Mississippi Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education

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MISSISSIPPI CHOICES AND THE INFLUENCE OF

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

by

Charish Rene Pierce

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ABSTRACT

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Mississippi counselors serve in a variety of roles in order to meet the needs of all

students. The role of the school counselor is to execute efforts to address each student's

academic, personal/social, and career development needs (ASCA, 2005). Middle and

high school counselors are often tasked with activities that do not align with national and

state standards for school counseling. Thus, these activities generate very little time for

activities such as the Choices program and career development.

This study examined the middle and high school counselors' usage of the Choices

program. In addition, the research study explored middle and high school counselors'

value of Career and Technical Education in Mississippi. Statistical data was also

collected about the various duties that might inhibit the time school counselors have

available to focus on career exploration and career planning with students. Descriptive

statistics and ANOVAs were used to identify statistically significant differences among

the variables.

The findings of this study indicated that Mississippi middle and high school

counselors on average are aware of the Choices program. However, counselors are not

fully utilizing the program. Middle and high school counselors reported that they did not

have sufficient time to implement the Choices program. In addition, specific

inappropriate tasks, as defined by ASCA, are hindering implementation of Choices.

Principal support of Choices and counselor usage of Choices were found to be

statistically significant. No significant relationship was found between usage of Choices

and type of counselor. The results of the study indicated that Mississippi counselors

expressed a strong awareness of CTE. In addition, Mississippi middle and high school

counselors reported a high value toward Career and Technical Education. From these

findings, recommendations for policy, practice, and future studies were made.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

First of all, I thank God for giving me the drive, determination, and perseverance to complete this goal. The past two years have been full of many unexpected, unbearable challenges. I could not have faced those heartbreaks while writing a dissertation without my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This work is dedicated to my husband, Stephen Pierce, who constantly supported me and encouraged me to continually press toward the finish line. He has been a patient partner and helpmate while supporting me in reaching this goal. Completing the doctoral program would never have been possible without his love and support. Thank you for washing many dishes, cooking many meals, and never complaining. I love you, and I am thankful God gave me you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Today's public school counselors wear many hats. Counselors serve in a variety of roles in which they advocate for all students in hopes of improving the condition of each student's life. Counselors play an integral part in the process of each student's emotional, social, academic, and career development. Meeting the needs of all students can be a balancing act. However, the rewards are great when students experience academic success. Counselors across the state of Mississippi are working hard to make a difference in the lives of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the community at large. Covey (2004) asserted, "Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important" (p. 45). School counseling is a demanding profession. Therefore, a determination of urgent versus important tasks is a decision counselors make on a daily basis.

A body of literature exists that relates directly to school counselors' values of career and technical education (CTE) and the effect of these values on student choices. Research in this area dates back as far as the late 1970s; however, very little of this information specifically relates to middle and high school counselors. Sawyer (1977) researched the views of students, teachers, parents, school counselors, and businesses toward career and technical education in the state of Indiana. Many differences existed, both positive and negative, among the participants in the study; but, overall, the researchers found that the opinions of CTE were more positive than negative. The number of CTE programs offered in the school and whether or not the school was urban or rural made no significant difference in the participants' opinions. Furthermore, Sawyer's research revealed that communities with CTE programs enjoyed many benefits

from these programs. Unfortunately, not all responses were positive. For example, a group of teachers, school counselors, and administrators surveyed reported that CTE hindered students from acquiring further education after high school. Based on his findings, Sawyer (1977) suggested that CTE students are held in low esteem. Thus, better communication among all stakeholders about career and technical programs could benefit students (Sawyer, 1977). Students benefit when all stakeholders understand that CTE programs provide endless opportunities to all students including national certifications, partnerships with business and industry, employability skills, and much more.

However, the lack of career guidance by counselors may cause many students to choose courses that do not match their post-secondary plans. According to the United States Department of Education (2014), college plans motivate ninth graders' choices for high school mathematics courses. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) observed, "A minority of students reported that career needs motivate their course taking, and no more than five percent reported being motivated by career needs independently of college" (p. 3). Compared with students planning to enter the workforce immediately after high school, a large percentage of ninth graders who planned to enroll in a college program reported that college and career needs influenced their course-taking plans. Among ninth-grade students who had the same post-secondary plans, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to take higher levels of high school mathematics and reported that their mathematics course choice was motivated by college, parent encouragement, and school encouragement (NCES, 2014).

Lack of motivation, lack of parental guidance, and low socioeconomic status also contribute to high school students' poor course selections. One important aspect of school counseling is having honest conversations with all students and their parents regarding the students' aptitude and abilities. All students are not on the same pathway to success, and therefore, each student must find the path best suited for him or her. Each student is gifted with unique talents and abilities that, if fostered, can contribute to success both in the classroom and in the workplace. Planning time should be set aside for every student, whether the student is bound for a two-year career and technical program or a four-year college or university.

Several researchers have indicated that schools' definitions of the roles of school counselors are related to the outcome of CTE programs (Kim, 2008, U.S. News and World Report, 2012, Greene & Greene, 2004, and Finlayson, 2009). According to these studies, counselors spend a large majority of their time assisting students with the admissions process for postsecondary education in addition to scheduling student courses. Activities of school counselors regarding career exploration represented a smaller percentage of time than other activities. Additionally, it was noted that counselors are tasked with clerical duties that detract their focus from student achievement. Some counselor-to-student ratios of about 1:500 make it impossible for counselors to assist each student in developing his or her career plan. Kim, 2008, U.S. News and World Report, 2012, Greene & Greene, 2004, and Finlayson, 2009, revealed that counselors believed that CTE was important, and that students should be exposed to different career choices as early as kindergarten. Additionally, these studies stressed the importance of involving parents in the career development process by making them

aware of CTE programs and the certifications that are available. These studies also reported that many counselors are concerned about the lack of time available for task completion with which they are often confronted (Kim, 2008, U.S. News and World Report, 2012, Greene & Greene, 2004, and Finlayson, 2009).

In addition, Kim's (2008) study reinforced the need for training school counselors to evaluate student needs and to understand the benefits of CTE programs. Kim suggested, "school staff such as counselors and principals should understand the evolving roles of career development" (2008, p. 97). The author suggested that school counselors influence the outcome of secondary CTE programs. Kim's (2008) research suggests that workforce development policy makers should empower school counselors by providing training on financial aid and law and workforce development.

Are Mississippi students choosing the best path of study for their high school education based on their postsecondary goal? A counselor whose mission is to give students the guidance and direction needed to accomplish their own mission can be invaluable in the life of a student. Professional school counselors are instrumental in implementing programs geared toward addressing students' academic development, career development, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2005). School counselors in both middle schools and high schools have many opportunities to provide significant expertise and resources to ensure that Mississippi students are making the best decisions about which paths of study to follow in high school. Information and guidance must be provided to both students and parents to ensure each student chooses a path that is most suitable for him or her.

In preparing students to become college and career ready, Mississippi has implemented the "Pathways to Success", a Mississippi Department of Education Initiative (MDE, 2013). This is a national initiative that utilizes a combination of programs and services to support workers as they transition from the classroom into the workforce. "Pathways to Success" addresses the issues that are at the very core of Mississippi's future, such as education, economics, and employment. College and career readiness requires each student to take ownership of his or her future. School counselors are assigned a significant role in this process. School counselors who work within "Pathways to Success" aim to get students to consider their career goals and postsecondary plans as early as elementary and middle school.

In 2011, the Mississippi State Board of Education updated accountability standards and now requires that all students must complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) upon completion of eighth grade through the use of the Mississippi Choices program. The iCAP is a four-year plan that guides each student toward his or her goal of completing high school and successfully transitioning into a career or college experience. The four-year plan is created within each student's online portfolio. The iCAP was established to serve as a resource for students to define and accomplish their academic and career goals for success after high school by:

1. Providing direction to guide students in career pathway planning,

2. Endorsing modifications that meet student needs and aspirations,

3. Helping students identify correct graduation pathway options, and

4. Advising students as they transition into a career or postsecondary major (MDE, 2013).

Currently, each high school student in Mississippi public schools must have an iCAP personalized to meet his or her educational and career goals regardless of which graduation pathway is sought. The iCAP helps students target a career pathway that is within one of the sixteen national career clusters. Exposure to a variety of options allows students to make more informed choices in post-secondary placement, which could contribute to successful completion of their post-secondary education, whether it is a degree or work-based training. The state also mandates that each student update his or her plan yearly to account for changes in academic and career interests.

The iCAP ties directly to student placement into Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. CTE has advanced significantly from the days of vocational education. The rigor of these programs greatly influences student success and preparation for college and career. Fletcher (2009) found that high school students in CTE programs who obtain the technical skills and employability skills required for today's workforce make more informed career choices and transition more smoothly from school to work.

This study will attempt to determine the value that middle school and high school counselors in Mississippi place on Career and Technical Education (CTE). Student-centered decisions are at the very heart of this study because each student is a unique individual with different abilities, talents, and skills that define him or her. By getting to know students through conversation and observation, counselors can encourage students to pursue programs of study in which they have the greatest opportunity for success. This study will determine whether counselors in Mississippi understand and value the importance and impact of CTE. The impact of counselor bias on student participation in CTE classes will also be evaluated.

Problem Statement

A review of the literature related to the value of career and technical education held by school counselors has not identified any studies that mainly focused on middle school and high school counselors in Mississippi. Currently, because the roles of counselors continue to expand, classroom teachers are often expected to participate in the career development process by encouraging career exploration in their classrooms. A lack of career development across most curricula increases the likelihood that students may not adequately be exposed to the information they need in order to make informed choices about coursework, programs and careers.

Mississippi's use of the Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) to identify career pathways to students as early as 8th grade is a positive step toward ensuring that all students participate in career activities; however, this program is relatively new, and no data exist that measure what effect, if any, the program has on student achievement. The Choices program can greatly benefit students and ensure college and career preparation. However, lack of time and importance toward programs such as Choices can pose great challenges to implementation.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to determine middle and high school counselors' awareness and usage of the Mississippi Choices program. In addition, the study will attempt to determine the valuation that middle school and high school counselors in Mississippi place on Career and Technical Education (CTE).

1. To what degree are counselors aware of the state mandated Choices (iCAP) program?

2. To what degree do counselors use Choices to direct students in future academic and career planning?

3. To what degree do counselors report significant time to implement the Choices program efficiently to assist in future planning for students; if not, which activities, as defined by the American School Counseling Association National Model (ASCA), inhibit the implementation of Choices?

4. Is the principal's support of Choices inhibiting the counselor from fully implementing Choices?

5. Are there significant differences between type of counselor and implementation of Choices?

6. To what degree are counselors aware of Career and Technical Education (CTE)?

7. How strongly do counselors value Career and Technical Education (CTE)?

Definitions

For clarification purposes, technical terms or terms used frequently throughout this study are defined as follows:

1. Career and technical (vocational) education (CTE) – education that prepares students for careers in business and industry, allows students to explore career possibilities, and allows students to develop meaningful as well as hands-on life skills (Gordon, 2002).

2. Career Academies – small learning communities structured around career cluster pathway areas such as health science, agriculture, family and consumer

science, marketing, business and technology, or trade and industrial career and

technical areas (ACTE, 2006).

3. Career Development – the lifelong process of refining professional skills and

acquiring new knowledge coupled with career planning activities (Niles & Harris-

Bowlsbey, 2013).

4. Carl Perkins Legislation – the major funding source and legislation for career

and technical education programs (MDE, 2007b).

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this research project will be to determine the counselors' use

of the Choices program. The secondary purpose is to explore middle school and high

school counselors' values of career and technical education in Mississippi. After a

critique of available instruments, middle school and high school counselors in

Mississippi will be surveyed to determine the value they place on career and technical

education. The gap revealed in the review of the literature related to the value of career

and technical education held by school counselors has not identified any studies that

mainly focused on middle school and high school counselors in Mississippi. Therefore,

it is critical to determine the value, knowledge, and understanding Mississippi school

counselors have toward CTE. Mississippi students and parents are directly affected by

the counselors' value and understanding of CTE. In addition, the counselors' usage of

the Choices program must be determined due to the valuable resources it provides.

Justification for the Study

One of the most important duties of a counselor is preparing students to be both

college and career ready. Many times, the focus is on the college aspect, while the career

component is left for the student to explore on his or her own. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) define career development as "the lifelong psychological and behavioral processes as well as contextual influences shaping one's career over the life span" (p. 15). When people attempt to understand themselves as they relate to the world of work and their roles in it, they have engaged in career development. In American society, people are defined by what they do, and often, a person's identity is determined by his or her career. An individual's choice of work colors the "perceptual lens" through which others often view the individual and through which an individual views themselves (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Mississippi's school counselors play a significant role in the career development of today's youth within the education system.

Many individuals have made great contributions to the field of career development. Super's emphasis on the importance of self-concept has been one of his greatest contributions to the area of career development. According to Super (1990), self-concept changes over time and develops through experiences. Self-concepts contain both subjective and objective elements. Subjectively, individuals develop self-understanding by focusing on their uniqueness that emerges out of the life stories they create. Objectively, individuals develop self-understanding by comparing themselves with others (Super, 1990). It is the responsibility of the counselor to assist each student in understanding both the subjective and objective elements in order to identify appropriate career goals. As self-concepts continue to develop, the need to make choices and adjust to those choices represent life-long tasks. Therefore, career development is a lifelong process, beginning on the elementary level and continuing throughout middle

school, high school, and beyond. Each student requires individual guidance in regard to his or her career goals in order for his or her classroom experiences to have relevance.

According to Mupinga and O'Conner (2013), "Rigor, relevance, and relationships are essential components needed to prepare each student for the next phase of his or her life." "Today's employers report difficulties finding competent and creative workers needed to compete in the global economy" (p. 69-70). Mupinga and O'Connor (2013) acknowledged that students who lack career guidance in high school graduate with skills that do not meet the needs of today's employers. The quality of academic and career planning our students receive impacts the future success of our country and future generations. Lipsett (2007) reported "employers have called the failure of schools to equip teenagers with the basic skills they need for work a national scandal and urged curriculum reform" (Lipsett, 2007). The educational system provides the knowledge and resources for students to become competitive and productive citizens of a dynamic, global community. Therefore, equipping students with better decision-making skills could help them find jobs or choose occupations for which they are better suited (Mupinga & O'Connor, 2013). Better decisions will lead to more confidence, more contentment, and less turnover in the workforce (Mupinga & O'Connor, 2013). The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) suggests, "given that human capital is a prerequisite for success in the global economy, the United States economic competitiveness is unsustainable with poorly prepared students feeding into the workplace" (p. 1).

The data reported by the American College Testing program (ACT) is being used by school counselors and administrators now more than ever to ensure students are

college and career ready. The ACT program reports a research study that highlights the critical nature of college readiness and career education in the middle school years. The researchers found that eighth grade achievement is one of the most reliable predictors of students' college and career readiness. The authors suggest that improving college readiness and career readiness skills of eighth grade students will have a tremendous impact on students' post-secondary opportunities (ACT, 2008). Educators play a key role in each student's success prior to high school. If a student's skill set is lacking upon entering high school, the student is more likely to experience absenteeism, dropping out, discipline issues, crime, teenage pregnancy, and low self-esteem.

CTE classes are available to all students regardless of a student's post-secondary plans. CTE programs are "comprehensively structured approaches" (Hyslop, 2012 p. 17) for delivering both academic and career technical education in order to improve the skills needed for success in college or in the workforce. CTE is no longer only for students who do not plan to attend college. All students, no matter their chosen destination, can benefit from a CTE class. CTE programs have been shown to increase attendance rates, decrease dropout rates, provide hands-on learning, strengthen relationships with business and industry, and give students a jumpstart to his or her chosen career (Plank, 2001). In spite of these benefits, many teachers, administrators and counselors perceive that CTE programs are only acceptable for students who are unable to fulfill the requirements of the academic curriculum (Gordon, 2008). However, school counselors function in a role that can advocate and communicate that all students can benefit from participation in both CTE and academic classes. Because time and personnel are limited, teachers are often the ones who must provide information and give students opportunities to explore

12

careers and CTE programs of study. Therefore, career development must be embedded across the curriculum.

Methodology

The research sought to measure middle school and high school counselors' values of career and technical education in Mississippi. This study used survey methodology that incorporated an instrument created by the researcher. This instrument allowed a descriptive statistical and one-way analysis of variance view of how counselors' values of CTE affect students' academic and career choices. A non-probability sample was chosen for data collection from middle and high school counselors in Mississippi public school districts in which career and technical programs of study are offered. The survey was sent through two mechanisms. Initially, the survey link was sent electronically to Mississippi counselors through the Mississippi Counseling Association (MCA). In addition, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) dispersed the survey to middle school and high school counselors. Permission was obtained from both MCA and MDE to send the survey electronically. Not all counselors are members of MCA. Therefore, all middle school and high school counselors in Mississippi were contacted by dispersing the survey through two outlets. Counselors chose whether or not to participate.

The information sent to participants included a consent letter informing the counselors of the survey, its purpose, an invitation to participate, their consent, a commitment to share findings if they are interested in reviewing the results, and the link to the survey. Approximately two weeks after MCA and MDE sent the initial survey requests, a follow-up email was sent to all MCA members asking those who had not

13

participated to do so. A note to thank those who had completed the survey was included.

                                    Summary

As a result of this study, the Mississippi Department of Education could determine the counselors' use of the Choices program throughout Mississippi schools to help students identify interests and abilities. The information from this study will enable both middle school and high school counselors to evaluate how their valuation of CTE can affect decisions students are making in preparing for their future. This study will provide information concerning the knowledge and misconceptions counselors have of CTE programs, and it will seek to explore how equipped the middle school and high school counselors are at providing the career guidance students need in the 21st century. The information collected during the course of this study could be beneficial to local school administrators, as well as the state department of education, when planning and implementing professional development or trainings for Mississippi counselors. Additionally, this study will also evaluate the time counselors have available to help students with career exploration and career choices by determining the appropriate and inappropriate activities that demand a counselor's time. The information will benefit counselors and administrators when examining the duties and demands placed upon counselors during a typical school day.

Because this study seeks to provide an image of Mississippi counselors' valuation of career and technical education, the information gathered from this study may create awareness and benefit both the students of Mississippi and all stakeholders, including parents, school counselors, administrators, CTE directors, state educational leaders, state

14

legislators, and business and industry. In addition, the Mississippi Department of

Education leaders and state legislators may use the data to direct policies that will

enhance academic and career planning opportunities for Mississippi students. It is vital

that all stakeholders in Mississippi understand the importance of blending academic and

career and technical education to ensure the success of all students.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature that is relevant to career development, career and technical education (CTE), and counselors' roles and responsibilities in relation to CTE. The chapter begins by presenting the importance of career development and the evolution of career development theories. Next, the focus of research shifts to the influence of career and technical education and the changes that have occurred in CTE. The integration of academics and CTE is also discussed. Finally, I discuss the progression of school counseling, school counselor accountability, and the challenges facing school counselors. The Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP), as mandated by the Mississippi Department of Education, is also discussed. In addition, the image of CTE is also discussed.

Career Development

According to Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013), the most frequently asked question upon meeting a new person is, "What do you do?" Although many individuals could respond to the question with a multitude of life activities, they seldom do. The question probes into what one does to earn a living. Such engagement between strangers reinforces the notion that an individual's occupation is one of the principal determinants of social status (Super, 1976). Career selection is one of many important choices students will make in determining future plans. This decision will significantly impact them throughout their lives. Therefore, the implementation of career development programs in public schools is necessary for Mississippi students to experience success and career satisfaction in the 21st century.

Ardichvili and Kuchinke (2009) suggest that the meaning of work around the world is changing. However, the change occurring in work patterns around the world may not benefit the American worker. The International Labour Organization stated, "Americans work 137 more hours per year than Japanese workers, 260 more hours per year than British workers, and 499 more hours per year than French workers" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 8). Therefore, the data indicates that work plays a central role in the lives and identities of the American people. It is of utmost importance for educators to understand the career development process and to appreciate the role that work plays in people's lives (Helwig, 2008).

An individual's chosen career impacts many areas of his or her life (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). An individual's work determines the lifestyle he or she will possess, including the types of homes, automobiles, clothes, and vacations that he or she will be able to enjoy. Work determines the people with whom an individual will spend the majority of his or her day. There is no evidence that work will cease to be a central force in defining individual lifestyles in the foreseeable future (Herr et al, 2004). Connecting academics to the world of work in the educational setting directly impacts the career development process of each student. Students can be taught math, science, English, and social studies. However, if students are not taught to connect their passions, gifts, and abilities with a career, those responsible for providing guidance counseling to them have done them a disservice. Engaging students in career exploration and research will facilitate their decision-making processes.

Definition of Career Development

Career development is an integral process in the life of each individual. Whether career development occurs by intention or by accident, the process allows individuals to create their own future. According to Herr, Cramer, & Niles (2004), career development involves a combination of a person's decision-making style, expression of values, and understanding of self-concepts. Career development begins with a child's earliest observations of the ways in which individuals make a living. When a child begins to distinguish that some people are nurses, some are chefs, and others are mechanics, the career development process begins (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Children begin to develop abilities and interests that may eventually influence their career paths. Exposure to career exploration and planning during the elementary, middle, and high school years will equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to make better decisions regarding career choice as well as college planning.

Career development interventions assist each student in identifying his or her talents and determining how those talents can be used throughout his or her life (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Many factors influence career development including interest, personality type, social and economic conditions, skills and abilities, and situational factors. Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) described each factor in detail:

- Interest and personality type – Interests, personality, and values play a vital role in the career development process. Assistance must be provided to help students recognize these factors.

- Social and economic conditions – Students can perceive their socio-economic situation as a barrier to their career development. Many students may feel that their financial situation may be an obstacle to attending college or pursuing a

chosen career. Counselors play a significant role in providing resources to help students overcome such obstacles.

- Skills and abilities – Due to varying levels of skills and abilities, individuals vary in the degree of fit associated with careers. Therefore, students must explore careers that will highlight their gifts and abilities.

- Situational Factors – These factors are distinguished as those events over which we have little or no control. Situational factors can affect a student's career choice and how the student will advance in his or her chosen career.

Importance of Career Development

Career development has been perceived by many as of low importance within the school system. This perception is due to the limited amount of time available to invest in the area of career preparation and guidance. Helwig (2008) conducted a fifteen-year longitudinal study that investigated several career development factors, beginning with participants in second grade (seven-year-olds), following them throughout high school, and finishing five years later when participants were twenty-three year olds. Some disturbing results emerged from the participants' responses regarding their perceptions of the career preparation and guidance they received in high school. Graduate participants were significantly more negative toward their high school's assistance with career matters than they were when they were high school seniors. These young adults felt as though they did not receive adequate career preparation and guidance from their former high schools after advancing through post-secondary educational and work experiences. The outcomes of this study confirmed the prevailing suspicion that schools are focusing

19

more on crisis counseling and the college admissions process and not spending enough time on career development and preparation.

Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) referred to the career development process as a "spiritual journey" in which individuals' choices determine how their time will be spent on Earth. When students initiate the planning process early in the educational experience, they make better decisions. Establishing a career based on interests and securing employment is not a simple undertaking (Lewis, Kosine, & Overman, 2008). The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) (2008) asserted, "Without structured guidance activities, young people tend to drift through their high school education without gaining knowledge of all the career opportunities available to them or the skills that are required" (p. 2). School counselors and administrators must redefine the need and importance of career development. Mupinga and O'Connor (2013) identified the following ten reasons why career development is necessary:

1. Unprepared graduates – Race to Nowhere data has indicated that students who complete a career and technical education (CTE) course are prepared for life after high school in comparison to students who do not take a CTE course.

2. Students lacking career development have limited job opportunities.

3. Students who have not properly prepared experience more difficulty finding a job. Thus, these students encounter greater unemployment and unemployment for longer lengths of time.

4. The need for remediation in post-secondary education continues to increase.

5. Minority students have been identified as experiencing the most negative post-graduation outcomes.

6. Students in CTE programs experience the most career development.

7. Currently, no variety of career development services exists to adequately meet students' diverse sets of needs.

8. Fewer at-risk and minority students are enrolled in CTE programs. Therefore, they receive very little career development opportunities and experiences.

9. The availability of resources and personnel to support career development are limited.

10. The expectations and requirements related to academics and common core are continuing to increase.

Career development is an essential component of advancing the United States economy. Therefore, policies have been developed to support career development in high schools because "high school is the last institution all students attend, so it is the logical place for students to learn how to exert effort and to acquire both soft and academic skills" (Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 270).

Schools must employ measures to ensure that all students are exposed to career development during middle school and high school. The workplace is constantly changing, along with the expectations of the employer. Career development will expose students to existing options in addition to careers that do not yet exist (ACTE, December 2008). The amount of career exposure and exploration will have an impact on the future success of the student and society as a whole.

Roles of Career Development

Career development plays a significant role in the lives of each individual. Each individual has unique skills, talents, and interests that make particular careers more

appropriate for him or her. Therefore, career development must be individualized.

Students cannot explore or set post-secondary or career goals if they are unaware of the

opportunities that are available to them (Herr & Cramer, 1996). The needs of students

participating in career development help to define the role of the school counselor

throughout the process. Kalchik and Oertle (2010) defined successful, ongoing career

development as "helping individuals of all ages to make a variety of transitions

throughout their lifetimes: between different levels of education, from education to work,

and between work and education" (p. 1).

Mupinga & O'Connor (2013) identified multiple student groups within the high

school setting who need career development information and services specific to their

needs. The following seven student groups are viewed as the majority of students in a

high school:

- students who possess physical or mental limitations;

- students who are at-risk of dropping out of school;

- students who plan to immediately enter workforce following graduation;

- students who plan to enroll in apprenticeships or diploma programs following
  graduation;

- students who plan to serve in the military upon graduation;

- students who plan to attend a community/junior college and obtain an Associates
  degree; and

- students who plan to attend a four-year university. (Mupinga & O'Connor, 2013).

Each of the student groups on the high school level has varying needs, post-

secondary goals, and aspirations. Therefore, these unique needs must be taken into

account when designing career development opportunities. Individual planning for

students in each of these groups can pose tremendous time management challenges for

school leaders and counselors. However, careful planning of career development

strategies that are precise, structured, and intentional can ensure that each student

receives the necessary individual planning and attention that is critical for his or her

future success.

Career Development Strategies

Career development strategies can be implemented by school counselors in the

form of computer-based career programs, internships, and job shadowing (Williams,

Bragg, & Makela, 2008, p. 7). These strategies should:

- Include students of all ages and academic abilities;

- Provide resources that students can utilize throughout their lifetime;

- Acknowledge the relationships among education, business, and industry;

- Demand participation of all students as a fundamental requirement;

- Accentuate the link between both career development and academic services;

- Promote and apply decision-making and problem-solving skills; and

- Utilize the cycle of career decision-making to introduce human development in

  theory and practice (Williams et al., 2008).

Participating in career development activities motivates students while engaging

them in career decision-making (ACTE, December 2008). Connecting students'

classroom experiences and educational experiences to future career aspirations will create

a meaningful and personalized experience. Katchik and Oertle (2013) credited career

development and exploration to the ability of students to make good decisions about college and careers.

Career development strategies exist to guide each student in making informed decisions regarding his or her future. In addition, career development programming should prepare students for the changes that can occur after high school (Mupinga & O'Connor, 2013). Students must be prepared to adjust their plans due to the unexpected life events. Students must know that they must keep their eyes on their goals even though their plans may have to be adjusted along the way.

ASCA National Standards for career development guide school counseling programs to provide the foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work, and from job to job across the life span (ASCA, 2012). The National Standards represent a comprehensive and holistic view of career development. The ASCA National Model for School Counseling links with other national standards such as the National Career Development Guidelines. The current guidelines update those developed in 1989 (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) embarked upon an effort to revise the National Career Development Guidelines (NCDG). The specific goals of the revision project were to: update and revise the framework of competencies and indicators; expand the target audiences to include K-12 students and their parents, teachers, counselors and administrators, postsecondary students, and other adults and the business community; provide the target audiences with accessible career development information, learning activities, and strategies that lead to informed career decision making; and create a career

development website to deliver career development information, learning activities, and strategies (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013).

The revision resulted in a new framework that is organized into three domains. The three domains for the Guidelines are: Personal Social Development (PS), Educational Achievement and Lifelong Learning (ED), and Career Management (CM) (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Interestingly, the three domains provide a parallel to the National School Counseling Model. Unlike the previous Guidelines, the current ones are not tied to an individual's age or level of education. This change acknowledges both the heterogeneity in career development and the fact that people recycle through career development tasks.

<center>Opposition Toward Career Development Interventions</center>

Many individuals question the usefulness of career development interventions either by their actions or their opinions. Those questioning the usefulness of career development interventions assume that career-related activities take students away from time spent focusing on core academic subjects. Additionally, critics assume that career education programs pressure students to pursue work immediately after high school rather than pursuing a college education (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Many individuals who are unfamiliar with the career development process do not comprehend why career development interventions are valuable at the elementary and secondary school levels. The fact that career education initiatives were funded externally to school districts and that, career education supporters had not gained local support for career education were also factors contributing to negative attitudes toward the career education movement (Herr et al., 2004).

Much debate has also existed regarding the appropriate age at which students should be exposed to career development interventions. Those arguing against career interventions for elementary students often view career decision-making as events that occur at a particular time during the course of secondary education (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). These individuals lack an appreciation for the precursors to productive career decision-making.

Another concern related to the implementation of career education programs relates to the reality that many school districts do not provide career development programs in a systematic and coordinated fashion (Herr et al., 2004). The partial implementation of a career guidance program limits the degree to which these interventions can positively influence students. Therefore, confusion is created regarding the meaning and purpose of career development programs by those not directly involved in their development or implementation. Therefore, it is crucial that school counselors engage in standardized and systematized planning prior to implementing career development programs.

Theoretical Framework

For the past seventy-five years, career development theories have evolved. The trait and factor theory and Super's life-span, life-space theory have played significant roles in career development (Niles & Bowlsbey, 2013).

Trait and Factor Theory

Herr and Cramer (2004) recognized Frank Parsons as an individual who contributed greatly to career development in the early 1900s. Parsons was often referred to as the "dominant visionary and architect of vocational guidance and counseling in the

first decade of the twentieth century" (Herr & Cramer, 2004, p. 19). Parson's work is known as the trait and factor approach, and ultimately focused on helping individuals find the occupation that is the "right fit" (Herr & Cramer, 2004, p. 170).

Parson's work, *Choosing a Vocation* (1909), expressed Parson's idea of vocational guidance as follows:

"In the wise choice of a vocation there are three broad factors: (1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, resources, limitations, and their causes; (2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities, and prospects in different lines of work; (3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts" (p. 5).

Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey (2013) describe step one of trait and factor theory as requiring self-investigation and self-revelation. Step two depends upon complete and precise occupational information. Parson developed detailed occupational materials because during his time it was uncommon for occupational information to meet these two requirements. The third step, "true reasoning," (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013, p. 8) relies upon the individual's ability, along with the assistance of a counselor, to use the information from steps one and two to choose a career that is his or her best fit. Herr, Cramer, and Niles (2004) acknowledged, "As psychological instruments have been developed to assess individual traits and as knowledge has been accumulated about differences in occupational and educational requirements, including aptitudes, interests, and personality factors, career guidance processes, under the influence of trait-and-factor approaches, have become an increasingly scientific aid to choice" (p. 171).

Super's Theory

Super's "life-span, life-space" theory is the leading developmental approach in career development (Super, 1990, p.197). During a forty-year time period, the life-span, life-space theory evolved as Super and his partners worked to refine various features of the theory (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). Super's theory is the result of his synthesizing two different theories. He labeled his theory a "differential-developmental-social-phenomenological career theory" although it is primarily developmental in nature (Super, 1969, p. 4).

Life-span, life-space theory builds upon key assumptions proposed by Super. Specifically, he argued that individuals differ in their self-characteristics and self-concepts (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Super's idea of self-concept is a "picture of the self in some role, situation, or position, performing some set of functions, or in some web or relationships" (1963, p. 18). Super identified the five stages of career development, which included growth (childhood), exploration (adolescence), establishment (early adulthood), maintenance (middle adulthood), and disengagement (late adulthood) (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013).

In the growth stage, children between the ages of four and thirteen begin to develop a self-concept and to move from play to work orientations. Children progress through the sub-stages of fantasy, interest, and capacity (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). During the growth stage, children begin to realize the importance of planning for the future and begin to make connections between their present behavior and the impact it has on their future. Adolescents, aged fourteen to twenty-four, begin planning for the future during the exploration stage. During this stage, future planning involves the tasks

of "crystallizing and specifying occupational preferences" (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, p. 51). Individuals begin eliminating choices leading to the selection of a career.

The United States public education system has a responsibility to make an impact upon students as they progress through these two critical stages. During the critical stages of growth and exploration during elementary, middle, and high school, students must be given every opportunity to gather information regarding post-secondary and occupational opportunities, to gain greater self-awareness, and to acquire the skills and abilities needed to make informed decisions regarding their futures.

The establishment stage of a career usually occurs from age twenty-five to age forty-five. The career development sub-stages with this stage are stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). An individual may decide that the career choice he or she has chosen is no longer a good selection at any time in this process. If this occurs, the individual may cycle back to the exploration stage in order to make a more appropriate occupational choice (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). For this reason, it is evident that career development is an essential process through which individuals progress during their lifetime.

During the maintenance stage (approximately ages 45 to 65), workers begin the career development tasks of holding, updating, and innovating (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Many practicing educators are at this stage of their careers. Educators must continue to develop their own skills and continue to model life-long learning for their students as they proceed through the maintenance stage. The last stage of Super's theory is the disengagement stage. This stage includes the tasks of deceleration,

retirement planning, and retirement living (Super, Starishevsky, Martin, & Jordaan, 1963).

Relationship Between Career Development and Career Technical Education

As educators focus on the career development process, they must continue to focus on individualized career planning for each student. As Mupinga and O'Connor (2013) highlighted, students in career and technical education (CTE) programs experience the most career development. CTE provides hands-on experiences in high school that greatly contribute to the career decision making process. Mississippi has approximately fifty-two career and technical programs that provide rigor, relevance, and a competitive advantage to Mississippi students (RCU, 2015).

Career and technical programs complement the career development process. CTE programs offer both focused academic and career curriculum and have been shown to assist students in becoming college and career ready (Loera, Nakanoto, Joo Oh, & Rueda, 2013). Students can choose a program of study from a multitude of program choices while in high school. Currently, CTE programs address a wide variety of subjects ranging from construction, polymer science, health science, and many more. CTE allows student to have career exposure in high school. Ultimately, the career exposure and exploration allows students to begin the career decision-making process while in high school, and provides opportunities for them to make informed decisions about their futures.

Career and Technical Education

Today's career and technical education (CTE) programs have made tremendous progress and are providing students with quality education and experience. In the past,

30

many career and technical education programs were not seen as an opportunity for all students. The Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE, Dec. 2008) noted that the new focus of CTE is "providing career development to all students, for all levels of education and for all career fields by supporting a comprehensive counseling and guidance system, providing a curriculum framework for career exploration, and engaging students in personalized and applied learning" (p. 3). The history and evolution of career and technical education is essential to understanding the progression of CTE since the early part of the twentieth century.

European Influence on Career and Technical Education

CTE's loyalty to the workplace is evident when one studies its historical roots, particularly in nineteenth century Europe. During the 1800s, social class divided schools, and the purposes of educational institutions were much different for those from working-class or impoverished backgrounds than for those who came from wealthy classes. One of the most obvious differences was that manual training became a central part of the curriculum for the lower classes. Workmanship was integrated with the other areas of instruction in all grades throughout these schools (Bennett, 1937).

Germany was the center of this manual training movement for the middle and lower classes. Unlike France and England, Germany's trade association maintained their power throughout the nineteenth century and continued to encourage apprenticeship programs. Germany's elementary schools were both mandatory and free. Therefore, an educational foundation on which to build industrial training was already in existence (Bennett, 1937).

31

Among the noted supporters of these ideas were Jean Rousseau and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi.

Rousseau prepared the way for CTE through his novel, *Emile*. He believed education freed mankind from social status and permitted self-indulgence of the senses. Rousseau was of the opinion that manual arts served as a way of mental training. Pestalozzi advocated that education should consist largely of manual labor. He argued that children should not only be taught to think but also to do. Pestalozzi's ideas about the importance of a vocational component in the school curriculum for all students spread through Europe and the United States.

Apprenticeship in America

Gordon (2003) recognized apprenticeships as the oldest form of CTE within the United States. This type of education was not recognized as part of the school's curriculum. The apprenticeship involved a contract, dictating a precise time period, which obligated the employer to provide training in exchange for the labor of the apprentice. The custom of apprenticeship the colonists brought with them from European countries formed the main form of training for industrial employment until the period of machine production. It was not until late in the nineteenth century that the free public elementary school became an established American institution and gradually relieved apprenticeships of its general education functions (Hawkins, Prosser, and Wright, 1951).

Leaders Who Influenced Career and Technical Education

Gordon (2003) identified three individuals who influenced the curriculum development of CTE as David Snedden, an educational administrator; Charles Prosser, an attorney; and John Dewey, a philosopher. The struggle to introduce vocational education

into formal school curriculum was identified with these three men. Each of these individuals was an advocate for vocational education and education for all.

David Snedden

From Snedden's perspective, "the only acceptable vocational education model was one that prepared non-academic students for immediate occupational participation within the existing industrial infrastructure" (Hyslop-Margison, 1999, p. 5). Snedden proposed that education be separated into three broad categories, each addressing different educational goals. The first category of education seeks "to produce and preserve bodily efficiency such as health, strength, and working power" (Snedden, 1910, p. 4). Physical education falls into this category. The second category, vocational education, aims "to promote the capacity to earn a living or, expressed in more social terms, the capacity to do one's share of the productive work of the world" (Snedden, 1910, p. 4). The last category of education, liberal education, focuses on "contributing to the improvement of social life and to the development of personal culture" (p. 4). Snedden believed that schools should prepare individuals for the occupations at which they excel. In addition, he was the first to divide occupations into different career clusters including professional education, commercial education, industrial education, and agricultural education (Wonacott, 2003).

Charles Prosser

Charles Prosser served as the first federal Commissioner for Vocational Education. In addition, Prosser has been recognized as the "father of vocational education" (Zunker, 2002, p.34). Prosser argued that vocational education required the combination of two components to be successful: (1) practice and thinking about the practice, and (2) doing and thinking about the doing (Gordon, 2003). Prosser thought that practice and theory

33

must work together in vocational education. The more closely practice and theory are related, the more the school will equip the student for mastery in a chosen career and contribute to the student's success in school.

Prosser established 16 theories based on his philosophy that were instrumental in the formation of vocational education (Wonacott, 2003). Prosser's 16 theories are as follows:

1. Vocational education should occur in the most realistic setting that replicates the work environment.

2. Vocational education should only be given where the training jobs are carried on in the same way, with the same tools, and with the same machines as in the occupation itself.

3. Vocational education should provide students with thinking habits – technical knowledge and scientific problem-solving skills – and the manipulative skills required in the occupation itself.

4. Vocational education should be planned and delivered in a manner that capitalizes on the student's interest, aptitudes, and intrinsic intelligence to the highest degree.

5. Vocational education is not for everyone, but for those individuals who need it, want it, and are able to profit from it.

6. Vocational education should provide opportunities for students in repeat operations of thinking and manipulative skills until habits are formed characteristic of those required for gainful employment.

7. Instructors who have successful experience in the application of skills should teach vocational education and knowledge required of competent workers.

8. For every occupation there is a minimum of productive ability, which an individual must possess in order to secure or retain employment in that occupation.

9. Vocational education should prepare individuals for the occupations as they currently exist in the workforce and for future labor markets as a secondary concern.

10. Vocational education should provide opportunities for students to perform operations on actual jobs and not only simulated work tasks.

11. The only reliable source of content for specific training in an occupation is in the experiences of masters of the occupation.

12. For every occupation there is a body of content that is peculiar to that occupation and which practically has no functioning value in any other occupation.

13. Vocational education should meet the needs of individuals when it is needed and in such a way that they can benefit from it.

14. Vocational education is more effective when its methods of instruction are best suited to the particular characteristics of any particular group that it serves.

15. The administration of vocational education should be as efficient in proportion as it is elastic, and fluid rather than rigid and standardized.

16. While every reasonable effort should be made to reduce per capita cost, there is a minimum level at which effective vocational education cannot be given, and if the course does not permit this minimum of per capita cost, vocational education should not be attempted (Prosser, 1925).

Prosser was a critic of the traditional focus on academic and college preparation within the high school curriculum. He concluded that differentiated education was necessary due to student differences in interests, career goals, and attitudes (Prosser, 1925). In today's society, the focus is on "schooling today for skills tomorrow" (Gordon, 2013, p. 28). The conditions needed to improve society have changed rapidly since the beginning of Prosser's 16 theories. However, the depth and knowledge encompassing Prosser's theories are still very relevant and applicable today.

John Dewey

John Dewey saw occupations as central to educational activity. Dewey (1900) characterized an occupation as "a mode of activity on the part of the child which reproduces, or runs parallel to some form of work carried on in social life" (p. 82). Dewey ran an experimental elementary school at the University of Chicago. He embedded vocational technical education into the curriculum, including cooking, shop work, textiles, gardening, and sewing. Dewey believed that everyone could benefit from the experiences of vocational technical education regardless of a student's future college or career plans (Gordon, 2003). Dewey suggested that introducing students to various occupations helps them to gain social power and frees them from financial stress. Dewey's approach to CTE was comprehensive in nature, rather than a narrow, skills-based approach (Dewey, 1964).

Dewey was of the opinion that instruction begins with problem solving. Comparatively, Snedden and Prosser argued that teaching begins with learning facts and sequence. Dewey strongly advocated that education should focus on the individual needs of the students, while, Snedden and Prosser advised that education focus more on the

36

success, prosperity, and needs of society and the economy. Dewey held firm to his belief that vocational education could benefit every student. However, Snedden and Prosser argued that vocational education should be reserved for students who would benefit the most from hands-on and career instruction (Gordon, 2003).

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution marked the move from an economy based on manual labor to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture (Dennis & Hudson, 2007). It also prompted major cultural, technological, and socioeconomic changes. The Industrial Revolution created both a middle class that demanded new educational access and work that called for a completely new type of education (Gordon, 2003). The demand for designers, managers, and engineers with knowledge of both scientific theory and applied practice began to increase. With the development of new jobs, the workforce needed to learn how to operate the advanced technology. The onset of career and technical education had begun, and its popularity continued to grow following the Industrial Revolution. In today's workforce, the need to train employees to maintain and operate technology continues to increase with technological advances.

Career and Technical Education Legislation

Federal legislation has been the primary unifying force for vocational education in America. Since federal vocational dollars were the only educational funds that flowed from federal government to the states until the 1958 National Defense Act, federal policy played a major role in shaping current programs (Gordon, 2003). Several significant laws were passed during the 20th century that shaped vocational education, including the

37

Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and 1968, and the Carl D. Perkins Acts of 1998 (Wonacott, 2003).

Smith-Hughes Act of 1917

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 supplied the first federal funding for vocational education. In addition, it helped differentiate between vocational education and the comprehensive high school curriculum (Gordon, 2003). In order to receive funding, separation on the state level had to exist. Each state was required to establish a state board for vocational education. This requirement led, in some states, to the establishment of a board separate from the State Board of Education. As a result, two separate governmental structures could exist at the state level. The Smith-Hughes Act promoted a segregated curriculum, with homemaking, agriculture, and trade and industrial education segments separated not only from the academic curriculum, but from other vocational programs as well (Gordon, 2003). During July of 1997, the Smith-Hugh Act was repealed. However, the impact of the Smith-Hughes Act can still be observed today through the separate training programs, separate teacher organizations, and separate student organizations.

The Vocational Educational Act of 1963

The Vocational Education Act of 1963, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, announced a new era for vocational education (Gordon, 2003). The purpose of the act was to ensure access to high quality, vocational training and retraining for all individuals of all ages. The primary goal of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 was to maintain, broaden, and refine existing vocational education programs. The bill also sought to provide part-time employment for youth who needed money to resume

their schooling as full-time students. The law also established funding for individuals

with socioeconomic, academic, or other handicaps that hindered them from achieving

success in a regular vocational education program (Gordon, 2003). Mason, Furtado, and

Husted (1989) reported that for the first time, vocational education was enacted to meet

the needs of each student and not just the employment needs of industry. The Vocational

Education Act of 1963 was amended in 1968. The amended Act emphasized education

in postsecondary schools and broadened the definition of vocational education to bring it

closer to general education.

Carl D. Perkins Funding

The major source of funding for vocational education in the late 20th century came

from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, which amended the

Vocational Education Act of 1968. Perkins provided career and technical programs for

persons in high school, those out of high school available for full-time study, unemployed

and underemployed persons, and those having academic or socioeconomic handicaps that

hindered them from prospering in regular career and technical programs (American

Vocational Association, 2002). The act also emphasized increasing the links between

academic and occupational skill development, secondary and postsecondary education,

and business and education (Gordon, 2003).

In 1998, the federal vocational education law continued to define vocational

education as preparation for careers other than careers requiring a baccalaureate, masters,

or doctoral degree. However, the 2006 reauthorization, which replaced the term

"vocational" with "career and technical," finally eliminated the restriction that CTE

programs could not prepare students for a baccalaureate degree (Gordon, 2003). CTE

programs looked different; therefore, the name change. The advancements in business and industry since the authorization of Perkins have demanded workers possess more technological background and training, which CTE is providing students on both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

<div align="center">Changes in Career and Technical Education</div>

In 2006, the language used to describe CTE shifted from "vocational" to "career and technical," marking a change in how it was perceived (ACTE, Dec. 2008). The shift highlighted CTE's focus on higher education, employment, and technology. Originally, the purpose of vocational programs was to provide training in limited fields for students who were not pursuing college degrees. In today's educational system, CTE programs provide career pathways both from high school to the workforce and from high school to college in a multitude of career options.

At the National Governors Association meeting in February of 2005, the governors sought to improve high schools by introducing bills in their state legislatures to make high schools more rigorous (Olson, 2005). This included mandates creating alignment between the state college admissions requirements and graduation requirements; creating more opportunities for dual credit courses, tech-prep courses, and advanced placement courses for students still enrolled in high school; and increasing the number of courses for graduation requirements, especially in math and science (Olson, 2005).

Increasing the number of graduation requirements has had an adverse affect on career and technical education. Many students do not have the opportunity to enroll in a CTE program due to the increased number of graduation requirements implemented on

both the state and district levels. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics

indicate that the overall course taking in CTE has declined (2013). From 1990 to 2009,

the number of CTE credits earned by U.S. public high school graduates declined from 4.2

to 3.6, while the average number of credits earned in other subject areas increased.

The percentage of graduates who earned credit in any occupational CTE area

declined by 88 percent in 1990 to 85 percent in 2009. However, within CTE, the

direction and magnitude of change differed by specific occupational area. Occupational

areas with increasing participation were communications and design, health care, public

services, and consumer and culinary services with communications and design being the

area of largest increase. The increased interest in these occupational areas correlates with

projections of future employment. Forbes (2012) reported that employment trend

watchers have identified the career sectors where jobs are expected to increase every five

years. These sectors are linked to technology, the environment, and a growing aging

population (Forbes, 2012). A few jobs that did not exist ten years ago include app

developers, cloud computing services, elder care, and many more. Therefore, school

systems must continue to develop innovative graduates who can embrace these new

occupations and look at new ways of meeting existing needs.

One of the most important issues in public education is preparing students for the

workplace. The "new" CTE prepares students for both college and career; teaches

students how to apply science, technology, high-level math, and languages in the

workplaces and their communities; and it includes more academic rigor and career

relevance (Lynch, 2000b). Educators must continually provide students with up-to-date

technology, academic rigor, workplace skills, and career planning to prepare them to be competitive in today's workforce.

<center>Integration of Academics and CTE</center>

With the passage of time, the barriers between CTE and academics are slowly fading away while the benefits of integration are becoming more evident. Stone and Lewis (2012) established that CTE classes, when combined with academics and work experience, have the capacity to improve students' academic engagement; in turn, this can advance the skills required for success in the workplace. Student experiences both in-school and out-of–school assist students in determining their educational aspirations, which ultimately shape their interests and motivation. Experiences allow students to develop interests in learning, create an awareness of rewarding careers, and create college-bound students. Researchers, including Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, & Swan (2011), discovered that connecting academic preparation with career preparation and college information increases students' educational and career goals. The most successful educational reform movements have recognized this and embedded career development themes into their vision.

Southern Regional Education Board

CTE has focused on connecting what students are learning in the classroom with the skills needed in the workplace. The Southern Regional Education Board sponsors a number of school improvement initiatives for high school leaders and teachers that are aimed at preparing students for career and further education by improving curriculum and instruction in schools. The High Schools That Work (HSTW) program is the largest and oldest of the SREB initiatives. It is the nation's first extensive effort to enlist school

district and state education officials, school leaders and teachers in partnerships with students, parents, and the community in efforts to improve students' preparation for postsecondary courses and careers.

The Southern Regional Education Board's "High Schools That Work," established a set of goals to help schools foster this connection. Bottoms, Presson, and Han (n.d.) stated that "High Schools That Work" (HSTW) aims to improve studies in communication, science, and math for students entering the workforce. The organization has set objectives for achieving high educational standards. The standards were formulated using a curriculum that emphasizes applied knowledge and skills of higher academic achievement and creating assessments in which students can demonstrate both skill and knowledge. HSTW began as an initiative to improve high school experiences for CTE students in schools in the southeastern United States. However, it has evolved into a comprehensive school reform model for all high school students with diverse postsecondary goals.

Career Academy Model

Career Academies are school-within-school programs operating in high schools. They offer career-related curriculum based on a career theme, academic coursework, and work experience through partnerships with local employers. Common themes for career academies are health, business and finance, arts and communication, computer, engineering, law, and government. Employers in these different career fields serve as curriculum advisors, mentors for students, and sponsors for work-based training (Stern, 2015). Students are scheduled to take classes as a cohort including one career and technical class along with one to three academic subjects.

The Career Academy Model has existed for almost half a century in the United States (Stern, 2015), but career academies have only recently become popular in Mississippi. Academies operate in 162 school districts across the United States partnering with more than 2,500 companies (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2008). Career academies aim to prepare each student for both college and career (Stern, 2015). According to Stern (2015), Common Core State Standards "emphasize application of knowledge and synthesis of information" (p. 29). Career academies are favorable to these outcomes. In the United States today, career academies act as the epitome of academic and CTE integration.

School Counseling

School counseling has progressed from a position, to a service, and finally to a program. In the early 1900s, school counseling originated as vocational guidance. It evolved from distinct economic, educational, and social forces and was directed by the work of several individuals. Originally, teachers and administrators in schools had the responsibility of counseling students, but an organizational framework was nonexistent except for a listing of duties. In the early 1900s, a clinical approach to school counseling developed. During this period of time, much dialogue existed concerning who would be responsible for the role of school counseling. The screening and preparation processes were topics of interest at the time. A major milestone developed with the formation of a different organizational framework called pupil personnel services (Gysbers, 2010). The idea of guidance services appeared within that framework.

School counseling transformed from a position with a list of duties to a position with a list of duties coordinated by guidance services all under the comprehensive

framework of pupil personnel services. During the mid-1900s, counseling continued to grow and develop in schools (Gysbers, 2010). The passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1964 brought attention to the screening and preparation processes for school counselors (Gysbers, 2010). Furthermore, in 1952, the American School Counselor Association was endorsed as a domain of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (Gysbers, 2010). At this point, school counselors were represented through their national organization.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of a school counseling program began to take shape. It was not until the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 21st century that the contemporary organization and management of school counseling began to develop (Gysbers, 2010). Advancements were made at the beginning of the 21st century toward the development, implementation, and evaluation of school counseling programs. However, discussions persisted about the purpose of school counseling and the role of school counselors. According the Gysbers (2010), "the development and implementation of school counseling programs across the country grew in the first decade of the 21st century. This growth was stimulated by the publication of the ASCA National Model in 2003 and its adoption by many states and school districts" (p. 9).

The role of the school counselor is to execute efforts to address each student's academic, personal/social, and career development needs (ASCA, 2005). It is important for school counselors to focus on students' individual interests and abilities that will lead them to satisfaction in their personally chosen educational and work goals. To ensure that school counselors remain experts in their field, organizations such as ASCA provide

professional development, resources, and research tools for school counselors (ASCA, 2010).

Mississippi School Counseling Curriculum

As defined by the Mississippi State Department of Education (2009), "the mission of the Mississippi School Counseling Curriculum Framework is to establish standards, objectives, and resources that enable Mississippi school counselors to promote and enhance the learning process of students in the public schools of Mississippi" (p. 6). The school counseling program's purpose is to empower all students to accomplish success in school and to become successful members of society. The greatest results will be achieved when the program is executed in partnership with families, students, teachers, administrators, businesses, and the community (MDE, 2009).

The Mississippi Revised School Counseling Curriculum Framework Prekindergarten – Grade 12 (MRSCCF) symbolizes a synergy among certified school counselors at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels within the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE, 2009). The framework served as an approach to authorizing Mississippi Code, section -37-9-79, which became law July 1, 2002 (MDE, 2009). The curriculum framework has benefited school districts in accomplishing their goal to advance greatness and to produce college and career ready students in the 21st century. The Mississippi School Counseling Curriculum Framework was established through the national standards recommended by ASCA (MDE, 2009). The framework is composed of three standards, which include the areas of personal/social development, career development, and academic development. The framework is "comprehensive in scope and preventive in design" (MDE, 2009, p. 7).

Accountability of Mississippi School Counselors

Accountability became a continuous topic of concern for school counselors in the 2010s (Gysbers, 2010). Since the 1920s, accountability has been a component of counselor conversation and work. However, there is a revived feeling of importance regarding accountability today due to the accountability system implemented by the state. The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) established the Mississippi Statewide Counselor Appraisal Rubric (M-CAR) to gather information on counselor strengths and weaknesses to reinforce and develop and, ultimately, improve student success (MDE, 2014). The main goal of the school counselor performance evaluation is to improve the student outcomes by improving counselor practice. The M-CAR is "specifically designed to generate" a team effort by using data to implement important and productive interventions (MDE, 2014, p. 3).

Senate Bill 2423

The Mississippi legislature passed Senate Bill 2423 in the 2014 Regular Session as an amendment to MRSCCF, to provide for the assignment and responsibilities of professional school counselors employed by public school districts and for related purposes" (Senate Bill 2423, 2014). According to Senate Bill 2423 (2014), professional school counselors shall provide the following comprehensive counseling services:

(i)   Personal/social and academic counseling;

(ii)   Usage of multiple student data sources to assist students in making informed career and academic choices;

(iii)   Educational and career counseling;

(iv)   Group and individual counseling;

(v)   Preventive counseling and crisis intervention;

(vi)   Referrals to community agencies;

(vii)   Educational consultations and collaboration with parents, community leaders, teachers, and administrators;

(viii) Educational and career placement services;

(ix)   Follow-up counseling services;

(x)   Conflict resolution

(xi)   The delivery of services to students as outlined by the American School Counselor Association, comprising a minimum of 80% of school counselors' contractual time. Delivery of services is the direct service and interactions between counselors and parents, the community, school personnel, as well as students.

Senate Bill 2423 (2014) was passed to protect counselor time and to increase student services. ASCA also provided a model for how counselors should spend their time (ASCA, 2012). As part of this model, it compiled a list of inappropriate activities for school counselors:

- Coordinating data entry and paperwork of all new students;

- Organizing aptitude, achievement, and cognitive testing programs;

- Signing excuses for students who are absent or tardy;

- Assigning discipline consequences and performing disciplinary actions;

- Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed;

- Teaching classes when teachers are absent;

- Computing grade-point averages;

- Maintaining student records;

- Supervising common areas and classrooms;

- Keeping clerical records;

- Assisting with duties in the principal's office;

- Providing long-term counseling or therapy in schools to address psychological disorders;

- Coordinating school attendance review boards, school-wide individual education plans, and student study teams;

- Serving as a data entry clerk;

Administrators have been informed of the passage of Senate Bill 2423. However, many counselors are still struggling to meet the 80% requirement due to inappropriate job assignments. Involvement in state-wide testing and retesting consumes a significant portion of time for many counselors. Thus, challenges exist in order to meet the needs of all students. The Mississippi Department of Education has also mandated that each student, starting in eighth grade, complete the Mississippi Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) process with the assistance of their school counselor.

Individual Career and Academic Plan

The Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) is a multi-year process that is meant to guide students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities (MDE, 2011). The Mississippi middle and high school program, Mississippi Choices, is customized with Mississippi specific information to guide students on their pathway to success and to help them complete the iCAP process.

Mississippi Choices assists students with career planning, high school planning, college planning, and financial aid planning.

Career Guidance in Middle and High School

The Mississippi Counseling Model as mandated by the Mississippi Department of Education states that "the program standards for career development guide the school counseling program to provide the foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work and from job-to-job across the life span" (MDE, p. 26). In the middle school grades, MDE's expectation is that school counselors use Mississippi Choices to help students identify interests and abilities through self-assessment activities. Middle school counselors are to use the assessment results in academic and career planning. Mississippi Choices provides students the opportunity to explore careers and the connection of school to work by developing decision-making skills that they will use to select a career/education path and complete an individual graduation plan (iCAP) for grades seven through twelve (MDE, 2009).

When students enter ninth grade, the school counseling standards state that a student should be able to assess the relationship between aptitudes and interests to continually adjust his or her iCAP (MDE, 2009). Through the use of Mississippi Choices, students are expected to create strategies to achieve future career success and satisfaction by modifying their educational plans to support their career goals, to evaluate and update their iCAP, and to apply academic and employment readiness skills through programs such as work-based learning (MDE, 2009). The iCAP allows students to formulate long-term education and career goals as well as connect courses of study to

long-term goals. Students are expected to use their self-knowledge in their research of future options and investigation into the world of work to make informed career decisions.

The Mississippi Choices program is an investment and mandate that MDE has implemented throughout Mississippi schools. The program is an excellent resource to prepare students to be college and career ready. However, the program has posed many challenges to Mississippi school counselors. The information within the Mississippi Choices program does not connect to the student information systems that Mississippi counselors use. Therefore, counselors have two systems with valuable information that are not connected. The plan of study in which a student creates in Mississippi Choices does not filter into the scheduling of course requests in the schools' student information systems. Therefore, counselors are left to keep both systems up-to-date while managing other responsibilities.

In order to abide by the mandates of MDE, many schools have resorted to obtaining help from career center managers, CTE counselors, and teachers. These individuals may facilitate the process of students completing the Mississippi iCAP. However, the alarming concern is the counselor may never have the time to use the wealth of information from the Mississippi Choices program to channel the student's course selections or CTE programs in the most appropriate direction. Transferring student data from the Mississippi Choices program to the student data within the student information system would enable counselors to have more meaningful conversations regarding career and college plans with students. Many other challenges are affecting the work of Mississippi Counselors.

Challenges Affecting Mississippi Counselors

The educational system in America has not advanced sufficiently in the area of assisting students in matching their desires and abilities with their post-secondary options. As a result, the educational system needs to develop its methods and conform to the skills gap, which is a demonstrated reality in our economic downturn (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).

Although Senate Bill 2423 passed, its implementation rests in the hands of administrators. Ideally counselors will meet all of the requirements as outlined in the ASCA Model and the M-CAR Appraisal Rubric, but; it is the duty of administrators to protect and value each counselor's time in order for success to be achieved. Many public school counselors are all too often assigned a tremendous workload. Gaviola and Sable (2008) reported, "the average U.S. student/counselor ratio is 479 to 1, and it grows to more than 1,000 to 1 in some schools" (p. 10). These numbers are too high to ensure the provision of sufficient student services. For a school counseling program that is both comprehensive and developmental in nature, ASCA recommends a student/counselor ratio of 250 to one (ASCA, 2012).

An additional challenge facing counselors is job assignments that do not necessitate professional counseling skills. These additional responsibilities may include activities such as registering students for courses, handling discipline issues, maintaining student records, conducting testing programs, and filling out college applications. ASCA has declared coordinating and administering cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests as an inappropriate activity for school counselors. While schools assign responsibilities as they see fit, it may be a waste of resources to assign school counselors to routine tasks.

52

Pat Martin, assistant vice-president of College Board's National Office for School

Counselor Advocacy, observed that "school counselors . . . are required to have a

master's degree, while teachers are not . . . [therefore] to assign the kinds of clerical, low-

level duties that school counselors are doing across the country is a terrible utilization of

a really, really critical force of people that could be redeployed to do meaningful . . .

things for students" (Sheehy, 2012).

In a public agenda report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Johnson,

Rochkind, and DuPont (2010) reported that "recent studies of the guidance system as it

operates in public school today indicate that counselors are often overworked and

underprepared when it comes to helping students make the best decision about their lives

after high school" (p. 17). Based on a survey of young adults aged 22 to 30, Johnson,

Rochkind, and DuPont (2010) discovered that, "at least in the eyes of students

themselves, the system is failing" (p. 5). They found that surveyed students who later

completed college were not pleased with the services they received from their high

school counselor. According to the results of Public Agenda survey, graduates

considered the counseling they received in high school as insufficient and a routine task.

Graduates reported that they "felt like, 'just another face in the crowd" as if the

counselors did not really know them (Johnson, Rochkind, Ott, & DuPont, 2010, p. 7).

The results signify an alarming concern for educators, counselors, and administrators.

<div align="center">Education and Career Planning</div>

Counselor workloads create challenges to adequately developing post-secondary

plans for students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2011), 55% of

students entering four-year colleges as full-time students earn their degrees within six

years, while only 27% of those entering two-year institutions earn degrees or certifications within an appropriate period of time. Career change and lack of academic and career goals were among the top reasons students gave for transferring from a four-year institution before receiving a degree (LeBard, 1999). This switch from a four-year to a two-year program and lack of completion of educational programs may indicate lack of proper planning. The lack of career and college planning on the secondary level results in wasted time and money on the post-secondary level.

According to future job projections, 33% of jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher while 30% percent of jobs will require some post-secondary education but not necessarily a bachelor's degree (Carnevale et al., 2010). These projections reflect the workforce needs within our society. An abundance of career opportunities exist for students who do not desire to obtain a 4-year degree. However, the norm in our society has been to push each student to attend college and obtain a degree. The college for all notion is a fallacy within our homes, schools, and society. Personal assessments, such as Mississippi Choices, assessing students' strengths and weaknesses along with labor market opportunities can help resolve this issue (Gray, 2008). Students will be equipped to make a career decision, which includes choosing the correct path to reach their chosen career (Gray, 2008)

The Role of the Principal

Principals play a major role in the successful implementation of a guidance program. Williams (2013) addressed the key role principals play in the structure of a counseling department. The principals' perceptions of the school counselor's roles and responsibilities may influence their decisions. The study sought to determine the

54

perceptions career counselors and principals had of the types of difficulties that face high school students when making career decisions. The researcher found no statistically significant difference (Williams, 2013).

Finkelstein (2009) addressed the principal-counselor relationship by asking both principals and counselors what counselors should spend their time on in order to improve student outcomes and what counselors truly spend their time on. The three activities counselors rated as taking more than a moderate amount of time and being of less than moderate importance were: doing supportive administrative tasks such as record keeping and clerical tasks, serving as coordinator for standardized tests given in the school, and scheduling responsibilities.

Several studies indicate principals are able to prioritize appropriate and inappropriate school counselor activities (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Zalaquett, 2005). However, principals continue to rate inappropriate activities as significant in spite of these findings. Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, and Skelton (2006) surveyed principals and counselors regarding the time school counselors should spend performing various activities. Principals believed school counselors should designate their time each week on testing students, creating Individual Education Plans, and performing supervisory duties. Principals were of the opinion that counselors should spend less time working with individual students and small groups than the counselor deemed appropriate.

In order for the school counselor to make the most impact on students, the school principal must value the counselor's time. The delegation of time must be intentional in order for career exploration opportunities to exist. Counselors must have conversations

55

with students to identify possible career interests and direct students into CTE programs of interest. Without these conversations, students may not be aware of the multitude of opportunities to match his her talents, interests, and abilities.

Image of Career and Technical Education

Image and perception issues have troubled CTE for some time. Cohen and Besharov (2002) reported the CTE's image has slowly improved due to the negative perception that CTE provides a poor quality education for the worst students. Even though CTE, once coined "vocation", still has many hurdles to cross, CTE is making gains and gaining respect across the country due to the rigor and relationships it is providing students.

Counselors play a critical role in whether students enroll in a CTE class or not. Huss and Banks (2001) discovered that school counselors impact the course selection of students. The impact is dependent upon the relationship that has been established between the student and counselor. Has the counselor created a plan of study for the student based on his or her career goals and interests? The counselor can positively or negatively impact the course selections of students. Jackson (2002) observed that when counselors showed an interest in a student's enrollment in a CTE course, the counselors was instrumental in the student's decision.

Spaulding and Steffen (2011) suggests that one of the determinants playing a role in CTE's success on the secondary level is the perceptions and knowledge of school counselors. One could presume that if school counselors perceive the career and education opportunities related to those fields, school counselors would encourage students to investigate CTE opportunities. Counselor knowledge is critical to the success

of CTE, the schools, and industry. Brand (2008) observes that CTE leaders and advocates are often concerned regarding school counselors' knowledge and support of CTE participation. Dyer, Breja, and Ball (2003) suggests that agriculture teachers recognized the support of school counselors as the second determinant behind scheduling conflicts as an obstacle to students taking agriculture. Exposing counselors to the benefits of CTE and providing the necessary knowledge will enable them to help students make informed decisions. Students must be provided every opportunity in order to be both college and career ready in the 21st century. School counselors will continue to play a critical role in the success of each and every student.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

The purpose of Chapter III is to outline the research design used for the study of Mississippi Choices and middle and high school counselors' valuation of career and technical education. Research questions and related hypotheses are presented along with proposed methodology. The procedures, research design, participants, and analysis of data are explained. Chapter III describes the instrument that was used to collect data in the study. In addition, the independent and dependent variables are explained along with the statistical processes that were used to analyze data.

Research Design

The research design for this study is non-experimental and quantitative in nature. Statistical data were gathered from a questionnaire completed by middle and high school counselors. The questionnaire focused on middle and high school counselors' value of career and technical education along with the usage and knowledge of the state Choices program. In addition, data were collected as to the various duties that might inhibit the time school counselors have available to focus on students' career opportunities.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

1. To what degree are counselors aware of the state mandated Choices (iCAP) program?

2. To what degree do counselors use Choices to direct students in future academic and career planning?

3. To what degree do counselors report significant time to implement the Choices program efficiently to assist in future planning for students; if not, which activities, as defined by the American School Counseling

Association National Model (ASCA), inhibit the implementation of
Choices?

4. Is the principal's lack of support of Choices inhibiting the counselor from
   fully implementing Choices?

5. Are there significant differences between type of counselor and
   implementation of Choices?

6. To what degree are counselors aware of Career and Technical Education
   (CTE)?

7. How strongly do counselors value Career and Technical Education (CTE)?

The hypotheses related to the research questions were as follows:

Participants

Participants included a non-probability sample of certified public school
counselors of grades 7-12 from across the state of Mississippi. In order to collect
applicable data, the target study population included the 575 middle and high school
counselors across the state. The Mississippi Department of Education and the
Mississippi Counseling Association agreed to distribute the questionnaire electronically
in order to reach all middle and high school counselors. The questionnaire was sent to
every middle and high school counselor in Mississippi to ensure participants were from
various areas and schools in the state of Mississippi. Participation was voluntary and
could be terminated at any time. No penalty existed for nonparticipation. The researcher
confirmed that the participants' data was kept completely confidential, and the data was
used in aggregate form with no identifying factors.

Instrumentation

After careful examination of multiple survey instruments (Sawyer, 1977; Finlayson, 1997), no suitable instrument for this study was found. Therefore, an original survey entitled *Mississippi Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education* (Appendix X) was necessary due to the lack of an appropriate instrument to completely gather data needed for the study.

The statements contained in the *Mississippi Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education* survey instrument were formulated from an extensive review of the literature. The instrument contains 50 statements, which include 6 demographic questions. The remaining 44 statements include 6 statements on valuation of career and technical education, 6 statements related to the awareness of the Choices program and 2 statements related to awareness of CTE, 8 statements pertaining to the usage of the Choices program, 9 statements related to time counselors have for career counseling, and 13 statements related to "inappropriate activities" as defined by ASCA. The instrument was read by experts prior to the pilot study to determine that all the statements and terminology were coherent and appropriate for the research questions to be addressed. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, the questionnaire was sent electronically to middle and high school counselors across the state of Mississippi, and the responses were analyzed using quantitative measures.

Statement 1.1-1.6 provided the researcher with information regarding the valuation of CTE among middle and high school counselors and supported Research Question 7. Items 2.1-2.2 addressed the awareness of CTE and supported Research Question 6. Items 2.3-2.8 addressed the awareness of Choices/iCAP among counselors

60

for academic and career planning and supported Research Question 1. Research

Question 2 is supported by the responses to items 3.1-3.6,3.8, addressing the utilization of

Choices/iCAP among counselors for academic and career planning. Item 3.7 specifically

focused on principal support of Choices and supported Research Question 4. Items 4.1-

4.9 supported Research Question 3 and addressed the time counselors have for career

counseling. Items 5.1-5.13 specifically focused on any inappropriate activities, as

defined by ASCA that inhibited the opportunity for counselors to focus on career

planning and also supported Research Question 3. Finally, items 6-11 supported Research

Question 5 and provided the researcher with general demographic information about

counselors.

Items 1.1-4.9 utilized a six point Likert scale as follows: 1 = "Strongly Disagree,"

2 = "Disagree," 3 = "Slightly Disagree," 4 = "Slightly Agree," 5 = "Agree," 6 =

"Strongly Agree." Design of the six-point scale prohibited a neutral response from the

participants. Items 5.1-5.13 consisted of a list of inappropriate activities for school

counselors, as defined by ASCA. Items 5.1-5.13 utilized a six point Likert scale as

follows: 1 = "Always", 2 = "Very Frequently", 3 = "Occasionally", 4 = "Rarely", 5 =

"Very Rarely", 6 = "Never". Counselors checked the inappropriate activities that inhibit

their time to develop career plans with students. The inappropriate activities included

coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students; coordinating cognitive,

aptitude, and achievement testing programs; signing excuses for students who are tardy

or absent; performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences, sending

students home who are not appropriately dressed; teaching classes when teachers are

absent; computing grade-point averages; maintaining student records; supervising

classrooms or common areas; keeping clerical records; assisting with duties in the principal's office; providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders; and coordinating school-wide individual education plans, student study teams, and school attendance review boards.

Demographic data from each participant will also be obtained: type of school counselor, student enrollment, number of school counselors assigned to school, number of years of experience, number of students responsible for, and location of school in Mississippi will be acquired through the responses of the counselors who participate. The options for type of school counselor are middle school, high school, middle/high school, and career technical education counselor. The options for years of experience are 0-5 years, 6-15 years, 16-30 years, and over 30 years. For the number of students responsible for there are 4 groups. The groups are listed as follows: less than 200 students, 201-500 students, 501-1000 students, over 1000 students. The options for location of school are north Mississippi (areas north of Jackson, MS), central Mississippi (areas north of Hattiesburg, MS, but south of Jackson, MS), and south Mississippi (Hattiesburg and areas south of Hattiesburg, MS).

<div align="center">Pilot Study</div>

Upon a completion of review by experts, the researcher conducted a pilot study of the instrument to check its reliability and validity. The pilot study of the instrument was conducted in Qualtrics. The researcher contacted three Mississippi universities with School Counseling graduate programs to secure participation in the pilot study. These universities included The University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi State University, and The University of Mississippi. The researcher requested approval from

the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi (Appendix A). The survey was sent via email to 40 graduate students by their program coordinator. Of those to whom the instrument was sent, 25 graduate students responded. This represented a return rate of 62.5% for graduate students. The pilot study was administered prior to the study in order to determine reliability of the study instrument. The data from the responses of the pilot test participants were analyzed using the statistical program SPSS. Once the pilot study was conducted and the surveys were completed, data was compiled in spreadsheet form and inputted in SPSS. Using SPSS statistical software, a Cronbach's alpha was conducted to test the reliability of the survey instrument.

The test disclosed a reliability greater than 0.70 for all subscales, with the exception of two. Section 2 produced reliability results of .64. By omitting 6.8, reliability would have increased to .807. Section 4 Cronbach's Alpha of .18 was unacceptably low. It was determined that a low sample size impacted the reliability. The statements in both subscales were retained for the final data collection and analysis.

Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed through two mechanisms. Permission to conduct the study through the Mississippi Counseling Association and the Mississippi State Department of Education was obtained. Initially, the survey link was sent electronically to Mississippi counselors through the MCA. MDE also sent the survey to middle and high school counselors across the state of Mississippi. Not all counselors are members of MCA. Therefore, all middle and high school counselors in Mississippi were contacted by dispersing the survey through two outlets. Participation was voluntary and

could be terminated at any time without consequence. Minimal risks were anticipated.

There were no negative consequences for those participants who chose not to participate.

The information sent to participants included a consent letter informing the

counselors of the survey, its purpose, an invitation to participate, their consent, a

commitment to share findings if they are interested in reviewing the results, and the link

to the survey. The cover letter explained the procedures and informed participants that

their responses would remain confidential. The cover letter is included in Appendix X.

The letter indicates the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The University of Southern

Mississippi approved the study, and the researcher's name is provided. The IRB

approval letter can be found in Appendix X. Approximately two weeks after MCA and

MDE sent the initial survey requests, a follow-up email was sent to all MCA members

asking those who had not participated to do so. A note to thank those who had completed

the survey was included.

The dependent variable for the study was the mean of the Counselors' Usage of

Choices. The independent variables in the study were principal support and type of

counselor. The reliability and internal consistency of the variables were explored further

during the actual study using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.70 or greater is

considered acceptable. The Cronbach's alpha test for Section 1, 3, 4, and 5 yielded a

reliability greater than 0.70. Item 2.3 "State Mandated" was omitted in Section 2 to yield

a Cronbach's alpha of .633. Item 4.3 "Postsecondary Plans" was omitted in Section 4 to

yield a Cronbach's alpha of .805.

Data Analysis

For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance. Once the study was conducted and the surveys were complete, data was compiled in spreadsheet form. The data collected from Qualtrics was entered into SPSS to run several statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the 6 possible responses to statements 1.1 through 4.9 to answer research questions. By using Qualtrics, the participants of the survey remained anonymous. The survey responses were directly sent to Qualtrics without identifying any personal information. The researcher used only collected data from Qualtrics.

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Questionnaires were sent via Qualtrics to school counselors in Mississippi. The

Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi Counseling Association

distributed the questionnaire electronically in order to reach all school counselors.

Participants were K-12 counselors, elementary counselors, middle school counselors,

high school counselors, and CTE counselors as identified by themselves. One hundred

sixty-two questionnaires yielded a completed survey response rate of one hundred fifty-

nine (n=159). For descriptive and statistical analysis, only those participants who self-

identified as a K-12 counselor with only one school counselor, a middle school

counselor, and a high school counselor were analyzed. The responses of elementary

counselors were not included in the final analysis. Therefore, the total number of surveys

analyzed was one hundred twenty-four (n=124).

Descriptive Analysis

Respondents included 10 K-12 School Counselors, 72 Middle School Counselors,

14 High School Counselors, and 28 Counselors who are both Middle and High School

Counselors. The instrument consisted of six Likert-type items with the poles being

strongly disagree (1) to *strongly agree* (6). Seven research questions were posed to fully

understand the behaviors and perceptions of school counselors in Mississippi.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked the following: To what degree are counselors

aware of the state mandated Choices (iCAP) program? The degree of awareness was

determined by calculating the mean via five different variables in a 50-question survey.

The five different Awareness variables involving Choices included the following:

Mississippi students "Must Complete" an iCAP, Choices is the "Recommend Program,"

Choices helps "Target Career," "Trainings Attended" by Counselors, and Choices as a

"State Mandated" program. The averages for the individual questions in addition to the

overall average of this section (M=4.63) are shown in Table 1. The means for the

individual questions have been sorted from high to low. Hypothesis 1 was stated as

follows: Counselors are aware of the state mandated (Choices) program. A descriptive

frequency analysis was used to test hypothesis 1. The analysis revealed that on average

(M=4.77) counselors are aware of the Choices program. This average represents that

counselors agreed that they were aware of the Choices program. Therefore, the

hypothesis was supported.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Counselors' Awareness of Choices Program

Awareness of Choices	N	Mean	S.D.
Must Complete	123	5.38	1.02
Recommended Program	123	5.20	1.01
Target Career	124	4.94	1.24
Trainings Attended	124	3.55	1.67
State Mandated	122	4.09	1.94
Overall Mean	124	4.63	0.92

Research Question Two

The second research question asked the following: To what degree do counselors use Choices to direct students in future academic and career planning? Descriptive statistics were used to answer Research Question Two. One hundred twenty-four counselors responded to five variables in this section pertaining to Usage of Choices. A frequency table (Table 2) was generated for all items.

Out of 124 middle and high school counselors, 62 (50%) agree that they are fully utilizing Choices while the other 62 (50%) reported that Choices was not being fully utilized, M=3.25. Among the participants, 57 (46.3%) reported that Choices was utilized for student course selections, while 66 (53.7%) reported not using Choices to assist with course selections, (M=3.17). However, there were 84 (67.7%) respondents who reported students utilizing Choices to update their iCAPS annually, while 40 (32.3%) reported not utilizing Choices to update iCAPS, (M=3.98). Among middle and high school counselors, 45 (36.3%) reported that Choices was a priority in their district, while 79 (63.7%) disclosed that it was not a priority in their district (M=2.92). Among the participants, 53 (42.7%) reported that counselors were fully resourced to support career development through the Choices program, while 71 (57.3%) were not fully resourced. The frequencies and percentages are provided in Table 2. Hypothesis 2 was stated as follows: Counselors are not fully utilizing Choices to direct students in academic and career planning. A descriptive frequency analysis was also used to test the hypothesis. The test revealed that counselors on average (M=3.26) are utilizing Choices. Hypothesis 2 was, therefore, supported.

Table 2

Frequencies of Choices Usage by Counselors

Usage of Choices	N	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Slightly Agree	%	Slightly Disagree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%	Mean
Fully Utilizes	124	8	6.4	24	19.2	30	24.0	14	11.2	25	20.0	23	18.4	3.25
Course Selections	123	7	5.6	28	22.4	22	17.6	14	11.2	26	20.8	26	20.8	3.17
Students Update	124	22	17.6	40	32.0	22	17.6	7	5.6	19	15.2	14	11.2	3.98
District Priority	124	5	4.0	18	14.4	22	17.6	25	20.0	25	20.0	29	23.2	2.92
Fully Resourced	124	6	4.8	23	18.4	24	19.2	15	12.0	21	16.8	35	28.0	2.98
Overall Mean														3.26

Research Question Three

Research question three asked the following: To what degree do counselors report significant time to implement the Choices program efficiently to assist in future planning for students; if not, which activities, as defined by the American School Counseling Association National Model (ASCA), inhibit the implementation of Choices? Descriptive statistics were used to answer Question Three and to describe the responses from Mississippi middle and high school counselors regarding the time counselors have available to implement the Choices program.

One hundred twenty-four counselors responded to eight variables in this section regarding Counselor Time. The eight different variables pertaining to Counselor Time included the following: ASCA model "Fully Utilized," Needs of "All Students," Time spent in "Testing," "Protecting Time" due to Senate Bill 2423, Focus on "Career Planning," Students' "Social, Emotional, Academic, Career," and Choices as "Another Program." The data indicated that approximately 53.6% of the counselors are fully utilizing the ASCA model. On average, the 124 counselors *slightly agreed* (M=3.95) that they have the support to meet the needs of all students. This represented the highest mean of the eight statements. Even though counselors reported having the support to meet the needs of all students, more than half of the counselors reported the following: the majority of their time is spent involved testing, Senate Bill 2423 has done nothing to protect them, sufficient time does not exist to focus on career planning or the counseling domains, no time exist for Choices, and more focus is placed on college planning than career planning. Counselors on average *slightly disagree* (M = 3.31) that the majority of their time is spent involved in testing. However, the interpretation of this variable is

70

opposite the other in terms of what high and low means. A frequency table was generated for all items that also display the averages for both the items and the overall average (M = 3.18) in Table 3.

Hypothesis 3 was stated as follows: Counselors do not have significant time to implement the Choices program efficiently. A frequency test was used to determine the perceived amount of time counselors have to implement Choices. In addition, counselors reported the degree to which the inappropriate activities as defined by ASCA inhibit implementation of Choices. Counselors on average *slightly disagreed* (M=3.18) that they had significant time to implement Choices. Hypothesis 3 was, therefore, supported.

Table 3

Frequencies of Counselor Time

Counselor Time	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Slightly Agree	%	Slightly Disagree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%	Mean
Fully Utilized	16	12.8	25	20.0	26	20.8	10	8.0	22	17.6	25	20.0	3.42
All Students	15	12.0	44	35.2	26	20.8	9	7.2	13	10.4	15	12.0	3.95
Testing	19	15.2	20	16.0	33	26.4	22	17.6	16	12.8	14	11.2	3.31
Protecting Time	7	5.6	23	18.4	23	18.4	15	12.0	26	20.8	29	23.2	3.05
Career Planning			18	14.4	22	17.6	31	24.8	28	22.4	25	20.0	2.84
Domains	3	2.4	19	15.2	30	24.0	24	19.2	23	18.4	24	19.2	3.05
Another Program	40	32.0	25	20.0	21	16.8	17	13.6	12	9.6	7	5.6	2.65
College Planning	8	6.4	28	22.4	40	32.0	28	22.4	14	11.2	6	4.8	3.24
Overall Mean													3.18

The thirteen inappropriate activities as defined by ASCA were listed in the survey. One hundred twenty-four middle and high school counselors responded to their involvement in the activities by using the following scale: 1 = *Always*, 2 = *Very Frequently*, 3 = *Occasionally*, 4 = *Rarely*, 5 = *Very Rarely*, and 6 = *Never*. The inappropriate activities as defined by ASCA include:

1. Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students.

2. Coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs.

3. Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent.

4. Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences.

5. Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed

6. Teaching classes when teachers are absent.

7. Computing grade-point averages.

8. Maintaining student records.

9. Supervising classroom or common areas.

10. Keeping clerical records.

11. Assisting with duties in the principal's office.

12. Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders

13. Coordinating school wide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards.

Middle and high school counselors reported that on average (M=2.16) "Very Frequently" they are maintaining student records. Dress Code represented the activity that counselors

"Very Rarely" (M=5.47) were involved in. The frequencies, percentages, and means for each activity are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequencies of "Inappropriate Activities" as Defined by ASCA

Inappropriate Activities	Never	%	Very Rarely	%	Rarely	%	Occasionally	%	Very Frequently	%	Always	%	Mean
New Students	14	11.2	6	4.8	10	8.0	13	10.4	26	20.8	55	44.0	2.42
Testing Programs	22	17.6	16	12.8	9	7.2	31	24.8	16	12.8	31	24.8	3.23
Signing Excuses	71	56.8	26	20.8	11	8.8	12	9.6	3	2.4	2	1.6	5.15
Disciplinary Actions	81	64.8	17	13.6	13	10.4	10	8.0	3	2.4	1	0.8	5.28
Dress Code	90	72.0	14	11.2	11	8.8	10	8.0					5.47
Teaching Classes	84	67.2	16	12.8	8	6.4	12	9.6	4	3.2	1	0.8	5.29
Grade Point Averages	23	18.4	9	7.2	5	4.0	22	17.6	26	20.8	39	31.2	2.9
Student Records	8	6.4	10	8.0	2	1.6	16	12.8	26	20.8	62	49.6	2.16
Supervising	43	34.4	23	18.4	11	8.8	25	20.0	13	10.4	10	8.0	4.22
Clerical Records	11	8.8	17	13.6	6	4.8	21	16.8	26	20.8	43	34.4	2.69
Principal's Office	33	26.4	19	15.2	15	12.0	29	23.2	21	16.8	8	6.4	3.92
Providing Therapy	50	40.0	19	15.2	20	16.0	28	22.4	7	5.6	1	0.8	4.59
School Wide Teams	28	22.4	18	14.4	19	15.2	34	27.2	15	12.0	11	8.8	3.82

Research Question Four

Research Question four asked the following: Is the principal's support of Choices inhibiting the counselor from fully implementing Choices? A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to determine if there was a significant relationship between Principal Support of Choices and Counselor Usage of Choices. Principal Support was used as the independent variable, and the mean of the Counselor Usage of Choices section was used as the dependent variable. Since the *F* is the average amount of variability and is used to test the statistical significance of the model, the ANOVA table indicates statistical significance with $F(5,118) = 26.622$, $p < .001$. These results can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5

ANOVA Results for Question 4

	Df	SS	MS	F	p
Between-group	5	115.50	23.10	26.62	p < .001
Within-group	118	102.39	0.87		
Total	123	217.89			

Post hoc analyses were conducted given the statistically significant omnibus ANOVA *F* test. Specifically, Tukey HSD tests were conducted on all possible pairwise contrasts. The findings indicate that Choices Usage is different based on the level of

Principal Support. Middle and high school counselors used the Choices program more

when they believed their principal fully supported the Choices program.

The average for the individual responses (*strongly disagree, disagree, slightly*

disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree) by each counselor regarding Usage of

Choices is displayed in Table 6. The overall average of this section (M=3.26) is also

shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean of Counselor Usage of Choices

Usage of Choices	N	Mean	S.D.
Strongly Disagree	20	1.84	0.93
Disagree	20	2.46	0.85
Slightly Disagree	16	2.66	1.10
Slightly Agree	30	3.62	0.83
Agree	26	4.20	0.94
Strongly Agree	12	4.83	1.03
Overall Mean	124	3.26	1.33

An easier way to see this relationship is by using a means plot. Figure 1 gives a means

plot of Usage Mean (Section 3) to Principal Support. There exist a clear linear

relationship between Counselor Usage and Principal Support. This relationship will be

explored more in Chapter 5.

Hypothesis 4 was stated as follows: The principal's lack of support of Choices is inhibiting the counselor from fully implementing Choices. This hypothesis test whether or not principal support has an influence on Counselor Usage of Choices. To complete the analysis associated with Hypothesis 4, the researcher employed a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Data related to this hypothesis are profiled in Table 5 and Table 6. This model did find statistical significance between Principal Support of Choices and Counselor Usage of Choices, $F(5,118) = 26.622$, $p < .001$. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.
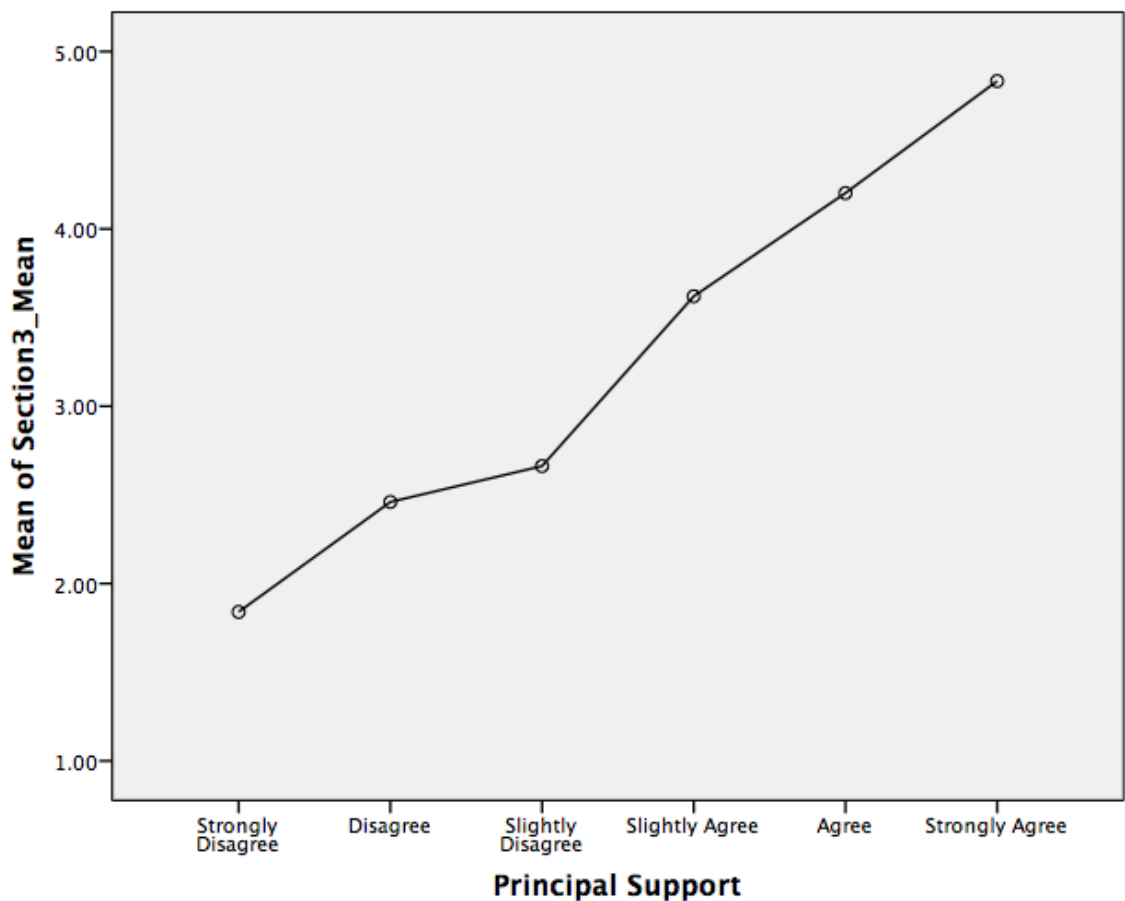

Figure 1. Means plot of Question 4. Principal Support and Counselor Usage of Choices.

Research Question Five

　　Research question five asked the following: Are there significant differences between type of counselor and implementation of Choices? The groups of counselors include K-12, Middle School, High School, or Middle/High School. An ANOVA was conducted to examine the significance of type of counselor and usage of Choices. The ANOVA found no significant difference between the groups, $F(3,120) = 1.77$, p = .156. The ANOVA results are summarized in Table 7.

　　Hypothesis 5 was stated as follows: There are significant differences between type of counselor and implementation of Choices. It should be noted that elementary and CTE counselors were excluded. To complete the analyses associated with Hypothesis 5, the researcher employed an ANOVA. As shown in Table 7, there were no significant differences in the Implementation of Choices by middle or high school counselors. $F(3,120) = 1.77$, p = .156. Hypothesis 5 was, therefore, not supported.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for Question 5

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Between-group	3	9.24	3.08	1.77	0.156
Within-group	120	208.65	1.74		
Total	123	217.89			

Research Question Six

Research question six asked the following: To what degree are counselors aware of Career and Technical Education (CTE)? Descriptive statistics were used to answer Research Question six. One hundred twenty-four counselors responded to two questions in this section pertaining to CTE awareness. A frequency table was generated for both items.

Out of 124 middle and high school counselors, 121 (96.8%) agreed that they are fully knowledgeable of most all of the CTE programs in their school district. In addition, 121 (96.8%) reported that they agreed that some CTE programs offer students national certifications. The frequencies and overall mean (M=5.50) are provided in Table 8. Hypothesis 6 was stated as follows: Counselors are aware of Career and Technical Education. A descriptive frequency test was used to test the hypothesis. The test revealed that counselors on average (M=5.50) are aware of CTE. Therefore, counselors *strongly agree* that they are aware of CTE. Hypothesis 6 was, therefore, supported

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Counselor's Awareness of CTE

Awareness of CTE	N	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Slightly Agree	%	Slightly Disagree	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%	Mean
Fully Knowledgeable	124	83	66.4	31	24.8	7	5.6	2	1.6	1	0.8			5.56
National Certifications	124	67	53.6	48	38.4	6	4.8	3	2.4					5.44
Overall Mean	124													5.50

Research Question 7

Research question seven asked the following: How strongly do counselors value Career and Technical Education (CTE)? Descriptive statistics were used to answer Research Question 7 and to describe the responses from Mississippi middle and high school counselors regarding their perceived value of CTE.

One hundred twenty-four (124) counselors responded to six statements in this section regarding Valuation of Career and Technical Education. The six different variables pertaining to Value of CTE included: *greatly assist, highly competitive, much exposure to careers, benefit students, strongly encourage students to enroll, and work-bound.* Middle and high school counselors' responses to the six variables indicated that CTE is highly valued by these counselors. All variables received 90% agreement whether it was strongly agree, agree, or slightly agree. A frequency table was generated for all items that also display the averages for both the items and the overall average (M = 5.19) in Table 9.

Hypothesis 7 was stated as follows: Counselors do not value Career and Technical Education. A frequency test was used to determine the perceived value counselors have of CTE. Counselors on average *agree* (M=5.19) that they value Career and Technical Education. Hypothesis 7 was, therefore, not supported.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Counselor's Value of CTE

Awareness of CTE	SA	%	A	%	SA	%	SD	%	D	%	SD	%	Mean
Greatly Assist	57	45.6	43	34.4	14	11.2	5	4.0	3	2.4	2	1.6	5.13
Highly Competitive	58	46.4	30	24.0	26	20.8	7	5.6	1	0.8	2	1.6	5.06
Much Exposure	57	45.6	38	30.4	19	15.2	5	4.0	3	2.4	2	1.6	5.09
Benefit Students	67	53.6	37	29.6	10	8.0	5	4.0	2	1.6	3	2.4	5.23
Strongly Encourage	76	60.8	36	28.8	8	6.4	2	1.6	1	0.8	2	1.6	5.42
Work Bound	5	4.0	2	1.6	5	4.0	14	11.2	28	22.4	70	56.0	5.16
Overall Mean													5.19

Summary

This study investigated middle and high school counselors' awareness and usage of the state Choices program in addition to their awareness and perceived value of Career and Technical Education. The study included 124 participants from across the state of Mississippi. The data from the quantitative study was entered into SPSS to be statistically analyzed and reported. Descriptive statistics and ANOVAs were used to identify statistically significant differences among the variables. Frequency data from the sample indicated that the majority of the respondents were middle school counselors (n=73). A large number of the respondents were from North Mississippi, followed by South Mississippi, then Central Mississippi. The number of high school counselor participants (n=14) and K-12 counselors with only one counselor (10) were fairly equal.

This study indicated Mississippi counselors on average are aware of the Choices program. Despite their awareness of Choices, counselors have not fully utilized the program. Counselors reported that they did not have the time available to implement Choices. In addition, specific inappropriate tasks as defined by ASCA have hindered the implementation of Choices. Principal support of Choices and counselor usage of Choices were found to be statistically significant. No significant relationship was found between usage of Choices and type of counselor. Mississippi counselors expressed a strong awareness of CTE. In addition, Mississippi middle and high school counselors reported a high value toward Career and Technical Education.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research project was to determine the counselor's usage of the Choices program throughout Mississippi schools. The secondary purpose was to explore middle and high school counselors' value of career and technical education in Mississippi. The data will be used to improve counselors' knowledge and usage of the Choices program in order to ensure Mississippi students are college and career ready. The information from this study will enable both middle and high school counselors to recognize how their value of Career and Technical Education (CTE) can affect the decisions students are making in preparing for their future. This study presents findings concerning the knowledge and misconceptions counselors have of CTE programs.

The information collected during the course of this study could be beneficial to local school administrators, as well as the state department of education, when planning and implementing professional development or trainings for Mississippi counselors. Additionally, this study also provides information regarding the appropriate and inappropriate activities, as defined by ASCA, that demand counselors' time. The information will benefit counselors and administrators when examining the duties and demands placed upon counselors during a typical school day.

Because this study also sought to provide an image of Mississippi's counselors' valuation of career and technical education, the information gathered from this study may create more awareness and benefit both Mississippi students and all stakeholders, including parents, school counselors, administrators, CTE directors, state educational leaders, state legislators, and business and industry. In addition, the Mississippi Department of Education leaders and state legislators may use the data to direct policies

that will enhance academic and career planning opportunities for Mississippi students. It

is vital that all stakeholders in Mississippi understand the importance of blending

academic and career and technical education to ensure the success of all students. This

chapter includes a summary of procedures, discussion of the findings, conclusions, and

recommendations.

<div align="center">Summary of Procedures</div>

The data for this study was acquired from middle and high school counselors.

Individuals responding included 10 K-12 School Counselors, 72 Middle School

Counselors, 14 High School Counselors, and 28 Counselors who are both Middle and

High School Counselors. The majority of the respondents were middle school

counselors. The study focused on middle and high school counselors' value of career and

technical education along with the usage and knowledge of the state Choices program. In

addition, data was collected about the various duties that might inhibit the time school

counselors have available to focus on students' career opportunities. For this quantitative

study, the responses were analyzed using SPSS.

Permission was granted from The University of Southern Mississippi's

Institutional Review Board (IRB) before the study began. The questionnaire, *Mississippi*

Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education, was sent via Qualtrics to

school counselors in Mississippi at the beginning of March 2017 and collected through

the end of March. The Mississippi Department of Education and the Mississippi

Counseling Association distributed the questionnaire electronically in order to reach all

school counselors. The data from the quantitative study was entered into SPSS to be

statistically analyzed and reported. Using SPSS statistical software, a Cronbach's alpha

was conducted to test the reliability of the subscales of survey items.

<center>Major Findings</center>

Research question 1 asked to what degree are counselors aware of the state

mandated Choices (iCAP) program. The descriptive statistics used to test the related

hypothesis indicated that counselors are aware of the state mandated Choices program.

The Mississippi Choices program is an investment and mandate that the Mississippi

Department of Education (MDE) has implemented throughout Mississippi schools. The

program is a meaningful resource to prepare students to be college and career ready.

Even though counselors responded that they were aware of the program, the usage of the

program is of utmost importance. Knowledge without application of the program does

not benefit our students.

Research question 2 addressed to what degree do counselors use Choices to direct

students in future academic and career planning. Descriptive statistics were used to

perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis. The results indicated that

counselors' usage of Choices is much less than counselors' awareness of the program.

Awareness of Choices does not equal usage of Choices among counselors in Mississippi.

More counselors are aware of the program than are actually using the program; however,

67% reported that they are utilizing Choices to update student iCAPS annually.

Interestingly, 63.7% reported that Choices was not a priority in their district. It is evident

that many Mississippi counselors are still using Choices to update the iCAP even though

their district does not make Choices a priority.

<center>87</center>

Research question 3 addressed to what degree do counselors report significant time to implement the Choices program efficiently to assist in future planning for students; if not, which activities, as defined by the American School Counseling Association Model (ASCA), inhibit the implementation of Choices? Descriptive statistics were used to perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis. The analysis revealed that a majority of middle and high school counselors felt like they received the support to meet the needs of all students; however, they reported that they do not have sufficient time to meet the needs of all students. The results indicated that many districts can do a much better job protecting counselors' time by fully utilizing the ASCA Model. Further, counselors reported that Senate Bill 2423 has done very little to protect their time.

The majority of counselors reported that more of their time is focused on college planning than career planning. The findings suggest that Choices is simply another program that counselors do not have time to accomplish. Middle and high school counselors reported the amount of time they were involved in the 13 inappropriate activities as defined by ASCA, and the following five inappropriate activities posed a serious threat to middle and high school counselors' time: coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students; coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs; computing grade-point averages; maintaining student records; and keeping clerical records.

Research question 4 addressed whether the principal's lack of support of Choices is inhibiting the counselor from fully implementing Choices. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis.

The test revealed statistical significance. There exist a clear linear relationship between the counselors' usage of Choices and the principal's support of Choices. The more supportive the principal is of the Choices program, the more the counselor utilizes the program. Post hoc analyses also supported the relationship.

Research question 5 addressed whether there are significant differences between type of counselor (K-12, middle, or high school) and implementation of Choices. An ANOVA was used to perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis. The data revealed no significant differences between the type of counselor and implementation of Choices. The findings from research question 4 and 5 suggest that both middle school and high school counselors struggle to implement the Choices program effectively due to lack of time.

Research question 6 addressed to what degree are counselors aware of Career and Technical Education (CTE). Descriptive statistics were used to perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis. The findings revealed that middle and high school counselors in Mississippi are highly knowledgeable of the CTE programs and the national certifications offered in their district. Middle and high school counselors appear to have more of an awareness of CTE than of the Choices program.

Research Question 7 addressed how strongly counselors value Career and Technical Education (CTE). Descriptive statistics were used to perform the statistical analysis for the related hypothesis. The findings indicate that CTE is highly valued by middle and high school counselors in Mississippi; therefore, counselors are aware of and value CTE. All variables were highly valued by counselors; however, the counselors' strongest response was to the value they placed on encouraging students to enroll in CTE

programs. The findings indicate that CTE is strongly supported by middle and high school counselors.

<center>Discussion</center>

Mississippi Choices is a program for middle and high schoolers that is customized with Mississippi specific information to guide students on their pathway to success and to help them complete the iCAP process. Mississippi Choices provides students the opportunity to explore careers and the connection between school and work by developing decision-making skills that they will use to select a career/education path and complete an iCAP for grades seven through twelve (MDE, 2009). The Mississippi Department of Education expects school counselors to use Mississippi Choices to help students identify interests and abilities through self-assessment activities.

No data has been provided by MDE regarding the implementation and usage of the Choices program since its adoption in 2011. The program is an excellent resource to prepare students to be college and career ready; however, the program has posed many challenges to Mississippi counselors including the flexibility within the program. Most importantly, the findings from this study confirm that counselors have limited time to use the wealth of information from the Choices program. Further, the data from this study confirmed that the majority of counselors believe the Choices program is just another program they do not have time to accomplish fully.

One area in which the counselors are using the Choices program is in the completion of the Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP), a state-mandated activity for all students. While a majority of counselors indicated they are utilizing Choices to have students update their iCAP annually, more than half of the participants reported that

<center>90</center>

they are not fully utilizing the program, that they are not assisting students in tailored course selection based on their post-secondary goals, and that they are not fully resourced through the Choices program. The iCAP was established to serve as a resource for students to define and accomplish their academic and career goals for success after high school as counselors advise students about the transition into a career or postsecondary major (MDE, 2013). Although updating the iCAP is a state mandate from the Mississippi Department of Education, the reported findings indicate that students may possibly be updating their iCAPS without the assistance from the counselors. If counselors do not have enough time to complete the iCAPS for each student, they may be allowing students to complete their own iCAPs in order to meet audit requirements. Therefore, the value and meaning of the iCAP and Choices program is lost.

Career development has been perceived by many stakeholders as of low importance within the school system because students are not getting the much-needed time/advising with counselors. Research indicated that students do not believe counselors spend enough time on career guidance and advisement. For instance, results from Helwig's 2008 longitudinal study, which followed students from 2nd grade until age 23, indicated that students did not feel as though they had received adequate career preparation and guidance from their former high schools after advancing through post-secondary educational and work experience. The outcomes of this study confirmed the prevailing suspicion that schools are focusing more on crisis counseling and the college admissions process and not spending enough time on career development and preparation.

Counselors spend a large majority of their time assisting students with the admission process for postsecondary education in addition to scheduling student courses (Kim, 2008; U.S. News and World Report, 2012; Greene & Greene, 2004; and Finlayson, 2009). Activities of school counselors regarding career exploration represented a smaller percentage of time than other activities. For instance, the studies revealed that counselors are tasked with clerical duties that detract their focus from student achievement. Further, these studies indicate that many counselors are concerned about the lack of time available for task completion with which they are often confronted (Kim, 2008, U.S. News and World Report, 20112, Greene & Greene, 2004, and Finlayson, 2009). It is of utmost importance that the counselor's time be protected to meet the needs of all students. The demands of today's school counselors are tremendous. Many times counselors have to make difficult decisions as to their priorities for the day because they are pulled in many directions.

Findings from the current study indicate that the majority of counselors believed they were supported to meet the needs of all students. While the data indicated that only half of the school districts are fully utilizing the ACSA model in their district, more than half reported that Senate Bill 2423 has done nothing to protect their time as a school counselor. On the contrary, those same counselors who felt supported to meet the needs of all students also reported that the majority of their time is spent coordinating testing programs. The current study indicates that less than half of the counselors believed that they had sufficient time to focus on career planning with students or to meet students emotional, social, academic, and career development needs. Therefore, how can counselors feel supported while not being able to meet the needs of students? Counselors

92

may continue to do the things they have always done because of their comfort level. If counselors spend a tremendous amount of time focusing on college planning, he/she may not feel as adequate as time goes by to focus on career planning with students. The confidence and skills in these areas of counseling can become weaker when they are inactive on a daily basis; therefore, counselors focus on what they know and can do well. Quite possibly, the needs of the counselors have not been heard by administration. The role of the school counselor is to execute efforts to address each student's academic, personal/social, and career development needs (ASCA, 2005); however, if counselors do not have the time to effectively do their jobs, the educational system will continue to fail at meeting the needs of Mississippi students.

Furthermore, Choices is not the only activity vying for middle and high school counselors' time. The findings of the current study reveal that five inappropriate activities pose a serious threat to middle and high school counselors' time: coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students; coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs; computing grade-point averages; maintaining student records; and keeping clerical records. These findings indicate that testing and clerical duties detract the counselor's focus from student achievement.

The answer to these problems may lie with administration. Principals play a major role in the successful implementation of a guidance program. Several studies indicate that principals are able to prioritize appropriate and inappropriate school counselor activities (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Zalaquett, 2005). However, principals continue to rate inappropriate activities as significant in spite of those findings.

The principal's priorities directly affect the work and priorities of the school counselor. This study found that counselor usage of the Choices program is directly related to the principal's support of Choices. If an activity is important to the school principal, it is going to be a priority for the school counselor. In order for the school counselor to make the most impact on students, the school principal must value the counselor's time.

As educators focus on the career development process, they must continue to focus on individualized career planning for each student. As Mupinga and O'Connor (2013) highlighted, students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs experience the most career development because CTE provides hands-on experiences in high school that greatly contribute to the career decision-making process. Mississippi has approximately fifty-two career and technical programs that provide rigor, relevance, and a competitive advantage to Mississippi students (RCU, 2015).

All students, no matter their chosen destination, can benefit from a CTE class. CTE programs have been shown to increase attendance rates, decrease dropout rates, provide hands-on learning, strengthen relationships with business and industry, and give students a jumpstart to his or her chosen career (Plank, 2001). In spite of these benefits, research has found that many teachers, administrators, and counselors perceive that CTE programs are only acceptable for students who are unable to fulfill the requirements of the academic curriculum (Gordon, 2008). The findings from this research study did not concur with the aforementioned results. Mississippi middle and high school counselors in this study were both aware of CTE offerings in our state and value the program.

It is crucial that counselors understand and value the importance of CTE. Even though the findings indicate that counselors are aware and value CTE, this does not mean that all stakeholders including parents, teachers, students, and administrators understand and value the importance of CTE. School counselors function in a role that can advocate and communicate that all students can benefit from participation in both CTE and academic classes. CTE cannot benefit students unless counselors communicate the opportunities students can receive from being involved in a CTE program.

In many ways, school counselors influence the outcome of secondary CTE programs. CTE recruitment, enrollment, attitude, and interest are definitely impacted in a positive or negative way by the counselor's attitude toward CTE. Fletcher (2009) found that high school students in CTE programs who obtained the technical skills and employability skills required for today's workforce make more informed career choices and transition more smoothly from school to work. The findings surely do indicate a positive future for CTE in Mississippi. Mississippi middle and high school counselors reported that they strongly agree that CTE greatly assists students in their post high school goals, offers students a highly competitive advantage in regards to employability, allows students more exposure to career options, and benefits participating students. In this study, counselors reported that they would strongly encourage students to enroll in CTE programs and expressed an understanding that CTE programs are for both college-bound and work-bound students.

Finally, according to research, image and perception have troubled CTE for some time. CTE's image has slowly improved despite the negative perception that CTE provides a poor quality education for the worst students (Cohen & Besharov, 2002).

Apparently, CTE has gained respect from Mississippi counselors due to its rigor and the advantages it is providing for students.

Delimitations and Limitations

Some factors limited the findings of the present study. The participants of the study were limited to only Mississippi counselors; however, the Choices program is used throughout the United States. Currently, one or more schools, districts, or organizations in every state are using a Choices product (Choices Planner, Choices Explorer, Choices360, or a statewide portal with Choices functionality) except the following states: Alabama, Washington DC, Georgia, Montana, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah. In addition to the delimitation, several limitations exist including non-random sampling. The researcher determined the selected group of individuals to send the instrument. Convenience sampling would also be a delimitation due to the fact that the group of participants is made up of people who are easy to reach. Lastly, self-reporting would limit the amount of information obtained by the researcher.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

In the best interest of students, counselor time must be protected. Lack of protection results in counselors spending endless time on coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students; coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs; computing grade-point averages; maintaining student records; and keeping clerical records. These tasks impede counselors from adequately meeting the needs of all students and hinder counselors from fully utilizing programs such as Choices, which benefit Mississippi students. Counselors must continue to advocate for their profession and for the protection of their time in order to meet the needs of all students.

Documentation of counseling activities, both appropriate and inappropriate, will support

counselors as they communicate both the successes and struggles they are facing as a

school counselor to their administrator. Although administrators should be the strongest

voice and advocate for school counselors, it seems that counselors must advocate for

themselves while simultaneously advocating for their students.

For this to change, accountability must exist on the administration level. In 2012,

the American School Counselor Association provided a model for how counselors should

spend their time; further, in 2014, Senate Bill 2423 was passed to protect counselor time

and increase student services. Most administrators are aware of Senate Bill 2423 and the

ASCA model. However, communication must exist between counselors and

administrators before accountability can occur. Counselors must outline the issues that

are hindering them from following the ASCA model and seek face-to-face meetings with

administrators to foster more effective communication.

In addition, policies must exist that require administrators to assign the

inappropriate activities, as defined by ASCA, to other individuals. For example, many

schools have assigned testing to the librarian in order to protect the counselors' time.

Every school is unique. Therefore, every school should be mandated to assign the time-

consuming responsibility of testing to an individual or team to protect the counselors'

time. In addition, sufficient clerical staff should exist in the counseling office to support

the counselor in the daily operations of registering new students, requesting cumulative

folders, and handling other administrative duties.

If counselors are evaluated based on uncontrollable circumstances,

administrators' evaluation should also be impacted on how well their counselors are

following the ASCA model as required by law. Until administrators are held accountable for the ASCA model, counselors will still struggle to meet the needs of all students. In addition, administrators should be educated as to the job requirements and responsibilities of a school counselor. Administrators are expected to understand the attributes of an excellent teacher and what the learning environment in the classroom should look like. In the same respect, it would be beneficial for administrators to develop a full understanding of the school counselor's role within the school system.

The current research project indicates that counselor time has been impacted by the inappropriate activities, as defined by ASCA. MDE policies and administrative practices must support counselor time. The support from both stakeholders will result in counselors being more proactive than reactive. Counselors can be more proactive by having the time to coordinate activities that will increase student attendance and student achievement while decreasing discipline infractions. The results of proactive activities will benefit individual students while contributing to the success of each school.

<div align="center">Recommendation of Future Research</div>

The research study yielded an opportunity for further investigation and research. The following research would provide additional understanding of the Mississippi Choices program and Career and Technical Education in Mississippi.

1. The findings of the study revealed that Mississippi counselors are aware and value Career and Technical Education. It is recommended that future studies examine parents', teachers', students', and administrators' awareness and valuation of CTE. This data would facilitate efforts to promote CTE and its benefits to stakeholders.

2. The ASCA model is the framework school counselors utilize to meet the needs of students. It is recommended that future research examine the knowledge school counselors and administrators have of the ASCA model. The data would identify the degree to which administrators and counselors are aware of the appropriate and inappropriate activities of school counselors as defined by ASCA. Thus, the level of additional ASCA training for school counselors and administrators could be determined.

3. The research indicated that school counselors have limited time to focus on career planning/career exploration. Additional research is recommended regarding whether counselors feel equipped to guide students in career development opportunities. This information would provide valuable information for the Mississippi Department of Education to utilize as they prepare for the professional development of counselors throughout the state.

4. Choices has been the program of choice by the Mississippi Department of Education. It is recommended that further research explore other career programs that are being utilized throughout Mississippi school districts. The data would provide additional information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of alternative programs in comparison to the Choices program. Therefore, MDE would have meaningful data to guide them in structuring and mandating career guidance throughout the state.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The purpose of this research project was to determine the counselor's usage of the Choices program throughout Mississippi schools. In addition, the research study explored middle and high school counselors' value of career and technical education in Mississippi. A review of the literature related to Choices and the value of career and

technical education held by school counselors did not identify any studies that focused on middle and high school counselors in Mississippi; this research project sought to fill this gap in literature.

The data for this research study was obtained from middle and high school counselors. Participating individuals included 10 K-12 School Counselors, 72 Middle School Counselors, 14 High School Counselors, and 28 Counselors who are both Middle and High School Counselors. The study focused on middle and high school counselors' value of career and technical education along with the usage and knowledge of the state Choices program. Statistical data was collected about the various duties that might inhibit the time school counselors have available to focus on career exploration and career planning with students. For this quantitative study, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA.

Several findings were discovered from the research study. First, the data revealed that counselors are aware of the state mandated Choices program; however, the results indicated that counselors' usage of Choices is much less than counselors' awareness of the program. Second, the study further revealed that the majority of middle and high school counselors believe they received the support needed to meet the needs of all students; however, they reported that they do not have sufficient time to meet the needs of all students.

In addition, the majority of counselors reported that more of their time is focused on college planning than career planning. Counselors reported that they were tasked with many inappropriate or ancillary tasks: coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students; coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs; computing

grade-point averages; maintaining student records; and keeping clerical records were among the inappropriate activities they were tasked with.

The data revealed no significant differences between the type of counselor and implementation of Choices; however, statistical significance existed between counselors' usage of Choices and the principal's support of Choices. Those counselors who used the Choices program also had principals that supported the Choices program. The findings revealed that middle and high school counselors in Mississippi are highly knowledgeable of the CTE programs and the national certifications offered in their district. In addition, the findings indicate that CTE is highly valued by middle and high school counselors in Mississippi.

Inappropriate activities hinder counselors from fully utilizing programs such as Choices to benefit Mississippi students. For this to change, accountability must exist on the administrative level in order to protect counselors. Policies requiring administrators to become more knowledgeable of the ASCA standards and the roles and responsibilities of the counselor were recommended. Suggestions were made that administrators' evaluation should be impacted by the counselors' time to meet the direct/indirect services set forth in the ASCA Model.

In addition, counselors must continue to advocate for their role as a school counselor and educate all stakeholders as to the value they possess. Recommendations for future research included examining parents', teachers', students', and administrators' awareness and valuation of CTE. Other recommendations were to explore the counselors' and administrators' knowledge of the ASCA model, to determine how equipped

counselors felt at guiding students through career development opportunities, and to

explore other career programs utilized in Mississippi school districts.

Mississippi Choices and the Influence of

Career and Technical Education

Section A: Valuation of Career and Technical Education

[1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree]

1) CTE programs greatly assist students for their post high-school goals.
2) CTE programs offer students a highly competitive advantage in regards to employability.
3) CTE programs allow students much exposure to career options.
4) I am highly confident that CTE programs benefit participating students.
5) When appropriate, I would strongly encourage students to enroll in CTE programs.
6) CTE programs are only for students who are "work" bound (NOT college-bound).
   [Only questions 1-5 would be for attaining a sum or mean….question 6 would provide perspective.]

Section B: Awareness of CTE and the Choices Program

[1=No awareness to 6=Fully aware]

7) I am knowledgeable of most all of the CTE programs offered in my school district.
8) I am aware that some CTE programs offer students national certifications.
9) I am aware that the Choices program is a state mandated program.
10) I am aware that all Mississippi students must complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP) beginning in 8th grade.
11) I am aware that students are able to target a career pathway by using the Choices program.
12) I have attended trainings that have successfully prepared me to implement the Choices program in my school.

Section C: Usage of Choices Program

[1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree and N/A]

13) My school fully utilizes the Choices program.
14) Through the Choices program, our school's counselors assist students in tailored course selection based on their post-secondary goals.
15) My school's counselors have students update their iCAP annually.
16) The Choices program is highly user-friendly.
17) The Choices program helps students to be "college and career" ready.
18) The Choices program is a priority in my district.
19) My principal fully supports the Choices program.
20) Through the Choices program, our school's counselors are fully resourced to support career development in my school.

Section D: Counselor Time

[1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree]

21) The ASCA Model is fully utilized in my district.
22) As a counselor I have support to meet the needs of all students.
23) The majority of my time is spent developing post-secondary plans for students.
24) The majority of my time is spent involved in testing.
25) Senate Bill 2423 has benefitted me by protecting my time for student related services.
26) I focus more on college planning than career planning.
27) I have sufficient time to focus on career planning /career exploration with students.
28) I have sufficient time to meet students' emotional, social, academic, and career development needs.
29) Choices is simply another program that I do not have time to accomplish.
30) How frequently are you involved in the following inappropriate (ASCA defined) activities?
[1=Never to 6=Always]

   a. Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
   b. Coordinating cognitive, aptitude, and achievement testing programs
   c. Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
   d. Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
   e. Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed
   f. Teaching classes when teachers are absent
   g. Computing grade-point averages
   h. Maintaining student records
   i. Supervising classroom or common areas
   j. Keeping clerical records
   k. Assisting with duties in the principal's office
   l. Providing therapy or long-term counseling in schools to address psychological disorders
   m. Coordinating school wide individual education plans, student study teams and school attendance review boards

Section E: Demographics

31) Type of school you work in:
   a. K-12
   b. Elementary Only
   c. Middle School Only
   d. High School Only
   e. Middle and High School
   f. CTE School
   g. Other: _____
32) Number of students in your school: _____
33) Number of School counselors in your school: _____
34) Number of year's experience:
   a. 0-5 years
   b. 6-15 years
   c. 16-30 years

104

       d.   over 30 years

35) Number of students responsible for:
       a.   less than 200 students
       b.   201-500 students
       c.   501-1000 students
       d.   over 1000 students

36) Region in Mississippi [show a map]:
       a.   Region 1
       b.   Region 2
       c.   Region 3

Charish R. Pierce, Ed.S.
181 Big Hill Road, Sumrall, MS 39482
(601) 408-2333

Dear Middle/High School Counselor,

I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi as well as a Counselor at Hattiesburg High School in Hattiesburg, MS. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study titled, "Mississippi Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education".

Participants in this study will be asked to complete a questionnaire about Mississippi state programs and career and technical education. The questionnaire includes questions about basic demographic information and counselors' usage and awareness of state programs. I am asking that all middle and high school counselors in Mississippi to complete the questionnaire that should take no more than ten minutes to complete.

Your participation may offer a better understanding of the usefulness of the state programs and the misconceptions of CTE. In addition, it may help provide insight into how much time counselors actually have to help students with career exploration by determining the appropriate and inappropriate activities that demand a counselor's time. As a Counselor and researcher, I will be sharing the aggregate results of the study with any participants requesting a copy of the findings.

There will be minimal risk to your participation in this study. All information will be completely confidential and anonymous. This project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and appreciated. Please find the questionnaire at the link provided.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at (601) 408-2333 or Charish.Kennedy@usm.edu. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Charish Pierce, Ed.S.

APPENDIX C – IRB Approval Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 16102802
PROJECT TITLE: Mississippi Choices and the Influence of Career and Technical Education
PROJECT TYPE: New Project
RESEARCHER(S): Charish Pierce
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Research and Administration
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 11/03/2016 to 11/02/2017
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Ensuring a bright *future* for every child

Office of Secondary Education
Counseling and Support Services

September 21, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter will serve as an authorization to the University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board that Chandrea Walker, Assistant Director of Counseling, of the Mississippi Department of Education is willing to distribute Charish Pierce's instrument to all middle and high school counselors in Mississippi to support her research study.

Should there be any questions or concerns about this research, I will contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Southern Mississippi (601.266.5997), 118 College Drive, Box #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001.

Sincerely,

Chandrea S. Walker, M.Ed., NCC, NCSC
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