

Article 28

Voices of Rural Counselors: Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

Dorothy J. Breen and Deborah L. Drew

Breen, Dorothy J., is an Associate Professor of Counselor Education at the University of Maine. She has been teaching and practicing rural counseling for the past 25 years and she is co-chair of the ACES Rural Counseling and Supervision Interest Network. Dr. Breen's research interests are with preparing counselors for working in rural school and community settings.

Drew, Deborah L., is an Associate Professor of Counseling at Husson University. She has been teaching and practicing rural school and mental health counseling and supervision for more than 30 years. With Dr. Breen she co-chairs the ACES Rural Counseling and Supervision Interest Network. Dr. Drew's interests are rural counseling, ethics, clinical supervision, and the preparation of counselors for rural practice.

Introduction

Counselors should understand and appreciate the unique rural context and be prepared to cope with the challenges of rural practice (Hovestadt, Fenell, & Canfield, 2002; Morrisette, 2000). But are counselors prepared for rural practice? Schank (1998) pointed out that "hearing directly from rural counselors is the essential factor in accurately addressing relevant issues" (p. 281). No current researchers have specifically asked professional counselors in rural school and mental health settings for their recommendations for training. We think this is important because of our own experience as rural counselors. In this qualitative study, we explored the perceptions of rural school and mental health counselors and we asked for their recommendations for preparation. We use quotes from those counselors to illustrate their perceptions of rural counseling practice and recommendations for training rural counselors.

Literature Review

Our review largely yielded descriptive or opinion based articles about the effects of the rural context on counselors (Breen & Drew, 2005; Bushy & Carty, 1994; Cahill & Martland, 1993; Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1990; Drew & Breen, 2004; Lund, 1990; McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990; Rojewski, 1992; Saba, 1991; Weigel, 2003; Weigel & Baker, 2002; Worzbyt & Zook, 1992). Other writers discussed ethical challenges faced by rural counselors (Erickson, 2001; Nickel, 2004). In their discussions, all of these authors made specific suggestions for the practice of counseling in the rural area. Several

also made suggestions for training rural counselors (Boyer, 1987; Cahill & Martland, 1996; Cody, 1983; Coward, DeWeaver, Schmidt, & Jackson, 1983; Erickson, 2001; Hines, 2002; Rojewski, 1992; Saba, 1991; Weigel & Baker, 2002). While valuable, these suggestions are based on the perspectives of the authors rather than on data collected from rural counselors in the field.

A few researchers have looked at the effects of the rural context on the practice and experience of rural counselors (Morrisette, 2000; Pearson & Sutton, 1999; Sutton, 1988; Sutton & Pearson, 2002; Sutton & Southworth, 1990). In discussion of the implications of their findings, they made suggestions for rural counseling practice and counselor preparation. But, only two research studies specifically asked rural practitioners for their recommendations for training (Hovestadt et al., 2002; Pawlak & Zygmund, 1982). Hovestadt and associates (2002) surveyed 74 Marriage and Family Therapists using the Delphi method. They generated a list of six characteristics of effective providers of Marriage and Family Therapists in rural settings. Pawlak and Zygmund (1982) used a nominal group technique to gather information from 21 clinicians from rural mental health centers representing social work, psychology, and counseling through a 3 hour nominal group meeting. They asked clinicians to identify knowledge and skills required for practice in rural mental health settings and issues unique to clinical practice there. Results of both of these studies provide useful information that can be applied to the training of professional counselors for practice in the rural setting. However, the study by Hovestadt and associates was limited to the field of marriage and family therapy and the study by Pawlak and Zygmund is dated and limited to a very small sample (N=21) of mental health counselors, only some of whom were professional counselors. More recommendations from counselors in a variety of rural counseling settings are needed.

Schank (1998) recommends the importance of hearing from the voices of rural counselors. To date there has been little research in which rural counselors were asked to voice their recommendations. To address this gap in the research, we asked professional counselors who work in rural schools and mental health settings, the real experts, to talk about the impact of the rural setting on their lives and practice and to make specific recommendations for preparation and support for their work.

Research Method

We applied a Basic Interpretive Qualitative research approach to discover, describe, and interpret what rural counselors told us. Using this approach, the researcher tries to understand what it is like for the participants and make meaning of their experience (Merriam, 2002).

Participants

Twenty counselors were selected to participate in this study. The sample size was chosen to allow the researcher the opportunity to conduct lengthy interviews in order to explore the topic in depth. Participants included licensed or certified counselors of varying ages and levels of experience. Eleven were employed as school counselors and nine were employed in counseling agencies and practices.

Participants were chosen from states selected from regions as defined by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). Eight states (Pennsylvania, Vermont, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, North Dakota, Washington, and Arizona) were randomly selected from those regions.

Three definitions for rural were used. In each state, counties with a density of 15 to 50 people per square mile were identified, using the 2000 United States Census data and definitions (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000), and considered by the participants to be rural according to the Local Opinion Measure (Bushy & Carty, 1994). Within each county, towns having a population of 50,000 or less were identified as rural for purposes of this project (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Lists of licensed professional counselors and school counselors for the identified towns were obtained through websites, state licensing agencies, and state departments of education. Letters were mailed inviting counselors to participate in the study. Counselors, representing six of the states in three of the regions, completed the interviews. Those contacted in Georgia and Kentucky did not choose to participate.

Procedure

The counselors were interviewed by telephone using a set of seven semi-structured interview questions. The questions were developed as a part of the work of the ACES Rural Counseling Interest Group. The interviewer used a general interview guide approach, a conversational process of interviewing while using an interview guide listing the questions to be explored (Patton, 2007). Semi-structured interviews guide the gathering of specific information while allowing room for participants to voice their own perspectives. Interviews lasted from 45 minutes to one and one half hours. Questions were designed to gather data about the rural setting, the effects of the rural context, the critical issues rural counselors faced, the understandings and skills they needed, and the recommendations they would make for preparation and support for their work in the rural setting.

Analysis of Data

We were interested purely in the perceptions of counselors working in rural areas. Patton (2007) describes a process of going back and forth between what the participants told as their perceptions and the researcher making meaning by interpreting these perceptions. Each interview transcript was read. Categories of meanings emerged and were coded using different colored pencils. Subcategories were developed as well. We worked as *triangulating analysts* in that we both read the transcripts independently and compared findings (Patton, 2007). We used ourselves as *researchers-as-instruments* (Morrow, 2005), incorporating our perceptions of our own rural counseling experience.

Results

Core to the findings of this research is the concept that rural counselors are not prepared for the unique challenges they face and that counselor educators need to prepare school and mental health counselors specifically for practice in rural settings. Four categories emerged from the analysis of the interviews: rural life, impact on the life of the counselor, counselor self-efficacy, and recommendations for counselor educators.

Rural Life

Rural life reflected aspects that drew counselors to working and living in rural settings. Rural life was described as having time for outdoor leisure activities, less crime, no gangs, strong community support, independence, and strong work ethic. One counselor elaborated, “We have no gangs in our community and the reason is that there’s only one highway out of town. Our crime rate is very low. You can’t rob a bank in our community because all they’ve got to do is set up a roadblock on the one highway and they catch you.”

However, rural life also presented aspects that made counselors’ work and lifestyle challenging. These include poverty, lower levels of education, limited career opportunities, long travel distances, lack of resources, lack of diversity, and alcoholism.

Five subcategories emerged in the rural life category. They are culture, trust, family, school, and lack of services.

Culture. Rural life seems to be a culture in itself. These counselors explained that rural people are independent and have their own values, and counselors need to respect that. One counselor explained, “You get to know the community you’re in and understand their values... because if you don’t... you won’t be a person they trust.”

In an effort to understand rural culture, these counselors said that it is important to know why some people are living in rural areas. One counselor discussed this honestly, “I think people live here... for family reasons. I also think (some people are) intimidated about living in a larger community, there is a... kind of a rugged individualism... people here hide out in terms of alcohol and drug problems, depression, social anxiety.”

Trust. Trust stood out as a value in rural culture. It was discussed as important and something in which rural people took pride. However, it can also be to their detriment. One counselor said, “There’s a big trust issue where they just don’t want to trust somebody outside of their own community... if anybody needs to trust somebody outside of their community, it’s them because they don’t have the services available.”

Family. Families come first. Rural families value less commuting time because they can spend more time together. One counselor provided a picture of rural family life and said, “There’s kind of a clannish nature of family. Do things as a family... there’s a great emphasis on that.”

Families have strong influence when it comes to their expectations for their children. One counselor reported, “I had a kid in here who made a very positive response to working somewhere in the medical profession and I suggested nursing and he really liked that but the problem is he’s a he and that’s just not accepted.”

School. The school is important in the community. As a counselor said, “There’s a great emphasis often on school being the center of what happens in the community.” Rural adults see the school counselor as a role model who they continue to go to for advice about a range of concerns such as legal issues, domestic problems, and sexual abuse. One school counselor talked about how this was different compared to a suburban school and said, “When I worked in a school in a suburban setting, this was not at the center of so many people coming and asking for help... It’s kind of a constant in many people’s lives (here).”

Lack of services. Access to services is a challenge in rural life. There are not many local services available and rural people may not have the financial resources, time to get off from work, or means to travel to urban or suburban areas. Most rural

communities do not have the public transportation that is available in urban areas. There may be community volunteer drivers, but the independence of rural people is compromised when they want to have confidentiality. One counselor elaborated, "I'll hear stories of where a 40 or 50 year old man or woman has to go to Burlington (60 miles away) for health care reasons and they will need directions because they haven't been to Burlington since they graduated from high school... it's not like the bus stops right outside the door every 40 minutes."

Impact on the Life of the Counselor

The parts of rural life that impact the counselor can be both positive and negative at the same time. For example, the idea of having more leisure time and good climate for outdoor recreation is a drawing factor, yet the pay is low. Two subcategories emerged: integrating into the community and professional challenges.

Integrating into the community. The reality of always being the counselor can feel like an intrusion, and at the same time can bring a sense of being helpful and providing a needed service in the community. These counselors emphasized the need for rural counselors to be aware of boundaries and how to appropriately work within them given the culture of rural settings. One counselor expressed this struggle to find balance saying, "Living in the community where you work... it's on an island. People call you at home."

Another counselor talked about being able to know if you can live and work in the rural community reporting, "Some people can tolerate that and kind of integrate themselves into the community and some people, they're like, no, I have to have a fairly solid barrier between what I do professionally and how I live."

Another counselor described integrating into the rural community as an opportunity to feel closer and more responsible saying, "Parents are more involved and you expect to see them in the building and you get to know them. You see them at the grocery store and that, I think, makes it more of a family kind of feeling. And maybe that's the attitude, less formal feeling and more responsible because you're always there."

Another counselor described some awkwardness in this closeness reporting, "Just this morning getting gas at the convenience store, the woman taking my money is also a client. And so, you're getting groceries and every other aisle you go down there is either a client or a family member of a client."

It seemed there were more challenges for those who moved to rural areas from urban or suburban areas. This counselor talked about her transition saying, "Everything is way more informal. That was a jolt for me. I arrived with my east coast wardrobe which was suits and heels and nobody wears anything like that here."

Counselors described rural life as a choice for a pleasant living environment. One reported, "It's lovely up here... just slower pace. Nature. Lots of powder for snowmobiling and snowboarding. And just a softer culture. A little more appealing for my soul." Another counselor described a feeling of safety in the rural community, "The crime rate is low. I don't have to feel... that my life might be threatened. In some areas, that can be a real hindrance in your job."

Professional challenges. While there were benefits to living and working in rural communities, there were also challenges. A counselor talked about the impact on professional development and peer supervision opportunities saying, "It's a big deal for

me to go to a conference or a workshop because it's always so far away. In the more urban areas the school counselors meet on a monthly basis. I don't have anything like that."

Many of these counselors related scenarios they faced in their personal lives that could present ethical challenges. One stated, "Being known now as a professional within town, it feels like at times that you're in a fish bowl."

One counselor talked about the need to be aware of ethical issues and do her best to follow guidelines, given the rural setting. She related a compromising story saying, "My own children are on display at times. I'm in the grocery store... they're wanting something and you're saying no, and you turn the corner and they're arguing with you and there's the family you're dealing with."

Self-Efficacy

Rural counselors are often one of the few professionals, if not the only professional, available in the rural community. These counselors made it clear that they have to be confident in what they are doing. There were three subcategories describing the self-efficacy category: confidence in providing a broad range of services, responsibility, and community contribution.

Confidence in providing a broad range of services. Counselor self-efficacy reflected the need for counselors to be mature and confident in their roles and be able to provide a broad range of services. One school counselor said, "You do it all... in a small school you're going to do it because there is no one else." A counselor in a private counseling agency has multiple roles and said, "Besides being the... Director in this county, I'm also the HIPPA Privacy Officer and I'm the Head of Maintenance. Administratively, I oversee the maintenance guy. Pretty typical for a small county."

Responsibility. Rural counselors described their work settings as perhaps more relaxed than urban settings. However, with that they felt a strong sense of needing to be responsible in their work. One counselor said, "We also don't have... the pressure. I don't have parents breathing down my back to get their kids into Harvard. Hell, they don't even know if they want them to go to college... They come to me for answers."

Rural counselors are well known and looked up to, even after professional relationships are terminated. One school counselor said, "Anywhere I go... you are recognized... They will still call me... You made a connection and you become the person that they go to... It is a big responsibility, I mean, you're very visible..."

Rural counselors need to be responsible for finding supervision. Many of these counselors talked about the impact of being isolated and having fewer opportunities for supervision. One counselor expressed this as a need to have a strong self-efficacy, "You have less direct supervision ...you've got to have a sense of what you're about... no other counselors nearby to mentor you except maybe in the next building and that's 15 miles down the road."

Community contribution. Rural counselors not only provide services in their work setting but in the community. They need to see themselves as educated and worthwhile and realize they are serving a need in the community. As one counselor stated, "You are a key component in the community. People look to you for a lot of different things. And they consider you the expert... she's the expert, she knows what to do."

Recommendations for Counselor Educators

The rural counselors in this study had not previously thought about suggestions for counselor educators. Once they were asked, however, they realized that they had many suggestions. Their recommendations comprise seven subcategories: talk about rural, prepare students for broad roles, help students develop an understanding of rural culture, provide rural internships, teach about seeking supervision in isolation, teach use of technology, and provide continuing education about rural counseling.

Talk about rural. As graduate students, rural counselors said they did not have training that addressed rural counseling. They had strong feelings about the importance of this focus and suggested we talk more about rural in our courses. One said, “It’s not so cut and dried like in the books.” Another said counselor educators need to teach their students the “importance of confidentiality,” the need to make sure “boundaries are really in place,” and that it is essential to have a “good support system.”

Prepare students for broad roles. Rural counselors talked about the need to prepare students to be competent in varied roles. These school counselors described rural schools as having fewer administrators and specialists such as school psychologists. One school counselor said, “There is only a principal and myself. There is no other administrator position. I’m not an administrator but you can imagine when there’s only a principal and a counselor, it’s a real fight to keep from wearing the two hats.” Another said, “In graduate schools now, they really need to talk about the impact of special education on the program.”

Other rural counselors talked about the impact of the lack of professionals in the communities for referrals. One school counselor stated, “Of the rural area’s needs, counseling would be number one.” This is described by another school counselor who recommended that rural school counselors need to be trained to do more in depth counseling saying, “In a rural area you’re going to be working more with people and you’re going to have to be able to go into more in depth counseling because you may not be able to make a referral.”

Help students develop an understanding of rural culture. Rural counselors emphasized the value of developing an understanding of rural culture, for both students and counselor educators. They suggested they explore, understand, and appreciate rural culture, values, geography, isolation, connections, and lifestyle. One counselor suggested, “There probably needs to be some history and cultural lesson, as in-depth as what you might have for a multicultural class... because it almost is another culture up here.” One counselor stated, “You cannot come in here from the big city and have no cultural understanding. I have to be genuine with these youth. You know, I do enjoy my mud truck and my snow mobile and a little shooting.”

Counselor educators need to teach their students to understand the importance of the land for rural people. One counselor commented, “In New York there were days when I would not notice the weather... if you’re farming, you have to know, read, and accommodate the weather on a daily, monthly, yearly basis and know how to roll with it. It places you in connection with the world in a really different way.”

Another counselor thought counselor educators needed to teach their students the importance of knowing the social rules. She said openly, “You need to take cookies to the meetings... The social rules are different, but its just as important to follow them... that

includes a much more transparency about who you are... I mean, I serve coffee. I serve it.”

One counselor talked about the consequence of counselors leaving rural areas because of not being well prepared for the rural culture reporting, “There’s kind of a joke around here about seeing people come and go. They’re here about 6 or 9 months and realize that you can’t get a decent newspaper and there’s no cable TV and I need to get the hell out of here.” Another counselor elaborated, “I think also part of that is helping clinicians understand why people live in a rural community. Why would people choose to live where they log part of the year and then they work at the mountain at the ski resort in the winter?”

Provide rural internships. Rural counselors suggested counselor educators require students to have rural internships; one suggested, “having them interview practitioners that are out in the community.” Another said to have students “talk to people who have been there for a long time and be observant.” A school counselor suggested it would be valuable to “make sure that a particular intern had spent some time observing at an urban school and at a rural school for some of the differences.”

Teach about seeking supervision in isolation. Teaching students the importance of seeking supervision was a strong recommendation for counselor educators. One counselor stated clearly, “I think really emphasizing that in a rural atmosphere that (supervision) is way important, you need to find a way to get it even if that means spending the money out of your pocket to pay for it, to commute for it.”

The isolation of the rural setting makes engaging in supervision on a regular basis time consuming and expensive. But that same isolation and uniqueness of rural enhances the need for consulting with another professional. One stated, “If you’re dealing with a difficult client ...you’re really on your own.” For this counselor, the nearest peer is an hour away, but she finds time and money for peer supervision once each month. Another expressed, “Seeking supervision has been a real pain in the butt. I have to take off a day. It’s not like I can go in the afternoon.”

One counselor suggested counselor educators provide a rural counselor listserv so she could have immediate access to other rural counselors. Another said, “To be able to talk with other people in the same boat. How do you handle this when you’re at the gym and you’re just getting out of the shower and there’s your client?”

Teach use of technology. Rural counselors called for counselor educators to provide training in the use of technology. In rural areas technology brings people together and facilitates communication. One school counselor, whose school is located 300 miles from the University his intern supervisees attend, described how the use of technology helped with training school counselor interns saying, “Over this network we’ve been able to do some monitoring. Technology has really increased the effectiveness and delivery of the program.”

Provide continuing education about rural counseling. Rural counselors want to make sure counselor educators talk with their students about finding continuing education. They would like counselor educators to provide in-service trainings that focus on rural counseling. One said, “(trainings) are usually held in suburban areas, breakout sessions are geared to schools those size. For me to go to a day-long seminar on setting up a career center, it’s probably a waste of my time and my district’s money.” This

counselor described in-services that would be helpful to a rural high school counselor reporting,

A huge help would be to have admissions people from four-year universities talk to us just about accepting the students from the small schools. Where do we fall? What can we do to help our kids? Another thing even admissions could touch on is our kids' letters... personal statements. I read what they call a wonderful personal statement that this kid sent in for this Ivy League College and yeah, you live next door to the teaching hospital in downtown Chicago and you could get a summer internship, a payless job and do wonderful things. I live next door to a grate elevator. You know what I mean? How can I turn that into a personal experience, walking soybeans?

Discussion

These rural counselors were excited to participate in the interviews and happy they had a chance to tell their stories. They clearly stated that there are differences in rural counseling compared to urban counseling. As has been consistently pointed out by others who have studied and described rural counseling, personal and professional lives of these counselors are affected by the rural setting and they have to make personal compromises. They recommend that counselor educators prepare counselors specifically for unique challenges in rural counseling. Their voices provide insight and implications directly from their own experiences.

Practice Implications

Because of the impact of rural life, counselors need to have strong self-efficacy. They must be ready to provide a broad range of services in the counseling setting and in the community as previously recommended (Bushy & Carty, 1994; Saba, 1991). For some counselors this seemed to be welcomed. They liked the idea of being called upon and being available to provide many services in their work settings as well as in their daily community life. For others, this can be a challenge. They stressed the importance of knowing about the culture and being aware of the impact on practice in this environment.

Leading (Drew & Breen, 2004, Hines, 2002; Worzbyt & Zook, 1992), networking (Drew & Breen, 2004), seeking support (McIntire et al., 1990; Sutton, 1988), ongoing consultation and supervision (Drew & Breen, 2004; Erickson, 2001; Schank, 1998), and continuing education (Drew & Breen, 2004) have all been suggested as important steps to take to alleviate isolation and burnout and maintain effective practice in the rural setting. Rural counselors need to be creative in finding and maintaining support and strong supervision and continuing education that focuses on the practice of rural counseling.

Counselor Education Implications

Students in counselor education programs need to learn to develop a strong self-efficacy and awareness that they may be the only counselors and they will be called upon to provide a broad range of services. They need to learn how to live and work in the rural community, realizing they will be seen as professional counselors no matter where they are and what they are doing.

It was recommended that counselor educators require students to engage in internships and other experiences in rural areas. As counselor educators, we recommend that counselor educators also spend time in rural areas in order to develop an understanding of how the rural community functions. For example, counselor educators can attend town meetings, visit rural schools and clinics, or spend sabbatical time in rural areas doing research or providing services.

The results of this study contribute to the existing literature by providing suggestions for counselor educators who train counselors for work in rural settings. The recommendations made for counselor educators can be developed into training models that include emphasis on counselor self-efficacy, understanding rural culture, and importance of supervision. Counselor educators should also provide continuing education programs specifically about rural counseling.

Research Implications

In order to examine effective ways of preparing counselors for work in rural settings, in depth study is needed to fully understand rural life and work for counselors. We recommend ethnographic research, allowing for daily study of the professional and personal life of a rural counselor, examining ways the counselor adapts to work in rural settings and ways the counselor comes to understand the rural community.

Preparing students for post secondary education is a goal for all high school counselors. For the rural school counselor this may be an area of particular challenge. We suggest further research is needed to develop an understanding of how rural high school counselors see the task of preparing rural high school students for post secondary education.

This study is limited to interviews with 20 rural counselors. Research is also needed with larger and more representative samples of rural counselors.

References

- Boyer, P. A. (1987). Rural marriage and family therapy: Skills for private practice. *Human Services in the Rural Environment*, 10(3), 18-23.
- Breen, D., & Drew, D. L. (2005). Professional counseling in rural settings: Raising awareness through discussion and self-study with implications for training and support. In R. K. Yep & G. R. Walz, (Eds.) *VISTAS: Compelling perspectives on counseling* (pp. 247-250). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Bushy, A., & Carty, L. (1994). Rural practice? Considerations for counselors with clients who live there. *Guidance & Counseling*, 9(5), 16-25.
- Cahill, M., & Martland, S. (1993). Career counselling in rural areas. *Guidance and Counseling*, 8(3), 11-19.
- Cahill, M., & Martland, S. (1996). Community career counseling for rural transitions. *Canadian Journal of Counselling/Revue canadienne de counseling*, 30(3), 155-164.
- Cody, J. J. (1983). Guidance in rural schools. *The Rural Educator*, 4(2), 1-6.
- Coward, R. T., DeWeaver, K. L., Schmidt, R. E., & Jackson, R. W. (1983). Distinctive features of rural environments: A frame of reference for mental health practice. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 12, 3-24.

- Dinkmeyer, D., Jr., & Carlson, J. (1990). Guidance in a small school. *The School Counselor*, 37(3), 199-203.
- Drew, D. L., & Breen, D. (2004). The professional school counselor in the rural setting: Strategies for meeting challenges and maximizing rewards. In B. T. Erford (Ed.), *Professional school counseling: A handbook of theories, programs, and practices* (pp. 745-751). Austin, TX: Pro-ed.
- Erickson, S. H. (2001). Multiple relationships in rural counseling. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 9(3), 302-304.
- Hines, P. L. (2002). Transforming the rural school counselor. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(3), 192-201.
- Hovestadt, A. J., Fenell, D. L., & Canfield, B. S. (2002). Characteristics of effective providers of marital and family therapy in rural mental health settings. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 28(2), 225-231.
- Lund, L. (1990). Alone! *The School Counselor*, 37(3), 204-209.
- McIntire, W. G., Marion, S. F., & Quaglia, R. (1990). Rural school counselors: Their communities and schools. *The School Counselor*, 37(3), 166-172.
- Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Morrisette, P. J. (2000). The experiences of the rural school counselor. *Professional School Counseling*, 3(3), 197-207.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250
- Nickel, M. (2004). Professional boundaries: The dilemma of dual & multiple relationships in rural clinical practice. *Counseling and Clinical Psychology Journal*, 1(1), 17-22.
- Patton, M. L. (2007). *Understanding research methods* (6th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Pawlak, E. J., & Zygmund, L. (1982). Clinical perspectives on practice in rural mental health settings. *Human Services in the Rural Environment*, 7(2), 24-29.
- Pearson, R. E., & Sutton, J. M., Jr. (1999). Rural and small town school counselors. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 15(2), 90-100.
- Rojewski, J. W. (1992). Vocational rehabilitation in rural America: Challenges and opportunities. *American Rehabilitation*, 18(1), 39-45.
- Saba, R. G. (1991). The rural school counselor: Relations among rural sociology, counselor role and counselor training. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 30(4), 322-330.
- Schank, J. A. (1998). Ethical issues in rural counselling practice. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 32(4), 270-283.
- Sutton, J. M., Jr. (1988). Work environment perspectives of school guidance counselors in isolated settings. *Research in Rural Education*, 5(1), 17-21.
- Sutton, J. M., Jr., & Pearson, R. E. (2002). The practice of school counseling in rural and small town schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(4), 266-276.
- Sutton, J. M., Jr., & Southworth, R. S. (1990). The effect of the rural setting on school counselors. *The School Counselor*, 37(3), 173-178.

- U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Census 2000 Urban and Rural Classification*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua_2k.html
- Weigel, D. J. (2003). Counseling in rural America. in R. L. Dingman & J. D. Weaver (Eds.), *Days in the lives of counselors* (pp. 1-6). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Weigel, D. J., & Baker, B. G. (2002). Unique issues in rural couple and family counseling. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 10(1), 61-69.
- Worzbyt, J. C., & Zook, T. (1992). Counselors who make a difference: Small schools and rural settings. *The School Counselor*, 39(5), 344-350.

Note: This paper is part of the annual VISTAS project sponsored by the American Counseling Association. Find more information on the project at: http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/VISTAS_Home.htm