

School Counselors' Adoption of Brief Counseling:

The Diffusion of an Innovative Practice

John M. Littrell and Laurie Carlson

Colorado State University

### Abstract

Brief counseling has emerged as an innovation in the field of school counseling. This study examined the factors that promote and impede the adoption of such innovation. Everett Rogers' diffusion of innovation model provided the framework for the survey examining counselors' knowledge, application skills, and actual use of brief counseling. The study investigated how counselors' readiness to adopt innovation, the characteristics of brief counseling, and the counselors' social networks and activities influenced the adoption of brief counseling. Implications for the professional development and continuing education of professional school counselors are discussed.

School Counselors' Adoption of Brief Counseling:  
The Diffusion of an Innovative Practice

Why do some innovations gain support and become adopted, while others are ignored or spark little interest and fade from view? The counseling field has seen its share of innovative theories and techniques. Some are adopted and readily used; others attract attention for a while, but are subsequently discarded. Carl Rogers conceptualized warmth, genuineness, and empathy as facilitative conditions. His innovative conceptualization of counseling began to be adopted by counselors during the 1940s and 1950s and remains a fundamental approach undergirding the preparation of most counselors. An example of an unsustained innovation is Fritz Perls' gestalt therapy, which burst onto the counseling scene in the late 1960s, but has subsequently faded from prominence. While the theory has faded, Perls' innovative empty chair technique has remained a viable part of counselors' repertoires.

A major innovation since the late 1980s has been the emergence of brief counseling by counselors in K-12 schools (Amatea, 1989; Davis & Osborn, 2000; Metcalf, 1995; Molnar & Lindquist, 1989; Sklare, 2005). Brief counseling is defined as a problem-solving/solution-focused approach for helping people change (Littrell, 1998). Using brief counseling, counselors assist students individually, in small groups, and in classrooms to work through four steps:

- (1) a clear definition of the problem in concrete terms, (2) an investigation of attempted solutions, (3) a clear definition of the concrete change to be achieved, and (4) the formation and implementation of a plan to produce this change.
- (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974, p. 110)

Research supports the effectiveness and efficiency of brief counseling in K-12 schools (Franklin, Biever, Moore, Clemons, & Scamardo, 2001; Gillen, 2005; Littrell, Malia, & Vanderwood, 1995; Littrell & Peterson, 2005). Mostert, Johnson, and Mostert (1997) found that after basic training in solution-focused brief counseling, all 20 professional school counselors reported continued use of the intervention and emphasized its utility and effectiveness with not only students, but also with parents and colleagues. Qualities that contribute to brief counseling efficacy in schools include a focus on wellness, the contextual nature of issue clarification and resolution (therefore observable and measurable), a future orientation, cooperation, and expediency (Mostert, Johnson, & Mostert, 1997; Sklare, 2005).

How do school counselors learn about new innovations and what is the process by which they adopt them? Baker and Gerler (2008) reported that school counselors use multiple sources (e.g., professional journals and newsletters, case conferences, books, videotapes and DVDs, workshops, and local, state, and national conventions) to continually upgrade their knowledge and skills. These sources supply innovative ideas that influence counseling practice. The ultimate goal is that school counselors will embrace new practices, not only counseling interventions such as brief therapy, but also comprehensive professional innovations such as the ASCA National Model which allow them to help students maximize their academic, career, and social/personal development (American School Counselor Association, 2005).

Despite the variety of professional development sources and opportunities, counselors vary widely in their exposure to innovative ideas and their willingness to adopt them. Examination of national census data indicates that only 8% of professional

counselors in the country hold membership in the American Counseling Association and 11% of professionals identified as school counselors by the Bureau of Labor Statistics are members of the American School Counselor Association (Bauman, 2008). Although Bauman found that membership rates in her sample were higher than these rates, 27% of the sample in her study indicated no professional membership at all. This degree of involvement in professional organizations raises questions regarding access to information and training regarding innovative school counseling practice.

What do we know about adoption of innovations? A recent pilot study by Poynton, Schumacher, and Wilczenski (2008) found that school counselors tend to seek professional development activities and to adopt new innovations, such as state models, if the innovation has a direct impact on day-to-day work and if its impact can be measured. Concerning the adoption of brief counseling strategies specifically, mental health professionals in private practice report more favorable attitudes towards adoption than do professional counselors working in school/agency settings (Evans, Valadez, Burns, & Rodriguez, 2002). This study examines the factors contributing to school counselor adoption of brief counseling so that a greater understanding can be gained regarding diverse innovation acceptance and adoption.

The theoretical foundation for the current study is built upon the work of Everett Rogers (1995). Rogers developed a theoretical model that focuses on the diffusion and adoption of innovative ideas and practices. Three aspects of his model are relevant to our study. First, people differ in their innovativeness: "the degree to which an individual...is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than the other members of a system" (p. 22). Rogers' five adopter categories include laggards, late majority, early

majority, early adopter, and innovators. Based upon the characteristics of our data, we added the category of “never adopters” to Rogers’ schema.

Second, Rogers’ model focuses on five characteristics of innovations that influence their adoption: (1) *relative advantage*—the new practice’s degree of improvement or differentiation from older practices; (2) *compatibility*—degree to which the new practice can coexist or coordinate with previously accepted practices; (3) *complexity*—intricacy or level of difficulty the practice is perceived to possess; (4) *trialability*—extent to which the new practice can be tested or experienced on a small-scale basis; and (5) *observability*—degree to which an innovative practice is visible.

Third, Rogers’ model provides insights on the importance of social interactions and communication networks for diffusion and adoption of innovations. In addition, recent developments in the role of communication networks in diffusion of innovations appear pertinent in understanding the professional development of school counselors (Burt, 1999; Franklin, et al., 2001; Scott, 1991; Spence, 1995; Valente, 1995; Valente & Davis, 1999).

This research focuses on four primary research questions:

1. To what extent are school counselors knowledgeable about, skilled at, and using brief counseling?
2. What are school counselors’ degrees of innovativeness (e.g., innovators, laggards) related to brief counseling?
3. What are the specific characteristics of the brief counseling innovation (e.g., compatibility, complexity) associated with its adoption?

4. What are the counselors' involvements in social network and specific activities associated with adoption of brief counseling?

### Method

#### *School Counselors*

Of the 175 school counselors who returned completed surveys, 73% ( $n = 128$ ) were female and 27% (47) were male. Ages ranged from 26 to 63 years ( $M = 43$ ). Ethnically, 90% ( $n = 158$ ) of the participants described themselves as White or European, 4.4% ( $n = 8$ ) as Hispanic or Latino, 1.6% ( $n = 3$ ) as Native American, and .5% ( $n = 1$ ) as Black or African-American. Three selected other.

Years of experience as a school counselor ranged from 1 to 30 years ( $M = 8.6$ ). Ninety-five percent of the participants held master's degrees, while 5% held doctorates. Counselors were responsible for an average of 369 students ( $SD = 143.57$ ). Forty-six percent of the counselors worked in high schools, 25% in middle schools/junior highs, and 18% in elementary schools; the remaining 11% worked in multiple settings. Within a given setting, counselors reported that the percentage of students of color ranged from 0% to 99% ( $M = 24\%$ ). Four out of five counselors ( $n = 148$ ) worked in only one school. Forty-three percent of the participants described their school's setting as suburban, 35% as rural, and 22% as urban. Counselors in urban school settings were slightly older, reported higher levels of involvement with professional organizations, worked slightly more hours in an average day, and had larger caseloads. Rural counselors were younger, less experienced, had the least professional involvement, and reported the smallest average caseloads.

The school counselors estimated the amount of time they devoted to various activities during a typical work day. They averaged an 8.5-hour workday, during which they spent approximately 25% of their time doing individual counseling, 18% on paperwork/clerical duties, 7% on group counseling, 6% on coordinating testing and assessments, 5% on accountability-related tasks, 3% on student discipline, and less than 3% on teaching. Individual counselors varied considerably in these answers; one counselor spending 56% of work time doing paperwork.

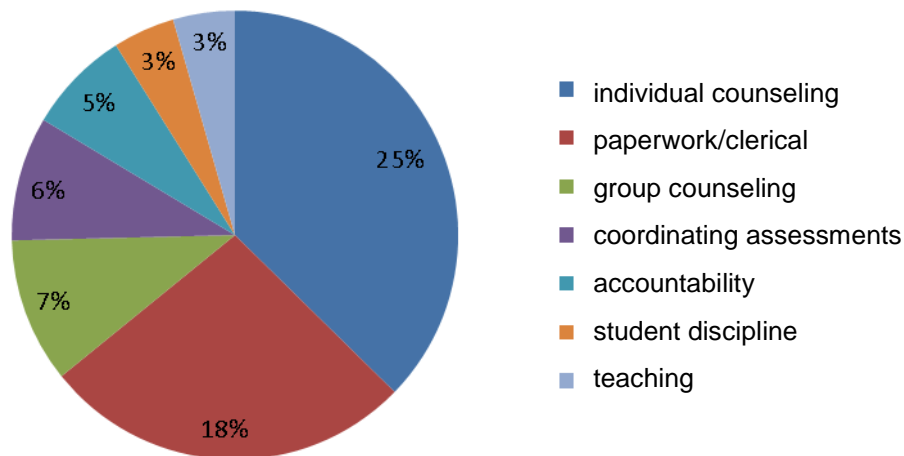


Figure 1. Percentage of school counselor time on task.

---

### Procedure

A random sample of 1000 school counselors was selected from an official data list of all school counselors in Colorado ( $n=1,690$ ), regardless of professional membership status. The sample was drawn using a random-numbers generator and all counselors were included in the target population to avoid selection bias created by using only active membership lists (Bauman, 2008). One thousand packets that



included a letter of informed consent, a survey, and a stamped return addressed envelope were mailed. For inclusion in the study, a participant had to be employed 80% of the time as a school counselor. Those returning valid questionnaires became eligible for four gift certificates of \$25 each. Winners were randomly chosen and certificates subsequently awarded. 175 usable surveys were returned for a rate of 17.5%.

Several factors contributed to the low return rate of this sample. First, it is recognized that using a drawing as strategy to improve response rate has subsequently not been supported in the literature (Bauman, 2007). Furthermore, this study was connected to a small grant and due to the nature of the grant timeline, the initial mailing occurred in early May. Because of the nature of schools at the end of the year and related school counselor tasks, it is believed that many of the mailings went unopened or unanswered. Secondly, no follow-up mailing was implemented because of the end of the school year. This likely had serious implications regarding the return rate and poses a serious limitation for the current study. As such, this current study is best treated as a descriptive pilot study with limited generalizability.

Concerns regarding the representative nature of those who returned the survey were further explored statistically through comparison of item responses for early responders (N=73) to late responders (N=84). All responses returned within the first three weeks of mailing were categorized as early responders and those returned after the three week marker were categorized as late responders. Research has indicated that late responders are the most similar to non-respondents and that response bias can be examined through statistically comparing early to late responders (Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2008). Statistical analysis through the use of independent samples *t*-

tests revealed no significant differences between early and late responders on any of the outcome variables. Although this does not completely erase concerns regarding the response rate in this study, it does increase the generalizability and utility of the study to a certain degree.

### *Instrument*

The Solution-Focused Brief Counseling Survey (*SBCS*) was designed to measure school counselors' patterns in adopting brief counseling ideas, strategies, and techniques in relationship to variables drawn from diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 1995). In the survey, brief counseling was defined as:

a problem-solving/solution-focused approach for helping people change.

Examples of brief counseling techniques are: asking scaling and miracle questions, assigning observation or doing tasks to reach goals, and focusing on exceptions. Prominent names associated with brief counseling/therapy are Insoo Kim Berg, Steve de Shazer, & Bill O'Hanlon. Important brief counseling institutions are the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee and the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, CA.

The *SBCS* included demographic questions about age, years of school counselor experience, degrees, numbers of students worked with, employment setting and location, and activities in a typical work day.

The first set of survey questions contained three items that assessed: (1) counselor knowledge about brief counseling (1 = not at all knowledgeable, very knowledgeable); (2) counselor skill at using brief counseling (1 = not at all skilled, 5 =

very skilled); and (3) counselor use of brief counseling in the work setting (1 = never use, 5 = use extensively).

The second set of survey questions assessed the counselors' degrees of innovativeness (e.g., innovators, laggards) related to brief counseling. Counselors were asked to check which statement most closely summarized where they were in the process of adopting aspects of brief counseling into their work as school counselors. Statements for each item on the survey ranged from "I have my reasons for never adopting aspects of brief counseling into my work" [coded as 1], to "I was among the very first of school counselors to adopt aspects of brief counseling into my work" [coded as 6].

The third section of the survey assessed specific characteristics of the brief counseling innovation (e.g., compatibility, complexity) associated with its adoption. Three summed items were used to assess each of the five special characteristics of the brief counseling innovation that included Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Level of Complexity, Trialability, and Observability. For example, an item for Relative Advantage was "Brief counseling is not an improvement over other counseling approaches." The 15 items used the following scale: (1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = repeatedly [always]). The 38 items based upon a five-level weighted scale were examined for internal consistency and yielded a Chronbach's Alpha of .92.

The final section of the survey examined the counselors' involvement in social networks and specific activities associated with the adoption of brief counseling. The influence of a social network on counselors' adoption of brief counseling was assessed by items reflecting their involvement with others as a professional counselor. These

items included their involvement in professional counseling organizations at the national, state, and local levels as well as lobbying legislators on school counseling issues. In addition, the influence of colleagues that shaped their adoption of brief counseling was assessed.

A 10-item Yes/No checklist offered sources of where and from whom the counselors had learned about or acquired brief counseling skills. These items included books, journals, workshops, conferences, classroom instruction, colleagues, technology (e.g., computers, videotapes, audiotapes), supervisor, live demonstrations, and "other" sources.

### *Data Analysis*

The returned survey raw data were entered into SPSS™14.0. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were used in initial examination of the data. Data related to the aforementioned research questions were analyzed using Pearson Correlation and Chi-square (Crosstabs).

## Results

### *Extent of Brief Counseling Knowledge*

Counselors were asked to indicate their level of knowledge, skill, and adoption with one item each that ranged on a scale from "1= Not at All" to "5 = Very." Counselors reported moderate knowledge about brief counseling ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ). Reported skills at using brief counseling were slightly less with a mean of 2.98 and standard deviation of 1.08. Finally, counselors reported using brief counseling ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ) to a degree that is similar to knowledge and skill. The correlations between these variables were all significant with knowledge and skill  $r = .865$ ,  $p < .000$ ; skill and use,  $r$

= .960,  $p < .000$ ; and knowledge and use  $r = .788$ ,  $p < .000$ . Based on these high correlations, the average value of the scores for these three items was treated as one variable in subsequent analyses. We regarded this new score as reflective of school counselors' overall use of brief counseling.

A significant majority (87%) of the counselors claims at least some knowledge of, and skill in using brief counseling, and more than 85% said that they use it at least occasionally. While very few counselors rated themselves as very knowledgeable (8.5%) or very skilled (4.5%) in brief counseling, 10.2% said that they use it extensively. In other words, at least half of the practitioners who use brief counseling extensively did not rate themselves as very skilled in its use. The most commonly chosen scale ratings were a "4" for knowledge (37.9%), a "3" for skill (33.5%), and a "4" for use (30.5%). These ratings indicate that counselors report a fairly high level of knowledge, skill and use of brief counseling within their settings.

#### *Degree of Innovativeness*

On the levels of adoption scale, counselors reported being early majority adopters ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ), which is reflected in the survey statement, "I was in the first half of school counselors to adopt aspects of brief counseling into my work." Counselors' use of brief counseling was positively correlated with counselors' level of adoption of brief counseling ( $r < .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In other words, the more counselors used brief counseling, the more likely they were to be innovators (4.5%), early adopters (3.4%), or early majority adopters (17.3%), and the less likely they were to be late adopters (18.4%), laggards (32.4%), or never adopters (9.5%). Table 1 presents

percentage of school counselors in each of the adoption categories based upon the demographic characteristics of gender, degree, location, and setting.

Table 1

*Percent of participants in adoption categories by gender, degree, setting, and location.*

<b>Class</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Innovator</b>	<b>Early</b>	<b>Early Majority</b>	<b>Late Majority</b>	<b>Laggard</b>	<b>Never</b>
Female	128	3.74%	2.80%	21.50%	22.43%	38.32%	11.21%
Male	47	6.67%	6.67%	17.78%	20.00%	37.78%	11.11%
Master's	166	4.83%	4.14%	20.69%	20.69%	39.31%	10.34%
Doctorate	9	0.00%	0.00%	14.29%	42.86%	14.29%	28.57%
Urban	38	6.06%	6.06%	15.15%	24.24%	36.36%	12.12%
Suburban	75	7.46%	4.48%	20.90%	28.36%	26.87%	11.94%
Rural	62	0.00%	1.92%	23.08%	11.54%	53.85%	9.62%
Elementary	31	0.00%	3.45%	17.24%	17.24%	48.28%	13.79%
Middle	44	5.41%	2.70%	27.03%	24.32%	21.62%	18.92%
High	80	5.71%	5.71%	18.57%	24.29%	38.57%	7.14%

#### *Characteristics of Innovation Leading to Adoption*

Adoption, as indicated by the categories ranging from innovator to never adopter, is associated with five characteristics of innovation. These five characteristics include *Relative Advantage*, new practice's degree of improvement or differentiation from older practices ( $r = .383, p < .000$ ); *Level of Complexity (Simplicity)*, intricacy or level of difficulty the practice is perceived to possess ( $r = .340, p < .000$ ); *Compatibility*, degree

to which the new practice can coexist or coordinate with previously accepted practices ( $r = .335, p < .000$ ); *Observability*, degree to which an innovative results are visible ( $r = .272, p < .000$ ); and *Trialability*, extent to which the new practice can be tested or experienced on a small-scale basis ( $r = .192, p < .01$ ). The degree of association among these five characteristics of innovation is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Intercorrelations among Characteristics of Innovation.*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. Advantage	--	.401**	.148*	.071	.164*
2. Simplicity		--	.279**	.415**	.273**
3. Observability			--	.119	.241**
4. Compatibility				--	.493**
5. Trialability					--

\*Correlation significant at  $p < .05$  (1 tail). \*\*Correlation significant at  $p < .01$  (1 tail).

*Counselors' Involvements Influencing Adoption*

Six items assessed the counselors' involvement in professional counseling organizations at the national, state, and local levels as well as lobbying legislators on school counseling issues. The school counselors were members of the Colorado School Counselor Association (70.5%), Colorado Counseling Association (9.7%), and Colorado Career Development Association (2.3%). More than half (55.4%) attended a Colorado School Counselor Association conference within the past 2 years. At the national level, counselors reported being members of the American School Counselor Association

(49.4%) and the American Counseling Association (20.5%). Approximately one in twenty (5.1%) attended an ASCA conference in the past 2 years. The counselors were active participants with regular attendance at locally-sponsored professional programs for counselors at 73%, while 15% of them had lobbied legislators on school counseling issues in the past 2 years. Due to nominal nature of the data, the influence of these variables upon reported use of brief counseling was analyzed using the Cramer's V statistic in crosstabs. Analyses revealed that neither professional memberships nor attendance at professional events had a significant influence on reported use of brief counseling, but networking through lobbying and other activities ( $\chi^2 = .391, p < .000$ ) was related to use of the innovation.

Two sources from which counselors learned about brief counseling were a close colleague who practices brief counseling (39%) or a coworker who did (23%). Eighteen percent reported having a respected coworker who advocates for the use of brief counseling, and 20% knew an expert in brief counseling. Counselors were more apt to use brief counseling if they had a close counseling colleague who practices brief counseling ( $\chi^2 = .488, p < .000$ ), they knew of a coworker who uses brief counseling ( $\chi^2 = .377, p < .000$ ), they had a respected counselor in their school district who advocated for the use of brief counseling in schools ( $\chi^2 = .260, p < .03$ ), and they personally knew an expert in brief counseling ( $\chi^2 = .367, p < .000$ ).

A checklist offered sources of where and from whom the counselors had learned about or acquired brief counseling skills. These items included books (73%), journals (45%), workshops (46%), conferences (40%), classroom instruction (61%), colleagues



(45%), technology [e.g., computers, videotapes, audiotapes] (13%), supervisor (24%), and others (7%).

Sixty percent of the counselors had participated in a brief counseling class or workshop, 67% had read one or more books about brief counseling, 38% had watched a live brief counseling demonstration, and 35% had viewed at least one brief counseling videotape. Counselors were more apt to use brief counseling if they had participated in a brief counseling class/workshop ( $\chi^2 = .467, p < .000$ ), read one or more brief counseling books ( $\chi^2 = .458, p < .000$ ), watched a live brief counseling demonstration ( $\chi^2 = .386, p < .000$ ), and viewed at least one brief counseling videotape ( $\chi^2 = .366, p < .000$ ).

## Conclusion

### *Limitations*

With a survey return rate of 17.5%, we are reluctant to generalize beyond our sample. We know that 70% of the counselors returning surveys indicated membership in the Colorado School Counselor Association, but we also know that only 45% of the state counselors belong to that organization. We suspect that people who are members of the state organization are precisely those who are more involved and perhaps more willing to return surveys. On the other hand, the distribution across work settings and average age appear in keeping with the demographics of the school counselors in Colorado. It is recommended that this protocol be repeated with greater adherence to response rate strategies advocated by Dillman (1999) and Bauman (2007).

*Questions & Directions*

So what does this mean for the profession in general and for professional development campaigns specifically? The ultimate goal of an innovation is that it provides those using it a better way of doing something. For school counselors in this study, the adoption of the innovation of brief counseling appears to provide them a better way of helping students maximize their development. While there were never adopters in our survey, the average school counselor was an early majority adopter. Overall, counselors perceived brief counseling as (a) having the relative advantage of possessing a degree of improvement or differentiation from older practices, (b) compatible with previously accepted practices, (c) less difficult to practice, (d) easier to test and experience on a small-scale basis, and (e) more easy to observe. To learn about and practice brief counseling, counselors were active in social networks with others, in addition to being exposed to a variety of informational sources. These findings have utility in the promotion of a variety of innovations within the school counseling profession.

Since 2003, the American School Counselor Association has engaged in disseminating an innovation called the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005). The results of this research study indicate that innovations are spread when they are perceived as possessing relative advantage, compatibility, level of complexity (simplicity), trialability, and observability. It may be beneficial to assess the dissemination of any innovation in school counseling given these five characteristics that lead to adoption. When the innovation is being touted, do perspective adopters perceive its relative advantage, how it is compatible with what they know, its level of simplicity, its ability to be tried out, and

can they observe it in practice? To the extent that one or more of these five characteristics may be missing, the more difficult the adoption of the ASCA National Model or any professional innovation may prove to be.

Brief counseling has been propagated with an effective marketing campaign. Prominent figures in the brief counseling field provide workshops, books, videotapes, etc. The innovators are perceived as offering something that will make life easier. Our experience with the marketing of other innovations, including the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005), is that the perceived benefits are advanced, but that practitioners do not recognize the specific characteristics that will benefit them and their students on a daily basis. It seems appropriate to reconsider promotion of the ASCA National Model in view of the characteristics of innovation adoption knowing that there are school counselors who will never be adopters or laggards. It is proposed that efforts be directed to counselors who are innovators, early adopters, and majority adopters. It is also suggested that efforts be directed toward examining the nature of materials used to advance any innovation within the field.

Individual counselors have innovative practices to advance; innovations do not advance by themselves. Marketing the characteristics of the innovation that directly impact practice, enlisting innovators and early adopters, and creating networking opportunities will help ensure that an innovation has a greater chance of adoption in the broad marketplace of new ideas and practices.

## References

- Amatea, E. S. (1989). *Brief strategic intervention for school behavior problems*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- American School Counselor Association. (2004). *Ethical standards for school counselors*. Alexandria, VA: Author. [On-line]. Available at: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/ethics/standards.htm>
- Baker, S. B., & Gerler, E. R. (2008). *School counseling for the twenty-first century* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Bauman, S. (2007, February 9). Improving survey response rates of school counselors: Comparing the use of incentives. *Journal of School Counseling, 5*(3). Retrieved February 20, 2008, from <http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v5n3.pdf>
- Bauman, S. (2008). To join or not to join: School counselors as a case study in professional membership. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 86*, 164-177.
- Burt, R. S. (1999). The social capital of opinion leaders. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 566*, 37-54.
- Davis, T. E., & Osborn, C. J. (2000). *The solution-focused school counselor*: New York: Brunner/Routledge.
- Dillman, D. A. (1999). *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Evans, M. P., Valadez, A. A., Burns, S., & Rodriguez, V. (2002). Brief and nontraditional approaches to mental health counseling: Practitioners' attitudes. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 24*, 317-329.

- Franklin, C., Biever, J., Moore, K., Clemons, D., & Scamardo, M. (2001). The effectiveness of solution-focused theory with children in a school setting. *Research on Social Work Practice, 11*, 411-434.
- Gillen, M. C. (2005, May 3). Providing efficacy for solution-focused theory in school counseling programs. *Journal of School Counseling, 3*(2). Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v3n2.pdf>
- Littrell, J. M., Malia, J. A., & Vanderwood, M. (1995). Single-session brief counseling in a high school. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 73*, 451-458.
- Littrell, J. M., & Peterson, J. S. (2005). *Portrait and model of a school counselor*. Boston: Lahaska Press/Houghton Mifflin.
- Metcalf, L. (1995). *Counseling toward solutions: A practical solution-focused program for working with students, teachers, and parents*. West Nyack, NY: The Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Molnar, A. & Lindquist, B. (1989). *Changing problem behavior in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mostert, D. L., Johnson, E., & Mostert, M. P. (1997). The utility of solution-focused, brief counseling in schools: Potential from an initial study. *Professional School Counseling, 1*, 21-24.
- Poynton, T. A., Schumacher, R. A., & Wilczenski, F. L. (2008). School counselors' attitudes regarding state-wide comprehensive developmental guidance model implementation. *Professional School Counseling, 11*, 417-422.

- Radhakrishna, R., & Doamekpor, P. (2008). Strategies for generalizing findings in survey research. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 46(2). Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2008april/tt1.shtml>
- Rogers, E. M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press.
- Scott, J. (1991). *Social network analysis: A handbook*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sklare, G. B. (2005). *Brief counseling that works: A solution-focused approach for school counselors and administrators* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Spence, W. R. (1995). *Innovation: The communication of change in ideas, practices and products*. London: Chapman & Hall.
- Valente, T. W. (1995). *Network models of the diffusion of innovations*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Valente, T. W., & Davis, R. L. (1999). Accelerating the diffusion of innovations using opinion leaders. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 566, 55-67.
- Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J. H., & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: Principles of problem formulation and problem resolution*. New York: W. W. Norton.

## Author Note

John Littrell, Ed.D., is a professor and program chair in the counseling and career development program at Colorado State University, School of Education. Dr. Littrell received his doctorate at Indiana University. He has published extensively on the topic of brief counseling, including two books, *Brief Counseling in Action*, and *Portrait and Model of a School Counselor*, the latter book an in-depth ethnographic study of an elementary school counselor who changed the culture of the school in which she worked. Dr. Littrell teaches counseling practicum and internship, brief counseling, and qualitative research methods. Dr. Littrell has been a faculty member at CSU since 2004.

Laurie Carlson is an associate professor in the counseling and career development program at Colorado State University, School of Education. Dr. Carlson holds a Ph.D. in counselor education from the University of Arkansas and is both a National Certified Counselor and National Certified School Counselor. Dr. Carlson's teaching duties include school counseling, counseling practicum and internship, counseling children and adolescents, and psychological and educational testing. Research interests include school counseling/climate, counseling children and adolescents, and LGBT youth. Her professional experience includes ten years of experience in public schools, four of those years as a K-12 school counselor in Minnesota. Dr. Carlson has been a faculty member at CSU since 2000.

The authors wish to thank the following organizations for financially supporting this research: North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES); the School of Education, Colorado State University, Fort Collins; and the College of Education, Iowa State University, Ames.