

Perceptions of Be(com)ing a Guidance Counsellor in Ontario: A Qualitative Inquiry

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master's of Arts in Education, Educational Counselling

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### Acknowledgements

This project brought with it many challenges. Fortunately, I had mentors, friends and family who offered immeasurable support. First, I sincerely thank my thesis supervisor and mentor, Dr. André Samson, for his guidance, wisdom and generosity. His support helped me through this long venture, which at times seemed like an unconquerable endeavor.

I am grateful to my committee members for their knowledge and insight. Dr. Nicola Gazzola shared his vast knowledge and offered new perspectives on my project. Dr. Anne Thériault guided my methodological reflection, offered insight on my project and supported me at crucial moments.

Thank you to the guidance counsellors who offered time and honesty. I praise you for your tireless commitment to helping students through the good times and the not-so-good times.

Lastly, to my parents, your help provided me with the peace of mind to continue with my studies. To Rebecca, Amélie and 'Lefty', I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your compassion and patience and for simply being there day in, day out. You made the writing process possible when it all seemed endless.

### **Abstract**

In Ontario, career and guidance services are offered by teachers who have completed additional undergraduate studies. The training required to become a guidance counsellor appears to be insufficient to properly deliver the necessary guidance and counselling services. Many guidance counsellors are still operating as teachers within their new role as guidance counsellors. The aim of this qualitative research was to explore the professional identity of guidance counsellors' working in Ontario, from their perspective. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and twelve guidance counsellors were interviewed. Eight participants had completed the required undergraduate studies and four had completed a master's degree in the field. The thematic analysis revealed four major themes that articulated and explained their professional identity: peer support, contextual factors, professional experience and formal training. The study's limitations are discussed and suggestions for future research are offered.

En Ontario, les services de carrière et d'orientation sont offerts par des enseignants qui ont complété des cours de qualification additionnelle. La formation minimum exigée des conseillers d'orientation s'avère insuffisante pour remplir les demandes des élèves en matière d'orientation et de counselling. Cette étude qualitative visait à explorer l'identité professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation de l'Ontario. Douze conseillers d'orientation ont été interviewé : huit participants avaient complété un, deux ou trois cours de qualification additionnelle alors que quatre participants avaient complété une maîtrise dans un domaine relié à l'orientation. L'analyse thématique des données révèle quatre thèmes qui articulent et expliquent l'identité professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation en Ontario : appui des pairs, facteurs contextuels, l'expérience professionnelle et la formation. Les limites de l'étude sont discutées et des pistes pour des recherches futures sont suggérées.

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## Introduction

Guidance and counselling services have been deemed indispensable for the psychosocial, academic and vocational development of students in a knowledge-based society (Claus-Ehlers, Serpell & Weist, 2012; La Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière, 2003; Keats & Laitsch, 2010; Van Esbroeck, 2002). Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner and Skelton (2006) stated that there is no doubt that school counselling is a vital part of students' schooling experience.

School counsellors play a major role in students' lives. They develop their understanding of the world of work (Baker, 2001; Dietsche, 2013; Hughes & Karp, 2004). Campbell and Dahir (1997) stated that guidance counsellors contribute to their overall success of students. As advocates for students, school counsellors work to close the achievement gaps between different student groups (Bemark & Chi-Ying Chung, 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). School counsellors also act as frontline mental health professionals, sorting through a plethora of issues to properly refer students to various specialists (Borders, 2002). Zalaquett (2005) found that principals perceived school counsellors as having a positive impact on the behavioral and mental health development of their students. Now, although the role of school counsellors is crucial to students and the school community, not all school counsellors are able to effectively deliver their essential guidance and counselling services.

Researchers identified various factors that can prevent American school counsellors from effectively delivering guidance and counselling services. Among these factors is the absence of a clearly defined and well-communicated professional identity (Baker, 2000; Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001; Wilkerson, 2009). Professional identity has been defined as "the possession of a core set of values, beliefs, and assumptions about the unique characteristics of one's selected profession that differentiates it from other professions" (Weinrach, Thomas & Chan, 2001, p.168).

Although there is little Canadian research on guidance counsellor professional identity, the topic has been extensively studied in the United States. Numerous articles focus on the challenges and issues associated with school counsellor professional identity. Indeed, research has shown that American school counsellors need to clarify their professional identity. This difficulty in defining their identity is rooted in the profession's history (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009), a general misunderstanding of the school counsellor's role (Carlson & Yohon, 2004;

Johnson, 2000), and a lack of self-advocacy from school counsellors (Carlson & Yohon, 2004; Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001). Research also demonstrated the negative impact of school counsellors' professional identity ambiguity on the students, the school community and the school counsellors themselves (Myers, Sweeney & White, 2002).

Little research on guidance counsellors has been conducted in Ontario. The professional identity and development of guidance counsellors in Ontario is an understudied phenomenon. Because guidance counsellors have the potential to influence the healthy professional, academic and vocational development of students as well as the proper functioning of schools (Murphy, 2004), gaining a better understanding of the guidance counselling profession would be beneficial. Evidence-based data on the subject would have the potential to develop our understanding of how guidance counsellors are influencing the success of students and the school community. Research could perhaps identify possible issues and challenges to the profession.

To develop and understudied area of the Ontario education system, the objective of this research is to explore Ontario's guidance counsellors' perception of their professional identity. This will be achieved by examining how teachers are inducted and adapt to their role of guidance counsellor.

### **Brief Overview of the Study**

This study is presented in five sections. The first section serves as a general introduction. It presents the importance of guidance counsellors within schools and outlines professional issues and challenges faced by the profession. There is a historical of the profession, which is followed by an account of the current situation of guidance counsellors in Ontario. This first section ends with the presentation of the objective, the need of the study and the research question. The second section describes the methodology used in the study, including the sampling method and the participants, the instruments and the analysis method. The third section presents the results of the study. Four themes emerged from the data analysis process and these themes are addressed individually. As this thesis is an article-based thesis, the fourth section is the article. The fifth section is a summary of the study, including a discussion of the results, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research pertaining to guidance counsellors in the province of Ontario.

### **Literature Review**

A clear professional identity is beneficial to school counsellors. Professional identity, as Brott and Myers (1999) explain, serves as a frame of reference for executing work roles, making ethical decisions and guiding professional development. In other words, professional identity is the underlying basis for the way school counsellors approach their work (Borders, 2002). Harris (2009) found that a clear professional identity was linked to the effectiveness of school counsellors. In a qualitative study, professional identity was said to enrich interactions with students and lead school counsellors to the pursuit of greater professional competence (Henderson, Cook, Libby & Zambrano, 2006). In the same study, feelings of comfort with the profession and genuineness were associated with professional identity congruence, which the authors explained as professionals sharing a common professional identity.

The limited research pertaining to the professional identity of guidance counsellors in Canada reveals characteristics of an unclear identity. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2004) described school and guidance counselling in Canada (with the exception of Québec) as weakly professionalized, namely because the required competencies and training have not been specified for guidance counsellors. Malatest (2009) reported in his pan-Canadian study that Canadian guidance counsellors are well educated, but mostly in fields other than school guidance and counselling. Furthermore, research has shown a discrepancy between actual guidance counsellor roles and those defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education (Dietsche, 2013; Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996).

Research demonstrated how professional identity ambiguity leads to negative consequences for the students, the school community and the school counsellors themselves. For students, consequences are of two natures. The first revolves around role confusion: when school counsellors are busy completing non-guidance tasks, students are deprived of their services (Sears & Granello, 2002). The second category is consequences originating from school counsellors performing tasks that alter the perception students have of school counsellors. For instance, as Baker (2000) explains, students sometimes experience tension when approaching school counsellors when students view them as disciplinarians. Also, confrontation can increase resistance in counselling which can be damaging to the student-counsellor relationship (Osborn, 1999).

In regards to school counsellors themselves, professional identity confusion has been found to be a contributing factor to experiencing dissatisfaction in the workplace for some school

counsellors (Baker, 2000; Falls & Nichter, 2007; Rayle & Adams, 2007). Huebner (1993) reported that role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload were sources of stress for members of helping professions working in schools. It has been found that school counsellors with an unclear professional identity have a higher risk of emotional exhaustion, compared to other mental health professionals (Wilkerson, 2009).

As for the school community, that professional identity ambiguity has contributed to school counsellors' negative public image by diminishing their credibility as professionals (Myers, Sweeney & White, 2002; Sweeney, 1995). In addition, Trolley (2011) states that identity ambiguity is disadvantageous when advocating for the school counselling profession: if school counsellors cannot clearly articulate who they are, teachers, administrators and the public can not be expected to understand who school counsellors are and what they do. Carlson and Yohon (2004) relate the ambiguity to the fact that the profession has been defined and redefined by individuals or organizations outside of the profession. The authors stress the need for school counsellors to advocate for themselves and the profession.

Despite the ongoing efforts of various American bodies, such as the Education Trust (2004), to develop a strong professional identity, school counsellors are still confronted with identity ambiguity. In 2002, Borders asked if any other profession had been trying to define itself for so long. It has been said that school counsellors in the United States have struggled with their sense of identity since the induction of the profession, over a century ago (Brott & Myers, 1999; Johnson, 2000; Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Researchers point to the evolution and expansion of school counsellors' scope of practice as having contributed to the identity struggle (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). As demonstrated in research from the United States, school counsellors' focus and duties continuously evolve, following the changing needs of the students (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Beesley, 2004). At the beginning of the century, school counsellors concentrated on vocational guidance through assessment and academic placement. At mid-century, the focus of school counsellors turned to the psychosocial developmental needs of students (Gysbers, 2001). Gysbers (2001) justified the shift as a response to the increasing drug use of students, school violence, changing family dynamics and the increase awareness of mental health issues. Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the focus of the American school counsellor has been to establish and deliver a comprehensive guidance program and measurable results and accountability have become priorities (American

School Counselor Association, (ASCA), 2005). Because of the continuous redefining of the focus of school counsellors, counselling leaders and school counsellors struggled to specify the essential role and responsibilities of the school counsellors (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). Mascari (2005) affirmed, “despite tremendous strides in developing a unified identity, the focus of school counselors is largely dependent on the systems in which they find themselves” (as cited by Foster, 2010, p. 32).

Various studies have identified challenges within the profession that perpetuate the school counsellors’ professional identity confusion. For instance, (a) there are discrepancies between school counsellor preparation and the realities of the workplace (Brott & Myers, 1999); (b) there are discrepancies in school counsellor practices across states, school boards and schools (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009); (c) school administrators, who are mostly unaware of appropriate school counsellors roles, determine school counsellors’ roles as they see fit (Baker, 2001; Bringman, Mueller & Lee, 2010; Johnson, 2000); (d) the varying economical, regional and student needs influence tasks performed by school counsellors (Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner & Skelton, 2006) and (e) counsellor educators struggle to promote a professional identity in counsellors in training (Gazzola, De Stefano, Audet & Thériault, 2011).

The review of American scientific literature has shown that school counsellors are beneficial to students and the school community. However, professional identity confusion is negatively impacting school counsellors’ roles. Despite ongoing efforts to develop a strong professional identity, school counsellors in the United States are still struggling to clearly define themselves.

The topic of professional identity has not been directly studied in Canada. Therefore, the state of American school counsellors’ professional identity will serve as a baseline comparison for the situation of guidance counsellors’ professional identity in Canada. This choice of comparison was made because Ontario’s guidance counselling history most resembles that of the United States, as a whole. Comparing Ontario to the United States as a sole entity was deemed ideal as it seemed unnecessary to go into state-specific details as most states hold very similar licensing and credentialing requirements (Snow & Jackson, 2004). A last thought: Québec’s training structure and guidance system are quite rigorous, in comparison to Ontario, and could have provided a backdrop for comparison. It was however not retained for comparison since the guidance systems of Ontario and Québec do not share many similarities. The title ‘conseiller

d'orientation' (guidance counsellor) has been a reserved title in Québec for 50 years (Ordre des conseillers et conseillères d'orientation du Québec (OCCOQ), 2014a). The profession has a far greater reach than the guidance counsellors of Canada and the school counsellors of the United States. Québec's 'conseillers d'orientation' work not only in schools, but also in community centers, postsecondary institutions and large corporations. They also have a larger scope of practice. For instance, after their admission into their professional order, the 'conseiller d'orientation' can obtain the right from the 'Ordre des psychologues du Québec' (Québec college of psychologists) to practice psychotherapy (OCCOQ, 2014b). It is also within their scope of practice to evaluate students and adults who have been diagnosed with mental health issues, cognitive delays or individuals with a physical or mental handicap (OCCOQ, 2014b). Comparing Ontario's guidance counsellors to Québec's 'conseillers d'orientation' could have yielded conclusions with questionable validity.

The next section details the evolution of school and guidance counselling in Canada and the United States. It is demonstrated that the two countries (and Ontario) share a similar history.

**A Historical Review of Guidance Counselling in Canadian Schools.** At the turn of the century, Canada's workforce was predominantly occupying manual labor jobs. Immigrants arrived to Canada hoping to find work, but often ended up segregated with their homologues and without employment. However, the arrival of the industrialization era offered hope to many men in need of work, as the technological advancement created decent jobs (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). The increasingly diverse nature of the workplace and changing social, economic and political realities generated the need to help young people and immigrants make sense of the new workplace.

The field of vocational counselling, which began in the United States early in the twentieth century, can be traced back to individuals such as Frank Parsons, Meyer Bloomfield, Anna Read and Jessie Davis. In its earliest form, career counselling aimed at helping individuals determine how they might best serve their interests in an area of work (Baker, 2000). Herman (1981) states that the foundations of Canada's career and guidance counselling emerged from the United States, as Canadian leaders in the field of guidance were mostly educated in the United States. Also, textbooks on career and guidance counselling also originated from the United States.

In the early 1900s, the focus of career and guidance counselling services was on vocational guidance. The teacher-counsellors offered dependable information pertaining to occupations and the job market for students to make good occupational choices (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Psychological testing, which was primarily used with army personnel, began to be utilized in schools during the first quarter of the twentieth century. School counsellors relied heavily on tests to guide their students. These tools seemed very scientific and emphasized objectivity, prediction and placement (Baker, 2000).

By the 1920s and 1930s, teachers in the United States were regularly appointed to guidance roles, although there were no set standards for training or practice. During that same period, compulsory school attendance brought in many students who were uncertain of their futures, further increasing the need for a guidance specialist (Baker, 2000).

School and guidance counselling was dominated by the trait and factor model by the end of the Second World War. This model was focusing on goal setting and finding a satisfactory lifestyle for students (Baker, 2000). The influence of Carl Rogers' client-centered therapy was felt within the world of career and guidance counselling. The American government provided funds to further develop personal counselling within guidance services (Stone and Dahir, 2004).

During the same period, in Canada, schools were formally implementing guidance services within schools and appointing teacher-counsellors to offer the services (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). This implementation was a direct response to the notion that education was the hope of the nation. It was thought that the more high school graduates there were the more prosperous the country would become, since educated citizens have more money to spend. And so, prompted by the federal government, provincial governments injected money into the education system (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). At this time, teachers who acted as guidance counsellors had no formal training. Their interventions mostly revolved around the question 'What are you going to be?' (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002).

The works of Donald Super emphasized the psychological and developmental nature of career counselling. Career guidance now focused on skills, interests and individual preferences (Stone & Dahir, 2004). Students and adults alike were no longer seen as making a single occupational choice at a point in their life, but rather as individuals who made many choices throughout their lives (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). Following the trends in the United States, Canada's career and guidance services were also influenced by the popular

personal counselling theories. Emerging theories such as person-centered approach and Maslow's motivation and personality approach became the new focus of guidance.

In the 1960s, Canada's counselling identity took shape when the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association was created, which led to the elaboration of ethical standards for counsellors (Paterson & Janzen, 1993). Guidance services held a more permanent place within the Canadian education system and the teacher-counsellors were from then on referred to as guidance counsellors (Francis, 2005). During the 1960s, personal counselling had become the main focus of guidance counsellors, replacing career and vocational guidance (Nevison, 1978). The new emphasis on techniques and methods of counselling led to the adoption of a psychotherapeutic model by guidance counsellors (Herman, 1981).

Guidance counselling matured in the 1970s, which yet again changed the focus of guidance counsellors. The change was not to reject the psychotherapeutic model. Rather, it was to consolidate everything from the vocational guidance and personal counselling models into a model based on the needs of normal human development (Herman, 1981). The resulting model was the comprehensive guidance program. Guidance counsellors were encouraged to work with teachers in their classroom and with groups of parents to promote the healthy development of students (Paterson & Janzen, 1993).

At this point in history, guidance counsellors had questionable expertise and the teachers who offered guidance were held in lower esteem than teachers of other subject matter (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). The guidance task was often passed on to the new teachers (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002). Bedal (1979) conducted a pan-Canadian study and found that many provincial directors thought the training of school counsellors to be out-of-date. In response to the needs of better training for guidance counsellors, universities across Canada created better training programs in career and guidance counselling for teachers and guidance counsellors (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002).

After the 1970s, literature pertaining to the history of guidance counselling in Canada becomes scarce. However, as Herman (1981) stated, since the inception of guidance counselling, parallel development between the United States and Canada can be traced. And as we look at the current states of school and guidance counselling in both countries, it appears that Canada's career and guidance counselling developments still reflect those of the United States. Tang and Erford (2004) noted a decline in school enrollment during the 1970s. Funding to school districts

was reduced which forced a decrease in guidance services (Baker, 2000). Because guidance services were often the first victims of budget cuts, the profession focused on role clarification and accountability, two significant issues that could further legitimize its importance within schools (Tang & Erford, 2004). Consequently, to the comprehensive guidance program established in the 1970s was added the focus on accountability and role clarification. Gysbers and Henderson (2001) identified comprehensive guidance programs as the focus of the last decades. This was a shift away from having a set of ancillary services delivered by a person occupying the school counsellor position. This transition was brought forth by diverse needs, namely, a renewed interest in vocational guidance and in developmental guidance, concerns about the efficacy of the (then) current approach to guidance counselling and concerns about accountability.

The guidance counselling trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both in the United States and in Canada, position the school or guidance counsellor as instrumental to the school's success and to the students' success (Davis, 2012; La Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière, 2003). Programs provide frameworks that not only include comprehensive programs, but specific areas for student development, i.e. academic, personal, interpersonal and vocational (Davis, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999).

In Canada, education falls under the jurisdiction of the ten provinces and three territories. Provinces and territories elaborate frameworks on which to develop their guidance program, but schools and school boards have much latitude to elaborate their guidance program to best suit their needs (OECD, 2002). Full time guidance counsellors in most provinces in Canada are teachers with a specialized qualification in guidance and counselling (OECD, 2002). This qualification may not be grounded in career development, but rather in personal counselling. In Québec, however, guidance counsellors must have a master's degree in counselling, which has vocational development and career issues as its focus. Guidance counsellors in Québec are not required to hold teaching licenses (Keats & Laitsch, 2010).

**Professional Identity of Guidance Counsellors in Canada.** Although the professional identity of guidance counsellors has not received much attention in Canada, indications in various studies suggest that guidance counsellors in Canada could in fact struggle with professional identity ambiguity. A revealing indication may be the limited importance attributed to career and guidance services within the role of Canadian guidance counsellors (Keats & Laitsch, 2010; OECD, 2002, 2004). This fact is most significant when considering professional roles as defining

factors in one's professional identity (Clemens, Milsom & Cashwell, 2009; Schoen, 1989). The same 2004 publication of the OECD reported that the fundamental competencies and training of guidance counsellors were imprecise and variable.

In a general overview of guidance counsellors in Canada, Keats and Laitsch (2010) noted that guidance counsellors were in fact teachers with insufficient supplemental training in career and guidance counselling. Such results echo the findings of the OECD (2004), which reported that career and guidance in Canada was often offered by a teacher with limited training. And as Baker (1994) discovered, teachers-turned-counsellors perceive the profession from a pedagogical point of view using more advising, tutoring and information giving responses, which creates counsellor-centered relationships. Keats and Laitsch (2010) expressed concern relating to students receiving poorly delivered mental health services, which ironically, was considered a top priority by 61% of guidance counsellors; twice as important as career (32%) and educational planning (25%) in the OECD's 2004 report.

Guidance counselling programs in Ontario are supposed to reflect the guidelines stipulated in the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy document 'Choices Into Action' (1999). However, a few studies have demonstrated that the actual role of guidance counsellors differs from what has been prescribed in the policy 'Choices into Action' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). For example, guidance counsellors in Ontario would prefer to be doing more guidance related activities, but administrators are asking them to complete non-counselling duties (Mustaine and Pappalardo, 1996). Dietsche (2013) studied the career planning of students in Ontario and noted that guidance counsellors were spending 25% of their time on student career development; the other 75% of their time was devoted to non-counselling duties.

A common concern with Canadian guidance services is in regards to the role and identity of the guidance professionals: different guidance counsellors focus on different school issues (OECD, 2002). Historically, guidance counsellors have been constantly reorienting the focus of their *raison d'être* (Baker, 2000; Herman, 1981). Because the shift in skill is so significant – from academic advising, to remediation, to preventative counselling, to developmental programs – the standards of practice are seen as questionable (Keats & Laitsch, 2010). It is true that the attention to vocational issues in provincial guidance policies has been growing, but it does remain considerably different across the provinces (OECD, 2002). As detailed in the same OECD report, some provinces opt for career education courses, others offer time blocks during which the

information is passed along and in other provinces, career education is infused in the curriculum of various grades.

Despite the fact that guidance counselling in Canada presents some flaws in the program elaboration and delivery method, as previously stated, the public still has expectations towards guidance counsellors. For example, Canadian students and their parents rely on guidance counsellors, first and foremost, for guidance concerning postsecondary education (La Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière, 2003). Also, Dietsche (2013) found that over 80% of students rated working one-on-one with a guidance counsellor as the most helpful career planning resource. Unfortunately, with the current student-counsellor ratios reaching 1:750 for schools of 501 to 1000 students (Malatest, 2009), it is impossible to deliver guidance and counselling services to every student in their preferred method.

**The Training of Guidance Counsellors in Ontario.** The role of guidance counsellors in Ontario has followed the same trends as Canadian and American guidance and school counsellors. By the 1980s guidance counselling was fully established in Ontario's schools (Francis, 2005). Like guidance counsellors in most other provinces of Canada, guidance counsellors in Ontario were teachers who had received supplemental training in career and guidance. Although universities throughout Canada have been creating and revamping their graduate programs in guidance and counselling (Counselling Foundation of Canada, 2002), master's degrees are only mandatory in two provinces: Newfoundland and Québec (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012). Ontario's guidance counselling policies have kept up with guidance program trends emerging from the United States, unlike the training requirements of Ontario's guidance counsellors, which have not kept up with the training of American school counsellors.

Indeed, when comparing guidance counsellors in Ontario to their American counterpart, both groups share similar responsibilities and goals for students (See Table 1). There are however, major variances in training requirements (See Table 2). The standards to become a guidance counsellor in Ontario are substantially lower from those in the United States. To become a certified school counsellor in most American states, one must complete a master's degree in school counselling or a closely related field (ASCA, 2013). To become a guidance counsellor in Ontario, one must complete the teacher certification and the additional

undergraduate qualification course in ‘Guidance and Career Education’. The teacher must then be selected by a school’s administrators to carry out the career and guidance role within that school.

Table 1. Responsibilities of guidance counsellors in Ontario and school counsellors in the Unites-States.

	<b>Ontario</b> (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999)	<b>United States</b> (American School Counselor Association, 2005)
Current guidance program	Choices Into Action (1999)	ASCA National Model (2005)
Time distribution	Not specified	80% or more of school counsellor time should be spent delivering direct services
Student-counsellor ratios	1:385 (Canadian Counselling Association, 2007)	1:250
List of appropriate activities	14 appropriate activities listed	12 appropriate activities listed
List of inappropriate activities	4 inappropriate activities listed	11 inappropriate activities listed
Students’ competencies – 3 fields to develop:	(Specific skills and knowledge acquired through the guidance programs)	
Academic development	Set and achieve goals; successful independent learning	To be effective learners; understand the link between academic and the world of work
Career development	To make informed and appropriate choices to ensure successful transitions	Investigate the world of work in relation to self; employ strategies to achieve goals
Personal/social development	To demonstrate self-discipline; get along with others	Understand self and others; setting and achieving of goals through planning

Table 2. The training requirements of guidance counsellors in Ontario, Canada and school counsellors in the Unites-States.

	<b>Ontario</b> (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999)	<b>Canada, except Ontario</b> (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012)	<b>United States</b> (American School Counselor Association, 2005).
Teaching license required	Yes	Yes, in AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, PEI, SK, YT (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012)	Yes in 43 states
Graduate training required	No	Yes, in NL, QC (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012)	Yes in 47 states
Practicum hours required	Yes, only for teaching	Yes, in Québec and New-Brunswick for guidance counselling (Keats & Laitsch, 2010)	Yes in 34 states

The additional qualification courses are designed by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and mostly offered online by the Faculty of Education of various universities throughout Ontario. Three additional qualification courses in career and guidance are available, but only one is necessary to become a school counsellor (Ontario College of Teacher, (OCT), 2011). As

prescribed by the OCT, each part focuses on the same content but vary in depth. Part one is designed for the teacher to comprehend the delivery of Guidance and Career Education programs. Part two furthers the individual's comprehension related to career and guidance and to apply the integrated knowledge and skills in the design and delivery of guidance courses. Part three specializes the individual to become a leader of career and guidance within the school, the school board and the community.

**The Guidance and Career Education Program for Ontario.** The purpose, importance and approach of Ontario's career and guidance program for students is described in the Choices into Action (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999) policy document. The document states the importance of a carefully planned career and education program to foster students' ability to have educational, social and career success.

The comprehensive program provides students with opportunities to develop in three areas: personal development, interpersonal development and career development. The policy document involves parents, community partners, teachers, teacher-advisors, guidance counsellors and community mentors. Each partner has a specific role to play in the proposed comprehensive program. Students are to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to make successful life transitions, adapting to change and creating and seizing various opportunities.

Eight key components are the core of the career and guidance program: 1) Various competencies for students to achieve; 2) Career exploration activities; 3) Completion of a career studies course; 4) the annual elaboration of a career plan for each student, beginning in grade 7; 5) The pairing of a teacher-adviser to each student, beginning in grade 7; 6) Individual assistance; 7) A program advisor team; 8) A program evaluation every three years.

Choices into Action program also specify various methods that principals and teachers are to utilize to help students how to learn to plan a career. To effectively plan a career, students must acquire knowledge relating to the concept of lifelong learning, to develop a wide array of skills (including learning skills, social skills, social responsibility) and to apply their learning to their personal and work lives. The document also stresses the importance of meeting the needs of all students, including the exceptional students such as second language students and native students.

### **Conceptual Model of Professional Identity**

Individuals such as teachers, doctors and psychologists are professionals. They distinguish themselves from amateurs as they have developed specific methods, character and practice (Baker, 2000).

The titles of professionals are often reserved titles. This means the titles are protected by legislation that regulates who can use the title. For individuals to refer to themselves by a reserved title they must have the formal credentials established by the licensing association.

Identity is an individual's particular self-description that is recognized by others (Wong, 2002). There are many definitions and categorizations of identity since it is a fluid construct. One such categorization, which has been at the forefront of discussion for school counsellors, is professional identity.

Sweeney (1995) described the professional identity of a discipline as being distinguishable by the title, role and intention of a profession and should emerge from the unification of the profession's members. Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) summarized contemporary definitions of professional identity and recognized three main themes: self-labeling as a professional, integration of skills and attitudes as a professional and a perception of context in a professional community.

Professional identity is the outcome of lived experiences; it develops over time and through various influences within a determined context. Because school counsellors are tied to both the educational and counselling context, their professional loyalty to either remains unclear (Baker, 2000). This duality of allegiance, which can segregate school counsellors, is a defining trait of their professional identity that cannot be overlooked when discussing and describing the topic of identity.

Brott and Myers (1999) suggested that one's self-conceptualization as a type of professional (i.e. professional identity), guides the individual's professional beliefs and behaviors. According to the researchers, the professional identity of school counsellors serves as a frame of reference for carrying out professional roles, making ethical and significant decisions and developing as a professional. A school's counselling program and the services offered and rendered to students are direct reflections of the school counsellor's professional identity.

### **Professional Identity Development Theory**

There are various models of counsellor professional identity development (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Professional identity development is seen as a slow process that begins in training and continues throughout one's professional career. There is no final outcome of professional identity development as it is an ever-evolving process (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss's (2010) professional identity development theory consists of three developmental tasks that are completed by counsellors-in-training: definition of professional identity, responsibility of professional growth and transformation to systemic identity. Each task consists of a movement away from an external validation towards a self-validation. Counselors-in-training are supposed to progress through the tasks by means of coursework, experience and commitment.

Brott and Myers (1999) investigated school counsellor professional identity and discovered phases and conditions that allowed schools counsellors to develop personal guidelines for carrying out their functions. Performing roles were related to three conditions: professional experiences, other counsellors and the school context. The authors described the process of professional identity development as "being responsive to a variety of influences and the importance placed on those influences [conditions] by the individual counselor when performing in the role" (p.347). The research demonstrated that professional identity contributed to the role definition of school counsellors.

The works of Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) presented professional identity development as a phase and themes model. Their study investigated the identity of counsellors who were in different stages of their career. There are six phases to their model: the Lay Helper phase, the Beginning Student phase, the Advanced Student phase, the Novice Professional phase, the Experienced Professional phase and the Senior Professional phase. The authors further described the six phases on these eight topics: Definition of Stage, Central Task, Predominant Affect, Predominant Sources of Influence, Role and Working Style, Conceptual Ideas, Learning Process and Measure of Effectiveness and Satisfaction. Their findings suggest that counsellor development involves integrating training into work and then moving towards professional

individuation. The last step is a modest acceptance of one's self accompanied by satisfaction for their professional accomplishments. Ronnestad and Skovholt's model is of particular importance to this study as it presents a pretraining phase that accurately reflects some of the current study's participants.

### **Objectives and Research Question**

Some aspects of school counsellor professional identity, such as task definition (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Trolley, 2011) and professional identity development (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gray, & Carroll-McCollum, 2003), have been extensively studied in the United States. There are also Canadian studies that look at various aspects of guidance counselling in Canada (see Keats & Laitsch, 2010; Malatest, 2009; Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996; Webber & Mascari, 2006). The professional identities of other types of Canadian counsellors, such as counselling psychology doctoral students, have also been studied (Gazzola, De Stefano, Audet, & Thériault, 2011). There is, however, limited research on guidance counselling and guidance counsellors in Ontario, specifically, and none on that relate to the transition from teacher to guidance counsellor.

The professional identity ambiguity of school counsellors in the United States is well documented. As for the identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario, it can only be speculated that their professional identity endures the same fate as their American counterparts. This speculation stems from various issues. First, it is well indicated that both groups of counsellors follow a similar program outline and that both groups are struggling to properly implement their role within their school. Second, if American school counsellors are struggling to properly carry out their roles, despite their extensive training, how are Ontario's guidance counsellors faring, knowing their training is significantly limited? And lastly, is guidance counsellors' ongoing attachment to the teaching profession, affecting the way these professionals perceive themselves and their role within the school, if so, in what capacity?

The purpose of this research is to explore Ontario's guidance counsellors' perception of their professional identity. To achieve this, the study explores the participants' thoughts regarding their transition from teacher to guidance counsellor, their perception of their role and their feelings associated to being a guidance counsellor. Exploring these thoughts, feelings and perceptions allows us to understand how teachers adapt to and experience their guidance role, shedding light on their perceived professional identity. It is important to explore the professional

identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario, as it has yet to be studied. The following research question served as a guide for this qualitative research study: From the perspective of guidance counsellors, what experiences shape their professional identity?

### **Contributions to Knowledge**

Ultimately, this research is beneficial to students, guidance counsellors and the school community, as it attempts to understand how guidance counsellors perceive their professional identity. Such information can identify potential challenges to guidance counsellors' understanding of their role, their role execution and how they perceive themselves within the school community. From this research it is hoped that guidance counsellors may develop a better understanding of themselves and of their field. It may also have the potential to inform policy makers about the strengths and challenges of the profession in its current state.

### **Methodology**

#### **Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology**

The choice of either a quantitative or qualitative methodology is determined by the objective of the research. Whereas quantitative approaches are best suited to uncover trends or formulate explanations, qualitative approaches are relied upon to provide a deep understanding of a studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative research paradigm can be further characterized by its holistic-inductive nature and the acknowledgement that reality is subjective (Toma, 2006). As reality is subjective it is therefore multiple. Qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning each participant attributes to their experience within the studied phenomenon. Meaning, in a constructivist framework, is rooted in the socio-cultural context of each individual (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To adhere to such a framework is to attempt to understand the participants' perception of the phenomenon through their frame of reference and values (Toma, 2006). The researcher uses general, open-ended questions to gather the participants' subjective experience. This differs from the quantitative paradigm where hypotheses are postulated and tested (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

As the objective of this study was to capture the participants' thoughts on their professional identity as a guidance counsellor, the qualitative research paradigm is most appropriate. Creswell (1998) recognized five general traditions of qualitative research. One of these traditions is grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory methodology consists of systematic guidelines for carrying out inductive qualitative research (Strauss &

Corbin, 2004). The overarching goal of grounded theory is to elaborate an explanatory theory of social processes (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). However, in addition to the elaboration of a theory, Strauss & Corbin (2004) presented their systematic analysis guidelines as a vehicle to produce thick description or conceptual ordering. Conceptual ordering “is a method of organizing data into discrete categories by assessing the data’s properties or underlying meanings and then using these properties to categorize the data into groups” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 110).

Within the same framework as grounded theory methodology, researchers have presented thematic analysis as an adequate analytical method in itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative inquiry that allows for the identification of patterns or themes within data to reveal commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns or explanatory principles (Lapadat, 2010). However, unlike grounded theory analysis, thematic analysis is not directed towards theory development. Rather, it is geared towards producing in-depth themes that coherently represent the participants’ stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As with grounded theory methodology, thematic analysis can be used to produce conceptual ordering. This study utilized conceptual ordering through thematic analysis to explore the themes associated to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor in Ontario, as thematic analysis is appropriate to “reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Thematic analysis will allow the researcher to organize the data and extract major themes of the guidance counsellors’ perception of their professional identity.

### **Participants**

Convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) were used, as the research was specific to the context of French language high schools in Ontario. The author’s thesis supervisor referred participants who had participated in a different study. Participants also recommended colleagues who they thought were likely to participate and offer insight (see snowball sampling, Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Determining the sample size for a qualitative research is a matter of judgment in relation to the objective of the study (Sandelowski, 1995). Large samples are good for generalizability, while smaller samples yield more detailed accounts of the studied phenomenon (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Twelve participants were sufficient for the present study, which sought to describe the characteristics (themes) of a homogeneous sample population. The sample size was

sufficient to describe the essential features of the group, while identifying idiosyncrasies. This study did not intend on developing a full fledged theory of the studied phenomenon, but to identify commonalities within the group of participants. It was therefore not in the interest of the researcher to go beyond twelve participants.

The participants in the study were twelve school counsellors, eight women and four men, currently working on a full time basis in secondary schools in Ontario. All participants were certified by the Ontario College of Teachers and had at least completed the first additional qualification in career and guidance. Participants also needed a minimum guidance counselling experience of two years. This requirement for participation was to ensure that participants had time to further their understanding of the guidance counsellor's role and to have developed a certain level of comfort with executing these roles and tasks.

In total, four participants had completed a master's degree in school counselling or a closely related field. See table 3 for an overview of participants' demographic information.

All participants signed an informed consent form prior to the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at each participant's worksite. The interviews, that lasted approximately 75 minutes, were carried out by the researcher and audio recorded.

Table 3. Background of participants

Demographic variable	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	4		
Female	8		
Age of guidance counsellors		46.08	10.19
Years of experience as a teacher		10	3.9
Years of experience as a guidance counsellor		9.08	6.2
Number of participants who completed part 1	1		
Number of participants who completed part 1, part 2	1		
Number of participants who completed part 1, part 2, Specialist	6		
Number of participants who completed a master's degree in a field related to career and guidance counselling	4		

### Instruments

A demographic questionnaire was used to collect the participant's information regarding gender, years of experience, training, the number of students attending their school and the number of

school counsellors working in their school. Demographic information allows for further understanding of the context of the participants' experiences.

A semi-structured interview guide outlines specific topics to discuss during the interview and makes data collection systematic (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Four topics were discussed 1) teaching experience; 2) transition to school counselling; 3) the profession of school counselling in an Ontarian context; 4) professional identity of school counsellors. The semi-structured interview format allows for some flexibility with wording and question sequence, all the while offering consistency from one interview to the next (Karsenti & Savoie-Zajc, 2004).

To meet the specific objective of conceptualizing professional identity of school counsellors, an interview guide was developed. The primary researcher developed the interview guide based on evidence-based research (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010) and the input of his thesis supervisor who has expertise in the subject matter. The researcher's thesis supervisor also verified the interview guide to ensure accuracy, content validity and overall quality. Two pilot interviews with school counsellors-in-training were then conducted and audio recorded. Some questions were removed from the interview guide; others were modified in order to obtain answers in line with the studies' objectives. The transcripts were checked to ensure the comprehensiveness and content validity of the interview protocol. The interview guide evolved as participants' responses refined the questions for the subsequent interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis is a systemic and nonlinear process where themes appearing important to the studied phenomenon are identified across the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The overall process of data analysis, as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006), involves "moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data [being analyzed] and the analysis of [produced] data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). The main author completed the codification process of the data and his thesis supervisor served as an auditor. The auditing process included an independent codification of forty percent of the raw data. His thesis supervisor, to ensure the accuracy of the codification, meticulously reviewed the sixty percent of data, which had been coded by the main author. The process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was completed in 6 phases: 1) thorough familiarizing with the data; 2) elaborating an initial list of potentially pertinent codes; 3) searching for themes and sorting codes into their respective

theme; 4) reviewing themes to ensure intra and inter theme coherence; 5) defining and naming themes; 6) reporting the emerged themes from the data.

Because the interviews were conducted in French, the main author translated the verbatim into English. To protect the participants' identity, pseudonyms were used to identify them and identity compromising information, such as the names of schools, school boards and colleagues, were taken out of the verbatim.

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research design requires different measures of rigor than quantitative research. The term 'trustworthiness', emerging from the constructivist approach, commonly defines the standards of quality for qualitative inquiry (Toma, 2006). Bracketing in qualitative research can limit the potentially deleterious effects of the researcher's preconception on data gathering, analyzing and presenting (Tufford and Newman, 2012).

The use of triangulation through peer auditing (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) was used to confirm emerging codes and themes. The main author's thesis supervisor served as an auditor. The researcher-interviewer limited threats to internal validity through personal reflection and rich discussions (Marshall & Rossman, 1989) with his thesis supervisor, acknowledging the potential influence of personal history, values, knowledge and theoretical orientations.

Presenting a rich and accurate description of the participants' accounts increased the credibility of the study (Given & Saumure, 2008). Reporting and discussing contradictory accounts, as advocated by Marshall and Rossman (1989), encompassed a wider range of experiences and allowed for a more complete description of the studied phenomenon.

### **Results**

From the thematic analysis emerged various categories of experiences that contribute to the shaping of the participants' professional identities. These experiences were categorized into themes: (1) peer training and guidance, (2) contextual factors, (3) professional experience and (4) theoretical knowledge. Each of the four themes, and their sub-themes, are described and elaborated upon separately.

#### **Peer Training and Guidance: Learning the ropes**

The theme of peer training and guidance describes the essential responsibility of seasoned guidance counsellors in the training of teachers becoming guidance counsellors. When new guidance counsellors are requested to complete tasks, more experienced colleagues will provide

specific instructions on how to perform the task. Participants explain that although the tasks are not particularly complex, new guidance counsellors are often assigned duties for which they have no training. New guidance counsellors must therefore be guided through the process step by step. New guidance counsellors also require the support of their peers to guide and validate their counselling interventions.

**Peers Teaching the Role.** This subtheme describes the process by which new guidance counsellors learn what their role consists of. Because new guidance counsellors do not have a thorough knowledge of their new position, senior guidance counsellors explain which tasks need to be completed.

Participants described entering the profession with a general idea of which duties were theirs to complete, such as “counselling and course selection, helping with bursaries, career [and] postsecondary registration” (Phyllis). However, with minimal knowledge on how to carry out their role, participants confirmed relying on their peers’ guidance and leadership. Darren stated, “When you are the new kid on the block you say ‘OK, what’s next?’” As new guidance counsellors discover which tasks are theirs to complete, they will look to peers for practical instruction, as described by Andrew in the following statement: “I developed [role execution] here...with the people who were there...How to fill out an inscription; what do you do with a student from [another country]... and all of the other tasks a guidance counsellor does during a day.” Marilyn recalled relying on her colleague for guidance, as she prepared the graduating students’ transition by “organizing workshops, coordinating visits with different institutions, meeting with the students and verifying student files.” She further recalled: “I knocked on her [my colleague’s] door many times that year, and I was always greeted with a big smile.” Stacey also expressed how much her colleagues helped her during her transition: “...they were my mentors. I learned the job through them, which tasks were mine and which weren’t.”

**Peer Support.** Senior guidance counsellors are often relied upon to teach the new guidance counsellors how to perform various duties. Peer guidance and training is not limited to the repetitive and technical duties of guidance counsellors, such as scheduling and filling out registration forms. Peers also offer suggestions and insight on how to best support the development and well being of the students.

When she first became a guidance counsellor, Marilyn said that she could not answer all of the students’ questions. But with her “I’ll find you the answer philosophy!” she found answers

for her students. Marilyn said after that she would step out of her office go see her colleague: “I knocked often on her door that year.”

Angela offered a striking example of the relationship she had with her colleague in the beginning of her guidance counselling position: “...every time I had a student in my office I would say ‘OK. Hold on one minute’ and I would leave to go see my colleague: ‘Oh my god, she said she wants to commit suicide. What do I do? Help me.’” Angela also associated feelings of autonomy to a sense of competence: “I got it, I’m here”, when she could help students without consulting her colleague.

**Working with Colleagues.** Peer training and guidance impacted influenced the development of guidance counsellors of the current study. However, not all guidance counsellors in Ontario’s school share the guidance responsibilities with another guidance counsellor. According to participants, working without the direct support of a senior colleague would be challenging. Michael speculated: “If I am replaced, and this person has no experience, can you imagine the chaos? And this would be someone with the specialist [part of the additional qualification courses] that I’m talking about.” Darren specified that he would have relied on guidance counsellors from other schools for guidance: “If I had arrived alone at a school, I would have been on the phone with counsellors from other schools to know how things are done... alone, it wouldn’t be obvious.”

In summary, participants explained how senior guidance counsellors offered them significant guidance and training during their transition. More specifically, peers identified which administrative tasks needed to be completed and provided instruction on how to perform them. Participants also received guidance and training for specific counselling interventions with students. As two participants noted, a new guidance counsellor would be at a great disadvantage to be the new kid on the block without the help and guidance of senior counsellors.

### **Contextual Factors: Learning the Role by Meeting the Needs Within the School**

As demonstrated, guidance counsellors rely, in part, on their peers to guide them through the learning process of their role. However, becoming a guidance counsellor also involved discovering and learning the role simultaneously. These various requests to perform duties originated from many sources, such as teachers, students, parents, members of the community and administrators. Participants specified that requests were further determined by a school’s

particularities, such as financial resources, the students' needs, the school's tradition and the school administrators.

**Spontaneous Demands.** These demands are directed at guidance counsellors for various reasons. The study's participants offered example such as the arrival of a new student with a specific problematic, a parent arrives at school unannounced, the school board develops a new program or an administrator delegates a task, etc. These various requests must either be treated immediately or sometimes they end up on the to-do list.

Participants stated that the process of becoming a guidance counsellor included "discovering what you do [as a guidance counsellor] in the course of the job" (Andrew). As Erin explained, this can be attributed to the fact that guidance counsellors enter the profession with a vague notion of what the role entails and that "[a] new guidance counsellor has no idea what to do." For example, Janice specified learning what her role included "...within the first 5 days... you learn it when you're there."

When entering their role as guidance counsellors, participants were surprised to learn that their role would be determined by outside sources. Many participants felt that they had little control over their job, which was a contrast with their teaching position where they essentially controlled everything – from lesson plans, to assignments, to seating plans, etc. Although there is a provincial policy, it does not significantly influence the actual role of the guidance counsellor. In practice, this means that guidance counsellors in Ontario are expected to be flexible and open to completing a wide range of tasks, which are often beyond the scope of their role description. And these "[duties] can come from anywhere, Janice stated, a parent, a social worker, the principal." Stacey corroborated, stating that responding to various and punctual demands shape her role: "...the telephone rings, a parent arrives [at the school], the principal comes over [and] a grade 8 student wants to register [for high school]." Holly specified that her process of becoming a guidance counsellor involved learning to "deal with the unpredictable" nature of the position, which "took a while and caused... frustration." In practice, guidance counsellors end up being "at the heart the school" (Darren) and expected to know everything going on in the school.

**School Context.** The various requests that guidance counsellors receive are also shaped by a school's characteristics. A school's particularities, such as financial resources, the general student populations' needs, the school's tradition and can all influence the role of the guidance counsellor.

For instance, participants described the role of guidance counsellors in smaller schools as more diverse because of limited financial resources: “some schools have 1200 [students], here we are 400. The roles are different... we get by differently” (Stacey). Michael recalled working in a smaller school where he was the “COOP [teacher], guidance counsellor and teacher” all at once.

The general needs of the students also shape the role of the guidance counsellor. Stacey confirmed that: “different guidance counsellors do different things; it depends on the needs.” Angela identified the growing number of blended families in her community as a cause for increase in solicitation from students who are seeking counselling services to deal with family related issues. General and daily interactions with students were also found to be different from school to school due to various student population, as described by Andrew: “It’s certain that guidance counselling isn’t the same here as in other parts of the city.” He added that his students differed from students in other schools by their choice of courses and postsecondary options.

In regards to school tradition, participants explained that the role of the guidance counsellor was in part ingrained in the school’s legacy. Talking about school inscriptions and creating various documents, Andrew stated: “In certain schools, it’s the administrative assistants that do it... here I do it... It’s certain that it could be done by someone else.” Janice confirmed the experience with different examples: “in some schools, you [the guidance counsellor] are in charge of the graduating ceremony, elsewhere it is a teacher.” And again, by comparing her current administrative tasks to a previous one, she specified: “...at [the other high school] the student services’ secretary did a lot of things we do in our school.”

**School Administrator’s Understanding of Guidance Counselling.** Participants identified the administration as determinant of the role of guidance counsellors, and this for various reasons. Some administrators do not have an accurate view of what the guidance counsellors’ role is. Janice and Marilyn felt that some administrators viewed them as their assistant, in which case they would receive many administrative duties to complete. Andrew specified that when a new principal arrives their role can change and they “...have to adapt because he’s not like the previous one.” Some administrators are less involved with the guidance-counselling program and they let the guidance counsellors take the lead. James found that in such instances he had “the power to change things [for students]” since he had “the green light from administrators.” In contrast, some administrators considered themselves part of the guidance counselling services and would be over-involved. The limited knowledge these administrators

have of the guidance services are often either dated or altogether erroneous. This caused frustration with some participants (Michael, James) as they had to spend time educating and convincing administrators.

As demonstrated, guidance counsellors do not base their role on provincial guidelines or government policy. Rather, they react to the contextual demands naturally emerging from their milieu. These demands originate from many sources and are shaped by various characteristics of the school. Because the role of guidance counsellors follows and evolves with the school, the role of the guidance counsellor is different from school to school and varies from one community to the next.

### **Professional Experience**

This theme discusses the influence of the participants' previous experience. Participants brought forth their experience in teaching and the experience gained as guidance counsellors as being components of their professional identity. These two types of experiences each had different influence on the identity of participants. Namely, teaching experience developed their general understanding of student functioning. Guidance counselling experience was crucial to the development of counselling interventions.

**Teaching Experience.** All participants identified professional experience as important to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Holly listed, "my role on the student success team, my role as a teacher... my years of experience" as "most useful" in her development as guidance counsellor.

For eight participants, teaching was perceived as essential to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Angela reasoned that teaching before becoming a guidance counsellor contributed to her understanding of how the school and classroom functioned. She stated: "You have to teach. So much happens in a classroom that you can't understand if you never teach." Andrew echoed these sentiments stating that having been a teacher beforehand he had "a better understanding of the guidance counsellor's role within the school system."

Participants also felt they knew and understood the students better because of their teaching experience. Holly specified: "Being a teacher allowed me to see an array of situations that students can live in class and on a personal level." Participants believed they were in a better position to understand the impact of "behavioral issues in the classroom or a learning disability" (Darren), on a student. Priscilla also developed, as a teacher, an understanding of the possible

repercussions of withdrawing a student from the classroom: “You can’t keep a student for an hour at the same time every week or their teacher will be upset.”

Participants found that knowing and understanding the intricacies of teaching enriched their relationships with fellow teachers. For example, Angela stated “...knowing what it’s like to have students in a classroom and how you feel in different situations... You [the guidance counsellor] have to sympathize with teachers and students.” Stacey felt that guidance counsellors “do a better job because they’ve been in the classrooms. We are part of the gang, not just a counsellor on the sidelines.” She added: “The teacher who is tired, and can’t take it anymore because he has a tough group, he [the guidance counsellor] can understand that and listen to him.”

On the other hand, two participants did not find teaching to be essential to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor, albeit beneficial. Marilyn stated: “I understand evaluations, summative and formative, the levels, how things are done, the grades, the curriculum... But I don’t think it’s absolutely necessary to be a teacher to be a guidance counsellor.” Erin echoed these sentiments: “It’s not necessary to teach... I think that even if I hadn’t taught, I could do my work really well.”

**Guidance Counselling Experience.** This subtheme describes how experience acquired as a guidance counsellor participated in the development of their professional identity. In-service experience in guidance counselling also participated in the process of becoming a guidance counsellor since many roles are learnt “on the fly, while listening to students” (Darren). In-service learning was not limited to administrative tasks; they also developed their personal and career counselling techniques. Andrew discussed different counselling scenarios he had encountered and how he handled them, finally he summarized: “But I mean, it’s not complicated. You don’t learn that in university or in courses.”

Career counselling was also developed, in part, intuitively. Participants were asked how they acquired the skill set to provide career counselling to students. Marilyn explained: “Pretty much in the heat of the moment. ...Students leave my office and I’ve printed a bunch of things. They leave with their information. I would say I learned it because I am like that; it’s my style.” Holly also answered relying on the information from postsecondary institutions as the foundation of her career counselling, but she added: “Well... I work a lot with Career Cruising? Matchmaker, knowing the [postsecondary] programs. The open house at [local postsecondary

institutions]...It's mostly that way I learned." As demonstrated, for some participants, career counselling was mostly limited to information giving. The following statement offered by Marilyn summed it up: "I will do career counselling. How do I do it? By knowing what exists, what is there... the possibilities. And then by properly communicating it to the student."

Participants unanimously thought that professional experience had a positive impact on their process of becoming a guidance counsellor. The foremost experience, teaching, helped participants understand the dynamic of their work context. Experience acquired while in-service also shaped participants' process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Through in-service experience, participants developed their practices and intervention techniques.

### **Theoretical Knowledge: Contrasting Backgrounds**

Training was the most determinant identity forming influence for participants. This theme divides participants into two groups: those with graduate studies and those without. Because participants without graduate training felt their training to be inadequate, they relied on their teaching experience, their colleagues and their intuition to perform their role as guidance counsellors. They worked from an intuitive approach. Contrastingly, participants with a master's degree had a theoretical approach to career and guidance counselling. Such participants offered career and guidance counselling services based on scientific models. Participants with master's degree criticized the current training model of Ontario's guidance counsellors.

**An Intuitive Approach.** This subtheme depicts how participants without graduate studies developed their methods for role execution. It also discusses some of the limits of the additional qualification courses offered in career and guidance counselling.

Participants who strictly completed the additional qualifications courses thought that their professional training was at times poor or insufficient for various reasons. First, participants did not feel ready to take on the responsibilities of the role after their training: "I won't say that my additional qualification courses really prepared me" (Marilyn). Erin corroborated: "It's not because of the training I received [in the additional qualification courses] that I do what I do." Angela shared similar feelings: "Part one [of the additional qualification courses], it was really... no, it was terrible. It was academic and dissertations, silliness. No offense, I don't need that in my work."

Second, guidance counsellors are called upon to offer career and personal counselling services to students. Yet the additional qualification of many participants did not teach

counselling skills, as stated by Angela: “[W]hen we go to become qualified, not once did we talk about counselling.” Because universities offer different course content, some participants did receive training in counselling. However, such participants did not feel better prepared: “It’s not because you completed the specialist [course of the additional qualification] that you are able to do counselling. That girl who’s having an anxiety crisis, the other wants to commit suicide... not everyone can deal with that, even if you can answer it on paper” (Phyllis). Darren deplored the counselling training activities: “...different scenarios are presented and you explain how you would react... that isn’t worth much.”

With the limited pertinence, usefulness and depth of the course content, the participants’ personality became the grounds of their practice. Darren offered the following reflection: “Anybody can get the qualification, but it’s not anybody who can relate with the kids.” Indeed, participants relied on an innate predisposition towards helping professions and their professional experience to become guidance counsellors. These qualities are also valued within the actual Ontario guidance and school counselling system, over theoretical knowledge. This belief was further crystallized by the administrators’ selection process of new guidance counsellors. Administrators designate for the role of guidance counsellor because of their personalities rather than theoretical knowledge and competence in career and guidance counselling. Andrew recalled being allocated guidance periods: “I wasn’t chosen for my knowledge in the field, because I didn’t have much. But I think it was more a question of what should a guidance counsellor be like, in terms of interests and contact with the kids.” Stacey confirmed this and specified being chosen for her “way of being with students; how I treated and respected them... That, and because I am an organized person.”

**A Theoretical Approach.** Four of the twelve participants had completed a master’s degree in a field related to guidance and career counselling. A shared perception among those four participants was how the master’s degree training significantly impacted their process of becoming a guidance counsellor. This created a contrast with the eight participants who stated that the training acquired through the career and guidance additional qualification courses had little impact on their practice.

Graduate level coursework led participants to understand the importance of vocational development theory and specific counselling skills, as Priscilla stated: “The training I got during my master’s really helped me... Working as a guidance counsellor, I understand how important

the techniques are, even if they look easy.” Participants with a master’s degree believed that their role as guidance counsellors required certain depth, which could only be acquired through graduate studies. Michael shared this reflection: “you are not just there to give information. You are there to guide... but you have to know how to guide... If we don’t do it, we could be replaced by any technician who could do that work.”

Formal training was also utilized to interpret results from standardized testing: “The interpretation [of standardized tests] is different because you have some training which allows you to find things out. When you just have part 1, 2, 3 [of additional qualification courses] you just don’t have that” (Michael).

**Training Issues.** The four participants with a master’s degree identified two main issues with the guidance practice of guidance counsellors without graduate training. First, it is believed that such individuals are relying on good intentions to conduct career and guidance counselling. James asserted that it could be harmful to students. He stated: “Even with the intention of helping, if you don’t know how, you don’t have the tools, you can do more harm than good.”

Second, as guidance counsellors become comfortable with their role, a false sense of competence emerges over time. Participants with a master’s degree found this to be problematic, since guidance counsellors without graduate training do not fully appreciate the fundamentals of career and guidance counselling. This leads to delivering less than ideal services: “I think it’s the danger with someone who thinks they know a lot and will tell students ‘here’s what I think you could do, you’d be good at that.’ I hear it a lot” (Erin). In sum, Michael asked: “How can you offer students your best when you don’t have the necessary basic training?”

To conclude, formal training shaped the process of becoming a guidance counsellor for some participants. Training was a determining factor for participants with a master’s degree, as such participants operated quite differently from those with strictly the additional qualification courses as their formal training. Specifically, participants with a master’s degree based their role execution on the theory acquired during their training, while participants without graduate studies carried out their functions intuitively and by reproducing the methods of senior counsellors.

### **Scientific Journal Submission Guidelines**

The Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy (2013) has identified on its website guidelines for the submission of manuscripts. As detailed, the full-length article should not exceed 25 pages in length, excluding the title page, the abstract, figures, tables and

references. The manuscript must be double spaced with the text in 12-point Times New Roman font. The margins must be set to a least one-inch, on all sides.

The abstract, which is to be submitted in French and in English, must accompany each manuscript and be kept to a maximum of 100 words.

### **Article**

Perceptions of Be(com)ing a Guidance Counsellor in Ontario: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Perceptions of Be(com)ing a Guidance Counsellor in Ontario: A Qualitative Inquiry

### **Abstract**

In secondary schools in Ontario, career and guidance counselling is offered by a teacher who has completed additional undergraduate studies. The aim of this qualitative research was to explore the perception of professional identity of guidance counsellors' working in Ontario. Twelve guidance counsellors were interviewed: eight participants completed the required undergraduate studies and four had completed a master's degree in the field. The thematic analysis revealed four major themes that articulated and explained the guidance counsellors' professional identity: peer support, contextual factors, professional experience and theoretical knowledge. The article discusses the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

Dans les écoles secondaires de l'Ontario, les services de carrière et d'orientation sont offerts par un enseignant qui a complété des cours de qualification additionnelle. L'objectif de cette étude est d'étudier les enjeux et défis que portent la transition des enseignant qui se dirigent

vers les services d'orientation. Douze conseillers d'orientation ont été interviewés : huit participants avaient complété les ou des cours de qualification additionnelle alors que quatre participants avaient complété une maîtrise dans un domaine relié à l'orientation. L'analyse thématique des données révèle quatre thèmes qui articulent et expliquent l'identité professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation en Ontario : l'appui des collègues, le contexte de l'école, l'expérience professionnelle et la formation. L'article discute des limites de l'étude et offre des pistes pour des recherches futures.

### **Introduction**

Guidance and counselling services have been deemed indispensable for the academic, vocational and psychosocial growth of students in a knowledge-based society (Claus-Ehlers, Serpell & Weist, 2012; La Fondation canadienne pour l'avancement de la carrière, 2003; Van Esbroeck, 2002). It is well documented in research from the United States that school counsellors play a major role in students' lives. For example, school counsellors help students develop their understanding of the world of work (Baker, 2001; Hughes & Karp, 2004) while contributing to their overall success (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). School counsellors also act as frontline mental health professionals, sorting through a plethora of issues to properly refer students to various specialists (Borders, 2002). Zalaquett (2005) found that principals, who work with school counsellors on a daily basis, thought school counsellors had a positive impact on the behavioral and mental health development of their students.

Even though it has been demonstrated that school counsellors have a positive impact on students, researchers identified the absence of a clear professional identity to be a barrier preventing school counsellors from effectively delivering their guidance and counselling services (Baker, 2000; Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001; Wilkerson, 2009). Ultimately, the absence of a clear professional identity leaves school counsellors to prioritize non-counselling duties over direct counselling services (Baker, 2000).

Although the topic has not been directly studied in a Canadian context, some research pertaining to the role of guidance counsellors in Canada reveals characteristics of role and identity confusion. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2004) described guidance counselling in Canada (with the exception of Québec) as weakly professionalized. In a pan-Canadian study of guidance counsellors, Malatest (2009)

reported that Canadian guidance counsellors are well educated, but mostly in fields other than school and guidance counselling. In fact, Francis (2005) found that guidance counsellors were operating without a precise theoretical framework, basing their career and guidance practice on their previous teaching experience. Research has also demonstrated a discrepancy between the actual role of guidance counsellors in schools and the role outlined in the 'Choices into Action' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999) policy from the Ontario Ministry of Education (Dietsche, 2013; Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996).

Considering that research has identified professional identity ambiguity as a barrier to providing effective guidance services to students and that there are indications of such ambiguity within the Canadian context, this qualitative research aims to study the process of becoming a guidance counsellor in Ontario. Studying the process of becoming a guidance counsellor will shed light onto the identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario, as there is an intricate connection between the training and development of professionals and professional identity (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992).

### **Literature Review**

Professional identity has many definitions (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Brott & Myers, 1999; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) identified three recurrent themes in contemporary definition of professional identity: self-labeling as a professional, integrating specific knowledge and skills, and an attachment to a professional community. According to Brott and Myers (1999), a clear professional identity is essential for school counsellors as it serves as a frame of reference for executing work roles, making ethical decisions and guiding professional development. Harris (2009) found that a clear professional identity was linked to the effectiveness of school counsellors. In a qualitative study, professional identity was said to enrich interactions with students and lead school counsellors to the pursuit of greater professional competence (Henderson, Cook, Libby & Zambrano, 2006). In the same study, feelings of comfort with the profession and genuineness were associated with a clearly defined professional identity.

School counselling has been around for over a century. School counsellors are essential components of school systems. As previously stated, they hold a pivotal role in the development of students. It is therefore surprising that American school counsellors are still struggling to clearly define their professional identity (Johnson, 2000; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Studies

point to the profession's change of focus throughout its history (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009), the ambiguity of their role (Johnson, 2000) and a lack of self-advocacy (Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001) as causes to their professional identity ambiguity.

Professional identity ambiguity can lead to negative consequences for the students, the school community and the school counsellors themselves. First, for students, consequences are of two natures. The first nature of consequences stems from role confusion: when school counsellors are busy completing non-guidance tasks, students are deprived of their services (Sears & Granello, 2002). The second nature is consequences originating from school counsellors performing tasks that alter the perception students have of school counsellors. For instance, the discipline process is the function of the administration, as outlined in the American School Counselor Association National Model (ASCA, 2005) and in Ontario's Choices into Action policy document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). In practice, some school counsellors hold the responsibility of applying disciplinary measures (Baker, 2000). He also explained that students sometimes experience tension when approaching school counsellors because they think they are in trouble. When school counsellors taking on responsibilities concerning school discipline can impede their ability to develop encouraging counselling relationships (Kyle & DeVoss, 2011; Osborn, 1999).

Next, in regards to school counsellors themselves, professional identity confusion has been found to be a contributing factor to experiencing dissatisfaction in the workplace for some school counsellors (Baker, 2000; Falls & Nichter, 2007; Rayle & Adams, 2007). It has also been demonstrated that school counsellors with an unclear professional identity have a higher risk of emotional exhaustion, compared to other mental health professionals (Wilkerson, 2009). Murray (1995) also identified role ambiguity and confusion as a frequent precursor to conflict between school counsellors and other members of the school community.

Finally, for the school community, Myers, Sweeney and White (2002) noted that professional identity ambiguity has contributed to school counsellors' negative public image, which diminish the likeliness of students requesting school counselling services. In addition, Trolley (2011) explained that an unclear professional identity encumbers guidance counsellors who are advocating for the profession, as the counsellors themselves are struggling to clearly articulate their identity.

**Guidance counsellors in Canada.** As previously stated, related Canadian research does indeed suggest the presence of professional identity ambiguity for guidance counsellors. A revealing indication of this ambiguity may be the questionable importance attributed to career and guidance services within the role of Canadian guidance counsellors (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 2004). This fact is most significant when considering professional roles as defining factors in one's professional identity (Clemens, Milsom & Cashwell, 2009; Schoen, 1989). The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2004) also reported that the fundamental competencies of guidance counsellors were imprecise and their training was quite variable.

In a general overview of guidance counsellors in Canada, Keats and Laitsch (2010) noted that most guidance counsellors were in fact teachers with limited training in guidance counselling. These results supported the findings of the OECD (2004), which reported that career and guidance in Canada was often offered by a teacher with limited training. And as Baker (1994) discovered, teachers-turned-counsellors perceive the profession from a pedagogical point of view using more advising, tutoring and information giving responses, which creates counsellor-centered relationships. Keats and Laitsch (2010) expressed concern with students receiving poorly delivered mental health services, which ironically, was considered a top priority by 61% of guidance counsellors; twice as important as career (32%) and educational planning (25%) in the OECD's 2004 report.

Furthermore, Mustaine and Pappalardo (1996) found that guidance counsellors in Ontario would prefer to be doing more guidance related activities, but administrators are asking them to complete non-counselling duties. Dietsche (2013) studied the career planning of students in Ontario and noted that school counsellors were only spending 25% of their time on student career development.

The actual state of school and guidance counselling offered within Canada and the United States are strikingly different, despite being grounded in similar guidelines, as described in their respective policies (see Table 1). In Ontario, guidance counsellors are completing the role as expected by administrators, who have little knowledge of policy guidelines, and are operating without a theoretical framework (Francis, 2005). In comparison, school counsellors in the United States, who all follow the national standards of the American School Counsellor Association, are currently advocating for a clearer professional identity and are striving to eliminate discrepancies

between their actual roles and the roles described in the best practice models they studied in graduate training (Clemens, 2009).

**The Training of Guidance Counsellors in Ontario.** When comparing guidance counsellors in Ontario to their American counterpart, both groups share similar responsibilities and goals for students. There are however, major variances in training requirements. See Table 2 for an overview.

Indeed, the training requirements to become a guidance counsellor in Ontario are substantially lower from those in the United States. To become a certified school counsellor in the United States, one must complete a master's degree in school counselling or a closely related field (ASCA, 2013). In Ontario, after the teacher certification, additional undergraduate qualification courses in 'Guidance and Career Education' need to be completed to practice guidance counselling.

The additional qualification courses in career and guidance counselling and designed by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). The additional qualification courses are mostly offered online, by the Faculty of Education of various universities throughout Ontario. Three additional qualification courses in career and guidance are available, but only one is necessary to become a guidance counsellor (Ontario College of Teacher, (OCT), 2011). Although many universities in Ontario offer a master's degree in school and guidance counselling, they are not part of the mandatory training of guidance counsellors.

Some aspects of school counsellor professional identity, such as task definition (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Trolley, 2011) and professional identity development (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gray, & Carroll-McCollum, 2003), have been extensively studied in the United States. There are also Canadian studies that look at various aspects of guidance counselling in Canada (see Keats & Laitsch, 2010; Malatest, 2009; Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996; Webber & Mascari, 2006). There is, however, limited research on guidance counselling and guidance counsellors in Ontario, specifically. Currently, there is no research that has directly studied the process of becoming a guidance counsellor in Ontario or the development of their professional identity.

The professional identity ambiguity of school counsellors in the United States is well documented. When considering that guidance counsellors in Ontario are often teachers with little

training, who can more or less comply with their prescribed professional guidelines, it could be speculated that their professional identity endures the same fate as their American counterparts’.

It is important to explore the changes that occur to the professional identity of teachers who become guidance counsellors in Ontario, since there is little research on the topic. This study explores an aspect of Ontario’s guidance counsellors that has been identified as a challenge to similar professionals in other contexts. Ultimately, this research is beneficial to students, guidance counsellors and the school community, as it may uncover potential issues and challenges of the Ontario educational system.

The purpose of this research is to explore Ontario’s guidance counsellors’ perception of their professional identity. To achieve this, the study explores the participants’ thoughts regarding their transition from teacher to guidance counsellor, their perception of their role and their feelings associated to being a guidance counsellor. Exploring these thoughts, feelings and perceptions allows us to understand how teachers adapt to and experience their guidance role, shedding light on their perceived professional identity. It is important to explore the professional identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario, as it has yet to be studied. The following research question served as a guide for this qualitative research study: From the perspective of guidance counsellors, what experiences shape their professional identity?

### **Methodology**

The choice of either a quantitative or qualitative methodology is determined by the objective of the research. Whereas quantitative approaches are best suited to uncover trends or formulate explanations, qualitative approaches are relied upon to provide a deep understanding of a studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative research paradigm can be further characterized by its holistic-inductive nature and the acknowledgement that reality is subjective (Toma, 2006). As reality is subjective it is therefore multiple. Qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning each participant attributes to their experience with the studied phenomenon. Meaning, in a constructivist framework, is rooted in the socio-cultural context of each individual (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To adhere to such a framework is to attempt to understand the participants’ perception of the phenomenon through their frame of reference and values (Toma, 2006). In qualitative research, the researcher use general, open-ended questions to gather the participants’ subjective experience. This differs from the quantitative paradigm where hypotheses are postulated and tested (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

As the objective of this study is to explore guidance counsellor's perception of their professional identity, the qualitative research paradigm is most appropriate. Creswell (1998) recognized five general traditions of qualitative research. One of these traditions is grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory methodology consists of systematic guidelines for carrying out inductive qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 2004). The overarching goal of grounded theory is to elaborate an explanatory theory of social processes (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). However, in addition to the elaboration of theories, Strauss & Corbin (2004) presented their systematic analysis method as a vehicle to produce thick description or conceptual ordering. Conceptual ordering "is a method of organizing data into discrete categories by assessing the data's properties or underlying meanings and then using these properties to categorize the data into groups" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 110).

Within the same framework as grounded theory methodology, researchers have presented thematic analysis as an adequate analytical method in itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Thematic analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative inquiry that allows for the identification of patterns or themes within data to reveal commonalities, relationships, overarching patterns or explanatory principles (Lapadat, 2010). However, unlike grounded theory analysis, thematic analysis is not directed towards theory development. Rather, it is geared towards producing in-depth themes that coherently represent the participants' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As with grounded theory methodology, thematic analysis can be used to produce conceptual ordering. This study utilized conceptual ordering through thematic analysis to explore the themes associated to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor in Ontario, as thematic analysis is appropriate to "reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to organize the data and extract major themes relating to the professional identity of teachers who become guidance counsellors in Ontario.

### **Participants**

Convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009) were used, as the research was specific to the context of French language high schools in Ontario. With the written consent of the school boards, the author's thesis supervisor referred participants who had previously participated in a different study. Participants also recommended colleagues who were likely to participate and offer insight (see snowball sampling, Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

The participants in the study were twelve school counsellors, eight women and four men, currently working on a full time basis in secondary schools in Ontario. All participants were certified by the Ontario College of Teachers and had at least completed the first additional qualification in career and guidance. Participants also needed a minimum guidance counselling experience of two years. This requirement for participation was to ensure that participants had time to further their understanding of the guidance counsellor's role and to have developed a certain level of comfort with executing these roles and tasks (See Table 3).

Participants signed an informed consent form prior to the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at each participant's worksite. The approximately 75 minute interviews were carried out over a period of six weeks by the main researcher and were digitally recorded.

### **Instruments**

A demographic questionnaire was used to collect the participant's information regarding gender, years of experience, training, the number of students attending their school and the number of school counsellors working in their school (See Appendix A). To capture the participants' thoughts about their professional identity, a semi-structured interview guide was elaborated following an extensive literature review (See Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Beijjaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010). Two pilot interviews with school counsellors-in-training were conducted to refine the interview guide. Four topics were discussed 1) teaching experience; 2) transition to school counselling; 3) the profession of school counselling in Ontario; and 4) professional identity of school counsellors (See Appendix B).

### **Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis is a systemic and nonlinear process where themes appearing important to the studied phenomenon are identified across the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The overall process of data analysis, as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006), involves "moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data [being analyzed] and the analysis of [produced] data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). The main author completed the codification process of the data and his thesis supervisor served as an auditor. The auditing process included an independent codification of forty percent of the raw data. His thesis supervisor, to ensure the accuracy of the codification, meticulously reviewed the sixty percent of data, which had been coded by the main author. The process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was completed in 6 phases: 1) thorough familiarizing with the data; 2) elaborating an initial

list of potentially pertinent codes; 3) searching for themes and sorting codes into their respective theme; 4) reviewing themes to ensure intra and inter theme coherence; 5) defining and naming themes; 6) reporting the emerged themes from the data.

Because the interviews were conducted in French, the main author translated the verbatim into English. To protect the participants' identity, pseudonyms were used to identify them and identity compromising information, such as the names of schools, school boards and colleagues, were taken out of the verbatim.

## **Results**

From the thematic analysis emerged various categories of experiences that contribute to the shaping of the participants' professional identities. These experiences were categorized into themes: (1) peer training and guidance, (2) contextual factors, (3) professional experience and (4) theoretical knowledge. Each of the four themes, and their sub-themes, are described and elaborated upon separately.

### **Peer Training and Guidance: Learning the ropes**

The theme of peer training and guidance describes the essential responsibility of seasoned guidance counsellors in the training of teachers becoming guidance counsellors. When new guidance counsellors are requested to complete tasks, more experienced colleagues will provide specific instructions on how to perform the task. Participants explain that although the tasks are not particularly complex, new guidance counsellors are often assigned duties for which they have no training. New guidance counsellors must therefore be guided through the process step by step. New guidance counsellors also require the support of their peers to guide and validate their counselling interventions.

**Peers Teaching the Role.** This subtheme describes the process by which new guidance counsellors learn what their role consists of. Because new guidance counsellors do not have a thorough knowledge of their new position, senior guidance counsellors explain which tasks need to be completed.

Participants described entering the profession with a general idea of which duties were theirs to complete, such as "counselling and course selection, helping with bursaries, career [and] postsecondary registration" (Phyllis). However, with minimal knowledge on how to carry out their role, participants confirmed relying on their peers' guidance and leadership. Darren stated, "When you are the new kid on the block you say 'OK, what's next?'" As new guidance

counsellors discover which tasks are theirs to complete, they will look to peers for practical instruction, as described by Andrew in the following statement: “I developed [role execution] here...with the people who were there...How to fill out an inscription; what do you do with a student from [another country]... and all of the other tasks a guidance counsellor does during a day.” Marilyn recalled relying on her colleague for guidance, as she prepared the graduating students’ transition by “organizing workshops, coordinating visits with different institutions, meeting with the students and verifying student files.” She further recalled: “I knocked on her [my colleague’s] door many times that year, and I was always greeted with a big smile.” Stacey also expressed how much her colleagues helped her during her transition: “...they were my mentors. I learned the job through them, which tasks were mine and which weren’t.”

**Peer Support.** Senior guidance counsellors are often relied upon to teach the new guidance counsellors how to perform various duties. Peer guidance and training is not limited to the repetitive and technical duties of guidance counsellors, such as scheduling and filling out registration forms. Peers also offer suggestions and insight on how to best support the development and well being of the students.

When she first became a guidance counsellor, Marilyn said that she could not answer all of the students’ questions. But with her “I’ll find you the answer philosophy!” she found answers for her students. Marilyn said after that she would step out of her office go see her colleague: “I knocked often on her door that year.”

Angela offered a striking example of the relationship she had with her colleague in the beginning of her guidance counselling position: “...every time I had a student in my office I would say ‘OK. Hold on one minute’ and I would leave to go see my colleague: ‘Oh my god, she said she wants to commit suicide. What do I do? Help me.’” Angela also associated feelings of autonomy to a sense of competence: “I got it, I’m here”, when she could help students without consulting her colleague.

**Working with Colleagues.** Peer training and guidance impacted influenced the development of guidance counsellors of the current study. However, not all guidance counsellors in Ontario’s school share the guidance responsibilities with another guidance counsellor. According to participants, working without the direct support of a senior colleague would be challenging. Michael speculated: “If I am replaced, and this person has no experience, can you imagine the chaos? And this would be someone with the specialist [part of the additional

qualification courses] that I'm talking about." Darren specified that he would have relied on guidance counsellors from other schools for guidance: "If I had arrived alone at a school, I would have been on the phone with counsellors from other schools to know how things are done... alone, it wouldn't be obvious."

In summary, participants explained how senior guidance counsellors offered them significant guidance and training during their transition. More specifically, peers identified which administrative tasks needed to be completed and provided instruction on how to perform them. Participants also received guidance and training for specific counselling interventions with students. As two participants noted, a new guidance counsellor would be at a great disadvantage to be the new kid on the block without the help and guidance of senior counsellors.

### **Contextual Factors: Learning the Role by Meeting the Needs Within the School**

As demonstrated, guidance counsellors rely, in part, on their peers to guide them through the learning process of their role. However, becoming a guidance counsellor also involved discovering and learning the role simultaneously. These various requests to perform duties originated from many sources, such as teachers, students, parents, members of the community and administrators. Participants specified that requests were further determined by a school's particularities, such as financial resources, the students' needs, the school's tradition and the school administrators.

**Spontaneous Demands.** These demands are directed at guidance counsellors for various reasons. The study's participants offered example such as the arrival of a new student with a specific problematic, a parent arrives at school unannounced, the school board develops a new program or an administrator delegates a task, etc. These various requests must either be treated immediately or sometimes they end up on the to-do list.

Participants stated that the process of becoming a guidance counsellor included "discovering what you do [as a guidance counsellor] in the course of the job" (Andrew). As Erin explained, this can be attributed to the fact that guidance counsellors enter the profession with a vague notion of what the role entails and that "[a] new guidance counsellor has no idea what to do." For example, Janice specified learning what her role included "...within the first 5 days... you learn it when you're there."

When entering their role as guidance counsellors, participants were surprised to learn that their role would be determined by outside sources. Many participants felt that they had little

control over their job, which was a contrast with their teaching position where they essentially controlled everything – from lesson plans, to assignments, to seating plans, etc. Although there is a provincial policy, it does not significantly influence the actual role of the guidance counsellor. In practice, this means that guidance counsellors in Ontario are expected to be flexible and open to completing a wide range of tasks, which are often beyond the scope of their role description. And these “[duties] can come from anywhere, Janice stated, a parent, a social worker, the principal.” Stacey corroborated, stating that responding to various and punctual demands shape her role: “...the telephone rings, a parent arrives [at the school], the principal comes over [and] a grade 8 student wants to register [for high school].” Holly specified that her process of becoming a guidance counsellor involved learning to “deal with the unpredictable” nature of the position, which “took a while and caused... frustration.” In practice, guidance counsellors end up being “at the heart the school” (Darren) and expected to know everything going on in the school.

**School Context.** The various requests that guidance counsellors receive are also shaped by a school’s characteristics. A school’s particularities, such as financial resources, the general student populations’ needs, the school’s tradition and can all influence the role of the guidance counsellor.

For instance, participants described the role of guidance counsellors in smaller schools as more diverse because of limited financial resources: “some schools have 1200 [students], here we are 400. The roles are different... we get by differently” (Stacey). Michael recalled working in a smaller school where he was the “COOP [teacher], guidance counsellor and teacher” all at once.

The general needs of the students also shape the role of the guidance counsellor. Stacey confirmed that: “different guidance counsellors do different things; it depends on the needs.” Angela identified the growing number of blended families in her community as a cause for increase in solicitation from students who are seeking counselling services to deal with family related issues. General and daily interactions with students were also found to be different from school to school due to various student population, as described by Andrew: “It’s certain that guidance counselling isn’t the same here as in other parts of the city.” He added that his students differed from students in other schools by their choice of courses and postsecondary options.

In regards to school tradition, participants explained that the role of the guidance counsellor was in part ingrained in the school’s legacy. Talking about school inscriptions and creating various documents, Andrew stated: “In certain schools, it’s the administrative assistants

that do it... here I do it... It's certain that it could be done by someone else." Janice confirmed the experience with different examples: "in some schools, you [the guidance counsellor] are in charge of the graduating ceremony, elsewhere it is a teacher." And again, by comparing her current administrative tasks to a previous one, she specified: "...at [the other high school] the student services' secretary did a lot of things we do in our school."

**School Administrator's Understanding of Guidance Counselling.** Participants identified the administration as determinant of the role of guidance counsellors, and this for various reasons. Some administrators do not have an accurate view of what the guidance counsellors' role is. Janice and Marilyn felt that some administrators viewed them as their assistant, in which case they would receive many administrative duties to complete. Andrew specified that when a new principal arrives their role can change and they "...have to adapt because he's not like the previous one." Some administrators are less involved with the guidance-counselling program and they let the guidance counsellors take the lead. James found that in such instances he had "the power to change things [for students]" since he had "the green light from administrators." In contrast, some administrators considered themselves part of the guidance counselling services and would be over-involved. The limited knowledge these administrators have of the guidance services are often either dated or altogether erroneous. This caused frustration with some participants (Michael, James) as they had to spend time educating and convincing administrators.

As demonstrated, guidance counsellors do not base their role on provincial guidelines or government policy. Rather, they react to the contextual demands naturally emerging from their milieu. These demands originate from many sources and are shaped by various characteristics of the school. Because the role of guidance counsellors follows and evolves with the school, the role of the guidance counsellor is different from school to school and varies from one community to the next.

### **Professional Experience and Background**

This theme discusses the influence of the participants' previous experience. Participants brought forth their experience in teaching and the experience gained as guidance counsellors as being components of their professional identity. These two types of experiences each had different influence on the identity of participants. Namely, teaching experience developed their

general understanding of student functioning. Guidance counselling experience was crucial to the development of counselling interventions.

**Teaching Experience.** All participants identified professional experience as important to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Holly listed, “my role on the student success team, my role as a teacher... my years of experience” as “most useful” in her development as guidance counsellor.

For eight participants, teaching was perceived as essential to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Angela reasoned that teaching before becoming a guidance counsellor contributed to her understanding of how the school and classroom functioned. She stated: “You have to teach. So much happens in a classroom that you can’t understand if you never teach.” Andrew echoed these sentiments stating that having been a teacher beforehand he had “a better understanding of the guidance counsellor’s role within the school system.”

Participants also felt they knew and understood the students better because of their teaching experience. Holly specified: “Being a teacher allowed me to see an array of situations that students can live in class and on a personal level.” Participants believed they were in a better position to understand the impact of “behavioral issues in the classroom or a learning disability” (Darren), on a student. Priscilla also developed, as a teacher, an understanding of the possible repercussions of withdrawing a student from the classroom: “You can’t keep a student for an hour at the same time every week or their teacher will be upset.”

Participants found that knowing and understanding the intricacies of teaching enriched their relationships with fellow teachers. For example, Angela stated “...knowing what it’s like to have students in a classroom and how you feel in different situations... You [the guidance counsellor] have to sympathize with teachers and students.” Stacey felt that guidance counsellors “do a better job because they’ve been in the classrooms. We are part of the gang, not just a counsellor on the sidelines.” She added: “The teacher who is tired, and can’t take it anymore because he has a tough group, he [the guidance counsellor] can understand that and listen to him.”

On the other hand, two participants did not find teaching to be essential to the process of becoming a guidance counsellor, albeit beneficial. Marilyn stated: “I understand evaluations, summative and formative, the levels, how things are done, the grades, the curriculum... But I don’t think it’s absolutely necessary to be a teacher to be a guidance counsellor.” Erin echoed

these sentiments: “It’s not necessary to teach... I think that even if I hadn’t taught, I could do my work really well.”

**Guidance Counselling Experience.** This subtheme describes how experience acquired as a guidance counsellor participated in the development of their professional identity. In-service experience in guidance counselling also participated in the process of becoming a guidance counsellor since many roles are learnt “on the fly, while listening to students” (Darren). In-service learning was not limited to administrative tasks; they also developed their personal and career counselling techniques. Andrew discussed different counselling scenarios he had encountered and how he handled them, finally he summarized: “But I mean, it’s not complicated. You don’t learn that in university or in courses.”

Career counselling was also developed, in part, intuitively. Participants were asked how they acquired the skill set to provide career counselling to students. Marilyn explained: “Pretty much in the heat of the moment. ...Students leave my office and I’ve printed a bunch of things. They leave with their information. I would say I learned it because I am like that; it’s my style.” Holly also answered relying on the information from postsecondary institutions as the foundation of her career counselling, but she added: “Well... I work a lot with Career Cruising? Matchmaker, knowing the [postsecondary] programs. The open house at [local postsecondary institutions]...It’s mostly that way I learned.” As demonstrated, for some participants, career counselling was mostly limited to information giving. The following statement offered by Marilyn summed it up: “I will do career counselling. How do I do it? By knowing what exists, what is there... the possibilities. And then by properly communicating it to the student.”

Participants unanimously thought that professional experience had a positive impact on their process of becoming a guidance counsellor. The foremost experience, teaching, helped participants understand the dynamic of their work context. Experience acquired while in-service also shaped participants’ process of becoming a guidance counsellor. Through in-service experience, participants developed their practices and intervention techniques.

### **Theoretical Knowledge: Contrasting Backgrounds**

Training was the most determinant identity forming influence for participants. This theme divides participants into two groups: those with graduate studies and those without. Because participants without graduate training felt their training to be inadequate, they relied on their teaching experience, their colleagues and their intuition to perform their role as guidance

counsellors. They worked from an intuitive approach. Contrastingly, participants with a master's degree had a theoretical approach to career and guidance counselling. Such participants offered career and guidance counselling services based on scientific models. Participants with master's degree criticized the current training model of Ontario's guidance counsellors.

**An Intuitive Approach.** This subtheme depicts how participants without graduate studies developed their methods for role execution. It also discusses some of the limits of the additional qualification courses offered in career and guidance counselling.

Participants who strictly completed the additional qualifications courses thought that their professional training was at times poor or insufficient for various reasons. First, participants did not feel ready to take on the responsibilities of the role after their training: "I won't say that my additional qualification courses really prepared me" (Marilyn). Erin corroborated: "It's not because of the training I received [in the additional qualification courses] that I do what I do." Angela shared similar feelings: "Part one [of the additional qualification courses], it was really... no, it was terrible. It was academic and dissertations, silliness. No offense, I don't need that in my work."

Second, guidance counsellors are called upon to offer career and personal counselling services to students. Yet the additional qualification of many participants did not teach counselling skills, as stated by Angela: "[W]hen we go to become qualified, not once did we talk about counselling." Because universities offer different course content, some participants did receive training in counselling. However, such participants did not feel better prepared: "It's not because you completed the specialist [course of the additional qualification] that you are able to do counselling. That girl who's having an anxiety crisis, the other wants to commit suicide... not everyone can deal with that, even if you can answer it on paper" (Phyllis). Darren deplored the counselling training activities: "...different scenarios are presented and you explain how you would react... that isn't worth much."

With the limited pertinence, usefulness and depth of the course content, the participants' personality became the grounds of their practice. Darren offered the following reflection: "Anybody can get the qualification, but it's not anybody who can relate with the kids." Indeed, participants relied on an innate predisposition towards helping professions and their professional experience to become guidance counsellors. These qualities are also valued within the actual Ontario guidance and school counselling system, over theoretical knowledge. This belief was

further crystallized by the administrators' selection process of new guidance counsellors.

Administrators designate for the role of guidance counsellor because of their personalities rather than theoretical knowledge and competence in career and guidance counselling. Andrew recalled being allocated guidance periods: "I wasn't chosen for my knowledge in the field, because I didn't have much. But I think it was more a question of what should a guidance counsellor be like, in terms of interests and contact with the kids." Stacey confirmed this and specified being chosen for her "way of being with students; how I treated and respected them... That, and because I am an organized person."

**A Theoretical Approach.** Four of the twelve participants had completed a master's degree in a field related to guidance and career counselling. A shared perception among those four participants was how the master's degree training significantly impacted their process of becoming a guidance counsellor. This created a contrast with the eight participants who stated that the training acquired through the career and guidance additional qualification courses had little impact on their practice.

Graduate level coursework led participants to understand the importance of vocational development theory and specific counselling skills, as Priscilla stated: "The training I got during my master's really helped me... Working as a guidance counsellor, I understand how important the techniques are, even if they look easy." Participants with a master's degree believed that their role as guidance counsellors required certain depth, which could only be acquired through graduate studies. Michael shared this reflection: "you are not just there to give information. You are there to guide... but you have to know how to guide... If we don't do it, we could be replaced by any technician who could do that work."

Formal training was also utilized to interpret results from standardized testing: "The interpretation [of standardized tests] is different because you have some training which allows you to find things out. When you just have part 1, 2, 3 [of additional qualification courses] you just don't have that" (Michael).

**Training Issues.** The four participants with a master's degree identified two main issues with the guidance practice of guidance counsellors without graduate training. First, it is believed that such individuals are relying on good intentions to conduct career and guidance counselling. James asserted that it could be harmful to students. He stated: "Even with the intention of helping, if you don't know how, you don't have the tools, you can do more harm than good."

Second, as guidance counsellors become comfortable with their role, a false sense of competence emerges over time. Participants with a master's degree found this to be problematic, since guidance counsellors without graduate training do not fully appreciate the fundamentals of career and guidance counselling. This leads to delivering less than ideal services: "I think it's the danger with someone who thinks they know a lot and will tell students 'here's what I think you could do, you'd be good at that.' I hear it a lot" (Erin). In sum, Michael asked: "How can you offer students your best when you don't have the necessary basic training?"

To conclude, formal training shaped the process of becoming a guidance counsellor for some participants. Training was a determining factor for participants with a master's degree, as such participants operated quite differently from those with strictly the additional qualification courses as their formal training. Specifically, participants with a master's degree based their role execution on the theory acquired during their training, while participants without graduate studies carried out their functions intuitively and by reproducing the methods of senior counsellors.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the process of becoming a guidance counsellor in Ontario. From the analysis of the qualitative research emerged four main themes that showed that guidance counsellor education makes a significant difference in the way guidance counsellors perceive their role and carry out their functions. For the majority of participants, the guidance counsellors without graduate training, becoming a guidance counsellor was a superfluous process consisting of changing their professional focus from teaching to mostly helping students organize their transition out of high school.

The principal findings of the present study indicated that participants did not have any ambiguity with their identity as guidance counsellors. However, it was striking to see the emergence of two different professional identities: one for participants with a master's degree and a distinct identity for participants without graduate training. The first group described a professional identity that was very much related to career and guidance counsellors. The latter group indicated quite clearly that they were *teachers with a different role within the school*. The fact that some guidance counsellors in Ontario still identify strongly with the teaching profession is consistent with the findings of the OECD (2004) who described guidance counsellors in Canada as weakly professionalized and the findings of Keats and Laitsch (2010) who identified the same guidance counsellors as teachers with limited training in guidance counselling. Current

scientific data from Canada has yet to differentiate the two groups of guidance counsellors. This distinction was of significant importance to the participants.

Because two independent categories of guidance counsellors emerged, it seems appropriate to first discuss them separately. I will thereafter discuss their commonalities and finally compare their situation to American school counsellors.

On the outset, it was apparent that participants without graduate training perceived their role differently from the intention of the Ontario's Ministry of Education. Such participants described the job of guidance counsellors as responding to various role expectations, instead of implementing a full guidance program as described in Choices into Action (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). Participants did not appreciate the difference in the actual services rendered to students and the potential benefits of a fully implemented guidance program. This can mostly be attributed to the fact that their training failed to demonstrate the rewards of a theoretically bound guidance program. However, participants did perceive their role to be burdened by administrative duties, as had noted Mustaine and Pappalardo (1996), and other non-counselling related tasks, as indicated in the research of Dietsche (2013). Nonetheless, as one participant with graduate training stated, guidance counsellors in Ontario have limited resources to service students differently.

The main issue, as indicated by participants, was related to training rather than professional identity. Indeed, participants without master's degree acknowledged their inability to properly carry out some of the duties expected of them, such as personal counselling and crisis intervention, as they have insufficient training and skill. Consistent with the findings of Francis (2005) who determined that guidance counsellors in Ontario were operating without a theoretical framework, participants in the present study were unaware of their limited competence in career and guidance counselling and relied on intuition to provide such services.

Although participants approached roles for which they had limited training as challenges, the problem has further implications. Namely, Ontario guidance counsellors without graduate training cannot question the role expected of them by the school system, since they do not have the objective references to evaluate the appropriateness of their expected role.

The fact that guidance counsellors without graduate training based their practice on intuition and copying the behavior other guidance counsellors was highlighted by participants with master's degrees, who identified gaps in their colleagues' training and expressed concern

with some services that students are receiving. This is a danger that Baker (1994) identified among teachers-turned-counsellors, who tend to resort to advice and information giving.

On the other hand, participants with graduate studies described relying on their graduate training to carry out various duties, such as analyzing various tests or conducting interviews with students. As a matter of fact, the demeanor of the four participants who had completed graduate studies resembled their American counterparts, as their practice was also grounded in theoretical constructs. Participants with graduate training based their interventions on theoretical knowledge and carried them out with the various skills and tools acquired during training. They also have the means to evaluate their practice, through objective measures.

Although guidance counsellors in Ontario, with and without graduate training, are not afflicted with professional identity ambiguity like their American counterparts, both groups of counsellors share the issue of an imprecise role definition. The main difference however between American school counsellors and guidance counsellors in Ontario lies in their perception of reality. While American school counsellors are criticizing the faulty implementation of their role within the school (Baker, 2001; Bringman, Mueller & Lee, 2010; Sears & Granello, 2002), Ontario guidance counsellors are embracing the diversity of their role as a particularity of their job. What is perceived as an issue relating to an unclear professional identity by American school counsellors is simply the organization of guidance counselling in Ontario.

Albeit American school counsellors are currently required to complete various tasks unrelated to the guidance program (Johnson, 2000), they are also striving for a unified professional identity and trying to educate the school community (Trolley, 2011). Contrastingly, guidance counsellors in Ontario are accepting the role that emerges from the school environment without questioning if their current role is best serving students and the school community.

### **Limitations**

The study's participants were asked to reflect upon their perception of professional identity. More precisely, participants explored their thoughts on their role, their role execution, and their transition from teacher to guidance counsellor. It must be considered that beliefs, feelings and attitudes can change over time. The participants' thoughts can only represent the time at which they were recorded.

Variability in the interpretations of the results is inherent to qualitative research. Despite precautionary measures, such as stating researcher preconceptions and analytical auditing, researcher biases can affect the findings and the identified themes may be interpreted variously.

The interview guide was specifically elaborated to meet the specific needs of this study, which is not recommended (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Although the interview guide was based on other interview guides from evidence-based research and expert opinion, it is possible that the instrument presents validity and objectivity issues.

Thematic analysis is not widely recognized as a legitimate research method, despite it being commonly used for grounded theory and phenomenology analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This limitation cautions the reader to interpret the results as themes describing the perception of twelve guidance counsellors' professional identity, and not a standalone description of the guidance counsellor professional identity.

The study compared the guidance counsellors without graduate training to those with a master's degree. Because the number of guidance counsellors with a master's degree was low (four) it is possible that their accounts are not representative of the Ontario's general population of guidance counsellors with that educational background.

Lastly, the transferability of the results may be restricted as the sample population was homogeneously francophone and limited to a specific area of the province. Also, because all participants worked in tandem with another guidance counsellor, the emerging themes could have been different if participants had been the sole service provider for their school.

### **Implications for Guidance Counsellors**

The findings of the study could have implications for the training of guidance counsellors and in turn, how to best meet students' needs. If guidance counsellors are to offer valuable services, they ought to have knowledge and skill to support the students in their various needs. Although guidance counsellors are currently tending to the needs of students and the school community, there must to be an assured minimum level of competence to properly service students and to decrease the potential for harmful interventions. Competence could be attained through various means, i.e. master's degrees, more significant additional qualification courses, or a new training program that is obtained after the completion of the bachelor's degree in education.

This minimum level of competence is greatly needed as guidance counsellors are increasingly called upon to offer specialized services, such as brief personal counselling and crisis intervention. Although the participants without graduate training mostly proceed with caution in offering these services, the role expected of guidance counsellors are often outside their limits of competence. These results have the potential to inform policy makers of the limits of the current training structure for guidance counsellors and of the guidance program implementation in Ontario.

### **Conclusion**

Guidance counsellors in Ontario are striving to help students and the school community to their full capacity. The current training system is, however, limiting their potential impact on students, as the training standards to access the profession are relatively low. If guidance counsellors are not fulfilling their duties in the prescribed way, we should seek to explain their shortcomings by looking at the education system in place.

In regards to the professional identity, what seems to be an issue of professional identity for school counsellors in the United States, who are also not delivering their career and guidance services as describe in current American models, is an issue relevant to training for guidance counsellors in Ontario. Guidance counsellors in Ontario are conforming to the role expectations and adapting to a new context by relying on their previous experience. Ultimately, American school counsellors are asking ‘why?’ in reference to the role expected of them and guidance counsellors in Ontario are asking ‘how?’ as they try to cater to the needs of the students with their more or less relevant skill set and knowledge base.

Further research is needed to verify the results with different guidance counsellor populations. Further research from the students’ point of view concerning the services they receive from guidance counsellors would also fill an evident gap in the available literature.

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Table 1.

Responsibilities and goals for students for guidance counsellors in Ontario and school counsellors in the Unites-States.

	<b>Ontario</b> (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999)	<b>United States</b> (American School Counselor Association, 2005)
Current guidance program	Choices Into Action (1999)	ASCA National Model (2005)
List of appropriate activities	14 appropriate activities listed	12 appropriate activities listed
List of inappropriate activities	4 inappropriate activities listed	11 inappropriate activities listed
Three areas of students development	Specific goals and skills acquired through the guidance programs:	
Academic development	Set and achieve goals; successful independent learning	To be effective learners; understand the link between academic and the world of work
Career development	To make informed and appropriate choices to ensure successful transitions	Investigate the world of work in relation to self; employ strategies to achieve goals
Personal/social development	To demonstrate self-discipline; get along with others	Understand self and others; setting and achieving of goals through planning

Table 2.

The training requirements of guidance counsellors in Ontario, Canada and school counsellors in the Unites-States.

Table 2. The training requirements of guidance counsellors in Ontario, Canada and school counsellors in the Unites-States.

	<b>Ontario</b> (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999)	<b>Canada, except Ontario</b> (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012)	<b>United States</b> (American School Counselor Association, 2005).
Teaching license	Yes	Yes, in AB, BC, MB, NB, NL, NS, PEI, SK, YT (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012)	Yes in 43 states
Graduate training	No	Yes, in NL, QC	Yes in 47 states

Practicum hours	Yes, only for teaching	(Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2012) Yes, in Québec and New-Brunswick for guidance counselling (Keats & Laitsch, 2010)	Yes in 34 states
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Table 3.  
Background of participants

Demographic variable	Total	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	4		
Female	8		
Age of guidance counsellors		46.08	10.19
Years of experience as a teacher		10	3.9
Years of experience as a guidance counsellor		9.08	6.2
Number of participants who completed part 1	1		
Number of participants who completed part 1, part 2	1		
Number of participants who completed part 1, part 2, Specialist	6		
Number of participants who completed a master's degree in a field related to career and guidance counselling	4		

## Appendix A

### *Données démographiques*

1. Sexe et âge \_\_\_\_\_
2. Années d'expérience en enseignement \_\_\_\_\_
3. Années d'expérience en orientation \_\_\_\_\_
4. Premier baccalauréat complété et année \_\_\_\_\_
5. Année de l'obtention du diplôme d'enseignement \_\_\_\_\_
6. Qualifications additionnelles en orientation:  
aucune – partie 1 – partie 2 – spécialiste - maîtrise
7. Nombre total d'élève dans l'école \_\_\_\_\_
8. Nombre total de conseiller d'orientation \_\_\_\_\_
9. Nombre d'élève desservis par conseiller d'orientation \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Guide d'entrevue

#### *Expérience en enseignement*

Parle-moi de quand tu étais enseignant.

1. Quelles étaient tes motivations pour devenir enseignant?
2. Quels critères utilisais-tu pour savoir si tu étais un ‘bon enseignant’?
  - i. Qu’est-ce qui font les ‘bons enseignants’?
3. Ta formation t’aide comment dans ton poste d’enseignement?
  - i. baccalauréat en enseignement/ premier baccalauréat/ stages
4. Comment est-ce que les élèves manifestent leur appréciation envers un enseignant?

*Transition vers l’orientation*

Quand et comment es-tu entré en fonction?

Qu’est-ce qui t’a motivé à te diriger vers l’orientation?

Quels changements et ajustements as-tu vécu durant cette transition ?

Relations avec élèves ou enseignants/direction

À quel moment t’es-tu senti comme un conseiller d’orientation?

Quelles différences auraient-ils dans ta façon de faire de l’orientation si tu n’avais pas été enseignant avant d’être conseiller d’orientation?

Au niveau du système de l’école, au niveau des élèves et la façon d’entrer en relation avec eux

*Les conseillers d’orientation*

Le conseiller d’orientation fait parti de quelle équipe de l’école?

Comment est-ce que cela se manifeste ?

Y a-t-il des impacts ressentis par les élèves ?

Qu’est ce qu’un bon conseiller d’orientation?

Quelles expériences te font sentir comme un ‘bon conseiller d’orientation’?

Comment y parviens-tu?

Décris-moi la façon d’entrer en relation d’aide avec les élèves.

Les élèves seraient différents comment sans les conseillers d’orientation ?

*L’identité professionnelle du conseiller d’orientation*

5. Ton identité en tant que conseiller d’orientation diffère comment de ton identité en tant enseignant ? Comment le sais-tu/ça se manifeste comment?

- i. Qu’est-ce qui a changé pour toi depuis que tu n’es plus en salle de classe ?

6. Qu'est-ce qui t'a préparé à être conseiller d'orientation ?
  - i. Comment est-ce que ta formation t'aide dans ton poste en orientation ?
  - ii. Comment as-tu développé une expérience pratique pour l'orientation ?
  - iii. Avais-tu ou aurais-tu besoin autre chose?
7. Quels rôles ont joué tes mentors/superviseurs dans ta formation initiale/continue ?
  - i. Avais-tu ou aurais-tu besoin autre chose?
8. Y a-t-il quelque chose qui nuit à ta capacité de performer ton rôle de conseiller d'orientation?
  - i. Quels impacts à ton rôle au sein de l'administration sur ta pratique en orientation ?
9. Depuis que tu es conseiller d'orientation, quelle évolution as-tu vécue?
  - i. Et quelle évolution envisages-tu pour l'avenir?
10. Comment sais-tu si tu as fait 'du bon travail' à la fin d'une journée ?

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions guidance counsellors in Ontario developed of their professional identity. More specifically, this study was undertaken in an effort to determine if guidance counsellors in Ontario HAD an unclear professional identity. The analysis of the qualitative data revealed four main experiences that shape guidance counsellors' perception of their professional identity: peer support, contextual factors, professional experiences and theoretical knowledge. These experiences shaped how the participants perceived themselves, carried out their roles and identified with the profession of guidance counsellor. The study's findings suggest that professional identity is very much related to training, as the perceptions of professional identity of guidance counsellors without graduate training was distinct from the professional identity of guidance counsellors with a master's degree. The first group of participants, those without graduate training, described their professional identity as being A teacher with a different role. The second group, participants with a master's degree, described their identity in terms related to guidance and career counselling.

This discussion section broaches the findings of the study and situates them into the larger scholarly context. Also, the two distinct professional identities that emerged will be discussed separately and then compared. The limitations of the study are thereafter discussed. Finally, various implications for guidance counsellors and the profession are suggested.

The interview guide brought participants to reflect upon professional identity by exploring their feelings associated with being a guidance counsellor, their perceptions of their role within the school and their transition from teaching to guidance counselling. Generally speaking, the participants in the present study indicated having a clear professional identity.

#### **Feelings Associated with Being a Guidance Counsellor**

Participants described feeling like an integral part of the school community. From their perspective, their crucial role was twofold. First, in regards to students, participants qualified their guidance as instrumental to students' completion of secondary school and to their transition to postsecondary institutions or the job market. Participants said they had to check student records, to advise students about postsecondary possibilities and career paths, as outlined in the Choices Into Action (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999).

Second, participants identified themselves as a crucial element to the proper general functioning of the school: they are the liaison between the school and the community, they act as

intermediates between teachers and the administration, they are the school's historian (useful for updating new administrators), they process applications, they often take on new Ministry of Education initiatives and they are master schedulers (master course schedule and student timetables). This second, more administrative role, is not supposed to be part of the guidance counsellors role (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999).

The fact that guidance counsellors are completing administrative tasks that ought to be completed by other personnel is a long-standing issue. There is much research from the United States on the topic (Baker, 2001; Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner & Skelton, 2006; Sears & Granello, 2002) and the issue has also been identified in Ontario (Mustaine & Pappalardo, 1996). The main difference, however, between American school counsellors and guidance counsellors in Ontario lies in their perception of reality. While American school counsellors are criticizing the faulty implementation of their role within the school (Baker, 2001; Bringman, Mueller & Lee, 2010; Sears & Granello, 2002), Ontario guidance counsellors are embracing the variety of their role as a particularity of their job. What is perceived as an issue relating to an unclear professional identity by American school counsellors is simply the organization of guidance counselling in Ontario.

Despite the fact that American school counsellors are currently required to complete various tasks unrelated to the guidance program (Johnson, 2000), they are also striving for a unified professional identity and advocating for themselves and the profession (Trolley, 2011). Contrastingly, guidance counsellors in Ontario are accepting the role that emerges from the school environment and from the requests of administrators. This compliance with inappropriate counsellor roles could be linked to the fact that guidance counsellors in Ontario do not have extensive training in career and guidance counselling and therefore have a narrow understanding of what the guidance counsellor's role could and should be. New guidance counsellors rely on senior colleagues to train them; senior colleagues who were also trained by more or less qualified guidance counsellors. Because of this training structure, the role of guidance counsellors in Ontario is insufficiently infused with theoretical constructs.

### **The Influence of Training on the Professional Identity of Guidance Counsellors**

The study's participants had followed one of two educational routes to become guidance counsellors: either they had completed additional qualifications courses in career or guidance counselling or a master's degree in that same or a closely related field. Formal education of

participants appeared to be quite influential on their professional identities. Not only did it influence how tasks were carried out, it also developed their feelings associated with being guidance counsellors. This divide between participants was an important finding as it highlighted the impact different educational routes could have on guidance counsellor development, their sense of being a guidance counsellor and their role execution.

Turning to Ronnestad and Skovholt's (2003) phase model of counsellor development, the participants without graduate training, regardless of their years of experience, could be placed within the first step of development: *Pretraining: The conventional mode*. The comparison can be made because this study's participants described carrying out their functions in a naturalistic way, by doing what felt right. As explained in Ronnestad and Skovholt's model, and for the participants in the present study, helping students involved identifying the problem quickly, providing emotional support and then giving advice based on their own experience. The participants were mostly relying on intuition and their experience as teachers to perform their roles as guidance counsellors. These findings are consistent with the results of Francis (2005), who said that guidance counsellors in Ontario were not operating within any theoretical orientation. However, Francis did not distinguish guidance counsellors with and without graduate studies.

In the present study, participants with a master's degree identified their graduate training as the framework of their practice. It guided how they carried out various duties, such as analyzing various tests, working with vocational indecision or conducting interviews with students. Their interventions were based on theoretical knowledge and they spoke of various vocational and personal counselling theories and their impact on their practice.

Three of the four participants with a master's degree had over twenty years of experience. These participants spoke of their professional development as guidance counsellors and self-reflection helped them throughout their career. These experiences occur in the third step of Ronnestad and Skovholt's model: *Post-training/experienced: The internal and flexible mode*. The other participant with a master's degree had less than three years of experience in guidance counselling. This participant's focus was still rigidly connected to her graduate studies. She focused extensively on what was thought in graduate courses, but she also noticed that she needed to adapt her interventions to work within her particular setting. Consistent with Ronnestad

and Skovholt's phase model, this participant also spoke highly of her supervisors and educators. She admired their work with students/clients and aspired to be like them.

Despite the fact that both groups of guidance counsellors could be of benefit to the students, the latter group founded their interventions much more on scientific knowledge than the former group. Besides providing guidance to the students, they promoted the development of the profession and stressed the importance of properly carried out roles, in accordance to sound theoretical guidelines. Participants with a master's degree had the advantage of knowing the breadth of vocational guidance and counselling; participants with additional qualification courses could not utilize vocational counselling theories, as they did not know their full potential. This does not pose problem for the majority of students, as most do not experience serious vocational indecision. A brief intervention from the guidance counsellors, either through questioning or information giving, will typically nudge students into an acceptable postsecondary choice. But for that minority of students who experience severe vocational indecision, the average guidance counsellor in Ontario does not have sufficient training to effectively counsel them.

Finally, what further separated the two groups was their allegiance to the profession. Many authors speak of professional pride as a component of professional identity (Gale & Austin, 2003; Remley & Herlihy, 2010; Sweeney, 1995). On the one hand, it appeared that for participants without graduate studies, being a guidance counsellor was another stop in their career as teachers. The majority of those participants had held various roles within the school and they perceived guidance counselling as another challenge for them to take on. These well-intentioned teachers were typically liked within the school by students and faculty members, which made them obvious choices for fulfilling the position. But that is just it: they are occupying the position. On the other hand, all four guidance counsellors with a master's degree stated that being a guidance counsellor had been their career objective, before entering the education domain. They had a deeper connection to being a guidance counsellor.

### **The Role of Peers in the Training of Guidance Counsellors**

The role of peers is integral to the professional development of guidance counsellors (Brott & Myers, 1999) and counsellors in general (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In early phases of development, senior counsellors offer feedback on skills acquired during formal education (Brott & Myers, 1999). However, many of Ontario's guidance counsellors are inducted into the profession without significant formal training (the exception

being the few guidance counsellors who have master's degrees). Rather, the new guidance counsellor is commonly a well-liked teacher who has completed an additional qualification course. But as the participants in the present study mentioned, the additional qualification courses were minimal and left participants lacking training in various areas, most notably in career and vocational development. This leaves senior counsellors with the task of training new guidance counsellors. Participants who had experience training new counsellors describe the experience as very time consuming, but also as part of their role as guidance counsellors. But the training of new guidance counsellors, by senior counsellors, is not in-depth. Mostly, new guidance counsellors explained receiving 'recipes' from their peers on how to deal with various situations (often in the heat of the moment). Offering a recipe to colleagues is a quick fix that is devoid of theoretical orientation: new guidance counsellors do not understand the underlying basis of their interventions and cannot critically evaluate their appropriateness.

Dollarhide and Miller (2006) noted that adopting a profession's culture, which included attitudes and strategies for problem solving, was part of the development of professional identity and feeling like a type of professional. Considering the significant impact of senior guidance counsellors on the professional development of new guidance counsellors, it is clear why participants identified their mentors and colleagues as important identity-shaping components. However, when comparing the role of senior counsellors in the context of Ontario and in theories, there are obvious differences. Namely, senior counsellors in Ontario are replacing formal education while, in theory they should offer confirmation and feedback (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Furthermore, to impose the training of new guidance counsellors on senior guidance counsellors is not beneficial to the profession. The biggest area of concern is that typically the transmitted knowledge is not grounded in any theoretical orientation. As Baker (1994) and Keats and Laitsch (2010) had noted, teachers-turned-counsellors can present potential dangers for students, as they often operate from a pedagogical standpoint. This was confirmed by two of the study's participants with a master's degree, who expressed concern with some of the services students were receiving from some other guidance counsellors.

Another issue with senior counsellors training new guidance counsellors, as reported by participants, is that training teachers to become guidance counsellors takes up a lot of time. Considering the high student to counsellor ratios, the extra non-guidance tasks and incessant

solicitation from other sources, having new guidance counsellors join the guidance team as trained colleagues – rather than a teacher unaware of guidance theory and practice – would be most valuable to students and the school community.

### **Contextual Factors that Influence Professional Identity**

The environment in which the study's participants worked had a significant impact on their roles within the school, and in turn, how they perceived themselves as guidance counsellors. The influences identified by participants were the needs of the students, the task requests from various entities and the administrators' understanding of the profession.

In the available scholarly literature on professional identity, the work environment is not presented as an important component for the development of professional identity. It was however influential for this study's participants.

Although the work contexts differed from one participant to the next, their environment often shaped participants' reflection and perception of their role and professional identity. It can be suggested that the fact that Ontario's guidance counsellors act in a reactionary manner, as opposed to proactive manner, is the reason why context influenced guidance counsellors' perception of their identity. Guidance counsellors who do not develop a full understanding of their role during formal training execute the roles that are asked of them. Often, the role of the guidance counsellor is ingrained in a school's culture (Lehr & Sumarah, 2002). In practical terms, this means that new guidance counsellors take on the role and the tasks that are expected of them by the administrators and teachers. Whether or not these tasks are actually part of their role, as defined by the Ministry of Education, eludes them, as guidance counsellors were somewhat unaware of their actual role description. Participants explained completing tasks because it *helped the students or the school community*. The impact on professional identity is quite clear: when participants entered the profession as teachers and were asked to complete various tasks, more or less related to guidance counselling, their identity developed accordingly. Indeed, guidance counsellors' professional identities developed in accordance with the tasks they were expected to complete by the members of their environment. It should be noted that for participants with a master's degree, their identity was less shaped by their assigned tasks and roles. In general, these four participants described a more proactive role within the school, which meant that their environment shaped their role significantly less. Rather, they came into a school with a clearer understanding of what they wanted to accomplish and carried out their roles accordingly.

The participants also pointed to the school administrators as shaping their role, and so, their identity. Although there are many American studies that indicate that administrators shaped the role of school counsellors (Baker, 2001; Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Bringman, Mueller & Lee, 2010; Johnson, 2000), none go as far as saying that administrators could shape the identity of their counsellors, as it seemed to be the case for some of this study's participants. The difference between these participants and the school counsellors in the United States could be the fact that American school counsellors enter the profession with a professional identity that started to develop during their training (Brott & Myers, 1999). In Ontario, teachers enter the profession of guidance counselling and slowly develop a guidance counsellor sub-identity. During this identity development, administrators could influence the guidance program and the role of the guidance counsellors. As the new guidance counsellors were in the process of forming their identities as guidance counsellors, the role expected of them by administrators influenced how they perceived the profession, and in turn, their professional identities. For example, a few participants described themselves as part of the administrative team. They explained that as administrators asked them to complete various administrative tasks, a sense of belonging to the administration developed. For these participants, being part of the administration team was ingrained in their professional identity as guidance counsellors.

In Ontario some guidance counsellors see themselves as guidance counsellors, some as teachers and others, part of the administration. This disparity in professional allegiance can promote the ambiguity the public feels towards guidance counsellors (Myers, Sweeney & White, 2002; Sweeney, 1995).

### **How Professional Experience Influences Professional Identity**

True to identity development theory (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010), participants in this study attributed a great deal of importance to their previous professional experience as influential on their perception of their professional identity as guidance counsellors. Participants without graduate training explained that it was their previous roles in teaching that had prepared them for the position of guidance counsellors. In their opinion, this experience developed their understanding of students and their ability to work with a wide variety of students, i.e. regular students, students with behavioral trouble, or learning disabilities or gifted students. For participants with a master's degree, the experience they acquired through teaching was more relevant to their counselling role. Most notably, participants explained how as

teachers, they would engage with some students on a more emotional level, at times creating relationships that resembled helping relationships. Thus, as teachers, they were honing their counselling skills.

The majority of participants (with and without graduate training) thought teaching to be necessary to their evolution into guidance counselling. Generally, they thought it offered them a needed understanding of how a school functions, what it was to work in its setting and to learn about grade levels and curriculums (important for postsecondary transitions). Participants said they needed to experience how students can behave in the classroom so they could later relate to teachers once they became guidance counsellors. The requirement of having teaching experience is an on-going debate within the field of school and guidance counselling (Paisley, Ziomek-Daigle, Getch & Bailey, 2007). Stein and DeBerand (2010), who questioned the necessity of teaching experience for guidance counsellors, found that teaching experience did not equate to better performance in professional behavior, clinical skills, teaching skills or hireability. Such a requirement could prove to be a barrier to the profession, which would prevent non-teachers, yet qualified individuals to enter the profession.

Interacting with students – or clients in the case of other professional counsellors – is said to be a major influence in the process of professional development (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As the authors explained such interactions are sources of learning and development. However, for participants without graduate training, interacting with students did not seem to significantly reflect on their development or sense of professional identity. Rather, what seemed more significant to participants' was being able to help students – to fulfill the students' needs. Participants felt that such instances would confirm that they *were* guidance counsellors.

This study's participants without graduate training supported Baker's (1994) description of teachers-turned-counsellors who often create counsellor-centered relationships based on advising and information giving. Participants with a master's degree also expressed their apprehensions with some of the services students were receiving from their colleagues who acted as advisors and information-givers.

## **Conclusion**

Guidance counsellors are increasingly called upon to answer to a wide array of situations. This has, in part, caused school counsellors in the United States to question their professional identity. As for guidance counsellors in Ontario, the findings indicated they do not have an

unclear professional identity. This was true for guidance counsellors without graduate training and for guidance counsellors with a master's degree, although for different reasons. First, participants without graduate training developed their understanding of guidance counselling as they began their new function within the school. Participants recalled learning to carry out their functions by imitating colleagues and referring to their teaching experiences. Because guidance counsellors entered the profession with a vague understanding of their role, they lacked the necessary information to objectively and critically evaluate their functioning as a guidance counsellor. For these participants, their professional identity as guidance counsellor was an extension of their teaching identity.

On the other hand, guidance counsellors who had completed graduate studies had a different perspective of their practice and the issues related to guidance and counselling in Ontario. Such participants based their role execution on the theoretical concepts acquired during their graduate training and were objectively evaluating their practice by referring to scientific standards. Although these participants did criticize aspects of guidance counselling in Ontario, namely the minimal required training to become a guidance counsellor, they were not afflicted with an unclear professional identity. Their professional identity did however differ from their colleagues without graduate training. Participants with a master's degree demonstrated a more profound tie to the theoretical orientations that guided their role. Contrastingly, guidance counsellors without graduate training described their role as guiding students through the process of finishing high school.

The fact that both groups of guidance counsellors did not present unclear professional identities is not, however, an indication that guidance counselling in Ontario can be exempt of criticism. It is regrettable to realize how little guidance counselling has evolved over the last five decades, when we have known for just as long how important guidance counselling is for students. When considering the state of guidance counselling in the United States (i.e. the mandatory training requirements, the advocacy for the profession) and that Ontario has been following in their footsteps, program-wise, for a century now, why has Ontario's training requirements not kept up with the trends? As long as minimal training continues to be status quo, Ontario's guidance counsellors will not be able to critically reflect upon their practice. There is no doubt that guidance counsellors want the best for students, but guidance counsellors cannot hope for what they do not know.

An issue with the present structure in Ontario that could be addressed is the selection of candidates for the position of guidance counsellor. The two groups of guidance counsellors presented in the study differed on training, but also on intent of the profession. For participants with a master's degree, being a guidance counsellor was their career goal from the start; for others, it was a way to branch out of teaching. Typically, participants without graduate training were either tired of the classroom or looking for a new challenge. This is not to say that teachers who opt for a career change cannot become qualified and competent guidance counsellors. Teachers who become guidance counsellors must show they possess training and competence to properly carry out the functions expected of guidance counsellors.

Further research is needed to verify the results with different guidance counsellor populations. Further research from the students' point of view concerning the services they receive from guidance counsellors would also fill an evident gap in the available literature.

### **Implications for Guidance Counsellors**

In this study the professional identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario was explored. Prior research from the United States explained how professional identity develops (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010). Harris (2009) linked the benefits of a well-defined professional identity to the effectiveness of school counsellors. Other research indicated that school counsellors have been struggling to define their professional identity (Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001; Wilkerson, 2009) and that this struggle had negative implications for stakeholders (Baker, 2000; Sears & Granello, 2002). The present research was the first to examine the professional identity of guidance counsellors in Ontario. It provides information on how teachers are inducted and adapt to the role of guidance counsellor and how this is reflected in their professional identity.

The findings of this study could have implications for guidance counsellors. Guidance counsellors, in Ontario and elsewhere, are required to be a "jack-of-all-trades." The study's findings confirm the adage jack-of-all-trades, master of none, as guidance counsellors seem to be expected to complete a wide variety of tasks competently, without the necessary skills. Namely, the tasks of career counselling and crisis/personal counselling were noteworthy examples. These two types of counselling require very different subsets of knowledge and skill (Paisley, Ziomek-Daigle, Getch & Bailey, 2007). The profession would benefit from a properly defined and implemented role and to have this role understood by the school community. This is a

professional challenge that has been following the profession. DeVoss (2004) stresses the importance for guidance counsellors to decide on the extent to which they ought to be generalist or specialist. In either case, the choice must be clear and communicated.

If guidance counsellors are to offer valuable services, in whatever capacity, they ought to have knowledge and skill to support the students in their various needs. Although guidance counsellors are currently tending to the needs of students and the school community, there must be an assured minimum level of competence to properly service students and to decrease the potential of harmful interventions. Competence could be attained through various means, i.e. master's degrees, more significant additional qualification courses or a new training program (a certificate) that is obtained after the completion of the bachelor's degree in education.

This minimum level of competence is greatly needed as guidance counsellors are increasingly called upon to offer specialized services such as brief personal counselling and crisis intervention. Although the participants without graduate training mostly proceed with caution in offering these services, the role expected of guidance counsellors are often outside their limits of competence.

Looking at how teachers adapt to their role as guidance counsellors, it became apparent that there are some barriers to the training and role of guidance counsellors in Ontario. These results have the potential to inform policy makers of the limits of the current training structure for guidance counsellors and of the guidance program implementation in Ontario.

### **Limitations**

The study's participants were asked to reflect upon their perception of professional identity. More precisely, participants explored their thoughts on their role, their role execution, and their transition from teacher to guidance counsellor. It must be considered that beliefs, feelings and attitudes can change over time. The participants' thoughts can only represent the time at which they were recorded.

Variability in the interpretations of the results is inherent to qualitative research. Despite precautionary measures, such as stating researcher preconceptions and analytical auditing, researcher biases can affect the findings and the identified themes may be interpreted variously.

The interview guide was specifically elaborated to meet the specific needs of this study, which is not recommended (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Although the interview guide was based

on other interview guides from evidence-based research and expert opinion, it is possible that the instrument presents validity and objectivity issues.

Thematic analysis is not widely recognized as a legitimate research method, despite it being commonly used for grounded theory and phenomenology analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This limitation cautions the reader to interpret the results as themes describing the perception of twelve guidance counsellors' professional identity, and not a standalone description of the guidance counsellor professional identity.

The study compared the guidance counsellors without graduate training to those with a master's degree. Because the number of guidance counsellors with a master's degree was low (four) it is possible that their accounts are not representative of the Ontario's general population of guidance counsellors with that educational background.

Lastly, the transferability of the results may be restricted as the sample population was homogeneously francophone and limited to a specific area of the province. Also, because all participants worked in tandem with another guidance counsellor, the emerging themes could have been different if participants had been the sole service provider for their school.

#### **Statement of Contributors**

As the main researcher, I, Daniel Nadon, completed the literature review and recruited participants. The main author created the interview guide with guidance of his thesis supervisor. The main author completed the field research and transcribed the data. The data analysis started with the elaboration of an initial list of codes. The main author's thesis supervisor, who acted as an auditor, verified the codes. Next, the main author began to organize the codes into themes with the input and supervision of the main author's thesis supervisor. The main researcher initiated the study's discussion and his thesis supervisor offered suggestions and guidance for its elaboration.

The thesis supervisor participated in the entire research process as a guide and offered feedback, suggestions and insight. The two thesis committee members offered guidance, critiques and suggestions periodically throughout the writing process.

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**Appendix A*****Questionnaire démographique***

10. Sexe et âge \_\_\_\_\_
11. Années d'expérience en enseignement \_\_\_\_\_
12. Années d'expérience en orientation \_\_\_\_\_
13. Premier baccalauréat complété et année \_\_\_\_\_
14. Année de l'obtention du diplôme d'enseignement \_\_\_\_\_
15. Qualifications additionnelles en orientation:  
aucune – partie 1 – partie 2 – spécialiste - maîtrise
16. Nombre total d'élève dans l'école \_\_\_\_\_
17. Nombre total de conseiller d'orientation \_\_\_\_\_
18. Nombre d'élève desservis par conseiller d'orientation \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Guide d'entrevue**

#### ***Expérience en enseignement***

Parle-moi de quand tu étais enseignant.

11. Quelles étaient tes motivations pour devenir enseignant?
12. Quels critères utilisais-tu pour savoir si tu étais un 'bon enseignant'?
  - i. Qu'est-ce qui font les 'bons enseignants'?
13. Ta formation t'aide comment dans ton poste d'enseignement?
  - i. baccalauréat en enseignement/ premier baccalauréat/ stages
14. Comment est-ce que les élèves manifestent leur appréciation envers un enseignant?

#### ***Transition vers l'orientation***

Quand et comment es-tu entré en fonction?

Qu'est-ce qui t'a motivé à te diriger vers l'orientation?

Quels changements et ajustements as-tu vécu durant cette transition ?

Relations avec élèves ou enseignants/direction

À quel moment t'es-tu senti comme un conseiller d'orientation?

Quelles différences auraient-ils dans ta façon de faire de l'orientation si tu n'avais pas été enseignant avant d'être conseiller d'orientation?

Au niveau du système de l'école, au niveau des élèves et la façon d'entrer en relation avec eux

#### ***Les conseillers d'orientation***

Le conseiller d'orientation fait parti de quelle équipe de l'école?

Comment est-ce que cela se manifeste ?

Y a-t-il des impacts ressentis par les élèves ?

Qu'est ce qu'un bon conseiller d'orientation?

Quelles expériences te font sentir comme un 'bon conseiller d'orientation'?

Comment y parviens-tu?

Décris-moi la façon d'entrer en relation d'aide avec les élèves.

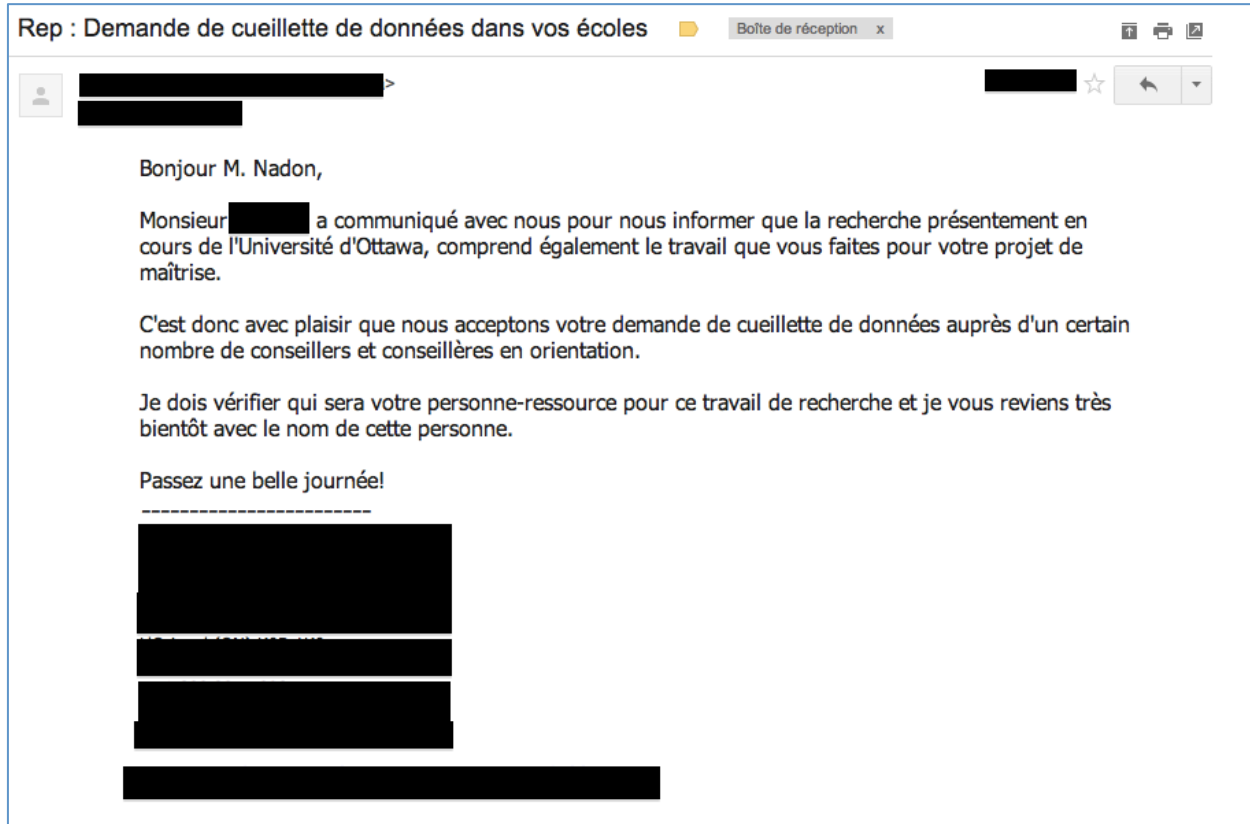
Les élèves seraient différents comment sans les conseillers d'orientation ?

***L'identité professionnelle du conseiller d'orientation***

15. Ton identité en tant que conseiller d'orientation diffère comment de ton identité en tant qu'enseignant ? Comment le sais-tu/ça se manifeste comment?
  - i. Qu'est-ce qui a changé pour toi depuis que tu n'es plus en salle de classe ?
16. Qu'est-ce qui t'a préparé à être conseiller d'orientation ?
  - i. Comment est-ce que ta formation t'aide dans ton poste en orientation ?
  - ii. Comment as-tu développé une expérience pratique pour l'orientation ?
  - iii. Avais-tu ou aurais-tu besoin autre chose?
17. Quels rôles ont joué tes mentors/superviseurs dans ta formation initiale/continue ?
  - i. Avais-tu ou aurais-tu besoin autre chose?
18. Y a-t-il quelque chose qui nuit à ta capacité de performer ton rôle de conseiller d'orientation?
  - i. Quels impacts à ton rôle au sein de l'administration sur ta pratique en orientation ?
19. Depuis que tu es conseiller d'orientation, quelle évolution as-tu vécue?
  - i. Et quelle évolution envisages-tu pour l'avenir?
20. Comment sais-tu si tu as fait 'du bon travail' à la fin d'une journée ?

## Appendix C

### Permission to Contact Guidance Counsellors



## Appendix D

Bonjour conseillères et conseillers d'orientation!

Je suis Daniel Nadon, EAO, un étudiant à la maîtrise à la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa. Je suis à la recherche de conseillères et de conseillers d'orientation pour prendre part à une recherche qualitative portant sur leur identité professionnelle. L'objectif du projet est de créer un portrait de l'identité professionnelle des conseillères et conseillers d'orientation travaillant dans une école secondaire de langue française de l'Ontario. Les différents thèmes à explorer sont : l'orientation en Ontario, la transition de l'enseignement vers l'orientation, vos perceptions et vos opinions sur la profession dans son contexte actuel.

Les participants recherchés doivent avoir au minimum 2 ans d'expérience en tant que conseiller d'orientation (temps partiel ou temps complet) dans une école secondaire de langue française en Ontario.

En acceptant de participer, il vous faudra prendre part à une entrevue qui durera entre 45 et 60 minutes au mois de novembre. L'entrevue aura lieu à l'endroit et à l'heure de votre choix.

Votre participation et votre identité demeureront strictement confidentielles. Moi-même et mon superviseur de thèse seront les seuls individus ayant accès aux coordonnées et à l'identité des participants. Il vous est possible de retirer, à n'importe quel moment, votre consentement à la participation de cette étude.

Pour toute question, n'hésitez pas à me contacter à l'adresse courriel suivante  
\*\*\*\*\*

Il vous est aussi possible de contacter André Samson, mon superviseur de thèse à l'adresse suivante : \*\*\*\*\*

Cette recherche a obtenu l'approbation éthique du comité éthique de l'Université d'Ottawa.

Si vous souhaitez participer à cette étude, s'il vous plaît me contacter par courriel.

Au plaisir de vous rencontrer,

Daniel Nadon, EAO

## Appendix E

### Formulaire de consentement éclairé

---

**Titre du projet :**

L'identité professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation des écoles secondaires francophones de l'Ontario

**Nom du chercheur principal :**

Chercheur principal : Daniel Nadon, EAO  
Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa

Sous la supervision du professeur André Samson, Ph. D., c. o.,

**Invitation à participer :**

Je suis invité (e) à participer à la recherche nommée ci-haut qui est menée par Daniel Nadon de la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa, sous la supervision du professeur André Samson. Daniel Nadon étudie le counselling éducationnel à la Faculté d'éducation.

**But de l'étude :**

L'objectif de cette recherche vise à conceptualiser l'identité professionnelle des conseillers d'orientation travaillant dans les écoles francophones secondaires de l'Ontario.

**Participation :**

Ma participation consistera à participer à une entrevue au mois de novembre 2012. L'entrevue sera d'une durée d'entre 45 et 60 minutes. Il s'agira, pour moi, de partager mes expériences professionnelles relatives à ma carrière en enseignement, ma transition de carrière vers l'orientation et ma carrière en orientation.

Quoique les risques liés à cette recherche soient jugés minimes, il se peut que je ressente de l'inconfort émotionnel lié à ma réflexion au sujet de ma carrière. Dans tel cas, je pourrai en discuter avec des collègues ou superviseurs. Je peux aussi refuser de répondre à toute question ou me retirer complètement de la recherche sans conséquence.

Afin d'assurer la véracité de l'entrevue, la transcription me sera envoyée par courriel. Je pourrai relire l'entrevue et y apporter des modifications ou précisions, le cas échéant.

**Bienfaits :**

Cette étude aura pour effet de réfléchir sur ma pratique en orientation et d'améliorer ma compréhension de mon rôle au sein de mon école.

**Confidentialité :**

J'ai l'assurance du chercheur que l'information que je partagerai restera strictement confidentielle. Je m'attends à ce que le contenu ne soit utilisé que pour développer les connaissances des chercheurs. Selon le respect de la confidentialité, en aucun moment mon nom, ni des informations qui pourraient permettre mon identification, ne seront mentionnés. Ni les noms d'école, ni les noms des conseils scolaires ne seront divulgués.

La transcription de l'entrevue me sera envoyée par courrier électronique habituel. Aucune précaution supplémentaire ne sera utilisée pour protéger le document et son contenu.

**L'anonymat :**

L'anonymat est garanti par le fait que mon nom ne se sera jamais divulgué.

**Conservation des données :**

Les données recueillies seront conservées sur la mémoire de l'ordinateur du chercheur principal, et ce, pour une durée de 5 ans. L'ordinateur est protégé par un mot de passe qui est seulement connu par le chercheur. Seuls les chercheurs auront accès aux données. Les données seront aussi conservées sur une clé USB pour une durée de 5 ans dans le bureau de mon superviseur de thèse, le professeur André Samson. À la fin de cette période, les données seront effacées de façon sécuritaire de mon ordinateur et de la clé USB dans le bureau d'André Samson.

**Participation volontaire :**

Ma participation à la recherche est volontaire et je suis libre de me retirer en tout temps, et/ou de refuser de répondre à certaines questions, sans subir de conséquence négative.

**Acceptation :**

- J'accepte de participer à cette recherche menée par Daniel Nadon de la Faculté d'éducation de l'Université d'Ottawa.
- J'accepte que l'entrevue soit enregistrée.
- J'accepte que la transcription me soit envoyée par courriel.

Pour tout renseignement additionnel concernant l'étude, je peux communiquer avec Daniel Nadon ou avec son superviseur, André Samson aux adresses fournies ci-haut.

Il y a deux copies du formulaire de consentement, dont une copie que je garde.

**Signature du participant**

---

**Signature du chercheur**

---

**Date**

---

## Appendix F

Numéro de dossier: 10-12-08

Date (mm/jj/aaaa): 11/07/2012



Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa  
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche / Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

## Certificat d'approbation déontologique

## CÉR Sciences sociales et humanités

## Chercheur principal / Superviseur / Co-chercheur(s) / Étudiant(s)

Prénom	Nom de famille	Affiliation	Rôle
André	Samson	Éducation / Éducation	Superviseur
Daniel	Nadon	Éducation / Éducation	Étudiant-chercheur

Numéro du dossier: 10-12-08

Type du projet: Thèse de maîtrise

Titre: The state of professional identity of school counsellors working in Francophone secondary schools in Ontario

Date d'approbation (mm/jj/aaaa)	Date d'expiration (mm/jj/aaaa)	Approbation
11/07/2012	11/06/2013	Ia

(Ia: Approbation complète, Ib: Autorisation préliminaire de libération de fonds de recherche)

## Conditions Spéciales / Commentaires:

N/A

Numéro de dossier: 10-12-08

Date (mm/jj/aaaa): 11/07/2012



Université d'Ottawa  
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa  
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

La présente confirme que le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CER) de l'Université d'Ottawa identifié ci-dessus, opérant conformément à l'Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables de l'Ontario, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'approbation déontologique du projet de recherche ci-nommé. L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales / Commentaires".

Lors de l'étude, le protocole ne peut être modifié sans approbation préalable écrite du CER sauf si le sujet doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques de l'étude comme par exemple un changement de numéro de téléphone. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CER dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet. Ils devront aussi rapporter tout événement imprévu et / ou dommageable et devront soumettre toutes les nouvelles informations pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet et/ou à la sécurité des participants. Toutes modifications apportées au projet, aux lettres d'information / formulaires de consentement ainsi qu'aux documents de recrutement doivent être soumises pour approbation à ce Service en utilisant le document intitulé "Modification au projet de recherche" au: <http://www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/formulaires.html>.

Veillez soumettre un rapport annuel au Responsable de la déontologie en recherche, quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée afin de fermer le dossier ou demander un renouvellement de l'approbation déontologique. Le document nécessaire est disponible en ligne au: <http://www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/formulaires.html>.

Pour toutes questions, vous pouvez communiquer avec le bureau de déontologie en composant le poste 5387 ou en nous contactant par courriel à: [ethics@uOttawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uOttawa.ca).

**Appendix G**

Data Codes for the Theme of *Peer Guidance and Training: Learning the Ropes*

Indispensable guidance		Peer training - Counselling	Working with colleagues
Of the role in general	Administrative duties		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various techniques for personal counselling</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which duties are theirs to complete</li> <li>• Timeline of duties to complete</li> <li>• Available community resources</li> <li>• The limits of their role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student inscriptions</li> <li>• Career Cruising</li> <li>• Trillium</li> <li>• Filling out various forms (student transfers)</li> <li>• Grade 12 diploma</li> <li>• Creating teacher schedules</li> <li>• Creating student schedules</li> </ul>		

**Appendix H**

Data Codes for the Theme of *Contextual Factors: Learning the Role by Meeting the Needs Within the School*

Absence of provincial policy	School context			
	From administration	Student needs	Available resources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rely on tradition and legacy</li> <li>• Causes role ambiguity</li> <li>• Discrepancies</li> <li>• Irrelevant training</li> <li>• Advocating for guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From parents</li> <li>• From teachers</li> <li>• From postsecondary institutions</li> <li>• Community organisms</li> <li>• From students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evolve and change</li> <li>• Depend on socioeconomic factors</li> <li>• Postsecondary related inquiries</li> <li>• Bursaries</li> <li>• Registration</li> <li>• Personal counselling</li> <li>• Referrals</li> <li>• Mediation with other students</li> <li>• Mediation with teachers</li> </ul>	Financial	Human
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing</li> <li>• Vocational resources</li> <li>• Software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student to counsellor ratios</li> <li>• Guidance periods allowed in school</li> <li>• Multiple roles of guidance counsellor</li> <li>• Presence of support staff</li> </ul>

**Appendix I**Data Codes for the Theme of *Professional Experience: A Teacher State of Mind in a New Role*

Teaching experience			Guidance counselling experience	
Knowing students	Knowing teachers	Knowing the school system	Developing guidance counselling techniques	Understand the role over the span of a year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactions</li> <li>• Behavioral problems</li> <li>• Learning disabilities</li> <li>• Absenteeism</li> <li>• Performance levels</li> <li>• Student archetypes</li> <li>• Creating bonds</li> <li>• Knowing a specific student population</li> <li>• Common student issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing a classroom</li> <li>• Understand student behavior</li> <li>• Summative evaluations</li> <li>• Formative evaluations</li> <li>• Report cards</li> <li>• Various and typical emotions</li> <li>• Busy time of year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedules</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• The roles of their peers</li> <li>• Academic incidences</li> <li>• Curriculums</li> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal counselling style</li> <li>• Career counselling interventions</li> <li>• Increase knowledge base</li> <li>• Develop listening skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better management</li> <li>• Better organization</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Making things better for students</li> <li>• Role clarity</li> </ul>

**Appendix J**Data Codes for the Theme of *Theoretical Knowledge: Contrasting Points of View*

Intuitive approach- Additional qualification courses	Theoretical approach- Master's level training	Training issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrelevant to practice</li> <li>• Insufficient preparation for actual role</li> <li>• Insufficient practical training</li> <li>• Insufficient counselling training</li> <li>• Fails to demonstrate the importance of theoretical concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge-based</li> <li>• Relevant to practice</li> <li>• In-depth</li> <li>• Recognizes limits of competence</li> <li>• Understands importance of training</li> <li>• Analyzing standardized tests</li> <li>• Counselling techniques</li> <li>• Vocational development knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of necessary knowledge</li> <li>• Lack of necessary intervention tools</li> <li>• Harm to students</li> <li>• False sense of competence</li> </ul>

## Appendix K

Translation of Verbatim from French to English

Author's Translation	Participant Communication
"counselling and course selection, helping with bursaries, career choices, postsecondary registration." (06-70)	« ...qu'on fait du counselling et tout le choix de cours, de l'accompagnement pour les bourses, les choix de carrière, les demandes postsecondaires. »
"When you are the new kid on the block you say 'OK, what's next?'" (03-33).	« Tu pognes le new kid on the block qui dit 'OK c'est quoi qui s'en vient?' »
"I developed it [role execution] here...with the people who were there...How to fill out an inscription; what do you do with a student from [another country]... and all of the other tasks a guidance counsellor does during a day." (11-131)	« Je l'ai vraiment développé ici, au travail avec les gens qui était là par rapport au côté très administratif de la patente, comme, comment tu fais une inscription – qu'est-ce qui te faut pour un élève qui arrive du Burundi, par exemple. Ect, etc. Puis là, toutes les autres tâches que le conseiller fait au courant d'une journée. »
"organizing workshops, coordinating visits with different institutions, meeting with the students and verifying student files." (02-17)	« ...préparer des ateliers, préparer les visites des universités. J'ai commencé à travailler avec eux autres, préparer les dossiers... »
"I knocked on her [my colleague's] door many times that year, and I was always greeted with a big smile." (02-17).	« J'ai cogné à sa porte souvent cette année et elle m'accueillait toujours avec un sourire »
"...they were my mentors. I learned the job through them, which tasks were mine and which weren't". (07-81)	« j'ai appris beaucoup d'eux, ils ont été mes mentors. Donc j'ai appris la job avec eux autres. Ce qui était les dossiers, ce qui ne l'était pas. »
"...every time I had a student in my office I would say 'OK Hold on one minute' and I would leave to go see my colleague: 'Oh my god, she said she wants to commit suicide. What do I do? Help me.'" (01-06).	« Quand j'ai commencé au début, chaque fois que j'avais un cas, je disais ' OK, juste une minute' puis là je sortais, j'allais voir *****, dans le temps. 'Monique, Oh my god, elle m'a dit qu'elle va se suicider' qu'est-ce qu'il faut que je fasse ou 'elle a des pensées suicidaires' qu'est-ce qu'il faut que je fasse?' aide-moi.' »
"If I am replaced, and this person has no experience, can you imagine the chaos? And this would be someone with the specialist [part of the additional qualification courses] that I'm talking about."(09-111)	« Si je décide de partir tout de suite et on me remplace, si cette personne n'a aucune expérience, tu imagines le bordel que ça va créer? Puis ça c'est les gens qui ont le papier, qui ont le spécialiste dont je parle. »
"If I had arrived alone at a school, I would have been on the phone with counsellors from other schools to know how things are done... alone, it wouldn't be obvious." (03-33)	« Si j'avais atterrit tout seul à une école, j'aurais été sur le téléphone avec les orienteurs des autres écoles pour savoir comment ils font les choses, parce que ça te prend un bagage. Il faut que tu l'aies vu ou vécu, parce que tomber tout seul ca doit pas être évident. »

- “within the school setting.” (11-131) « ...dans le milieu scolaire... »
- “discovering what you do [as a guidance counsellor] in the course of the job.” (11-132) « ...découvrir un peu ce que tu fais en cours d’emploi... »
- “A new guidance counsellor has no idea what to do”. (10-123) « Donc le conseiller d’orientation qui rentre... ne sait pas du tout quoi faire. »
- “...within the first 5 days... you learn it when you’re there.” (04-43) « Dans les premiers 5 jours? Tu l’apprends quand tu es là. »
- “it [duties] can come from anywhere: a parent, a social worker, the principal.” (04-43) « Là ça peut venir de n’importe où, un parent, la travailleuse sociale, la direction... »
- “...the telephone rings, a parent arrives [at school], the principal comes over [and] a grade 8 student wants to register [for high school].” (07-76) « ...le téléphone sonne, un parent arrive, la direction qui vient, au pavillon on a un élève qui veut s’inscrire. »
- “It took a while and caused... some frustration.” (05-50) « Ça ça m’a prit un peu de temps et ça m’a apporter quelques frustrations. »
- “the boy who cried for 2 hours” (06-67) « Le petit gars qui pleurait pendant 2 heures... »
- “People know you have a schedule, but that it is flexible. So if something comes up you can put your schedule on hold to deal with it.” (04-43) « Parce qu’il faut que les gens savent que tu as un horaire mais que tu es assez flexible que s’il y a un imprévu, tu peux le mettre de côté et je vais gérer ça. »
- “at the heart the school” (03-30) « ...tu es au cœur de l’école... »
- “if the school principal can’t do it...we’ll give it to the guidance counsellors, because anyways, they are aware of everything.” (06-68) « Si la direction ne peut pas le faire parce qu’ils en ont plein les bras, bien on va le donner à l’orientation parce que de toute façon l’orientation est au courant de toute, ça fait qu’on va lui donner, il va le faire. »
- “When you start doing something, people don’t bother to do it anymore and it becomes your job.” (11-132) « Un moment donné, tu t’appropries le dossier puis les gens ne se dérangent plus trop de le faire, parce qu’ils te le laissent. »
- “There isn’t a curriculum from the Ministry, there is no role [description].” (10-123) « ...il n’y a pas de curriculum d’écrit au ministère. Il n’y a pas de tâche. »
- “There isn’t a clear definition... It would be fun to have an model from the Government of Ontario.” (05-57) « Il n’y a pas de définition claire... Ça serait le fun de voir un modèle du gouvernement Ontarien. »
- “Maybe it should be defined. Maybe I do not understand and what I do is what I would like [guidance counselling] to be” (08-91). « Mais, il faudrait peut-être redéfinir. Peut-être moi j’ai mal compris et peut-être que ce que je fais, c’est ce que j’aimerais que l’orientation soit. »
- “some schools have 1200 [students], here we are 400. “some schools have 1200 [students], here we are 400. The roles are different... we get by differently.” (07-73). « Ça dépend de la taille des écoles aussi, il y a des « Ça dépend de la taille des écoles aussi, il y a des écoles à 1200 élèves, ici on est 400. Les dossiers sont différents... on s’arrange autrement »

“...COOP [teacher], guidance counsellor and teacher”  
(09-104)

“different guidance counsellors do different things; it depends on the needs.” (07-73)

“It’s certain that guidance counselling isn’t the same here as in other parts of the city.” (11-133)

“In certain schools, it’s the administrative assistants that do it... here I do it... It’s certain that it could be done by someone else.” (11-144)

“in some schools, you [the guidance counsellor] are in charge of the graduating ceremony, elsewhere it is a teacher.” (04-42)

“...at [the other high school] the student services’ secretary did a lot things we do in our school.” (04-42)

“a gray area” (04-42) “so different from one school to the next”.

“implies that the guidance counsellor who doesn’t do it, will have to do it.” (04-42)

“the administration’s personality” (08-97)

“...have to adapt because he’s not like the previous one”. (11-132)

“my role on the student success team, my role as a teacher... My years of experience, I would say, were what was most useful.” (05-55).

“You have to teach. So much happens in a classroom that you can’t understand if you never teach.” (01-07)

“a better understanding of the guidance counsellor’s role within the school system.” (11-149)

“Being a teacher allowed me to see an array of situations that students can live in class and on a personal level”. (05-51)

“have behavioral issues in the classroom or a learning disability” (03-28)

« ...qui ont à faire coop, conseiller d'orientation et enseignement »

« ...différents orienteurs qui font différentes choses, ça dépend des besoins. »

« C’est sur que l’orientation n’est pas pareil à \*\*\*\* qu’à ici. »

« ...oui, puis dans certaines écoles, c’est les secrétaires administratives ou dans les écoles élémentaires, ici c’est moi... Ah c’est sur, ça pourrait être fait par quelqu’un d’autre. »

« Pour certaine écoles, tu dois t’occuper de la remise des diplômes, pour d’autres écoles, c’est un prof qui fait ça. »

« Parce qu’à \*\* la secrétaire du service à l’élève fait beaucoup de choses que nous on fait dans nos écoles. »

« ...une zone grise... C’était tellement différent d’une école à l’autre »

« ...ça implique que l’orienteur qui ne le fait pas va être obligé de le faire... »

« ...la personnalité de l’administration... »

« ...puis on doit s’adapter un peu à ça parce que lui n’est pas comme comment que l’autre était avant. »

« ...mon rôle de responsable de la réussite, mon rôle d’enseignante. Je pense que c’est ça.

... les années d’expérience je te dirais c’est ça qui a été le plus utile. »

« Ah non, tu as besoin d’enseigner. Il y a tellement de chose qui se passe en salle de classe que tu peux comprendre en tant qu’orienteur que tu ne pourrais pas comprendre si tu n’avais jamais enseigné. »

« Tu as une meilleure idée du rôle de l’orienteur à l’intérieur du système. »

« ...qu’être enseignante m’a permis d’être capable de voir une gamme de situations que les élèves peuvent vivre en salle de classe et au niveau personnel. »

« ton élève qui peut avoir un comportement difficile en salle de classe ou un trouble de l’apprentissage »

“surrounded by friends or 20 other students.”

« ...mais il n'est pas entourant de ces amis ou de 20 autres élèves... »

“You can't keep a student for an hour at the same time every week or their teacher will be upset.” (12-149)

« Tu ne peux pas garder un élève pendant une session de une heure à chaque semaine au même moment, il doit être en cours sinon l'enseignant va être fâché. »

“...knowing what it's like to have students in a classroom and how you feel in different situations... You [the guidance counsellor] has to sympathize with teachers and students.” (01-10)

« ...savoir c'est quoi les enseignantes, savoir c'est comment avoir des élèves en salle de classe et comment tu te sens face à certaine situation. Tu as besoin de savoir ça quand tu deviens enseignant. Tu as besoin de pouvoir sympathiser avec les élèves puis les enseignants. »

“do a better job because they've been in the classrooms. We are part of the gang, not just a counsellor on the sidelines.” (07-78)

« Moi je pense qu'on fait une meilleure job parce qu'on est passé en salle de classe. On fait meilleure équipe avec la gang et on n'est pas juste orienteur, puis être pas rapport, en tout cas, moi j'ai toujours senti que j'étais un prof, puis que je faisais parti de la gang. »

“The teacher who is tired, and can't take it anymore because he has a tough group, he [the guidance counsellor] can understand that and listen to him.” (07-78)

« Puis le prof qui est fatigué au bout, puis il n'en peut plus, puis il a un groupe difficile, il est capable de comprendre ça et de l'accueillir. »

“I understand evaluations, summative and formative, the levels, how things are done, the grades, the curriculum... But I don't think it's absolutely necessary to be a teacher to be a guidance counsellor.” (02-18)

« ...j'ai compris un peu le système éducationnel : les évaluations, sommative formative, les niveaux, je comprends comment les choses se font, comment les notes sont calculées, je connais les curriculums... Mais je ne pense pas que c'est absolument nécessaire d'être un prof pour être conseillère d'orientation. »

“It's not necessary to teach... I think that even if I hadn't taught, I could do my work really well.” (10-118)

« Ce n'est pas quelque chose d'obligatoire, d'enseigner... Mais je pense que si même je n'avais pas enseigné, je pourrais faire mon travail très bien. »

“on the fly, while listening to students.” (03-29).

« J'ai appris sur le tas, en écoutant les élèves. »

“But I mean, it's not complicated. You don't learn that in university or in courses.” (11-138)

« ... Mais je veux dire, c'est pas compliqué, tu n'apprends pas ça a à l'université ou dans les cours. »

“Pretty much in the heat of the moment. ...students leave my office there, and I've printed a bunch of things. They leave with their information. I would say I learned it because I am like that; it's my style.” (02-20)

« Pas mal dans le feu de l'action. Je suis quelqu'un qui agit. Je regarde les possibilités du jeune, les jeunes vont souvent sortir de mon bureau là, j'ai imprimé plein de chose, il sort avec leur information. Je dirais que j'ai appris parce que je suis comme ça, c'est un peu mon

“Pretty much in the heat of the moment. ...students leave my office there, and I've printed a bunch of things. They leave with their information. I would say I learned it because I am like that; it's my style.” (02-

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“Well... I work a lot with Career Cruising? Matchmaker, knowing the [postsecondary] programs. The open house at [local postsecondary institutions]...It’s mostly that way I learned.” (05-58)

“I will do career counselling. How do I do it? By knowing what exists, what is there; the possibilities. And then by properly communicating to the student.” (02-20)

“...[graduate training] is something I use everyday.” (10-122)

“The training I got during my master’s really helped me... Working as a guidance counsellor, I understand how important the techniques are, even if they look easy.” (12-152).

“you are not just there to give information. You are there to guide... but you have to know how to guide... If we don’t do it, we could be replaced by any technician who could do that work.” (09-109)

“The interpretation [of standardized tests] is different because you have some training which allows you to find things out. When you just have part 1, 2, 3 [of additional qualification courses] you just don’t have that.” (09-109)

“My master’s studies really helped for the psychology. I explored different theories... I learned about the therapeutic relationship and active listening. That’s the key to developing good relationships with students.” (12-153).

“Even with the intention of helping, if you don’t know how, you don’t have the tools, you can do more harm than good.” (08-88)

“Talking with a student inappropriately can discourage him, hurt him. The training is important.” (08-89)

“I think it’s the danger with someone who thinks they know a lot and will tell students ‘here’s what I think  
“I think it’s the danger with someone who thinks they know a lot and will tell students ‘here’s what I think you could do, you’d be good at that.’ I hear it a lot.”(10-119)

« Bien, je travaille beaucoup avec career cruising? Matchmaker, la connaissances des programmes. C'est au travers des journées de présentation de la \*\*\* pour le postsecondaire, en tout cas. C’est surtout de cette façon là que j’ai appris. »

« ...je vais faire du counselling de carrière. Comment est-ce que je vais faire ça? C'est en connaissant ce qui existe, ce qui est là, puis les possibilités, puis après ça en communicant bien avec l’élève. »

« C’est quelque chose que j’utilise à tous les jours. »

« Ma formation à la maitrise m’a aidé beaucoup... j’ai compris comment importantes sont ces techniques là, même si elles ont l’air facile. »

« ...tu n’es pas juste là pour donner l’information. Tu es là pour guider, tu dois guider, mais il faut que tu saches guider. Il y a deux aspects qui sont pris en considération, le côté administratif et le côté information scolaire. »

« L’interprétation qu’on en fait est différente parce que tu as une formation de base qui te permet d’aller chercher des choses. Quand tu n’as qu’une partie 1,2,3, tu ne l’as juste pas ça. »

« Ma formation à la maitrise m’a aidé beaucoup au niveau psychologique. J’ai eu la chance d’explorer des théories... J’ai aussi beaucoup appris sur la relation thérapeutique, sur l’écoute active... c'est vraiment la clé vraiment pour avoir une bonne relation avec les élèves.

« ...parce qu’on peut bien vouloir aider, mais si on ne sait pas comment, on n’a pas les moyens, on risque sans peut-être le vouloir faire du tord. »

« ...parler avec quelqu’un d’une manière inappropriée peut le décourager, le blâmer. Alors c'est pour ça que la préparation est importante. »

« ...je pense que c'est le danger de placer quelqu’un qui pense qu’il connaît beaucoup de choses qui va dicter à  
« ...je pense que c'est le danger de placer quelqu’un qui pense qu’il connaît beaucoup de choses qui va dicter à l’élève ‘voici ce que je pense que tu pourrais faire, tu serais bon là-dedans.’ C’est ce qu’on entend

“How can you offer students your best when you don’t have the necessary basic training?” (09-108)

“It’s not because of the training I received [in the additional qualification courses] that I do what I do.” (10-122)

“I won’t say that my additional qualification courses really prepared me.” (02-20)

“I never went to get my specialist because I didn’t need it. ...I had part one and two, you don’t need the specialist.” (01-03)

“...different scenarios are presented and you explain how you would react... that isn’t worth much.” (03-28)

“Part one [of the additional qualification courses], it was really... no, it was terrible. It was academic and dissertations, silliness. No offense, I don’t need that in my work.” (01-11)

“Learning counselling online... [guidance counsellors] won’t be better equipped, it doesn’t help.” (09-109)

“[W]hen we go to become qualified, not one time did we talk about counselling.” (01-01)

“...it’s not because you completed the specialist [course of the additional qualification] that you are able to do counselling. That girl who’s having an anxiety crisis, the other wants to commit suicide and another is taking drugs: not everyone can deal with that, even if you answer it on paper.” (06-68)

“three little useless courses.” (09-111)

“Anybody can get the qualification, but it’s not anybody who can relate with the kids.” (03-27)

“I wasn’t chosen for my knowledge in the field, because I didn’t have much. But I think it was more a question of what should a guidance counsellor be like, in terms of interests and contact with the kids.” (11-

« Comment peux-tu donner à un élève le meilleur de toi même quand tu n’as pas la formation de base pour le faire. »

« Je me dis, ce n’est pas la formation que j’ai reçue qui fait que je fais ce que je fais. »

« Je ne dirai pas que mes cours de qualification additionnelle m’ont nécessairement bien préparé... »

« J’ai jamais été chercher mon spécialiste à cause je ne l’avais pas besoin... J’avais déjà partie un et deux, tu n’as pas besoin de spécialiste. »

« Il y a toujours des scénarios qu’ils présentent et on se demandent comment on l’adresserait... Ça ne vaut pas grand chose. »

« Partie un, c’était vraiment, non. C’était terrible. C’était tout académique puis des dissertations, des tataiseries. No offense, mais j’ai pas besoin de ça dans mon travail. »

« Du counselling en ligne... Les gens ne sont pas plus équipés, ça donne rien. »

« Nous autres là, quand on va pour se faire qualifier, il n’y a pas un fois qu’on a parlé du counselling »

« ...c'est pas parce que tu as passé le cours avec spécialiste que tu vas être capable de faire du counselling... la petite qui fait une crise d’anxiété, puis l’autre qui veut se suicider, l’autre qui est dans drogue... c'est pas tout le monde qui est capable, même si tu es capable de répondre à la réponse sur papier.

« Trois petits cours inutiles. »

« N’importe qui peut aller chercher la qualification, mais ce n’est pas n’importe qui qui peut cliquer avec les jeunes. »

« Je n’ai pas été choisi en raison des connaissances que j’avais dans le domaine, parce que je n’en n’avais pas beaucoup. Mais je pense que c’était plus une question de ce qu’un conseiller d’orientation devait ressembler en

respected them... That, and because I am an organized person.” (07-75)

les élèves. Ma façon de les traiter et de les respecter... c’est ça qui l’attirait et je suis une personne organisée. »

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