2004), and self-awareness is essential if counsellors are to avoid potential harm to clients (Collins & Arthur, 2010). Page et al. (2001) highlighted the wide range of issues that American school counsellors face, including drug use, violence, and sexual health issues. Canadian school counsellors also face these kinds of issues (PEI Department of Education, 2005). Risk-taking behaviours such as these can present ethical dilemmas for counsellors, necessitating them to examine their own values (Stone, 2013).

Ellis (2010) recognized the importance of examining one's own worldview and advocated that the supervisory relationship is an appropriate forum in which to do so, particularly when working with a diverse population. Working with issues of diversity may present some unique challenges for counsellors (Collins & Arthur, 2010). Canada is a diverse nation; few countries have as many foreign-born residents (Statistics Canada, 2008). Figures drawn from the 2006 Census indicated that approximately 20% of people living in Canada were born elsewhere (Statistics Canada, 2009), and projections indicate this trend will continue (Statistics Canada, 2008). It seems, then, that as the population diversifies, so too will the Canadian student body. Ellis (2010) proposed that our value systems are not black and white; rather, they exist along a continuum. He asked, "[W]here are you on the continuum of racism or sexism, and what are you doing about it?" (Ellis, 2010, p. 96). Perhaps an analogous question for this forum would be "How are Canadian school counsellors being supported to ensure they examine their values and practice in a culturally competent manner?"

A culture-infused approach (Arthur & Collins, 2010b) to school counselling is particularly important because of the impact that discrimination can have on the mental health and academic progress of those from nondominant groups (Chang & Le, 2010). In addition, Canadian Certified Counsellors are required to practice in a manner that takes account of the cultural backgrounds of their clients and shows sensitivity to diversity (CCPA, 2007). One of the ways counsellors can do this is to take on the responsibility of examining their biases and learning to work with diverse clients in the counselling setting, rather than simply referring students to other counsellors (Stone, 2013). These are challenging situations, providing counsellors opportunities for growth so that they can create space for all students without marginalizing certain groups (Stone, 2013).

The variations in the levels of training between school counsellors across Canada (Cain, 2013) is likely to mean that although some school counsellors will feel well equipped to audit their ability to practice in a culturally sensitive manner, others might not possess the skills to do so. Moreover, because counsellors continue to evolve throughout their career, an ongoing commitment to the development of cultural competency is essential for all practitioners, regardless of their level of training (Arthur & Collins, 2010a). Canadian Certified Supervisors can offer support to counsellors in order to develop their competence in the area of cultural awareness and sensitivity to diversity (Shepard & Martin, 2012). Arthur and Collins (2010b) asserted that failure to develop cultural awareness in relation to self and others is likely to act as a barrier to effective counselling practice, making a strong case for the implementation of clinical supervision for school counsellors.

Despite these perceived benefits, a thorough review of the literature did not uncover any studies focusing on the issue of clinical supervision for Canadian school counsellors. American research indicated that few school counsellors there have access to this type of support as well (Page et al., 2001). Although little has been written about clinical supervision for Canadian school counsellors, the available literature can be used to hypothesize about the potential barriers to accessing this service.

One potential barrier is the lack of time (Herlihy et al., 2002) that some school counsellors experience; they feel overstretched and lack the resources that they need to fulfill their duties (Brown et al., 2006; Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Cain, 2013). Participating in formal clinical supervision would be just one more item on the already full plate of school counsellors (Herlihy et al., 2002).

A second potential barrier is some school counsellors' belief that do not they need clinical supervision (Page et al., 2001). In Page et al.'s (2001) study, 33% of respondents indicated that they did not need supervision. This finding is in line with foundational research carried out by Sutton and Page (1994), who found that 37% of school counsellors did not view clinical supervision as a priority. Herlihy et al. (2002) drew links between a perceived lack of need for clinical supervision and role ambiguity. These authors proposed that school counsellors might not be engaged in a great deal of clinical work, making clinical supervision unnecessary (Herlihy et al., 2002). In Canada, Cain's (2013) study highlighted the variations

in training across jurisdictions, and more research needs to be done to determine whether differences in levels of training influence school counsellors' beliefs about the necessity of supervision. However, because Page et al.'s (2001) research indicated that a majority of school counsellors desired clinical supervision, it might be more likely that other barriers were getting in the way. These barriers could include financial obstacles, lack of knowledge on how to obtain supervision, or a lack of administrative support for such an endeavour (Herlihy et al., 2002).

Although these foundational studies provide some insight into the opinions of school counsellors on clinical supervision, there is a need to address the knowledge gaps in relation to clinical supervision and Canadian school counsellors.

Implications for School Counsellors

An interesting consideration that arises from this literature review is that relationships between educational stakeholders are a major contributing factor to the overall success of the services and programs that school counsellors offer (Armstrong et al., 2010; Salina et al., 2013). When school counsellors feel respected and valued by their leaders, they are motivated to strive to improve their practices, and this leads to improved outcomes for their students (Salina et al., 2013). Furthermore, when there is relational trust between school staff and parents, students benefit from witnessing the model healthy ways of communicating (Bodenhorn, 2005). A team approach helps to ensure that at-risk students are identified and offered appropriate support (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Therefore, it seems apparent that educational leaders must look for opportunities to create and nurture the conditions in which relationships can develop (Cisler & Bruce, 2013).

For school counsellors, working in isolation can increase their workload and decrease their ability to meet students' needs (Salina et al., 2013). Educational leaders, including principals and school counsellors, should therefore consider setting aside times throughout the school year to discuss policies and protocols, student progress, and any perceived hurdles to collaborative working practices. The American School Counselor Association's national model (2012) suggests that principals and school counsellors meet at the beginning of the school year to discuss roles and responsibilities. These preliminary meetings would be ideal forums for discussing complex issues such as student confidentiality (Trice-Black et al., 2013). Furthermore, I argue that such regular meetings might help staff to build relationships and overcome barriers to collaboration, as they find out more about each other's perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Although lack of time might be a perceived barrier to organizing such meetings, research has shown how collaborative working practices can actually save time (Gruman et al., 2013; Salina et al., 2013), and educating school staff on this finding might help to overcome any resistance to changes in practice.

Mason and Perera-Diltz (2010) emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for school counsellors and principals to find out more about each other's work; they recognized that this did not always happen in the formal education

setting. Educators in graduate counselling programs and educational leadership programs should consider designing innovative coursework that allows school counsellors and principals to learn about each other's roles (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010).

Cisler and Bruce (2013) also recognized the need for school counsellors and principals to increase their knowledge about how to work together. These authors suggested that school counsellors and principals might benefit from participating in joint professional development workshops that focus on problem solving in the school setting (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). Such professional development workshops could focus on how to resolve complex ethical dilemmas or respond to crises. The ethical challenges offered by Froeschle and Crews (2010) and Hicks et al. (2014) might provide the substance for discussions during workshops, allowing for thought-provoking debates about how to respond to dilemmas in ways that would take local policies and protocols into account. Time could also be set aside to design and implement action research projects, using the model outlined by Oberman et al. (2006) to determine the overall success of various aspects of the SCP. Making improvements to the way school counsellors and principals are educated (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010), as well as increasing opportunities for ongoing professional development (Cisler & Bruce, 2013) and action research (Oberman et al., 2006), might ameliorate the divergence of opinion between them (Brown et al., 2006) on the roles and functions of the school counsellor. Moreover, such measures could help to develop consensus on the role of the school counsellor, and in turn establish a strong professional identity for Canadian school counsellors and improve the effectiveness of the services they offer.

A second observation that arises from the findings presented above is that there is a direct link between consensus on the role of the school counsellor and access to clinical supervision. An analysis of the literature suggests that the role of the school counsellor needs to be better defined. For example, school counsellors provide individual and group counselling and are thus already addressing mental health needs of students (Alberta Education, 2012; BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba School Counsellors' Association, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, n.d.; PEI Department of Education, 2005). Until such roles are formally recognized, it is unlikely that the need for clinical supervision will be acknowledged, to ensure that school counsellors are practicing in an ethical manner. Reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between professional identity and clinical supervision, Dollarhide and Miller (2006) pointed out that clinical supervision is necessary if novice school counsellors are to develop an understanding of the parameters of their profession. Without this support, it would be left to administrators to define the functions of the school counsellors, and previous research has shown that this may take the profession in a direction away from meeting the needs of those it serves (Mason & Perera-Diltz, 2010). These findings appear to suggest a need for school counsellors to join forces in order to strengthen advocacy efforts for their profession, and to ensure that they are receiving the support they need

(i.e., appropriate training, professional development, and clinical supervision) to do their job well (Cain, 2013).

Cain (2013) identified many ways that school counsellors could build connections nationally, including participating in the CCPA's School Counsellors' Chapter and through organizing a Canadian School Counselling week (which took place for the first time in 2014; CCPA, 2014). However, I also suggest that it is important to build local networks within one's own school district. Peer consultation groups, where fellow counsellors provide critical and supportive feedback (Haag Granello, Kindsvatter, Granello, Underfer-Babalis, & Hartwig Moorhead, 2008), could be a beginning step in developing such connections. These groups have been shown to help participants develop new knowledge (Barlow & Phelan, 2007) and consider alternative viewpoints (Haag Granello et al., 2008), a necessary precursor to developing increased self-awareness. In addition, peer consultation groups have been linked to improved self-care practices among grief counsellors (Barlow & Phelan, 2007). This finding is important because Canadian Certified Counsellors have an ethical responsibility to ensure they participate in self-care activities (CCPA, 2007). However, as Cain (2013) noted, there are variations in training across jurisdictions, and it is likely that many school counsellors are not members of a professional association. Therefore, further research is required to determine the extent to which school counsellors believe they have an ethical requirement to participate in self-care activities, and whether Barlow and Phelan's (2007) findings are generalizable to school counsellors. I speculate that, in addition to the aforementioned benefits, establishing peer consultation groups might also help school counsellors to strengthen their voice within their school districts and increase advocacy efforts for systemic changes, such as implementing clinical supervision. However, this latter idea needs to be explored in more detail to determine if the projected outcome would be achieved. The recommendation to consider peer consultation groups should not be interpreted to mean that this type of support should take the place of individual or group supervision with a qualified supervisor, but merely that each journey begins with a small step. Peer consultation groups might be such a first step in increasing the connectedness between school counselling colleagues, thus strengthening professional solidarity and identity, as well as providing the motivation to advocate for changes.

Recommendations for Future Research

A limitation of this review is its reliance on international data to gain insights into the experiences of Canadian school counsellors. Field research that explores the daily roles and functions of Canadian school counsellors, as well as the perceptions of other educational stakeholders on the roles and functions of school counsellors, could address some of the gaps in the literature. In addition, future research should seek to determine the extent to which educational stakeholders are working collaboratively and how this affects student outcomes in Canadian schools. It would also be useful to discover more about the perceived barriers to

collaborative working practices and the steps that are being taken to overcome these barriers. Finally, there is a need to address the knowledge gaps in relation to clinical supervision and Canadian school counsellors. Field research that explores how many Canadian school counsellors have access to clinical supervision, the type of supervision they are engaging in (e.g., individual or group), and the perceived benefits of clinical supervision would be a useful starting point for this discussion. In addition, there is a need to examine current models of supervision to determine whether they are appropriate for the school setting (Luke & Bernard, 2006). Lastly, Swank and Tyson (2012) asserted that school counsellors benefit from receiving training prior to providing others with supervision. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate how many school counsellors have the training to provide clinical supervision, as well as the perceived benefits of participating in such training.

CONCLUSION

Many factors influence the effectiveness of SCPs, and the research presented in this article has shown that an evidence-based approach ensures that school counsellors remain accountable for the services they provide. Furthermore, clearly defined school counsellor roles and responsibilities, consistent with their education and training, provide the basis for collaborative working practices that lead to improved outcomes for students. Consensus on the role of the school counsellor and a commitment to collaborative working practices would create space for school counsellors to demonstrate their need for clinical supervision, a provision that would enhance clinical competency, thus improving the efficacy of the services provided to students. Although dealt with separately in this article, the concepts of consensus on the role of the school counsellor, collaborative working practices, and clinical supervision are inextricably linked, each one laying the foundation for and supporting the development of the other. Moreover, egalitarianism, relationships, and connectedness are the glue that unites these three realms. In addition to advocating for the needs of their students, school counsellors must now take seriously their responsibility for refining and advocating for their own professional identity. By joining together, school counsellors could create the conditions necessary for systemic change and ensure that their profession continues to develop in a way that meets the ever-changing needs of their students.

Note

1 Hereafter these titles are referred to as BCSCA, n.d.; Manitoba SCA, 2002; NB Department of Education, 2002; NWT Education, Culture, and Employment, 2004; NS Department of Education, 2010; Ontario SCA, 2009, or Ontario SCA, n.d.; and PEI Department of Education, 2005.

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