
Advocating for Ourselves, Advocating for Our Communities: Canadian Counselling Psychology Into the Next Decade and Beyond

Promouvoir et défendre nos propres droits et ceux de nos collectivités : la psychologie du counseling au Canada au cours de la prochaine décennie et au-delà

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ABSTRACT

This special issue of *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy* is an outgrowth of the landmark 2018 Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference called “Advocating for Ourselves, Advocating for Our Communities: Canadian Counselling Psychology Into the Next Decade and Beyond.” This conference centred on seven working groups: the future of counselling psychology education and training in Canada, foregrounding clinical practice and clinical supervision within the field of Canadian counselling psychology, student advocacy in Canadian counselling psychology, responding to the TRC in Canadian counselling psychology, internationalization of counselling psychology, the role of Canadian counselling psychology in advocating for the needs of members of under-represented groups, and the responsibility of Canadian counselling psychology to reach systems, organizations, and policy-makers. This introduction highlights the seven articles included in this special issue, each of which summarizes the discussion included within one working group and elaborates upon topics that emerged within each working group discussion. We expect that, after reading the articles contained within this special issue, readers will be able to experience some of the intellectual stimulation and inspiration felt by many who attended the working groups in person. We also hope that this collection of articles will inspire those who did not attend the conference to advocate for and to help increase the presence and the influence of Canadian counselling psychology locally,

provincially, nationally, and globally as it seeks to promote the best interests of the various communities it serves.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce numéro spécial de la *Revue canadienne de counseling et de psychothérapie* est issu de l'important congrès canadien 2018 de psychologie du counseling ayant pour thématique : « Promouvoir et défendre nos propres droits et ceux de nos collectivités : la psychologie du counseling au Canada au cours de la prochaine décennie et au-delà ». Ce congrès s'est articulé autour de sept groupes de travail : l'avenir des études et de la formation en psychologie du counseling au Canada, la mise en valeur de la pratique clinique et de la supervision clinique au sein de la psychologie du counseling au Canada, la promotion et la défense des intérêts des étudiantes et étudiants canadiens en psychologie du counseling, la réponse à la CVR de la part de la psychologie du counseling au Canada, l'internationalisation de la psychologie du counseling, le rôle de la psychologie du counseling au Canada dans la promotion et la défense des besoins des groupes sous-représentés, et la responsabilité de la psychologie du counseling au Canada dans l'établissement de contacts avec les systèmes, les organismes, et les responsables des politiques. La présente introduction souligne les sept articles présentés dans ce numéro spécial, dont chacun résume les discussions tenues au sein d'un groupe de travail et explique les enjeux qui en sont ressortis. Nous espérons qu'après avoir lu les articles contenus dans ce numéro spécial, les lecteurs seront en mesure de ressentir en partie la stimulation et l'inspiration intellectuelles qu'ont éprouvées bon nombre de personnes ayant pu participer en personne aux groupes de travail. Nous espérons également que cette série d'articles saura inciter celles et ceux qui n'ont pas pu être présents au congrès à promouvoir et à défendre la psychologie du counseling au Canada et à contribuer à accroître sa présence et son influence à l'échelle locale, provinciale, nationale, et internationale, compte tenu de sa démarche visant à promouvoir l'intérêt véritable des diverses collectivités qu'elle dessert.

Nine years after the Inaugural Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference (Bedi et al., 2016), the landmark 2018 Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference took place at the University of Calgary from October 26 to 28. The theme for the conference was “Advocating for Ourselves, Advocating for Our Communities: Canadian Counselling Psychology Into the Next Decade and Beyond.” This event brought together multiple stakeholders and promoted critical conversations about diversity, advocacy, and social justice as they permeate through the pillars and various foci of Canadian counselling psychology. It was designed to propel this psychology specialization and profession into the next decade (2020–2029). The conference was attended by over 150 counselling psychology–affiliated individuals (students, practitioners, educators, supervisors, researchers, etc.). In addition to approximately 125 poster and paper presentations, an opening keynote by Dr. Ada L. Sinacore (“Counselling Psychology at the Crossroads: Discipline or Social Movement”), and a closing keynote by Dr. Richard Young (“Driven by

the Past or Navigating the Future: Our Profession, Our Clients, Ourselves”), the conference centred on seven working groups. Each working group represented an important area related to Canadian counselling psychology specifically or to the various communities it serves. Two group facilitators led each working group (supported by two designated note-takers), which was attended by various self-selected participants representing academics, applied professionals, and students, among other representatives. They discussed general experiences, major issues and concerns, priorities for Canadian counselling psychology, and ways to advocate for the profession and the communities we serve in order to achieve desired outcomes now, within the next decade, and beyond. The leaders of each working group then reported back the results of their discussion to attendees at the conclusion of the conference.

The seven working groups for the conference (presented in no particular order) were as follows:

1. The future of counselling psychology education and training (facilitated by Dr. Dan Dox and Dr. Blythe Sheppard).
2. Foregrounding clinical practice and clinical supervision within Canadian counselling psychology (facilitated by Dr. Jeff Chang and Dr. Lara Hiseler).
3. Student advocacy in Canadian counselling psychology (facilitated by Dr. Jeff Landline and Dr. K. Jessica Van Vliet).
4. Responding to the TRC in Canadian counselling psychology (facilitated by Dr. Karlee Fellner and Dr. Jenny Rowett).
5. Internationalization of counselling psychology (facilitated by Dr. Ada L. Sinacore and Mr. Deepak Matthew).
6. The role of Canadian counselling psychology in advocating for the needs of members of under-represented groups (facilitated by Dr. Janelle L. Kwee and Dr. Roy Moodley).
7. The responsibility of Canadian counselling psychology to reach systems, organizations, and policy-makers (facilitated by Dr. Sharalyn Jordan and Dr. Shelly Russell-Mayhew).

The objectives of these working groups were (a) to facilitate discussion on the particular topic of critical importance to the future of Canadian counselling psychology, (b) to identify the current and future needs in each topic area, (c) to begin creating an action plan for the future of the discipline in relation to each area, and (d) to understand all of these aspects from an intersectional perspective (i.e., carefully considering individuals of a range of identities). The articles contained within this special issue are devoted to summarizing the rich discussion that took place in each working group, namely around current status, future needs, areas for advocacy, and suggestions for the field to work on over the next decade.

Papers in This Special Issue

The five full-length articles and the two brief reports in this special issue of *Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy* represent either summaries (brief reports) or summaries and scholarly elaborations (full-length articles) on topics covered during the discussions of the seven working groups.

With the exception of the training article (which was co-authored by the two graduate students who served as note-takers for the working group and by the organizers of the conference, who collectively are also the guest editors of this special issue), each article was authored by a selection of those who participated in the specific working group, typically the co-facilitators of the working group, who in some cases collaborated with the student note-takers.

The first article in this special issue, entitled “The Future of Counselling Psychology Education and Training in Canada: A Post-Conference Reflection,” was authored by Kaori Wada, Anusha Kassan, José F. Domene, Robinder P. Bedi, Franziska Kintzel, and Alyssa M. West. As the authors note, the field of Canadian counselling psychology education and training has various barriers to overcome in order to ensure the development of future counselling psychologists who are well-positioned to exert greater influence in impacting local and societal change in the areas that are within their scope of practice. In addition, there is much room for counselling psychology programs to espouse better the values of the profession within their own admissions and programming. In this article, the authors summarize the current status of Canadian counselling psychology education and training as well as key barriers to overcome in the future education and training of Canadian counselling psychologists in the following areas: regulation of education and training (including looking at master’s training and doctoral training separately), approaches to training and to enhancing research excellence, cultural and social justice responsiveness, and internationalization (especially related to student mobility and internationalization in Canada). One of the most salient aspects of this article is the observation that professional identity and core values in counselling psychology were relevant directly or indirectly across all four themes elaborated upon in this article, and participants experienced many forces working against applying the core values of Canadian counselling psychology in real-world settings (both within programs and after graduation). Therefore, there was some realization that it was important to advocate not only for the various communities that counselling psychologists serve but also for the profession itself and what it seeks to represent.

The second article, entitled “Clinical Practice and Clinical Supervision: Building a Firm Foundation,” was authored by Jeff Chang, Tanya Mudry, and Lara Hiseler. By weaving supervision literature and their personal experiences, the authors substantiated the discussion that took place in the working group on clinical practice and clinical supervision. The authors argued that professional

identity development has been multi-faceted, contextual, and complex, given that it is influenced by factors such as training opportunities, regulatory bodies, and employment situations. Echoing Sinacore's (2019) keynote speech, Chang et al. eschewed the "us versus others" way of thinking about counselling psychology identity. At the same time, they do not dismiss the sentiment that their working group participants expressed—a sense of marginalization in relation to clinical psychology. For these authors, this sentiment only highlights the importance of clinical practice and supervision as a principal way to build a firm foundation for counselling psychologists to become professionals who embody the values of the discipline. They also presented a thoughtful summary of ways to ensure high-quality supervision and factors influencing current practices.

The third article, entitled "Student Advocacy in Canadian Counselling Psychology Programs: 2018 CCPC Working Group Outcomes," was authored by Jeff Landine, K. Jessica Van Vliet, Chelsea Hobbs, and Alysha Chan Kent. It serves as a great complement to some of the work addressed in Wada et al.'s article in this issue but from a perspective that centres on student experiences. The article addresses five key themes related to students' experiences in Canadian counselling psychology programs and generates seven student-centred recommendations for improving these programs. Cutting across these themes and recommendations was a commitment to the psychology specialization of counselling psychology, an expressed need for programs to be more flexible and responsive to students' needs and self-care, and specific ways to increase opportunities and to reduce barriers for individuals to pursue their professional goal to become counselling psychologists. The emergent themes and recommendations address all stages of the student experience, from the admissions process through to post-degree licensure, and present important ideas for anyone interested in a student-centred approach to the preparation of future generations of counselling psychologists.

The fourth article in this special issue, entitled "Reconciling Relations: Shifting Counselling Psychology to Address Truth and Reconciliation," was authored by Karlee D. Fellner, Jeffrey Ansloos, Nevada Ouellette, and Gwendolyn D. Villebrun. As the authors note, this paper centres on the content and the subsequent recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission working group. Specifically, in the two working group sessions, members were asked to share their perspectives on reconciliation, current efforts in counselling psychology toward reconciliation, and recommendations for the future of counselling psychology in terms of reconciliation. As a result, the authors offer concrete suggestions for how researchers, educators, clinicians, and trainees in the field of counselling psychology can support reconciliation in a good way and improve the ways in which the discipline can serve Indigenous people and communities. To provide context for readers, the authors provided a critical analysis of the role that the TRC has played (or failed to play) historically within professional psychology. They

also address the efforts that have been carried out more specifically in counselling psychology as well as the need to take much more concrete action to promote to the well-being of Indigenous people and communities ethically and sensitively.

The fifth article in this special issue, entitled “Internationalization of Canadian Counselling Psychology: A Collaborative Endeavour Grounded in Social Justice,” was authored by Ada L. Sinacore and Kirby Huminuik. As the authors note, if Canadian counselling psychologists want their research and their practices to be applicable to those outside of the Euro-American context, internationalization becomes an imperative. Only relatively recently have counselling psychologists begun to appreciate more greatly and to engage in more comprehensive and analytical discourses around what internationalization means and how best to achieve it, and this article is an important contribution to this larger and timely dialogue. In this article, the authors report and expand upon the key themes that characterized their working group discussion: mapping the territory (e.g., what internationalization means and does not mean), outlining the varied tensions experienced by those who engage in international endeavours (for both Canadian and non-Canadian academics, practitioners, and students), and discussing challenges for the field of Canadian counselling psychology to overcome as well as opportunities for the field to actualize. One of the key contributions of this article is the outlining of some of the potential and actually observed harms associated with globalization and some caveats to be considered carefully as Canadian counselling psychology takes further steps toward internationalization.

The sixth article in this special issue (and the first brief report), entitled “Counselling Psychology and Under-Represented Groups: A Vision for Advocacy as Mutual Transformation,” was authored by Janelle L. Kwee. The topic of this brief report (and the working group it represents) has taken on particular salience in the latter half of 2020, with what appears to be a growing recognition in Canada and around the world of the racism, inequities, and injustices that are present. The authors describe the discussion and outcomes of the working group on counselling psychology and members of under-represented groups. Problematizing the task of advocacy and the meaning of the concept of under-represented groups, the authors describe two central themes that emerged from the working group: (a) an understanding of advocacy as a mutually transformative process that must attend to the contextual nature of (under)representation and (b) the need to consider advocating for change at multiple levels. The brief report also contains specific ideas for how counselling psychologists can engage in advocacy in ways that reflect the core values of our specialization as well as a recognition that there still remains much to be done.

The seventh article (and the second brief report), entitled “The Responsibility of Canadian Counselling Psychology to Reach Systems, Organizations, and Policy-Makers,” was authored by Hilary Evans and Shelly Russell-Mayhew. As the

authors note, social justice efforts have been infused increasingly across multiple domains of counselling psychology, and more research is needed to understand how to work outside of the counselling session. Accordingly, this brief report centres on the content and subsequent recommendations of the working group. More specifically, the discussion generated during the working group centred on (a) identifying needs, (b) using our unique training, and (c) infiltrating and navigating the system. As a result, the authors make recommendations regarding social justice and advocacy in counselling psychology in relation to systemic change.

Conclusion

It is hoped that, after reading the articles contained within this special issue, readers will be able to experience some of the intellectual stimulation and inspiration felt by many who attended the working groups in person. We expect that readers will feel comfortably updated on the current state of counselling psychology in Canada, including areas of strength, areas of growth, and particular challenges in need of strong advocacy, and we hope that readers will be inspired to advocate for Canadian counselling psychology and what it represents and strives for and to help increase the presence and the influence of Canadian counselling psychology locally, provincially, nationally, and globally, as the field seeks to promote the needs of the various communities it serves.

We believe that it is time for us in the field of Canadian counselling psychology to do a better job advocating not only for the communities we serve (which has always been a strong suit) but also for ourselves—the specialization and the profession of counselling psychology. This special issue is part of such a larger endeavour, and we sincerely thank Dr. Kevin Alderson, the past editor of the journal, for agreeing to allow us to create this special issue focused on advocacy for Canadian counselling psychology.

Lastly, we wish to note that this special issue of the *CJCP* is part of the larger knowledge mobilization and dissemination plan for the 2018 Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference working groups. It supplements (a) a conversation session held at the 2019 annual convention of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) entitled “Outcomes of the Working Groups at the 2018 Canadian Counselling Psychology Conference,” (b) an intended conversation session at the cancelled 2020 CPA conference in Montreal, and (c) selected conference proceedings that have been published online (Kassan et al. 2019). We especially encourage readers to review the selected conference proceedings, in which 13 papers corresponding to select presentations are published, and to gain a further accounting of exciting counselling psychology research and scholarship currently underway in Canada.

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