Exploring Teachers' Perceptions of Psychological Reports and Their Decision to Read Reports and Implement Recommendations

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Abstract

The current study used a questionnaire to explore 15 elementary school teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. Teachers indicated the extent to which internal variables (those inherent to reports, such as clarity) and external variables (those external to reports, such as the school psychologist's experience) impact their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Overall, teachers rated all variables as having at least somewhat of an impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. As well, all teachers indicated that they perceive all sections of reports as at least somewhat useful, and that they attempt to implement recommendations at least some of the time. Most teachers reported typically reading entire reports, and all teachers reported typically reading the majority of report sections. Teachers predominantly mentioned external variables related to classroom workings when listing factors that impact the frequency with which they attempt to implement recommendations.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband and my parents. I am grateful for their limitless love and support, and sincerely thank them for always helping me to believe in myself.

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Introduction

The Purpose of Psychological Reports

Psychological reports written for educational settings can play a paramount role in promoting the well-being of children. In addressing parents' and teachers' concerns regarding an individual child's academic achievement, emotions, and behaviour, reports can help meet the needs of the individual child by providing knowledge and encouraging action. School psychologists, as writers of psychological reports, make connections between information gathered from cumulative record folders, classroom observations, parent and teacher interviews, and various tests to provide a description of a child's functioning and abilities. Based on the profile of results, school psychologists can then formulate recommendations to capitalize on the child's strengths and to remediate or compensate in areas of weakness. Following the assessment of children, school psychologists use reports to convey assessment results to parents, teachers, and other professionals. Implementation of recommendations may have a positive effect on a child's functioning in school, as recommendations often address, directly or indirectly, the child's academic achievement, emotional well-being, and behaviour.

It seems reasonable to surmise that teachers' views of psychological reports and related variables will have an impact on whether they read reports and implement recommendations. Unfortunately, informal conversations with teachers and school psychologists indicate that many teachers may read only certain sections of psychological reports, and that some may not read reports at all. A teacher who does not read entire reports or reads only sections of reports may misinterpret results and/or recommendations, which could impact the implementation process. A study by Noell

(1999) that explored school psychologists' and teachers' perceptions regarding consultation revealed that both teachers and school psychologists reported believing that teachers were most accountable for the effectiveness of interventions. Literature on teachers' decision to read psychological reports could not be located, and literature on effective psychological report writing for school settings, teachers' decision to read reports, and variables impacting implementation of recommendations was limited.

This document is organized in chapters. The first chapter includes a rationale for this study, a review of literature on report writing, and research questions addressed by the study. The second chapter on methodology discusses participants, materials, and procedures used. Results are presented in the third chapter and discussed in the fourth chapter. Study limitations and implications are also explored in the fourth chapter.

Chapter I- Rationale, Literature Review, and Research Questions

Rationale for Current Study

There is minimal research on effective psychological report writing (Ownby, 1997), particularly as it applies to school settings. The present study examines one aspect: which variables relate to increased utility of reports in the eyes of teachers. It is hypothesized that several variables may impact teachers' perceptions of reports, and that teachers will identify that many of these variables impact their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Variables examined will be classified as internal or external. Internal variables, such as format and writing style, are inherent to the report itself, whereas external variables, such as setting and purpose, are not inherent to the actual report but related to it (Ownby, 1997).

In the following literature review, I will explore the current state of research on both internal and external variables. This distinction may allow clear presentation of variables that could facilitate report writing and developing an awareness of factors related to teachers' perceptions of reports. Given the aforementioned lack of research conducted in school settings, I will examine studies from experimental, clinical, and school settings.

Of the available studies on perceptions of psychological reports, several focus on clinicians' opinions of reports or on opinions of contrived reports read in contrived settings. The current study will have teachers assess reports they typically receive. Gaps in research related to teachers' general attitudes towards and experiences with psychological reports will also be identified and used to develop items for the questionnaire.

The term "psychoeducational report" is sometimes used, rather than "psychological report," when a report focuses on problems that children have in school (Sattler, 2001). Many researchers, however, also use the term "psychological report" to refer to a report written for school settings (Sattler, 2001; Ownby, 1997). In this study, the term "psychological report" will be used to refer to reports written for both settings.

Literature Review

Perceptions of Psychological Reports

According to Ownby and Wallbrown (1986), most reviews of literature on effective psychological report writing comprise expert opinions rather than research findings. This applies to much of the current literature. Many of the studies that provide research findings are outdated. The present section will explore literature on professionals' perceptions of psychological reports and the variables that may impact perceptions of reports.

In an early study of perceptions of psychological reports, Tallent and Reiss (1959, p. 446) asked 712 professionals, including psychiatric social workers, psychiatrists, and psychologists, to complete the stem, "The trouble with psychological reports is..." It was found that the main concerns of participants related to over- or under-interpretation of data, the use of jargon, wordiness and ambiguity of content. Berry (1975) found that 65% of teachers surveyed reported being generally satisfied with reports they received from clinical psychologists, although the return rate of Berry's questionnaire was only 46% (Ownby, 1997).

Hagborg and Aiello Coultier's study (1994) was one of the few to explore teachers' perceptions of actual reports they receive on their students. Questionnaires

completed by 28 classroom teachers and 26 special education teachers indicate that teachers viewed reports positively in terms of technical language, relevance, and comprehension.

Internal Variables

Internal variables were selected based on their connections to perceptions of psychological reports found in literature or on my hypotheses of their connections to perceptions of reports.

Components of a Psychological Report

The following sections explore various components of psychological reports and guidelines for their construction. Discussion focuses on teachers' perceptions of report components, although research in this area is limited.

a) Referral Reason

This section of a psychological report explains why a child was referred for psychoeducational assessment. Teglasi (1983) states that one of the main functions of psychological reports is the clarification of the referral problem. This partly involves providing parents and teachers with a new perspective and greater understanding of a child's problems, which may lead them to develop more positive attitudes (Teglasi). Support for this hypothesis comes from a survey where two-thirds of teachers reported that the largest benefit of a psychological report was that it helped them to think more clearly about individual children (Grubb, Petty & Flynn, 1976).

b) Background

The background section of psychological reports offers a history of the child based on interviews with current teachers and parents as well as information found in cumulative record folders, including report cards and details of contact with other professionals. Teglasi (1983) states that gathering information from various sources may produce a detailed history of the referral issue, including problem onset, frequency, and severity. He suggests that obtaining a developmental history and perceptions of others involved in the assessment process can aid in shaping conclusions and recommendations. Information gathered regarding the three domains in which a child functions—school, family, and peer group—can help to form a well-rounded picture of the child (Teglasi). The school psychologist must also recognize that people may have unique interpretations of behaviour; asking for specific examples of behavior can help the school psychologist to form his or her own conclusions (Teglasi).

c) Behavioural Observations

In the behavioural observations section of psychological reports, school psychologists include their perceptions of the referred child's behaviour during testing and/or classroom observations. Teglasi (1983) states that this section should include physical and attitudinal information that might have had an effect on test results (e.g., lack of interest, fatigue), descriptions of the child's approach to different types of tasks, and procedures that promoted cooperation and attention. A study by Lacey and Ross (1964) found that a sample of psychologists, social workers, and psychiatrists working in child guidance centers believed that information about the client's appearance and behaviour during the assessment should be included in the report.

Research by Ownby, Wallbrown, and Brown (1982) explored special education teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. Findings indicate writers of reports often included behavioural observations in reports, but seldom linked them to antecedent behaviours. The researchers concluded that the psychologists writing the reports deemed behavioural observations important, but did not assess behaviour systematically (Ownby, Wallbrown, and Brown).

d) Results and Interpretation

The results and interpretation section of psychological reports includes results from individual tests and the school psychologist's interpretation of the pattern of results, including implications for the classroom. Sattler (2001) states that children's profiles of test scores should be described clearly using percentile ranks, and that test scores should be interpreted in addition to being cited. When reporting results, however, Teglasi (1983) suggests that it is important to distinguish data from interpretations, and that conclusions should be clearly stated with supporting information.

e) Recommendations

Based on test results and their interpretation, the school psychologist provides recommendations that parents and teachers can implement at home and/or at school. A study by Berry (1975) found that 61% of teachers surveyed rated the recommendations section of reports received from clinical psychologists as the most valuable section in working with children. Littlejohn (1977) found that elementary school teachers and principals, school psychologists, and school psychology instructors rated recommendations as the most important part of reports. Ford and Migles (1979) found

that, although readers of psychological reports were most interested in the recommendations section, it was also the section of which they were most critical.

Teglasi (1983) lists making recommendations for taking action as an important function of psychological reports. Taking action could be similar to Sattler's (2001) description of the purpose for making recommendations: providing a flexible intervention and placement approach rather than labeling a child. Sattler also states that recommendations are intended to "describe realistic and practical intervention goals and treatment strategies (p.687)."

Number and specificity of recommendations may impact teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of recommendations. Hagborg and Aiello Coultier (1994) found that 38% of classroom and special education teachers surveyed indicated that the recommendations in actual reports they received were lacking in number and concreteness.

Studies have found that teachers prefer to read (Brandt and Giebink, 1968) and are better able to understand (Wiener, 1987) reports that contain specific rather than general recommendations. A study by Noble and Dickinson (1988), however, found that although teachers rated least specific recommendations as hardest to implement, the most specific recommendations were rated as the next hardest to implement. Recommendations with moderate amounts of specificity were rated as easiest to implement, suggesting that too little or too much detail could impede implementation. Ownby, Wallbrown, and Brown (1982) studied special education teachers' perceptions of report specificity. Sixty-five percent of those surveyed felt that reports they typically

received were either definitely or usually general in nature, and only seventeen percent felt that reports were definitely or usually specific in nature.

Format

The format of psychological reports (the manner or style of presenting report information) may shape teachers' perceptions of reports and influence whether reports are read and recommendations implemented. The following section describes general guidelines for formatting a psychological report and explores teachers' ratings of various report formats. Discussion also focuses on summaries, as the literature on report format often includes information on summaries.

The format of psychological reports may vary depending on the author. Although attaching summaries to reports is optional, the length of reports may determine whether they are used. For example, shorter reports may not require summaries, although a concise summary of major findings may benefit readers of longer reports (Teglasi, 1983). Sattler (2001) believes that report summaries should be limited to one or two short paragraphs, and notes that some school psychologists omit summaries in order to avoid having readers disregard the body of the report.

Littlejohn (1977) compared how school psychologists, elementary school teachers and principals, and school psychology instructors rated three formats of psychological reports: a traditional narrative report, a brief checklist, and a brief narrative report with an emphasis on recommendations. Results indicate that teachers preferred the traditional narrative report.

Wiener (1985) explored 81 elementary school teachers' views of three psychological report formats: a short report, a typical psychological report, and a report

that consisted of referral questions and answers. The two latter reports both contained elaborate descriptions of recommendations and learning styles. Wiener found that teachers preferred elaborate reports to shorter reports.

In a later study, Wiener (1987) researched factors that predicted elementary school teachers' comprehension of and preference for various psychological report formats. Forty-nine elementary school teachers were randomly assigned to read one of four formats of a psychological report: a short report, a regular psychological report, an elaborate report, and a report with elaborate recommendations. Results indicate that teachers preferred to read elaborate reports that were easy to comprehend. Comprehension of reports increased when what Wiener considers to be the two major sections of reports—the description of the child's learning style and the recommendations—were elaborate.

Lacks, Horton, and Owen (1969) explored psychiatrists' satisfaction with various psychological report formats. Participants described the standard narrative report as too long, redundant, subjective, general, and as containing too much information. The checklist was described as too limited, and the outline format received the most favorable ratings. The researchers suggest that this format, described as containing less detail than the standard report and more detail than the checklist, might be most suitable when a prompt reporting of results is preferred.

Overall, results seem to indicate that some readers of psychological reports, namely teachers, may be willing to read narrative reports in which certain sections are elaborate. Preference for a certain report format in a contrived setting, however, may not translate to the everyday workings of a school. Informal conversations with teachers and

school psychologists suggest that some teachers may read only the summary and/or recommendations section of psychological reports.

Organization

The organization of a psychological report could impact teachers' comprehension of the report and, therefore, their decision to read the report and implement recommendations. The following section explores general guidelines for organizing reports and research on teachers' preferences for various report formats.

Teglasi (1983) believes that a well-integrated report combines data in a more full and complete manner than a report in which information is interpreted in a test-by-test fashion. In some cases, reports can be organized by an overall theme that emerges from the data, with the relationship among findings being interpreted in terms of the theme that emerges (Teglasi). Wiener (1985) studied 81 teachers' comprehension of psychological reports and preferences for report organization. Results indicate teachers preferred and were better able to comprehend reports that were organized by domain (e.g., memory, motor skills) or by referral question and answer rather than shorter reports that lacked these organizational structures.

Clarity

Lack of clarity in psychological reports could affect teachers' ratings of report efficacy, their comprehension of psychological reports and, consequently, their decision to read psychological reports and implement recommendations. The following section examines the importance of writing with clarity, guidelines and research on avoiding

jargon, and professionals' perceptions of psychological report clarity and understanding of terms generally used in reports.

Some authors urge school psychologists to communicate clearly and concisely, noting that use of unnecessary technical information, or jargon, hinders clarity (Sattler, 2001; Teglasi, 1983). An example of jargon would be naming subtests without describing them (Teglasi). Sattler states that words used to describe test performance, such as "good" and "excellent," are inexact and subjective. He believes that results can be shared more objectively through discussing them in terms of age appropriateness and absolute and relative strengths and weaknesses.

Although a need for recent research exists, several researchers have conducted studies on perceptions of psychological report clarity. Baker (1965) used a survey to explore 479 teachers', counselors', and administrators' perceptions of psychological services in schools. He reported that, "the claim that the reports of the school psychologists are commonly too technical, theoretical or are written in a vague style was not substantiated in this study (p.39). " Results from several studies, however, do not support these findings. Cuadra and Albaugh (1956), for example, studied the relationship between the message report writers intended to convey and the actual message readers received. They found that this relationship was modest at best, which prompted them to urge writers of psychological reports to state their intended message explicitly.

Berry (1975) explored teachers' views of psychological reports received from clinical psychologists. The researcher found that 30% of participants felt that reports were unclear and contained too much psychological terminology. Shively and Smith (1969) studied teachers', counselors', and undergraduate education students'

comprehension of terms frequently used in reports. Although counselors understood more of the technical terms found in the reports, only 54% of these terms were understood by the groups overall. This could be problematic, considering an earlier study found that teachers prefer to read reports that contain fewer technical terms or that explain technical terms (Rucker, 1967 b).

On the surface, it seems that a reduction of technical terms may be a simple and effective way to increase the clarity of psychological reports. Yet, Ownby (1997) suggests that linking assessment data to conclusions and recommendations requires the use of technical terms. He states that terms will be jargon unless the writer and the reader share a frame of reference. To help ensure that readers understand terms being used, Ownby urges writers of reports to include descriptions of terms when readers' comprehension is questionable.

Ownby (1997) notes that terms such as *intelligence, anxiety,* and *perceptual skills* are often used to describe behaviour, but rarely have a shared definition. He points to a study by Rucker (1967 b) that found disagreement among psychologists themselves regarding the definitions of terms used in reports. Ownby (1997) feels that technical terms provide psychologists with a shared vocabulary with which to communicate, but that they are likely the jargon for which reports are criticized. He advocates connecting the terms to something familiar to both the reader and writer. If the writer feels that the reader is not familiar with the term, *auditory perceptual skills,* for example, he recommends using following report statement: "The client's auditory perceptual skills were assessed as his ability to break down words into their component sounds (Ownby, 1997, p.55-56)."

Ownby (1990) conducted research to determine how to improve the clarity of psychological reports. The model of writing he advocated was based on the assumption that reports often lack clarity because they fail to make an explicit link between potentially confusing constructs, such as "attention," to basic data, conclusions, and recommendations. School psychologists rated statements based on this model as more credible and persuasive than statements not based on this model (Ownby).

Sattler (2001) suggests that the writer of a psychological report would want to ensure that non-professionals could understand the report. Deciding on the degree of elaboration and the complexity of language to use in a report, however, may still be a challenge. If school psychologists incorrectly assume teachers are familiar with certain terminology, or if teachers are hesitant to seek clarification of terminology, comprehension may suffer. Writing a report that non-professionals understand may be a difficult task. Ownby's previously mentioned definition of the term "auditory perceptual skills," for example, may be confusing to some.

External Variables

Teachers' perceptions of variables external to psychological reports are examined in the following sections. Variables were selected based on their probable connection to teachers' perceptions of psychological reports and their decision to read reports and implement recommendations.

Views of Assessment

Teachers' decision to read reports and implement recommendations may be shaped by the value they place on assessment. A study by Watkins, Crosby, and Pearson

(2001) of a group of Arizona special education and classroom teachers found that teachers valued traditional assessment activities and wanted to maintain those services; however, teachers also wanted more psychological services in general. The researchers noted that school psychologists often report that they would like to reduce the time they spend assessing children to focus on other forms of service delivery, although teachers and administrators often reveal that they prefer to have all forms of service delivery increased and do not want a reduction in assessment services (Watkins, Crosby, and Pearson). In a longitudinal study in England, Evans and Wright (1987) examined head teachers' and educational psychologists' perceptions of the effectiveness of services provided by school psychologists. Results indicate teachers gave the highest priority to assessment. The value placed on assessment services suggests teachers view assessment as instrumental in meeting the needs of students, and as a result, may be more interested and involved in the assessment process.

The Impact of Consultation on Perceptions of Psychological Reports

Teachers' decision to read psychological reports and implement recommendations may be impacted by the quality and amount of consultations they have with school psychologists. The following is an exploration of guidelines and research on the various stages and purposes of consultation that highlights the possible relationship between consultation and perceptions of psychological reports. Qualities of the school psychologist as a consultant that may impact perceptions of reports are also explored.

a) Stages and Purpose of Consultation

Cole and Brown (2003) describe several phases of consultative problem solving used by school teams: clarification of presenting problem, analysis of identified problem, brainstorming alternative solutions, developing intervention plans, assigning responsibilities and time lines, and monitoring interventions and follow-ups. They describe the process of consultation as being interactive; members are free to discuss concerns and ask questions.

Several researchers offer ideas on the functions of consultation and its possible impact on implementation of recommendations. Borghese and Cole (1994) note that whether or not the school psychologist consults with the referring teacher likely affects the implementation of recommendations, and Teglasi (1983) notes that consultation between the two parties is necessary for implementation of recommendations. A study by Gutkin (1986) found a small, significant relationship between frequency of consultation and perceptions of recommendations.

Researchers note that teachers may not be motivated to implement an intervention if they lack adequate training in the theory behind recommendations and the practices required to implement them (Sladeczek, Kratochwill, Steinbach, Kumke, and Hagermoser, 2003). Researchers also suggest that teachers will passively resist change if they are not free to express their ideas regarding change to the school psychologist (Siegel and Cole, 2003). Both training in interventions and expression of ideas could occur during consultation. Collaborating with teachers to form recommendations during consultation seems valuable, given their knowledge and responsibility for implementing many interventions. Consultation throughout the assessment process may allow teachers

to stay informed of test results and to aid in interpreting results. Time constraints and caseloads, however, may leave school psychologists pressed to provide desired levels of service. An early survey of 479 school staff suggests this may be the case; participants felt that the communication between classroom teachers and school psychologists was inadequate (Baker, 1965). Teachers who participated indicated that they desired faster service and improved follow-up.

According to Teglasi (1983), several researchers responded to criticisms that school psychologists in the past have failed to develop open communication within schools by suggesting that face-to-face meetings should complement formal reports. Sudduth (1976) explored the impact of four methods of reporting information to teachers: report only, face-to-face consultation only, report and consultation, and no report or consultation. Significantly greater agreement between teachers and psychologists about the nature of the child's problem was evidenced in the report and consultation group.

In most Nova Scotia school boards, scheduling consultations to discuss assessment results with parents and teachers is mandatory. Some school psychologists may write reports prior to holding the consultation, and then use information gained during the consultation to finalize reports. School psychologists may also discuss various topics informally with teachers, including concerns regarding children, report results, or classroom management techniques. Such unscheduled discussions could occur at any time, including recess or after school. The amount of ongoing support teachers receive throughout the assessment process may influence their views of reports.

b) Qualities of the School Psychologist as a Consultant

Qualities of the school psychologist as a consultant may also impact teachers' perceptions of the assessment process and psychological reports. A study by Gutkin (1986) indicates certain qualities of the consultant might influence how consultees view recommendations generated during consultation. In that study, the researcher developed a questionnaire to compare, from a teacher's perspective, the relationship between consultation experiences and outcomes. Participants had a more positive view of recommendations when school psychologists communicated their ideas in a skillful manner, had a strong background knowledge of psychological principles, and shared their ideas with enthusiasm. It is probable that improved perceptions could positively influence implementation. According to Siegel and Cole (2003), effective functioning as a school psychologist requires avoiding the expert role, one that may be assumed or may be given by others. The researchers report that, in their own experiences, teachers resent receiving "expert advice" from outside professionals in areas in which teachers are knowledgeable. Engaging in collaborative consultation, part of which involves gathering as well as providing information, allows teachers to feel involved and valued in the assessment process. Research supports that educators prefer collaborative approaches to consultation (Cole & Brown, 2003).

Enhancement of Knowledge

The extent to which teachers feel that psychological reports enhance their knowledge of students may impact their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Teachers who feel that psychological reports provide them with new insight into a child's academic achievement, intelligence, behaviour, or emotional well-

being may place a higher value on reports and be more willing to read reports and implement recommendations. A study by Baker (1965) compared experienced (more than four years of experience) and inexperienced (less than four years of experience) teachers' ratings of the utility of psychological reports. Approximately half of inexperienced teachers responded that psychological reports enriched their knowledge of problems, although only 28% of experienced teachers responded similarly.

The area of teaching specialty may also relate to views of the amount of new information offered by psychological reports. In particular, researchers have found that special education teachers may be dissatisfied with school psychological services, particularly with reports (Ownby, 1982; Ownby, Wallbrown, & Brown, 1982). Although many factors may explain this finding, special education teachers may have more experience and/or training in meeting individual students' needs and, therefore, feel that reports do not offer any new suggestions.

Classroom Workings

Teachers' views of whether recommendations reflect an awareness of classroom workings and classroom workings themselves likely influence their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Borghese and Cole (1994) state that school psychologists must consider the limitations of the classroom and practicality when formulating recommendations that teachers will implement. A survey by Rucker (1967 a) found that teachers preferred easily-implemented recommendations that did not single out children, a finding that could relate to teachers' concern with the child's self-esteem, and to the additional time required to implement individualized recommendations.

Rucker (1967a) found that teachers rated reports that conveyed an awareness of classroom workings as more favorable than those that did not convey such awareness. This awareness would likely involve being cognizant of the time constraints, resources, and probable effectiveness of recommendations in the classroom. In support of one of these connections, Frankel and Kassinove (1974) found that teachers were less willing to implement recommendations that require excess effort. Demands on time may result in teachers being less able to read psychological reports and implement recommendations. Teachers may be more likely to implement individualized recommendations that reflect the holistic needs of the child rather than generic recommendations often used for common concerns, such as ADHD.

Exploration of Referral Problem

School psychologists' thorough exploration of referral problems with teachers and parents would likely enhance their ability to provide these individuals with an accurate description of a child's functioning. This, in turn, could improve perceptions of psychological reports. Although little research exists on the exploration of referral problems, Ownby and Wallbrown (1986) attribute lack of satisfaction with many psychological reports to school psychologists' failure to properly explore the child's problem prior to report writing. The authors state that a problem-oriented report must link data to environmental variables. A learning problem, for example, might be the teacher's major concern in making a referral, but a school psychologist should assess the child's behaviour in various contexts to determine how the child's behaviour relates to learning problems identified (Ownby & Wallbrown). Teglasi (1983) states that if the referral reason has not been examined carefully, the school psychologist may not be able to

gather appropriate data. He believes that school psychologists should explore the boundaries and implications of the referral question and help to clarify or adapt the question with the referral source.

Relationship with School Psychologists

The relationship between the school psychologist and the teacher may impact teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. Although little research specifically connecting these variables could be located, the present section proposes a potential link. Researchers outside the field of school psychology have studied the professional-client relationship's effect on whether directives are followed. Meichenbaum and Turk (1987), for example, found that the relationship between patient and doctor may affect patients' adherence to treatments prescribed. The researchers suggest improving the relationship as a way to improve adherence. The effect found within the professional-client relationship may translate to the professional-professional relationship: teachers who report having a more positive relationship with school psychologists may be more willing to meet with them to discuss children both formally and informally, thus enhancing comprehension of and involvement in assessments. They may also be more willing to read reports and implement recommendations provided by someone with whom they share a good working relationship.

One study suggests that teachers perceive the relationship between themselves and school psychologists as less than optimal. O'Hagan and Swanson (1983) used a questionnaire to assess 206 Scottish primary teachers' perceptions of psychological services provided in schools. A section of the questionnaire addressed teachers' perceptions of the teacher-psychologist relationship. Although results indicate teachers

viewed psychologists as fulfilling a worthwhile role within the school, they felt a closer relationship between themselves and psychologists was required. Heavy caseloads may prevent school psychologists from devoting adequate time to building relationships with teachers.

School Psychologists' Experience

The school psychologist's level of experience may impact teachers' perceptions of psychological reports and their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. In a survey conducted by Roberts (1970), teachers reported that school psychologists required more training in classroom-related topics. School psychologists with more experience may be more aware of classroom workings. They may also have had more experience writing psychological reports and have received more feedback from teachers on providing acceptable reports and recommendations.

Summary of Guidelines for Conducting Assessments and Writing Reports

The literature review identified variables that may impact teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. Based on this review, guidelines for conducting assessments and writing reports that may encourage teachers to read reports and implement recommendations can be proposed. Some of these guidelines can be organized according to the following main goals of psychological reports: providing an accurate description of a child's functioning that addresses parents' and teachers' concerns about the child, and providing recommendations to aid in meeting the child's needs. Additional guidelines relate to writing comprehensible reports and promoting positive interactions with teachers.

Accurate Description of Functioning

1) The school psychologist should thoroughly explore the referral reason. This may include asking for specific examples of behaviour and gathering information from various sources.

2) The report should link behavioural observations to antecedent behaviours. This may provide valuable insight regarding possible causes of behaviour.

3) The school psychologist should distinguish data from interpretations of data. This may allow readers to separate more objective data from interpretations. Interpretations should be followed with supporting information.

4) The report should help to clarify referral reasons and provide new information regarding a child's functioning.

Promoting Implementation of Recommendations

1) The report should include an increased (but not overabundant) number of recommendations. This would allow teachers to choose recommendations they feel are most suitable.

2) The report should provide moderately specific recommendations—those that include an adequate, rather than overwhelming, amount of detail for implementation.

3) The report should contain recommendations that reflect an awareness of classroom workings. This awareness could be gauged by recommendations' demands on time, likely effectiveness, and required resources. Effective recommendations would likely reflect the holistic needs of the child.

4) The report should include recommendations that, when implemented, do not alert students that a child is receiving extra help.

Comprehensible Reports

1) The school psychologist should avoid using jargon and link potentially confusing terms to data, conclusions, and recommendations.

2) The school psychologist should state messages explicitly.

3) The report should contain information grouped by domain or referral reason, rather than by test.

4) The report should include sufficient detail to facilitate comprehension.

Interactions with Teachers

1) The school psychologist should strive to become a knowledgeable, effective communicator who is willing to seek insight about a child's functioning from others.

2) The school psychologist should engage in frequent consultation with teachers to help them feel involved in the assessment process and to provide support during implementation of recommendations.

3) School psychologists should use consultation to collaborate with teachers to form recommendations and to help them receive adequate training in the theory behind recommendations and the actions required to implement them.

4) The school psychologist should attempt to form a close working relationship with teachers.

5) The school psychologist should be aware that his or her level of experience, the value teachers place on assessment, and demands of the teaching profession may impact teachers' decision to read reports and implement recommendations. The two parties could discuss these issues.

Research Questions

The literature review has identified several areas likely related to teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. The current study will attempt to answer the following questions regarding teachers' experiences with psychological reports:

1) Which variables, both internal and external to psychological reports, do teachers rate as having an impact on their decision to read psychological reports and implement recommendations found in psychological reports?

2) How do teachers rate the utility of various sections of psychological reports?

3) How frequently do teachers attempt to implement recommendations they receive, and why?

4) Do teachers typically read entire psychological reports, certain sections of psychological reports, or do they not read them at all? If teachers report reading only certain sections of psychological reports, which sections are they most likely to read?

Chapter II -Method

Participants

It is important for elementary school teachers to read psychological reports and implement recommendations because they are able to identify problems affecting young students and implement early interventions. For this reason, elementary school teachers—those teaching grades kindergarten to six—were chosen as participants for the current study. Thirty-five packages containing consent forms and questionnaires were evenly distributed amongst five elementary schools within a rural Nova Scotia school board. Fifteen of the returned questionnaires, three from each school, were randomly selected and analyzed to obtain an indication of teachers' perceptions of and experiences with psychological reports. Distributing more than twice the number of questionnaires to be analyzed served to obtain the desired level of participation. Schools were selected such that no school psychologist serviced more than one of the chosen schools. Also, some schools have been serviced by more than one school psychologist within recent time because of staffing changes. These factors helped to avoid having several teachers comment on the same school psychologist.

Materials

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was developed by the researcher to explore teachers' perceptions of and experiences with psychological reports. The first page of the questionnaire gathered subjects' demographic information, including sex, years of teaching experience, grades taught, area of teaching specialty, and degrees or diplomas held. These data were used for statistical purposes only.

In Section A of the questionnaire, teachers rated the impact of numerous variables on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations on a five-point, Likert-type scale, with one representing "no impact," and five, a "large impact." "No opinion" was an available option for each item. Teachers were also asked to list any additional factors that influence their decision to read reports and implement recommendations.

In Section B of the questionnaire, teachers rated how useful they consider sections typically found in psychological reports on a five-point, Likert-type scale, with one representing "not useful," and five, "useful." "No opinion" was also an available option throughout this section. Section C contained two questions related to teachers' attitudes towards and experiences with psychological reports. In the first question, teachers indicated how frequently they attempt to implement recommendations by choosing one of five options ranging from "always" to "never." They were also encouraged to provide reasons for their responses. In the second question, teachers indicated whether they read all sections, some sections, or no sections of reports. Teachers who reported reading some sections of reports were asked to identify sections they are most likely to read.

Procedure

The Director of Programs and Student Services with a rural Nova Scotia school board was contacted at the beginning of September to discuss the proposed study. Upon receipt of ethics approval from the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University, the director was given a letter detailing the nature and purpose of the study and a copy of the questionnaire. After granting ethics approval, the director selected schools for the study. He also sent letters to principals of these schools

requesting their participation in the study, along with a copy of a letter about the study prepared by the examiner (Appendix C).

Principals from the schools selected were contacted by the researcher once the school board and the University Research Ethics Board approved the study, and all agreed to have their schools participate. Each principal randomly distributed packages to the mailboxes of seven teachers in his or her school. Each package contained an information letter (Appendix D), a questionnaire (Appendix A), a consent form (Appendix E), and two envelopes—one labeled "Questionnaire," and the other, "Consent Form." The information letter explained the study and invited teachers to participate. To promote confidentiality and anonymity, teachers were instructed—in the information letters, questionnaires, and consent forms—to seal questionnaires and signed consent forms in separate envelopes before returning them to an envelope in their school's office. The letter also outlined precautions that would be taken during and after data collection to promote confidentiality and anonymity. Letters to teachers, principals, and the director contained contact information for questions and concerns regarding research.

Written reminders on the questionnaire envelopes asked teachers to return surveys within ten days. Surveys were collected by the examiner two to three weeks after distribution, and those suitable for analysis were assigned a number. For schools where more than three surveys were returned, numbers assigned to surveys were placed in a hat. Three numbers were then drawn to select the surveys to be analyzed from each school.

Descriptive statistics were often used to analyze data. Teachers' ratings of variables' impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations were compiled. Two median ratings—one reflecting impact on reading reports, one reflecting

impact on implementing recommendations—were found for each variable and then compared (the median is the middle value of a group of numbers arranged in order of size). Teachers' ratings of the usefulness of report sections were also compiled, and mean ratings were found and compared. For questions measuring implementation frequency and sections and portions of reports typically read, the number of teachers who selected each option was compiled, and totals were compared. Common themes were identified in responses to more open-ended questions that explored frequency of implementation of recommendations and additional factors affecting implementation. Response patterns throughout the questionnaire were explored (e.g., similar responses to similar items across questionnaires and connections between demographic variables and particular responses).

Chapter III-Results

Response Rate

Thirty-five surveys were distributed amongst five schools in a rural Nova Scotia school board. Twenty-seven were returned, including seven from School A, four from School B, six from School C, six from School D, and four from school E. Three of the returned surveys could not be analyzed, one because of an incomplete demographic information page, and two because they were not accompanied by written consent forms. In accordance with the procedure outlined in Chapter II, the 15 surveys to be analyzed were randomly selected from the 24 surveys

Respondents' Demographic Information

Table 1 lists the demographic characteristics of respondents who completed the 15 surveys selected for analysis. Approximately three-fourths of respondents (eleven teachers) were female, and approximately one-fourth (four teachers) were male. Participants' years of teaching experience ranged from 7 to 35, with 21 as the median. They held diverse educational qualifications, including teaching certificates and bachelor's and master's degrees in various areas. The majority of participants (close to three-fourths of participants, or eleven teachers) held one or more undergraduate degrees, and one also had a certificate in guidance. One participant had a teachers' college

certificate, and one had a masters' degree. Two participants reported their level of teaching certification (TC-5) rather than their degrees or diplomas.[1]

Two-thirds of participants taught in the general classroom (ten teachers), close to one-fourth taught resource (four teachers), and one teacher taught in a learning center. Grades taught by participants ranged from one to six. One teacher taught grade one, two taught grade three, three taught grade four, three taught grade five, and one taught grade six. Five teachers, one-third of participants, taught multiple grades. These were the resource teachers and the learning-center teacher. Resource teachers help students who are having difficulty meeting curriculum outcomes through supporting them in a small group setting or within the general classroom, and learning-center teachers help students who are experiencing even greater difficulty meeting curriculum outcomes through supporting them in a small group setting.

[1] The registrar of the Nova Scotia Department of Education reported that the holder of a TC-5 likely completed teachers' college or undergraduate studies (B. Woodbury, personal communication, February 7, 2005).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	*N*	*Percentage of Participants*
Gender		
Female	11	73.33
Male	4	26.67
Years Teaching Experience		
5-9	1	6.67
10-14	3	20
15-19	2	13.33
20-24	3	20
25-29	1	6.67
30-34	4	26.67
35-40	1	6.67
Degrees or Diplomas Held		
Teaching college certificate	1	6.67
Bachelor's degree(s)[2]	11	73.33
Master's degree	1	6.67
TC-5[3]	2	13.33
Area of Teaching Specialty		
Learning center	1	6.67
General classroom	10	66.67
Resource	4	26.67
Grade(s) Taught		
1	1	6.67
2	0	0
3	2	13.33
4	3	20
5	3	20
6	1	6.67
Multiple grades	5	33.33

[2] One participant held a guidance diploma in addition to Bachelor's degrees.
[3] Teachers reported level of certification rather than degrees or diplomas held

Section A Results

Ratings of Variables' Impact on Reading Reports and Implementing Recommendations

In Section A of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to rate the impact numerous variables have on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Participants' responses to items ranged from one (no impact) to five (a large impact). Their ratings of each variable's impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations were compiled, and two median ratings were found for each variable—one reflecting the variable's impact on reading reports, and the other reflecting its impact on implementing recommendations. Median scores were used to present data because ratings of numerous items fell within a broad range. In Table 2, median ratings of variables' impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations are presented. Discussion of these results will focus mainly on variables that received relatively high or low median ratings. Internal and external variables will be grouped together to promote ease of interpretation.

Ratings of variables' impact on implementing recommendations were usually the same as, or higher than, ratings of variables' impact on reading reports. All internal variables received a median impact rating of at least three (which corresponds to "somewhat of an impact"), with most (e.g., report clarity, organization, and detail) receiving a median rating of four. Two variables—the separation of test scores from interpretations of scores and the number of recommendations in the report—were rated as having a relatively lower overall impact on reading reports, although the ratings still corresponded to "somewhat of an impact."

Similarly, all external variables received a median impact rating of at least three, with most (e.g., the specificity of recommendations, the report's offering of new information, and the school psychologist's knowledge of psychological principles) receiving a median rating of four. Variables that were rated as having less impact on reading reports were: recommendations that reflected an awareness of the whole child, the experience of the school psychologist, the support provided to implement recommendations, and the school psychologist's availability for meetings.

Teachers' working relationship with the school psychologist and the workload of the teaching profession were rated as having less impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations. Two external variables—the school psychologist's communication skills and the value teachers place on assessment—were rated as having a higher impact on teachers' decision to implement recommendations. Tables 3 and 4 include lists of variables and the number of respondents who selected "no opinion" when rating their impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations.

Table 2: Median Ratings of Variables' Impact on Reading Reports and Implementing Recommendations (with variables categorized as internal or external)

Variable	*Impact on Reading Reports*	*Impact on Implementing Recommendations*	*Categorization of Variable*
Clarity and explicit statement of messages	4	4	Internal
Clarification or insight into referral concerns	4	4	Internal
Provision of a rationale for the child's observed behaviors	4	4	Internal
Organization of the report	4	4	Internal
Specificity of recommendations	4	4	Internal
Support offered in the report for interpretations of results	4	4	Internal
Detail of the report	4	4	Internal
Separation of test scores from interpretations of scores	3	4	Internal
Number of recommendations in the report	3	4	Internal
School psychologist's ability to communicate effectively	4	5	External
Value teacher places on assessment	4	5	External
New information offered in the report	4	4	External
Recommendations that reflect awareness of classroom limitations	4	4	External
Recommendations that single out a child as receiving extra help	4	4	External
School psychologist's seeking of input	4	4	External
School psychologist's knowledge of psychological principles	4	4	External
School psychologist's thorough exploration of the referral reason	4	4	External
Meeting to discuss the theory and practice of recommendations	4	4	External
Experience of the school psychologist	3.5	4	External
Recommendations that reflect awareness of the whole child	3.5	4	External
School psychologist's availability for meetings	3	4	External
Support provided to implement recommendations	3	4	External
Workload of the teaching profession	3	3	External
Teachers' working relationship with the school psychologist	3	3	External

Table 3: Number of Respondents Who Selected "No Opinion" When Rating Variables' Impact on Reading Reports

Variables' Impact on Reading Reports	*Number of Respondents*
New information offered in the report	1
Recommendations that single out a child as receiving extra help	1
School psychologist's knowledge of psychological principles	2
School psychologist's communication skills	2
School psychologist's seeking of input	1
School psychologist's experience	3
School psychologist's availability for meetings	2
School psychologist's availability to discuss recommendations	2
School psychologist's thorough exploration of referral reasons	1
Teacher's working relationship with the school psychologist	2
Support provided to implement recommendations	1
Recommendations reflected an awareness of the whole child	1

Table 4: Number of Respondents Who Selected "No Opinion" When Rating Variables' Impact on Implementing Recommendations

Variable's Impact on Implementing Recommendations	*Number of Respondents*
New information offered in the report	1
Recommendations that single out a child as receiving extra help	1
School psychologist's knowledge of psychological principles	2
School psychologist's communications skills	1
School psychologist's seeking of input	1
School psychologist's experience	2
School psychologist's availability for meetings	2
School psychologist's availability to discuss recommendations	2
School psychologist's thorough exploration of referral reason	1
Teacher's working relationship with the school psychologist	2
Support provided to implement recommendations	1

Additional Factors Impacting Reading Reports and Implementing Recommendations

Teachers were asked to list any additional factors that impacted their decision to read reports and implement recommendations. Six teachers listed factors that impacted their decision to read reports, most of which related to supporting students. Two teachers mentioned students' needs, and the following were each cited by one teacher: providing a learning environment to promote success; finding grade levels, adaptations, and modifications; continued difficulties following implementation of recommendations; and time and report clarity.

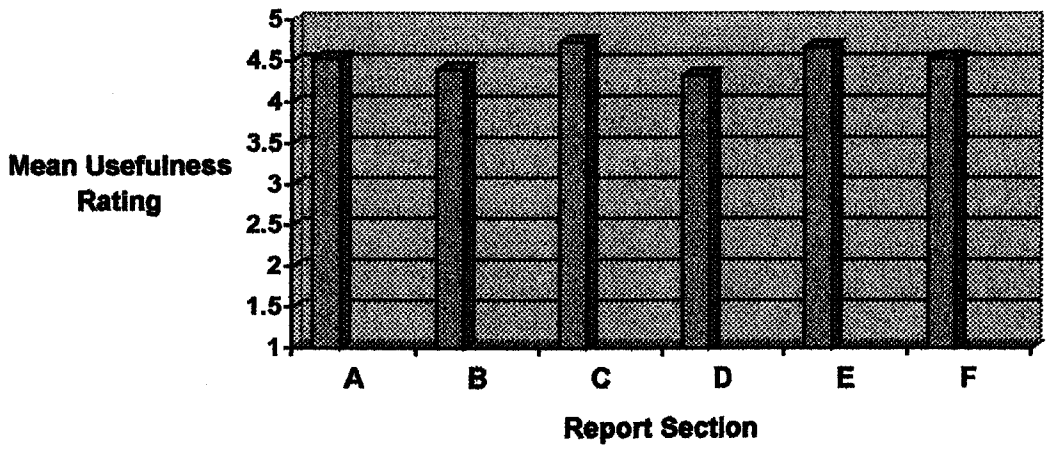
Seven teachers listed factors that impacted their decision to implement recommendations, most of which related to practicality of recommendations and ease of implementation. The following were each listed by one teacher: classroom resources, the inability to implement all recommendations at the same time, the number of children in the classroom and the support provided to carry out recommendations, the reasonableness of recommendations, practicality of recommendations in the classroom setting, implementing some recommendations to help students succeed, and aiding in the planning of the student's Individual Program Plan (a written plan that helps students experiencing academic difficulties to meet modified curriculum outcomes).

Section B Results

Section B of the questionnaire provided teachers with descriptions of sections typically found in psychological reports. Teachers rated the usefulness of each section using a five-point, Likert-type scale, with one representing "not useful," and five, "highly useful." Mean ratings were found for each section because responses fell within a narrow range. Means ranged from 4.33 to 4.70 (see Figure 1). Overall, the lowest rating given to

any report section was three, which represented "somewhat useful," and the highest was five, which represented "highly useful." Ratings for the behavioral observations section ranged from four to five, and ratings for all other sections ranged from three to five. The behavioral observations section received the highest mean usefulness rating, followed by the recommendations section. Both the referral reason and summary sections received the same mean usefulness rating. The background information section and the results and interpretation section received the second lowest and lowest mean usefulness ratings, respectively.

Figure 1: Mean Usefulness Ratings of Psychological Report Sections



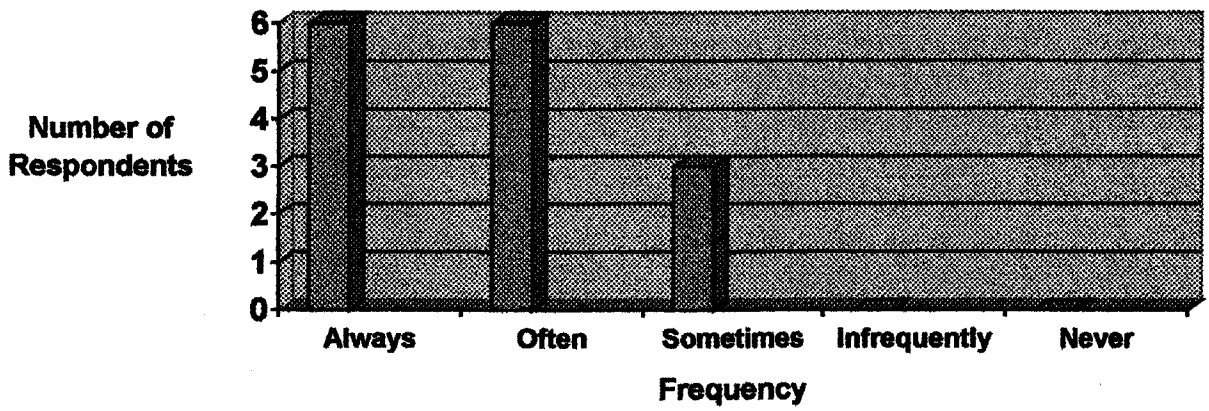
Legend
A-Referral Reason
B-Background Information
C-Behavioral Observations
D-Results and Interpretation
E-Recommendations
F-Summary

Section C Results

Frequency of Implementation of Recommendations

Section C of the questionnaire asked teachers to indicate how frequently they attempt to implement recommendations found in psychological reports—always, often, sometimes, infrequently, or never. Just over one-third of participants (six teachers) reported always attempting to implement recommendations, the same proportion reported often attempting to implement recommendations, and one-fifth (three teachers) reported sometimes attempting to implement recommendations (see Figure 2). No teachers reported infrequently or never attempting to implement recommendations.

Figure 2: Frequency With Which Teachers Attempt to Implement Recommendations



After indicating the frequency with which they attempt to implement recommendations, teachers were asked to provide reasons for their responses. Eleven teachers responded to this question. Teachers listed mostly external variables that would impede implementation: time constraints (three teachers), lack of resources (one teacher),

practicality of recommendations (two teachers, including one who felt that some recommendations could not be carried out in resource), the number of special needs students or students requiring resource support in the classroom (one teacher), the needs of other students (one teacher), and the fairness of recommendations to other students (one teacher). Two teachers mentioned interactions with the school psychologist, including one who reported that support from the school psychologist was lacking. It is unclear if the second teacher perceived these interactions (or lack thereof) as having a positive or negative impact on implementation.

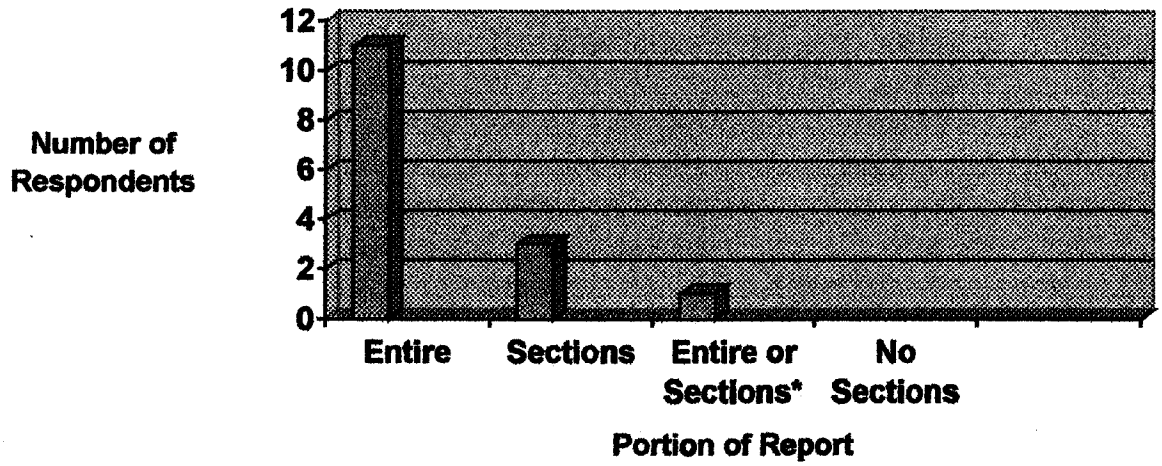
Several teachers listed external variables that would likely increase frequency of implementation. Three teachers commented on the need to support children (one on the importance of meeting the child's needs and promoting feelings of success, and two on using recommendations to support the child). One of these three teachers mentioned that the psychologist at his or her school always provides useful recommendations (this teacher reported always attempting to implement recommendations). One teacher seemed to take a more practical stance, noting that implementation of recommendations is important given the time spent on testing, discussion, and report writing. Only one teacher mentioned an internal variable—clarity of recommendations.

Portions and Sections of Reports Typically Read

In question two of Section C, teachers were asked to indicate whether they typically read entire psychological reports, sections of reports, or whether they do not read reports at all. Roughly three-quarters of participants (eleven teachers) reported reading entire psychological reports, one-fifth (three teachers) reported reading sections

of reports, and one participant reported reading entire reports or sections of reports, depending on their clarity (See Figure 3).

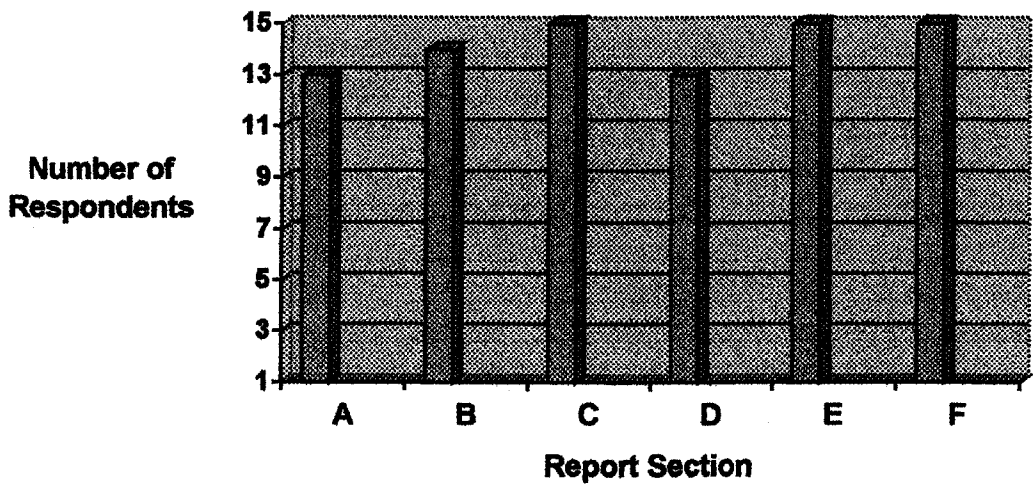
Figure 3: Portions of Reports Typically Read by Teachers



*One participant reported reading entire reports or sections of reports, depending on their clarity

Two of the three respondents who reported typically reading only sections of reports indicated that they are less likely to read the results and interpretation section. The third respondent reported being less likely to read the referral reason section. The participant who reported reading entire reports or sections of reports (depending on clarity) reported being less likely to read the referral reason and background information sections. Figure 4 displays sections of reports teachers indicated they typically read.

Figure 4: Sections of Reports Typically Read by Teachers



Legend
A-Referral Reason
B-Background Information
C-Behavioral Observations
D-Results and Interpretation
E-Recommendations
F-Summary

Chapter IV-Discussion, Study Limitations and Implications, and Conclusion

Discussion

Section A Discussion

Overall, teachers rated all variables as having at least somewhat of an impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations, and very few teachers selected "no opinion" when rating the impact of variables. This suggests that all variables identified in Section A may influence most participants' perceptions and use of psychological reports. Neither internal nor external variables as a group emerged as having more or less of an impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations. Although the reasons for some findings are ambiguous (because of the wording of questions and/or because teachers were not asked to elaborate on responses), possible explanations are offered.

For most items, ratings of variables' impact on implementing recommendations were the same as, or higher than, ratings of variables' impact on reading reports, suggesting most variables may impact implementation more than reading. Two respondents rated clarity as having a higher impact on reading reports than implementing recommendations, possibly because clarity impacts readability.

Internal Variables

Most internal variables received the same median rating in terms of their effect on reading reports and implementing recommendations—a rating that corresponded to more than "somewhat of an impact." Report detail received this rating, although it is unclear if teachers in the current study prefer elaborate reports to shorter reports, as was found in a

study by Wiener (1985). Among many other variables, specificity of recommendations and report organization received this same rating, although it is unclear if teachers prefer specific recommendations and particular organizational structures.

Some internal variables were rated as having a relatively lower impact on reading reports, although these ratings still corresponded to "somewhat of an impact." Separation of data from interpretations may have received a relatively lower median rating because teachers value interpretations and do not see a need to keep them separate from data. Alternatively, teachers may be accustomed to reading reports in which data and interpretations are always distinct or integrated, making them less sensitive to the separation of the two.

Although some studies have found that many teachers perceive a lack of recommendations in reports they receive (Hagborg & Aiello Coultier, 1994), teachers in the current study perceived number of recommendations as having a relatively low impact on reading reports. It is possible that they are accustomed to implementing a general proportion of recommendations regardless of the number provided. Those who implement recommendations less frequently or are comfortable in independently meeting students' needs may also be less concerned with the number of recommendations. Comfort in independently meeting students' needs seems especially plausible, given the experience of participants. Teachers' preferences regarding the number of recommendations they prefer to receive are ambiguous. One teacher who rated this variable as having a relatively high impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations mentioned that difficulty implementing all recommendations at the

same time influenced frequency of implementation. This teacher may prefer receiving a smaller number of recommendations.

External Variables

Most external variables received the same median rating in terms of their effect on reading reports and implementing recommendations—a rating that corresponded to more than "somewhat of an impact." Perhaps thorough exploration of the referral reason received this rating because teachers may value reports that address concerns that lead to the referral. Recommendations that reflect an awareness of classroom limitations and those that single out a child as receiving extra help were among numerous additional variables that received this rating. Ratings given to these two variables are consistent with findings from a survey in which teachers preferred easily-implemented recommendations that did not single out children (Rucker, 1967 a).

Several external variables were perceived as having a relatively lower impact on reading reports. Many researchers emphasize the importance of consulting with teachers to facilitate implementation of recommendations (Borghese & Cole, 1994; Teglasi, 1983; Sladeczek, Kratochwill, Steinbach, Kumke & Hagermoser, 2003). In the current study, however, support from the school psychologist to implement recommendations and the school psychologist's availability for meetings seemed to have a relatively lower impact on report reading. Participants' may be comfortable reading reports independently and/or may lack of access to school psychologists. When rating the impact of the school psychologist's availability for meetings, one teacher commented that the school psychologist had a huge caseload, and when discussing reasons for frequency of implementation, another noted that support from the school psychologist was lacking.

The latter teacher gave high ratings to many variables, but did not feel that the school psychologist's availability for meetings or support to implement recommendations highly influenced whether she reads reports or implements recommendations. It may be that she is accustomed to functioning without access to the school psychologist.

Recommendations that reflect an awareness of the whole child appeared to have less impact on whether teachers read reports. This may be because teachers recognize they are free to modify recommendations to meet the holistic needs of the child, or because they do not feel this variable is important. The experience of the school psychologist may have been perceived as having less impact on reading reports because teachers feel that all school psychologists provide similar services regardless of their experience.

Two external variables—teachers' workload and their working relationship with the school psychologist—appeared to have less impact on teachers' decision to read reports *and* implement recommendations. Although reasons for findings are unclear, teachers' workload may have received a lower rating because teachers attempt to read reports and implement recommendations regardless of their busy schedules. Also, experienced teachers in the study may be more accustomed to reading reports and implementing recommendations as part of their workload. Teachers' working relationship with the school psychologist may have received a relatively lower rating because teachers have become accustomed to working independently from the school psychologist, which could make the relationship seem less vital.

Two external variables—the school psychologist's communication skills and teachers' value of assessment—were perceived as having a relatively higher impact on

teachers' decision to implement recommendations. Communication skills of the school psychologists may have received a higher rating because they contribute to effective consultation with parents and teachers. Results correspond with those from a study by Gutkin (1986) in which teachers surveyed reported that school psychologists need to communicate their ideas in a skillful manner. The value teachers place on assessment may have received a relatively higher rating because teachers who value assessment may be more likely to implement report findings than those who do not value assessment. One teacher commented that her value of assessment depended on the assessor, and she later commented that she read entire reports or sections of reports depending on clarity. These remarks underscore that perhaps there are no *typical* experiences with reports—that some teachers' decision to read reports and implement recommendations may be based on the school psychologist providing services.

Connections Between Demographic Variables and Impact Ratings

The researcher hypothesized that resource teachers and more experienced teachers, in comparison to beginning teachers, would have stronger opinions regarding the amount of new information offered in reports. It was thought that these teachers would rate this variable as strongly impacting their decision to read reports and implement recommendations because of their experience and/or training in meeting individual students' needs. For unknown reasons, however, results did not support this hypothesis.

In comparison to classroom teachers, resource and learning center teachers gave higher ratings to certain variables. Report organization, their working relationship with the school psychologist, and the school psychologist's communication skills seemed to

have a higher impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations, and the school psychologist's exploration of the referral reason seemed to have a higher impact on reading reports. It may be that resource and learning center teachers receive more reports on their students, which causes them to develop stronger preferences regarding report organization. Similarly, they may work more frequently with school psychologists because of their students' needs, and have a greater appreciation for the value of clearly communicated results and the role of the working relationship. Also, because these teachers may have a well-developed understanding of students from working with them in small groups, they may be more likely to feel that a thorough exploration of the referral reason is required, and to appreciate the value of having input into the referral reason.

Additional Factors Influencing Reading Reports and Implementing Recommendations

When listing additional variables that influence their decision to read reports, teachers mostly listed those that relate to meeting students' needs. This suggests report reading may be a way for teachers to understand students and help them to succeed. Variables listed as influencing implementation of recommendations related predominantly to practicality and ease of implementation. Results suggest that some teachers may read reports to aid them in meeting students' needs, and that variables related to practicality and ease of implementation (time, resources, support) may impact whether they actually implement recommendations.

Section B Discussion

Overall, teachers perceived all sections of reports as useful. The behavioral observations section was rated most useful, and the results and interpretation section, least useful, although the range of ratings was quite narrow. Any number of factors, including format and detail, could account for the slight discrepancy between the mean ratings of these sections. The behavioral observations section may be valued because it offers teachers a new perspective on the child's observed behaviours. As well, students exhibiting behaviour problems may be frequently referred for psychoeducational assessments in the school board in which this study was conducted. The results and interpretation section may have received the lowest mean rating because it often includes potentially confusing information, such as percentile ranks and technical terms.

The recommendations section was rated second highest, a finding similar to results from a study by Littlejohn (1977) in which elementary school teachers and principals, school psychologists, and school psychology instructors rated recommendations as the most important part of psychological reports. Results are also similar to those from a study in which teachers surveyed rated recommendations as the most valuable section of reports received from clinical psychologists (Berry, 1975). Recommendations may be valued because of their direct application to meeting the needs of the child.

Section C Discussion

Frequency of Implementation of Recommendations

All respondents reported "sometimes," "often," or "always" attempting to implement recommendations. Participants who offered reasons for the frequency with

which they attempt to implement recommendations listed more external than internal variables, including lack of resources, time constraints, practicality of recommendations, the need to support the individual student, the needs of other students, support from and communication with the school psychologist, and the time required to complete assessments. Several teachers who reported often attempting to implement recommendations offered practicality-related variables. Alternatively, the majority of teachers who reported always attempting to implement recommendations mentioned the needs of the child. Findings highlight practicality as a possible barrier to implementation.

One teacher who listed time constraints when discussing reasons for frequency of implementation did not perceive number of recommendations as strongly impacting her decision to implement recommendations, perhaps because she recognizes that not all recommendations need to be implemented. A teacher who reported only sometimes attempting to implement recommendations noted that support from the school psychologist was lacking, which suggests support might lead to increased frequency of implementation.

Sections of Reports Typically Read

Contrary to anecdotal reports from teachers and school psychologists mentioned earlier, participants in this study did not report reading only the summary and recommendations sections of reports. The majority of participants reported reading entire psychological reports rather than reading sections of reports or not reading reports at all, and all respondents reported reading the majority of report sections. Two teachers reported that they are less likely to read the results and interpretation section. Ironically, anecdotal reports from school psychologists suggest this section takes the longest to

write. Any number of variables (e.g., format, detail, clarity, the school psychologist's availability for meetings) could account for why these teachers are less likely to read this section.

Two teachers reported that they are less likely to read the referral reason section, including one who is less likely to read the background information section. Again, results could relate to any number of variables, such as the teacher's belief that he or she is already familiar with the referral reason. The teacher who is less likely to read the referral reason and background information sections of reports also noted that clarity of reports influences whether she typically reads entire reports or sections.

Overall Results

Several findings from this study suggest that participants perceive psychological reports as useful. All participants reported that all sections of reports are at least somewhat useful, that they typically read at least a majority of report sections, and that they attempt to implement recommendations at least some of the time, despite the abundance of inhibitive factors that may influence their decision to do so.

Although it was hoped that results would offer a clear sense of which aspects of psychological reports teachers feel are most useful, this was not entirely the case. Participants reported reading reports and implementing recommendations with similar frequency, usefulness ratings of report sections and median ratings of variables' impact on reading reports and implementing recommendations fell within a relatively narrow range, and no report section clearly stood out as less likely to be read. As a result, it was difficult to pinpoint specific variables (e.g., report detail, clarity) or report sections (e.g.,

recommendations, background information) that could be targeted to improve perceptions of reports.

Participants' perceptions of and experiences with reports may be affected by their rural surroundings. A potential lack of ready access to services for children (mental health services, programs to remediate academic skills, etc.) in rural areas may result in school psychologists playing a more critical role in providing such services to children and adolescents in the school system. Many study participants may value and use psychological reports because they are one of the few outside sources of information available on a child.

The study contained mostly Likert-type items, and teachers were not often asked to expand upon or clarify responses. This lead to some ambiguity in interpreting results. Teachers rated all variables in Section A, for example, as influencing reading reports and implementing recommendations, although the nature of this influence is not entirely clear. Report clarity and detail, for instance, were perceived as having a relatively high impact on teachers' decision to read reports and implement recommendations, but it is unknown if teachers are satisfied with these variables in reports they receive. Some teachers perceived the school psychologist's support as having a relatively low impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations, although it is unknown if they do not need this support or if they are accustomed to functioning without it. Also, ratings of other items in Section A do not provide insight into teachers' preferences regarding report organization and number and specificity of recommendations.

Although all teachers reported attempting to implement recommendations at least some of the time, several did not report their reasons for doing so. From those who did

respond, it appears that external variables related to classroom workings (e.g., time, resources, practicality of recommendations) may hinder implementation, and that external variables related to the needs of the child (e.g., supporting the child, promoting success) may promote implementation. Reading entire reports seems connected to implementation frequency. All teachers who said that they always attempt to implement recommendations also said that they read entire reports. Several participants who said that they read entire reports, however, did not say that they always attempt to implement recommendations.

Limitations of Study

The results of the current study should be interpreted with caution because of potential limitations specific to this study and inherent to questionnaire research itself. Given that the current study was designed to serve as an indicator of teachers' perceptions of psychological reports, the sample size was low for survey research. Results cannot be used to make generalizations regarding the views of the population of teachers within the selected Nova Scotia school board.

Some limitations relate to selecting questionnaire research over an experimental or qualitative study. First, the research involved analyzing teachers' perceptions of psychological reports they typically receive, and did not involve changing teachers' experiences with reports to observe resulting perceptions; therefore, there may be a less reliable basis for making hypotheses regarding possible causal connections between experiences with reports and perceptions of reports.

As noted, most sections of the questionnaire contained multiple-choice and Likert-type items that did not prompt teachers to elaborate on their responses. It was

sometimes difficult to interpret the meaning of some results, such as teachers' preferences regarding certain variables (e.g., detail and organization of reports, specificity and number of recommendations), the clarity of reports they receive, and their value of receiving support to implement recommendations. Teachers occasionally added notes, and this helped clarify some responses.

Other limitations stem from characteristics of participants. Most were experienced teachers who may have had more opportunity to read reports and implement recommendations than beginning teachers, meaning the two groups' views of reports may differ. Finally, the sample of participants may not be representative because those who volunteered to participate may place a higher value on reports.

Implications of Study

Implications for Future Research

Future research on teachers' perceptions of psychological reports could include a larger number of subjects to generalize results. Experienced and inexperienced teachers' perceptions of reports could also be compared. In order to build upon results from the current study, future researchers could include more open-ended questions that allow teachers to discuss their experiences with psychological reports in detail. More specific questions may elicit clearer information; for example, teachers could be asked whether reports they receive are typically clear. This information could help school psychologists tailor the writing and sharing of reports to the needs and preferences of teachers.

Other researchers (Wiener, 1985, 1987) have given teachers reports with various levels of detail to explore their perceptions of report formats. Several of the variables in this current study (e.g., specificity and number of recommendations) could lend

themselves to this kind of design. For example, teachers could be given reports with different numbers of recommendations, and their perceptions could be explored. As noted previously, however, this kind of research is limited because it relies on contrived reports read in contrived settings.

Implications for School Psychologists

This study offers school psychologists direction on how to increase the likelihood that reports will be read and recommendations implemented. Results indicate that, overall, all variables in Section A were rated as influencing teachers' decision to read reports and implement recommendations, indicating that school psychologists need to be mindful of many factors when writing and sharing reports. Results from Section A indicate that school psychologists should thoroughly explore and offer insight into referral reasons, meet with teachers to seek input and discuss recommendations, communicate in a knowledgeable and effective manner, provide recommendations that reflect an awareness of classroom limitations and do not single out children, support interpretations of results, and write clear reports that offer new information. Factors identified by teachers as influencing implementation frequency suggest it is important to assess the resources available to the teacher and the needs of the individual student and classmates, to maintain an awareness of the time required to implement recommendations and the classroom as a context for implementation, and to support and communicate with the teacher during implementation.

All participants in the current study reported reading the majority of report sections and gave these sections above average usefulness ratings. Given that the results and interpretation section received the lowest mean usefulness rating overall (although

this rating was not clearly discrepant from those given to other sections), school psychologists may choose to ask teachers how to improve the utility of this section.

Conclusion

The current study provides a small glimpse into teachers' perceptions of psychological reports. All participants reported that they perceive all report sections as at least somewhat useful, attempt to implement recommendations at least some of the time, and typically read the majority of report sections. Most reported typically reading entire reports.

In the literature review, two main goals of report writing were identified. Several findings from this study may be used to address one main goal—providing an accurate description of a child's functioning that addresses parents' and teachers' concerns about the child. Teachers' ratings of variables' impact on their decision to read reports and implement recommendations, for example, highlight actions school psychologists could take prior to (e.g., thoroughly exploring and offering insight into referral reasons), during (e.g., writing clear reports), and after report writing (e.g., communicating in a knowledgeable and effective manner). Study results could also be used to address a second main goal of report writing—providing recommendations that will be implemented to aid in meeting the child's needs. Exploring factors that teachers perceived as influencing implementation frequency, for example, suggests school psychologists need to support teachers during implementation and customize recommendations to the needs of the individual student, teacher, and the class in general.

Although results suggest that teachers have positive perceptions of reports overall, study results did not offer the clear sense of teachers' perceptions of aspects of

psychological reports that was anticipated. Teachers' narrow range of responses often made it difficult to isolate specific variables (e.g., report detail, clarity) or report sections (e.g., recommendations, background information) that could be targeted to improve the utility of reports. Also, the meanings of some responses to Likert-type items were ambiguous. In Section A, teachers rated all variables as impacting their decision to read reports and implement recommendations, suggesting that school psychologists may need to focus on a large number of factors when writing and sharing reports.

Overall, results reinforce that meeting the main goals of report writing through impacting teachers' perceptions and use of reports likely requires supporting and communicating with teachers throughout the assessment process rather than simply providing a report and holding a final consultation. Having school psychologists consult with staff members from the schools they service to explore their preferences regarding reports and consultations may also be of value.

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Appendix A

Once completed, please seal this questionnaire in the envelope labeled *questionnaire* and return it to the folder labeled *MSVU study* found in your school's office.

Please provide the following demographic information. Data will be used for statistical purposes only, and will not be used to identify participants. *Please do not place your name anywhere on this questionnaire.*

Gender _____

Years of teaching experience _____

Degrees/ diplomas held _____

Area of teaching specialty (e.g., general classroom, resource) _____

Current grade(s) taught _____

To complete this questionnaire, please recall occasions when children in your class have been referred for psychological assessment. Think about how psychological reports you have received and the circumstances surrounding the reports (e.g., qualities of school psychologist, classroom demands, etc.) shaped your perceptions of reports.

A) Using the scales provided, please rate your opinion of the impact the following variables had on your decision to ***read*** a psychological report and ***implement recommendations*** found in a psychological report. Circle a number from one to five (one represents "no impact;" five represents a "large impact") for each question, or circle "no opinion" if appropriate.

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact		Somewhat of an impact		Large Impact

1) The report stated messages explicitly and clearly explained technical terms.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

2) The report clarified or provided insight into the concerns I expressed when I referred the child for assessment.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

3) The report provided a rationale for the child's observed behaviours.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

4) Test scores in the report were clearly distinguished from interpretations of scores.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

5) The report provided *new* information (e.g., insight into a child's functioning or new recommendations).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact		Somewhat of an impact		Large Impact

6) Recommendations were sufficiently specific to help me understand how to implement them.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

7) The school psychologist supported his or her interpretation of results (e.g., used test scores to explain a child's academic difficulties).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

8) Recommendations required me to single out a child in class (i.e., made known to classmates that a child was receiving extra help).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

9) Recommendations reflected an awareness of classroom limitations (e.g., time constraints, resources and likely effectiveness of recommendations).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

10) The school psychologist had a strong knowledge of psychological principles (e.g., self-esteem and memory).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

11) The school psychologist communicated effectively during meetings.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact		Somewhat of an impact		Large Impact

12) The school psychologist asked for my input during the assessment (e.g., for my thoughts on the child's strengths).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

13) I have found that having my students assessed was valuable.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

14) The report provided an ample, but not overwhelming, number of recommendations.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

15) The report was organized effectively.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

16) The report was sufficiently detailed.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

17) The school psychologist had a lot of experience in the field of school psychology.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact		Somewhat of an impact		Large Impact

18) My teaching workload was too demanding.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

19) The school psychologist met with me to discuss why recommendations were selected and how to implement them.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

20) The school psychologist thoroughly explored why the child was referred for assessment (e.g., asked me for specific examples of behaviour or gathered information from various sources, such as parents and cumulative record folders).

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

21) I had a good working relationship with the school psychologist.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

22) The school psychologist was available for meetings.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

23) The school psychologist provided support in implementing recommendations.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

1	2	3	4	5
No Impact		Somewhat of an impact		Large Impact

24) Recommendations reflected an awareness of the whole child.

Impact on Implementing Recommendations: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Impact on Reading Report: 1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

Please list any additional factors that influence your decision to:

a) read psychological reports:

_____

_____

_____

b) implement recommendations:

_____

_____

_____

B) Using the scales provided, please rate the ***usefulness*** of the following sections typically found in psychological reports. Circle a number from one to five (one represents "not useful;" five represents "highly useful") for each question, or circle "no opinion" if appropriate:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Useful		Somewhat Useful		Highly Useful

1. Referral Reason (A discussion of why the child was referred for assessment)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

2. Background Information (A history of the child, which may include concerns about the child, the child's functioning in various settings and contact with other professionals)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

3. Behavioural Observations (Physical and attitudinal information gathered during classroom observations or testing that may impact test results)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

4. Results and Interpretation (Citation and interpretation of test scores)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

5. Recommendations (Strategies suggested to meet the needs of the child)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

6. Summary (A concise overview of the report)

1 2 3 4 5 No Opinion

C) Please *fill in the blanks or use check marks* to answer the following questions concerning psychological reports:

1) How often do you typically attempt to implement psychological report recommendations?

____ Always
____ Often
____ Sometimes
____ Infrequently
____ Never

Please indicate the reasons for your choice (e.g., clarity of recommendations, time constraints or the school psychologists' ability to provide ongoing support):

_____

_____

_____

_____

2) I typically read:

____ entire psychological reports
____ sections of psychological reports
____ none of the psychological report

If you selected "sections of psychological reports," place a check mark beside the section(s) you are most likely to read:

____ **Referral Reason** (A discussion of why the child was referred for assessment)

____ **Background Information** (A history of the child, which may include concerns about the child, the child's functioning in various settings and contact with other professionals)

____ **Behavioural Observations** (Physical and attitudinal information gathered during classroom observations or testing that may impact test results)

____ **Results and Interpretation** (Citation and interpretation of test scores)

____ **Recommendations** (Strategies suggested to meet the needs of the child)

____ **Summary** (A concise overview of the report)

Appendix B

Director of Programs and Student Services
Nova Scotia school board

October 13, 2004

Dear Director:

I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university faculty member Dr. Elizabeth Church. My research has been approved by the University Review Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. I plan to ask teachers to complete a questionnaire to explore their perceptions of the factors that impact their decision to read psychological reports and implement recommendations (e.g., report clarity and format, their own views of assessment, and the school psychologist's level of experience). It is hoped that results will aid school psychologists in writing reports that will be of increased utility to teachers.

I am requesting permission to survey a sample of 35 teachers in local elementary schools. I would appreciate your assistance in selecting five schools, each of which are serviced by a different school psychologist. Questionnaires will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. I will contact principals to ask for their permission to randomly distribute questionnaires to classroom teachers. A letter attached to each questionnaire will briefly describe the purpose of the study. It will also instruct teachers to seal completed questionnaires and written consent forms in separate envelopes (to be provided by the researcher) before returning them to a folder found in their school's office. Efforts will be made to maintain the anonymity of participating schools and participants during and after data collection.

Research results will be mailed to participants upon completion of the study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the questionnaire itself, please contact me at (902) 444-4532 (telephone) You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Church, at (902) 457-7621 (telephone) or elizabeth.church@msvu.ca (e-mail). I thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Angela Hull
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix C

October 13, 2004

Dear Principal:

I am a graduate student at Mount Saint Vincent University completing a thesis as part of the Master of Arts in School Psychology program. This study is being conducted under the supervision of university faculty member Dr. Elizabeth Church. The proposed study has been granted ethics approval from the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University and from the local school board. I plan to ask teachers to complete a questionnaire to explore their perceptions of the factors that impact their decision to read psychological reports and implement recommendations (e.g., report clarity and format, their own views of assessment, and the school psychologist's level of experience). It is hoped that results will aid school psychologists in writing reports that will be of increased utility to teachers.

I would be grateful for your assistance in randomly distributing questionnaires to seven teachers in your school. Completion of questionnaires is voluntary and will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. A letter attached to each questionnaire will briefly describe the purpose of the study. It will also instruct teachers to seal completed questionnaires and written consent forms in separate envelopes (to be provided by the researcher) before returning them to a folder found in your school's office. Efforts will be made to maintain the anonymity of participating schools and participants during and after data collection. I will collect questionnaires once they are returned.

Research results will be mailed to participants upon completion of the study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the questionnaire itself, Dr. Church and I may be contacted. I can be reached via telephone (902-444-4532) and Dr. Church can also be reached via telephone (902-457-7621) or email (elizabeth.church@msvu.ca). I thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Angela Hull
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix D

Dear Teacher:

I am a student of Mount Saint Vincent University's school psychology program conducting a master's study under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Church, a university faculty member. You are invited to participate in this research, which explores teachers' perceptions of variables that impact their decision to read psychological reports and implement report recommendations. It is hoped that results may aid school psychologists in writing reports that will be of increased use to teachers.

If you agree to participate, please complete the attached questionnaire that assesses your views of whether several variables, such as report clarity and your relationship with school psychologists, influence your decision to read reports and implement recommendations. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. You may decline participation or withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Please seal the completed questionnaire in the envelope labeled *questionnaire*, and seal the signed consent form in the envelope labeled *consent form*. You are asked to place these two envelopes in the folder marked *MSVU study* in your school's office. Only researchers involved in this study will have access to questionnaires, which will be stored in a locked cabinet and shredded after three years. Three of the returned questionnaires from each school will be randomly selected for analysis (seven is the maximum number of questionnaires that could be returned from each school). Identifying details of participating teachers and schools will not appear in reports and publications resulting from this study. Research results will be mailed to your school upon completion of the study.

Dr. Church and I may be contacted for additional project information. I can be reached via telephone (902-444-4532) Dr. Church can also be reached via telephone (902-457-7621) or email (elizabeth.church@msvu.ca). Questions regarding the conduct of the study can be directed to the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (902-457-6350).

Sincerely,

Angela Hull
Master of Arts in School Psychology Student
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix E

Consent of Participant

I have read the letter regarding the study to be conducted by Angela Hull, under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Church, as part of Mount Saint Vincent University's school psychology program. I was able to ask questions and receive satisfactory responses to questions about the study. I am aware that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty, by informing the researcher. I am aware that data may appear in publications resulting from this study. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. Questions or concerns resulting from study participation may be directed to the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board at (902) 457-6350. With knowledge of the aforementioned information, I agree to participate in this study.

_____

Name (printed)

_____

Name (signature)

_____

Date

_____

Witness

Once completed, please seal this form in the envelope labeled *consent form*. Place it in the folder marked "MSVU study" found in your school's office.