A study to determine the perceptions of post-secondary vocational students regarding the value of their high school counseling experience

Linda Ann Sage

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE PERCEPTIONS OF POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL STUDENTS REGARDING THE VALUE OF THEIR HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING EXPERIENCE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in
Education: Vocational Education

By
Linda Ann Sage
June 1995
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VOCATIONAL STUDENTS REGARDING THE VALUE OF THEIR HIGH
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Approved by:

Name, Dr. T. H. Zimmerman

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Name, Dr. Ronald K. Pendleton
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which community college vocational students perceived the value of their high school counseling experience. The study was limited to community college vocational students in three Southern California counties. A Likert type questionnaire consisting of two parts was distributed to the respondents. Part 1 evaluated the respondents' demographic information while part 2 measured students' perceptions. The variables were evaluated by using a quantitative, study-based procedure to answer the research questions. The findings supported other studies and reflected a negative perception. After evaluating the results, it was recommended that: (1) a stronger emphasis be placed on career development curriculum in teacher and counselor training programs; (2) the role of the counselor be reassessed; and, (3) the implementation of career development programs be put in place that span from kindergarten through high school.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

Many of today's high schools provide guidance counselors to assist students with career exploration and career choices. However, many students are graduating from high school without making tentative career choices. Hutchinson and Bottorff (1989) stated: “Students are perhaps the most pertinent sources of significant input because of their direct personal involvement. Unfortunately, their perceptions and needs are sometime overlooked.” (p. 351) By inference, for a smooth transition from school to work, students need to be part of the process. The expression of their career guidance needs should be given more attention.

On November 15, 1993, the United States House of Representatives passed the School-To-Work Opportunities Act (PL 103-239). At the heart of this act was the idea of “systemic changes.” This change was to include high schools with a stronger emphasis on applied learning and work-related schooling. Seventy-five percent of today’s American high school students will not earn a college degree. Despite this high percentage, high schools continues to place greater emphasis on the college-preparatory student. The school-to-work legislation was designed to encourage states to think more about how best to expose all students -- including the college-bound -- to the world of work and how best to encourage students to consider occupations that may not require a college degree. (Jennings, 1994)
Today’s students are under a great deal of pressure to succeed. However, available evidence indicates that many schools are failing to provide all of the academic tools and career guidance they need for success. Mitchell (1988) described the pressure on today’s high school student when he said: “When high school students are seniors -- or even juniors or sophomores -- parents, friends of their parents, high school teachers, and peers constantly ask the anxiety-inducing question, ‘What are you going to do when you get out of school?’” (p. 331) To ease this pressure students who have made career decisions and those who have not need to make use of the career counselors’ expertise and information.

Faced with the crisis of searching for a place within society, which is compatible with self and with the opportunities provided by society, students need a source of information and answers to specific career questions. The student should be able to find answers in career exploration and guidance programs. Smith (1983) defined vocational guidance as: “A process involving traditional and innovative activities aimed toward helping the student make life and career decisions that are compatible with each one’s unique characteristics. ” (p.3)

The public school system desires to have students graduate with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become members of society. Therefore, career guidance should be a part of each student’s curriculum. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (1980) listed eight specific qualities related to guidance activities that should be a part of guidance curriculum:

1. Understanding the world of work.
2. Having job-entry skills.
3. Possessing a feeling of accomplishment.
4. Receiving acceptance from peers and family.
5. Developing economic awareness.
6. Learning to make and be accountable for decisions.
7. Knowing how to avoid harmful activities.
8. Developing good healthful living habits.

According to the Washington State Department of Public Instruction, along with the eight qualities related to guidance activities, vocational guidance curriculum should include:

Guidelines, goals, objectives and learning activities that will meet the need to provide students with instruction in guidance-related activities. Likewise, the counselor's philosophy should be one that motivates him or her to assume the major responsibility for assisting students to utilize their own resources, their environmental opportunities in the process of self-understanding, planning, decision making, and coping with problems relative to their developmental needs and their vocational development. (Washington State Department of Public Instruction, 1980)

According to the American School Counselor Association, the need for vocational guidance counseling programs is greater than ever. Many schools have guidance counseling programs, some are very effective while many are not. Gianuzzi (1992) described an effective program as: "A program that views counseling as the top priority which is more likely the forte of the counselor." (p.33) Brown (1989) described centers that provided ineffective counseling services:

- The change process perceived as a change in staff,
- The same factor. (Brown, 1989, as cited by Gianuzzi, 1992)

The main goal of the counselor in any school should be to enable to assume their place in the workplace and in society. (Gianuzzi, 1992)
For an effective career guidance program, student input should be a priority. The passage of the School-To-Work Opportunities Act focuses on the national recognition of the need for schools to address the vocational needs of all students. In addition, the act acknowledges that 75% of high school students will not go on to college. The high school student encounters many social pressures to make a career decision before completing high school. Career guidance programs need to be in place to counter these pressures.

There are state and federal guidelines that define what constitutes a good career program. The question then is: Are career guidance programs meeting the needs of high school students?

**Nature of the Problem**

With the signing of the “Goals 2000: Education America Act” in 1994 (PL 103-227), President Bill Clinton’s goals for a national reform of the United States educational system as a means for delivering more up-to-date effective education was outlined. The main thrust of Goals 2000 is to encourage agreement on what children should know and be able to do upon completion of their school experience. To do this the bill endorses the development of national content standards for education and assessment to measure their attainment. Along with the Goals 2000 Act, President Bill Clinton signed the “School-To-Work Opportunities Act” in 1993 (PL 103-239). These acts provide funds to states to plan for and implement educational programs that reflect systemic changes that contain the elements of job-related education in high school. This systemic change needs to include career counseling and guidance programs as a key component in the success of these educational reform acts.
Significance

There has been much discussion in literature and in the media about what education should be like by the year 2000 and beyond. Every student is to graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills to take his/her place in the workplace. The knowledge and skills that will be needed are rapidly changing. High school guidance counselors need to have a knowledge of today’s rapidly changing technology to be able to assist students with career choices that will reflect the needs of the job market in the year 2000 and beyond.

The career guidance process should not begin the year before students graduate from high school. Career development should be a continuing process that begins in elementary school and continues through the life of an individual. In the elementary school years an appreciation and understanding of the world of work should be instilled in the student. In middle school the student should begin to develop more realistic ideas and plans related to many occupational considerations by becoming involved in career planning. By high school the student should be provided in-depth career exploration and experiences including training. Smith (1983) stated:

Many career theorists say high school level is the most crucial time in the process in terms of vocational direction and long-term career planning . . . this is a time when the student will listen, especially when about to graduate. (p.19)

Our nation’s young people are our greatest natural resource. To nurture and develop this resource, we need to provide young people with the opportunity to make informed choices regarding their vocation. The House Committee hearing on the reauthorization of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 cited some of the needs of
students as: “A need to sort out and identify who they are in terms of their competencies, interests, attitudes, and aptitudes; a need to develop career planning, goal setting, and decision making skills; a need to have access to and know how to use up-to-date, accurate national, state and local educational, career and labor market information so they can make informed choices; and a need to know how to use placement, follow-up and follow-through resources.” (House Committee on Education and Labor, 1981, p 194)

This study of the perceptions of community college vocational students has the potential to provide information that can be valuable in recommending and/or determining a course of action for high school guidance counselors and career programs. Accordingly, it would facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and the overall benefits regarding career development and advisement education for high school students.

Statement of the Problem

During the formal years of education, K-12 students should be introduced to and be able to explore the many careers that will be available to them. When they graduate from high school they should have the knowledge and information that will enable them to make informed career choices. The high school guidance counselor should be the person whom students can look to for up-to-date information and help when making decisions as important as career choices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if high school students received the guidance and information they needed. To determine this, community college vocational students were surveyed to evaluate their perceptions’ of their high school career
counseling experience. To evaluate the value of the career counseling experience, students in community college vocational programs were surveyed.

**Overview of Research Questions**

The question the study sought to answer was, "how do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school career counseling experience?". Access to up-to-date information and knowledge of possible career choices should be a vital part of the high school experience of all students. How community college vocational students perceived the value of their experience was looked at to determine if their experience had given them the information and knowledge they needed. After a review of the literature, five areas appeared to control the type and quality of counseling students' experiences. These areas were: (1) how students valued the experience, (2) how time was spent with a counselor, (3) how the accuracy of information was perceived, (4) the counselor's skill and knowledge, and finally, (5) the students' needs.

Five research questions were developed to address these areas. The first research question addressed the value students placed on their career counseling experience. The second question looked at the amount of time students spent with a counselor. Research question three assessed the students' perception of the accuracy, validity, and timeliness of the counselors' information. Question four looked at the students' perception of the counselors' knowledge of skills needed by students to make informed career choices. Finally, question five sought to answer how the students viewed the equity of the counseling experience by high school track placement.
A questionnaire was developed and distributed to selected community college vocational students to measure their perceptions of the counseling experience in the five areas noted.

Limitations

The survey sample was limited to community college vocational students in three Southern California counties: San Bernardino, Riverside, and Los Angeles Counties. Only one or two programs were surveyed at each community college. Not all vocational programs are represented in the survey sample. The sample does not include students from agriculture and home economic programs. The community colleges and programs were selected because of the researcher's access to the programs.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study the following terms were used:

Career Counseling: Counseling individuals or groups of individuals about occupations, careers, life/career roles and responsibilities, career decision making, career planning, leisure planning, career pathing and other career development activities, together with the issues or conflicts that individuals confront regarding their careers.

Career Education: "A K-adult concept that integrates career related activities into regular classroom work and makes studies related to student growth toward worthwhile careers, . . . a partnership between schools and community." (Carlson, 1982, p. 4)

Career Guidance: "An organized program to assist an individual to assimilate and integrate knowledge, experience, and appreciation related to: (1) self-understanding, (2) understanding of work, society, and the discipline of work; (3) awareness of the part
leisure may play in a person's life, (4) understanding of the necessity for the multitude of factors to be considered in career planning, and (5) understanding the information and skills necessary to achieve self-fulfillment in work and leisure.” (Carlson, 1982, p. 5)

**Career Information**: The up-to-date and accurate information about trades, professional careers, and the job market provided by a career counselor or a career center.

**Career Services**: The programs, centers, and counselors that provide the student with the information needed to assist them with the process of making career choices and decisions.

**Counseling**: A direct and personal way to help the individual in a one-to-one, or small group basis.

**Counselor**: “A person on the staff who has special training for assessing the specific needs of each student and for coordinating an appropriate guidance program in the educational, vocational, and personal-social domain.” (Carlson, 1982, p. 5)

**Guidance**: “Guidance is both a process and a program. The guidance process helps individuals unify all of their learning activities and experiences. The program provides the frame-work for the process.” (Carlson 1982, p. 4)

**Guidance Services**: “Guidance services focus on the development of all individuals in the areas of skills and attitudes for responsible self-management and rational self-direction of their lives, the development of personal competence and personal adequacy. Guidance services are the umbrella, or the over-all term, which includes all of those services that may be guidance or counseling in nature.” (Carlson, 1982, p. 4)
Jobs: Regular activities performed in exchange for payment -- especially a trade, occupation, or profession.

Value: The importance or rank accorded to the experience.

Vocation: The conviction that one is called to do a particular kind of work in a trade, profession, or occupation.

Vocational Education: The formal preparation for a trade, profession, or occupation.

Vocational Guidance: "The broad purpose of vocational guidance is to help people to know, to accept, and respect their own abilities, interests, and aptitudes; then match these with realistic vocational goals; and finally proceed with maximum effectiveness toward these goals." (Carlson, 1982, p. 5)
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Historical Perspective

Guidance for work-bound youth and adults has been a focus of concern that goes back more than 80 years. Gianuzzi (1992) cited that guidance and counseling services were initiated at the turn of the century by Frank Parsons, who has come to be referred to as, "The Father of Guidance." Parsons believed that students were able to make wise choices about careers only after acquiring some knowledge about their own abilities and skills. In 1908, he founded a vocational bureau to help young men obtain jobs. (Gianuzzi, 1992) Ever since Parsons established the career counseling service, choosing an appropriate occupation for oneself has been considered one of the hallmarks of career maturity.

Prior to Parsons’ establishing career counseling services, Jesse B. Davis started guidance services in the Grand Rapids, Michigan schools in 1898. At the same time Eli Weaver began programs in New York City to help students find suitable jobs. (Gianuzzi, 1992)

The inclusion of guidance counseling into federal legislation was not a new trend. In 1913, four years before the Smith-Hughes Act (P.L. 347, in 1917) became law, the National Vocational Guidance Association was established in Grand Rapids, Michigan. (House Committee on Education and Labor [HCEL], 1981) This organization became the
catalyst for the guidance movement in the schools. Since that time, guidance services have expanded beyond vocational areas to include all areas of students' lives. (Gianuzzi, 1992)

With the passage of the National Education Act in 1958, millions of dollars were provided to local school districts to expand their guidance services and to train school counselors. Guidance services did not become widespread in most school districts until 1960. By 1965, guidance programs were flourishing because of the funds made available for counselor training. (Gianuzzi, 1992)

In 1981, the House Committee on Education and Labor met to reauthorize the Vocational Education Act of 1963. The reauthorization made provisions for the Vocational Guidance and Counseling Act of 1981. (H.R. 4974) The case for vocational guidance was found in Title II of the 1976 amendments to the Vocational Education Act of 1963. With the inclusion of these amendments the first formal recognition was made by congress to meet the guidance needs of work-bound youth and adults. Career counseling could no longer remain a function of choice or situational ethics. Prior to this time, state expenditures on counseling added up to less than 3.4% of their total vocational education budget. (HCEL, 1981) As a result of Title II, students located primarily in southern rural states, mid-Atlantic urban centers, northwestern states, and some isolated portions of the mid-west and far-west were familiarized with training that never had been within their reach.

In 1980, the Youth Act (H.R. 6711 and S. 2385) was created to meet a need that no legislation had effectively addressed at that time. The need was to assure the present
and future employability of approximately 3.5 million youth, between the ages of eleven
and twenty-one, characterized as poor, deficient in academics, social, and vocational skills.

Two titles made up this legislation. Title I, the labor initiative written in the
Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), carried the stimulus forward by
expanding the quality and depth of assistance to the impoverished out-of-school youth of
high-school age and beyond. The Education Title Act, Title II, also focused on the
high-school aged youth falling within or below certain poverty levels, but added the
criterion of marked academic skill deficiency to the eligibility factors dictating who would
be a recipient. Vocational guidance services were to be a part of meeting these needs.
(HCEL, 1981)

In 1982, the board of directors of the National Guidance Association adopted a
position statement that outlined the definition of vocational/career counseling and
competency areas required to perform such a role. In 1991, the board of directors of the
National Career Development Association approved a revised document in which career
counseling was defined as follows:

The counseling of individuals or groups of individuals about occupational, career,
life/career roles and responsibilities, career decision-making, career planning,
leisure planning, career pathing, and other career development activities, together
with the issues or conflicts that individuals confront regarding their career. (Herr,
1992, p. 258)

Recent legislation passed by the federal government include the reauthoized “Carl
D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990,” “The School-To-
America Act of 1994 (PL 103-227).” Each act provides funding for career guidance
programs. At the heart of the School-To-Work Opportunities Act is the nations’ need to address the development of a comprehensive and coherent system to help students acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, and information needed to make an effective transition from school to career-orientated work. These are considered as “incentive funds” to plant seeds that will initiate long-term local efforts in career guidance.

Historically the concept of vocational counseling or guidance has been primarily a process by which individual characteristics were fitted to a job or occupation that required certain profiles of personal attributes. This concept has made counseling less a total system in its own right and more a sub-system of a larger process of career-related issues and facilitative processes. Counselors who plan to work in the twenty-first century will find themselves confronted with an important role in the delivery of effective career guidance services. Educators need to prepare today’s students to meet not only the demands of today’s marketplace, but the marketplace of the twenty-first century. (Jenkins, 1978) The rapid development of new technologies and the continuing shift of employment away from manufacturing toward services are both having a profound and irreversible impact on the type of work that today’s students will encounter when they enter the job market. The type of skills students will need in order to obtain a job, succeed in that job, and be productive has changed dramatically. (Howe II, 1990) The student’s knowledge of the changing job market will be vital to their career success.

The Role of the Counselor

The federal government has recognized the need for career education and career counseling with the legislative acts passed by the House of Representatives and the
Senate. Furthermore, the National Vocational Guidance Association was established to address the career needs of the vocational student. It adopted a position statement that outlined the definition of vocational/career counseling and competency areas required by the counselor to perform such a role.

At the local level, counselors assume many roles, but two of their main assigned roles are to determine each student's course of study and their academic track placement. No administrator or teacher has as much power over the academic future of students as do counselors. The role of the counselor should be to enable students to find the abilities within themselves and to help them push toward their goals. The ideal role of the guidance counselor should be to move students from "seeking answers" to the discovery of the answers within themselves and to develop the ability to reach their goals.

The most powerful influence the counselor has is over students' selection of their high school program and ultimately their career choices after high school. Because of the role guidance counselors hold in the educational process, they are often referred to as the "gatekeeper" to the academic and vocational programs offered to students while in high school. In the position of gatekeeper, the counselor has a great impact on students' choice of the academic track that will have an effect on their career choices after high school. Viewed from this perspective, the impact that counselors have cannot be minimized. (Kendall, 1984)

To assume this role a counselor must be well informed about vocational education and career objectives when helping students with their career choices. (Sproles, 1988)
counselors' states that: "A secondary school counselor is to be a professional educator with specialized graduate level training in counseling and related vocational guidance services." (Smith, 1983, p. 46) The Washington Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia (1980), described the counselor as a professional educator who should have successfully completed training, have experience in human relations, and work experience in occupations other than counseling or teaching. In this role, counselors should adhere to the philosophy that they have a major responsibility for assisting students to utilize their own resources, and their environmental opportunities in the process of self-understanding, planning, decision making and coping with the problems relative to their developmental needs and to their vocational development.

The Professional Standards Committee of the National Career Development Association (1992) issued a report outlining the minimum competencies a career counselor must demonstrate in order to assume the role of counselor:

1. Career development theory.
2. Individual and group counseling.
3. Individual/group assessment.
4. Information resources.
5. Program management and implementation.
6. Consultation.
7. Special populations.
8. Supervision.
10. Research/evaluation.

The professional organizations that are responsible for the training and certifying of guidance counselors have outlined the minimum competencies, philosophy, job
description, and policy statement that defines the role of the guidance counselor. Does the role, as described, match the process?

**The Counseling Process**

In recent years there has been a rapid expansion in the effort of secondary school systems to provide students with more information pertaining to occupational education and the world of work and to help students with appraising their own interests, aptitudes, personalities and skills related to a variety of occupations. (Dawson, 1969) This information and occupational assessment should be found in the career counseling process. In the process, it becomes the responsibility of the counselor to organize counseling activities that will assist students to move in the direction of career choice decisions. By tradition, this process has included approaches to career counseling that emphasizes the importance of student-centered counseling and the need to attend to both the cognitive and affective facets of the student. (Mannuele-Adkins, 1992)

Local schools approach this on a one-on-one interaction between the counselor and student, but there is evidence that group career treatment produces better results than do one-on-one counseling. (McAuliffe, 1991) The group process gave the counselor the opportunity to address the needs of the students who were undecided about their occupational choices due to limited information about themselves and/or the world of work. McAuliffe (1991) also found that, in the classroom setting, the counselor was able to help students acquire information about themselves and the world of work while teaching them decision-making skills.
With today’s emphasis on the “new basics,” which are skills in group effectiveness, goal setting, problem-solving, initiative, responsibility, self-esteem and sociability, has made the role of the counselor and the counseling process have a significant impact, not only on the student, but in the field of education. Research into guidance efforts that successfully integrate these basic skills into educational programs convinced educators that the counselor plays a key role in helping students gain these new basic skills. (Feller, 1992) The New York School Boards Association in a position paper on “The Vocational Missions of Public Schools” (1986) stated that, “Making career choices and learning job-seeking skills are all part of the preparation that students are in need of to enter the workplace.” (p.13) Questions about work salience, career maturity, and time perspectives are all integral parts of the career counseling process and are antecedents to career decisions. (DiRusso & Lucarino, 1989)

**Student Access**

It is apparent that programs and services for vocational guidance are needed and wanted. Two corresponding questions need to be asked: (1) are programs in place to provide students with the skills, information, and knowledge to make realistic career choices?, and (2) are students open to seeking career information while in high school? Miller (1987) looked at vocational maturity; he found that students do not get maximum benefit from available vocational career counseling because of their level of vocational maturity. When students were faced with a vocational career choice, they had difficulty determining a preferred career option. Due to the student’s level of vocational maturity, Miller found that researchers have cautioned against early career decisions. Most students
simply do not seem to have processed a desire for relevant information about careers before their senior year in high school to warrant using career information in an actual career decision-making process.

Because of the lack of vocational maturity, students will make career decisions based on limited, inadequate, or faulty data. Students will make career choices because they wanted to learn a skill to prepare for a job, or the program sounded interesting and they thought they would like to work in that particular skill area. (Sproles, 1988) Finally, students would wait until the pressure of decision making was upon them before they allow information to become relevant.

Students who need the help formulating their career goals and actions would not have received comprehensive guidance assistance. Guidance and counseling services appeared to be unequally available to all public school students. Students from lower socio-economic status, minority students, students from small schools in rural areas, and students who do not plan to go on to college are less likely to have access to guidance counseling. (Meyer, 1989)

Many times the only contact students would have with a counselor was to select an academic track and plan a program of study while in high school. Even then only about half of all high school students receive counselor assistance in program planning. Slightly more than half of all high school students had access to counseling for their plans after high school, that is, for career counseling. More access tended to be associated with academic track placement. Those students with limited access were in general or vocational education track placement. (Lee & Ekstrom, 1978)
Students in general education and non-academic tracks are the ones who need more rather than less assistance in forming future plans. The amount of access students had for college and career counseling depended on the students. The students were the ones who took the initiative to seek out the counselor because the counselor did not seek out the students for these services. The arrows of communication did not go both ways. (Lee & Ekstrom, 1978) Because students did not seek out the guidance counselor’s advice they were unaware of the consequences of their academic choices, both in selecting a curriculum track and in planning their high school program; therefore, they were unaware of the effects their choices would have on them after high school.

Student Perceptions of Guidance Counseling

Many factors have contributed to the students’ perception of the value of their high school career counseling experience. Wills and Ritter (1979) surveyed 550 high school students regarding their attitudes toward counselors and the functions that counselors perform. Their study found that students would go to a counselor for help to change a class or to determine graduation requirements. The same students were not likely to seek out a counselor for help with a personal problem, questions about sex, or problems with friends. (Wills & Ritter, 1979, as cited by Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986)

Van Riper (1971) found that many students were not clear about the role of the counselor. He surveyed 735 ninth-grade students about their perceptions of the role of the counselor. He found that the counselors were easily identified as persons who helped with educational plans, somewhat identified as persons who helped with school problems, and not clearly identified as persons who helped with personal problems. (Van Riper,
1971, as cited by Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1989) Results of the study indicated that the vast majority of students remained uninformed about the nature and scope of guidance counseling services. Olson and Matkin (1992) found that students held different perceptions and expectations about career counseling than were offered.

There were differences between how students and counselors perceived the need for personal counseling, with students placing greater emphasis on fulfilling their vocational needs, while counselors placed greater emphasis on student responses. Student responses suggested that the need for personal counseling was not met, as a result, access to students was limited to meet the needs of the students.

Problems With the Counseling Process

Historically the value of career counseling has been proven, but many students are not being served or influenced by counselors while in high school. A review of literature revealed a number of problems. The most consistent problems were: Counselor training programs; school administration’s perception of the counselor’s role; the small number of students who are college bound that receive the largest amount of the counselor’s time; the students must seek out the counselor for information; and the high ratio of students assigned to counselors. Finally, today's counselors are faced with the many new and complex social problems that schools must deal with.
The level of counselor training has been a problem. It has been a well-recognized issue that guidance professionals do not receive adequate training for their positions. Counselor training programs do not adequately expose their students to methods that incorporate sophisticated counseling techniques. (Manuel-Adkins, 1992) The training process should have a bearing on the counselor’s attitude and behavior while in the position of counselor. According to Marsh (1966):

> It was assumed here that the behavior of an individual in his profession is the consequence of the various expectations and pressures brought to bear upon him in the social system in which he works, as well as the results of his training and the conceptions of “correct behavior” that he brings to his position. (Dawson, 1969, p.6)

Aubrey (1972) found that a weakness in counselor training was the failure to train the counselor to be a change agent or an active interventionist within the school curriculum. (Aubrey, 1972, as cited by Carroll, 1981)

Counselors come to their position with masters’ degrees, but what they were trained for and what they are assigned to do are very different. A study done by Gianuzzi (1992) revealed that a very narrow view of the counselor’s role was held by many school principals. Principals saw the counselor not as an individual with the expertise to help students with problems and with making career decisions, but as schedulers of classes and providers of information. As a result of the administrative perception of the counselor’s role, counselors viewed themselves more as administrators than as counselors. They felt their time was spent managing the school rather than assisting students. (Kendall, 1984) Kendall also found that counselors were assigned administrative tasks. He listed six
activities that counselors were consistently assigned:

1. Scheduling classes.
2. Performing clerical/secretarial tasks.
3. Engaging in hall or lunchroom supervision.
5. Mediating teacher/staff conflicts.

Finally, the counselor was not viewed as an important part of the decision-making and program-development process. They also had little voice in the politics of the school while finding themselves faced with the dilemma of conflicting pressures emanating from current vocational and academic curricula reforms.

Counselors were selective of whom they used their career counseling time for. They devoted their time to those students who were planning to attend college. The college-bound students were easier to work with because they were more focused on school and their plans after high school. The approach of meeting only the career needs of the 10% of college-bound students, left the remaining 90% of high school students unserved. For that 90%, the counselor becomes the gatekeeper who assigned them their course of study. Counselors made assumptions about which students were work-bound and which students were college-bound. They assumed it was their responsibility to assign students to an educational track. Once students were assigned it became very difficult and unusual for students to move between tracks, particularly in certain subject areas. (Kelvin, Oaks, Hare, Ramose & Schoeff, 1990)

The duties of the counselor did not include seeking out students to assist them with career information and career decisions. The student desiring assistance with career
information and guidance had to assume the responsibility to seek out the help of the
counselor. The problem of leaving the responsibility to reach out for the help to the
student was the students' level of vocational maturity. If the students did not know or feel
a need to know about career choices, they did not seek information. Another problem
was the counselors' over-burdened schedule. It would take students many days or weeks
to be able to get in to see a counselor. Because of the time factor, they did not seek out
the help of a counselor. Many times the result of placing the responsibility on the student
resulted in the student making poor curriculum choices and poor career choices.

Lee and Ekstrom (1978) in their study found two major problems that affected
access to guidance counselors and the type of counseling students received:

1. High student-to-counselor ratios limited particular availability of counseling.
2. Counselor’s time tended to be dominated by the required record keeping,
scheduling, and monitoring rather than by advising.

The National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (1984) stated that
counselor-student ratios were too high. They found that many counselors had 400 to 500
students assigned to them. (DiRusso & Lucarino, 1989) Much of the counselor's time
spent with students was for scheduling of classes, changing schedules, preparing testing,
and administering tests; this left little time for individual or group career counseling. A
national survey on career-information systems and practices in secondary schools found
that two-thirds of the schools said that less than 30% of their counselors' professional
time was spent assisting students with occupational choices and career planning.
(HCEL, 1981)
In conclusion, today’s counselors face many new problems related to their interaction with students. One problem is the rapid changes and the complexity of today’s public schools. Also, schools are now being asked to assume more and more responsibility to not only educate children in academic areas, but also in all areas of life. Schools now find themselves dealing with high crime rates, drugs, teenage pregnancy and other social issues that once were not a main focus or concern of the schools.

**Summary**

Historically there has been a concern for the need for career guidance to help high school students and young adults make the transition from school to work. Meeting the needs of career guidance began with Jesse B. Davis in 1896 and continues in recent educational reform acts such as the School-To-Work Opportunities Act, and Goals 2000: Education America Act signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994.

Since the inception of guidance counseling services, counselors have held the important position of “gatekeeper” in the educational life of every high school student. Professional organizations responsible for the training and certification of guidance counselors have outlined the minimum competencies, philosophy, job description, and policy statement that defines the role of the guidance counselor.

The career guidance process has involved assisting students in moving from seeking external answers to a discovery within themselves to develop the ability to push toward their goal. Questions about work salience, career maturity, and time perspectives are all integral parts of the career counseling process and are antecedents to making career decisions.
Two factors have determined the amount and quality of student access. The first factor was student vocational maturity. The second factor was guidance counseling services appeared to be unequally available to all students. Because of these factors students made poor academic decisions that resulted in poor career choices.

Student perceptions of the role of the counselor and the counseling process resulted because they were not clear about the role of the counselor. In addition, they did not feel that the majority of activities they believed should be performed by career guidance personnel were offered.

A review of the literature revealed six problems that consistently interfered with the counseling process. The first problem was counselor training programs. The second problem was school administrations’ perception of the counselor’s role. The third problem was the small number of students who received the largest amount of the counselor’s time. The fourth problem was the fact that the students were left to seek out the counselor help with career information. The fifth problem was the high ratio of students assigned to a counselor. Finally, the sixth problem was the complex social conditions that a school must deal with, i.e. single-parent homes, AFDC, teenage pregnancy, gang violence, etc.
CHAPTER THREE

Research and Design

Theory of the Study

The problem addressed by this study was to determine the perceptions of community college vocational students regarding the value of their high school career counseling experience. In theory, how career counseling was perceived should produce a positive response given the fact that many high schools provide counselors. To test the theory respondents were selected from eight different vocational programs representing five community colleges within Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. A survey instrument was used to gather the data needed for establishing the extent of the respondents’ perceived value of their high school counseling experience. To test the theory, the study measured the degree of value the respondents placed on their high school counseling experience. For comparison, responses were sorted by gender and high school track placement.

Research Procedures

The research was designed to measure the respondents’ perceived value of their career guidance experience. A questionnaire was used to gather data needed to assess the respondents’ perceptions. The questionnaire was distributed to students in vocational
programs at Riverside Community College, Crafton Hills College, Mt. San Antonio College, Chaffey College and Citrus College.

**Research Questions**

The following five research questions were identified to serve as a guide for the study:

1. How do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school career counseling experiences?

2. Did guidance counselors provide an adequate amount of time for students to be assisted with identification of career choices and information?

3. How do students perceive the accuracy, validity, and timeliness of the information that was provided by guidance counselors?

4. Did students perceive that guidance counselors had adequate knowledge of required technical and academic information needed by students to make an informed career choice?

5. Do community college vocational students who completed college preparatory, general education, or vocational education differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the value of high school counseling?

**Questionnaire**

A two-part questionnaire was developed. Part 1 evaluated the respondent’s demographic information, and part 2 measured the student’s perceptions. (see appendix C)
Along with each packet of questionnaires, a letter of introduction and an explanation of the study was sent to the vocational instructors at the eight community colleges who assisted with the distribution of the questionnaire. (see appendix A) Each instructor was contacted, prior to sending the questionnaire, and asked to assist in the collection of the data. Follow-up telephone calls were made to those instructors who had not returned the questionnaires by May 10, 1994. A letter of explanation and instruction to the respondents was attached to each questionnaire. (see appendix B) A likert type questionnaire consisting of two parts was distributed to the participants.

(see appendix C)

Part 1 of the questionnaire solicited demographic information about the respondents:

- Gender
- Age
- Educational level -- high school graduate
- High school track placement
- Highest level of education
- Future educational plans
- Fathers’ and Mothers’ occupations
- Fathers’ and Mothers’ level of education

Part 2 consisted of 14 likert-scale-type questions designed to solicit the following information:

- The value of the career counseling experience.
The amount of time spent with a counselor.

The accuracy, validity and timeliness of career information.

The career counselors' knowledge of technical and academic skills that would be needed by students after graduation.

The difference in the perception of the value of career counseling held by college preparatory, general education, or vocational education high school track.

The demographic data in part 1 were used to determine individual characteristics and family background. To get a family profile, questions were asked about the parents’ occupations and education. Questions in part 2 of the questionnaire were designed to establish the students’ perception of the value of their high school counseling experience. The questionnaire was designed to minimize confusion and reduce completion time.

**Pilot Study**

A pilot study of the research instrument was conducted using seven respondents who were not included in the study population. They were asked to evaluate individual question construction, clarity, and the ability of each question to yield the appropriate data. The respondents also provided an informal critique of the effectiveness of the survey instrument. After the pilot study was completed, modifications to both questions and response choices were made. Some wording was changed in part 1 to make questions read more clearly.
Population Sample and Description

The population was a cross-section of community college students enrolled in vocational programs in Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. The 208 (N=208) respondents represented vocational programs in aeronautics, automotive, computer science, cosmetology, electronics, emergency medical technology, police science and refrigeration. (see figure 7, page 43)

Treatment of the Data

For statistical purposes a quantitative, survey-based procedure was selected to answer the research questions. A questionnaire was designed to solicit demographic data of the respondents and solicit the respondents' perceptions of the value of their career counseling experience while in high school. A likert type scale was selected because of its consistency and reliability in educational research. Survey data were processed using a nonparametric scale using value, frequency, percentage, mean and mode. The responses were sorted by gender and high school track placement for variable comparison.

Research Design

Questions 1 through 10 of part 1 sought information to establish the respondent's demographic profile. Each question and its measurement rationale are as follows:

Question 1 -- gender -- identified the percentage of male and female respondents in the study.

Question 2 -- Age -- identifies the mean age group of the student population. Many vocational students in community colleges are older
re-entry students.

**Question 3 (A&B)** -- High school completion or GED -- identified the percentage of respondents who had completed high school or their GED. Some students enter community college with a GED in place of a high school diploma. This would reflect on their interaction with career counselors.

**Question 4** -- High school track placement -- identified the track placement of the respondents. Track placement would reflect the percentage of time spent with a counselor and the value respondents placed on career counseling.

**Question 5** -- Respondents' highest level of education -- identified the percentage of respondents who had more college or trade school experience. Many community colleges' vocational students have returned to school to be retrained.

**Question 6** -- Plans to continue education -- indicated the respondents' intentions to further their education.

**Question 7** -- Father's occupation -- was used to calculate a correlation between the father's occupation and the respondents' career choice.

**Question 8** -- Mother's occupation -- indicated the same data found in question 7.
Question 9 -- Father's highest level of education -- established the father's influence on the respondent to achieve an educational level at least equal with his own.

Question 10 -- Mother's highest level of education -- presented data similar to that of question 9.

Demographic data from questions 1 through 10 had a numeric scale for each variable to determine respondents' demographic profile and population distribution. The data were used in calculating the correlation between respondents' demographics and their perception of the value of their high school guidance counseling experience. (see part I of questionnaire, appendix C)

Questions 1 through 14 in part 2 of the questionnaire constituted the data necessary for measuring the strength of each respondents' perception of the value of their high school career counseling experience. Each question was designed to produce the data necessary to answer the following research questions:

1. How do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school career counseling experience?

Questionnaire questions 2, 9, and 10 measured the respondents' perception of the value of their experience.

Question 2 -- How valuable was the career information provided to you by your counselor? -- Indicated the value the respondents placed on career information provided by counselors. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT VALUABLE to 4 indicating EXTREMELY VALUABLE.
Question 9 -- How important was your high school counseling to you? -- Indicated how the respondents valued their high school career counseling. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT IMPORTANT to 4 being EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.

Question 10 -- How beneficial was your career counseling in high school? -- Implied how the respondents valued the benefits of career counseling. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT BENEFICIAL to 4 being VERY BENEFICIAL.

2. Did guidance counselors provide an adequate amount of time to assist students with the identification of career choices and information?

Questionnaire questions 3 and 4 addressed the amount of career counseling time the respondents perceived to have spent with a counselor while in high school.

Question 3 -- Indicate the amount of time you feel you spent with your high school counselor. -- Measured the amount of time spent. Eight variables were used to measure how time was spent. A numeric scale of 1 through 5 was used. One being NONE to 5 being EXTENSIVE.

Question 4 -- Did you feel you were able to spend the time you needed with a counselor for career planning? -- Indicated the respondents’ perception of the time they were able to spend. The question was measured by a YES/NO response.

3. How do students perceive the accuracy, validity, and timeliness of the information that was provided by guidance counselors?
Questionnaire questions 1, 6 and 12 addressed the respondents' perception of the accuracy, validity and timeliness of career counseling information.

Question 1 -- Did you feel that your high school guidance counselors provided you with up-to-date career information? -- Solicited a YES/NO response that would indicate the respondents' perception of the timeliness and accuracy of information provided by counselors.

Question 6 -- How accurate was the career information you received in high school? -- Indicated the respondents' perception of the accuracy of the information they receive. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT ACCURATE to 4 being EXTREMELY ACCURATE.

Question 12 -- What level of importance do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for job and career information? -- Indicated the respondents' perception of the importance counselors placed on the need for job and career information. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT IMPORTANT to 4 being EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.

4. Did students perceive that guidance counselors had adequate knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information needed by students to make an informed career choices?

Questionnaire questions 5, 7 and 8 addressed the respondents' perception of the counselors' knowledge of the technical and academic information and skills needed after graduation.
Question 5 -- Knowing what you know now, do you feel that your high school guidance counselor had an accurate knowledge of the academic and technical skills and information you would need after graduation? -- Indicated the respondents’ perception of the counselor’s knowledge of academic and technical needs. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE to 4 being EXCEEDINGLY KNOWLEDGEABLE.

Question 7 -- How knowledgeable was your counselor about college requirements? -- Indicated the respondents’ perception of the counselors’ knowledge of college entrance requirements. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE to 4 being EXCEEDINGLY KNOWLEDGEABLE.

Question 8 -- How knowledgeable was your counselor about trade school requirements? -- Indicated the respondents’ perception of the counselors’ knowledge of trade school entrance requirements. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NOT KNOWLEDGEABLE to 4 being EXCEEDINGLY KNOWLEDGEABLE.

5. Do community college vocational students who completed college preparatory, general education, or vocational education differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the value of high school career counseling?

Questionnaire questions 11 and 13 addressed the respondents’ perception of the value of their counseling experience when the data were sorted by the respondents high school track placement.
Question 11 -- How much importance did your high school counselor attach to your making tentative career choices before leaving high school? -- Implied the respondents' perception of the value counselors placed on their tentative career plans. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NO IMPORTANCE to 4 being MUCH IMPORTANCE.

Question 13 -- What level of emphasis do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for college counseling? -- Implied the respondents' perception of the level of emphasis counselors placed on their need for college counseling when the data were sorted by high school track placement. A numeric scale of 1 through 4 was used. One being NO EMPHASIS to 4 being A LOT OF EMPHASIS.

Questionnaire question 14 -- What was your most valuable source of career information? -- Implied where the respondents most valued source of career information came from. Seven variables were used to determine the sources: school guidance counselor, career classes, teachers, family, friends, television, books. (see part II of questionnaire, appendix C)

Chapter four will evaluate and discuss the finding of the questionnaire. The theory was that the high school career counseling experience should have been a positive experience that provided the respondents with the guidance and information about career choices they would need after high school. The data were also evaluated by gender and high school track placement to obtain a more complete picture of the respondent's perceptions.
CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Findings   --  Part 1

Do community college vocational students perceive that their high school counseling experience was of value? According to a review of the literature, there were five possible variables that would affect the level of value the respondents placed on their experience. Part 1 of the findings looked at the demographic variables that related to the respondents' educational and socio-economic background. Part 2 evaluated the value the respondents placed on their high school experience.

Population description in the questionnaire, questions 1 through 10, were used to construct a demographic profile of the population sample. As shown in figure 1, of the total population (N=208), males consisted of 73% while females accounted for 27%.

Figure 1
RESPONDENTS BY GENDER
The data indicated that the majority of respondents were in the 18 to 25 age group (53%). The data indicted that 94% had completed high school while 6% had not. (see figure 2)

![Figure 2: Respondents' High School Graduation Status](image)

Of the respondents that had not completed high school, 7% had not received a GED while 6% did get their GED.

![Figure 3: Respondents by High School Track](image)
Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they were placed in a general education track. Thirty-eight percent were placed in a college preparatory track. Ten percent were placed in a vocational/occupational track in high school. (see figure 3)

Seventeen percent of the respondents were first-year community college students, 26% were second-year community college students, 40% were community college graduates, 8% had completed a trade school, nine percent of the respondents had a four-year college degree. (see figure 4)
Nineteen percent of the fathers were professionals, while 16% of the mothers were professionals. Thirty-eight percent of the fathers and 15% of the mothers were technical, managerial or business owners. Twenty-five percent of the fathers were skilled workers, while 26% of the mothers were skilled workers. Of the semi-skilled workers, 11% were fathers and 9% were mothers. Three percent of the fathers were unskilled workers, while 5% of the mothers were unskilled workers. Of the respondents who were unemployed, 4% were fathers and 20% were mothers. (see figure 5)
Of the respondent's' parents, 15% of the fathers were not high school graduates, while 18% of the mothers had not graduated from high school. Twenty-five percent of the fathers were only high school graduates, while 34% of the mothers had only attended high school. Sixteen percent of the fathers and 18% of the mothers had completed some community college. Nine percent of the fathers and 3% of the mothers had completed trade school. Twelve percent of the fathers had a community college degree, while 16% of the mothers had completed community college. Twenty-two percent of the fathers and 12% of the mothers were four-year college graduates. (see figure 6)
The data in figure 7 identifies respondents by their community college vocational program. N=29 (14%) of the respondents were from Crafton Hills College Emergency Medical Technician Program. N=27 (13%) were enrolled in Mt. San Antonio College Refrigeration Program. N=23 (11%) were students in Chaffey College Aviation Program. N=31 (15%) were students in Citrus College Automotive Program. N=26 (13%) were enrolled in Citrus College Cosmetology Program. N=29 (14%) were enrolled in Riverside Community College Police Science Program. N=24 (12%) of the respondents were enrolled in Chaffey College Computer Science Program. N=19 (9%) were enrolled in Riverside Community College Electronic Program. (see figure 7)
Part two of the questionnaire asked questions that were designed to determine the strength of each respondents' perception of the value of their high school guidance counseling experience. (see appendix C) One hundred percent (N=208) of the respondents answered the 14 questions in part 2 of the questionnaire. The response to each question's variable was measured on a scale of 1 to 4, with the exception of question 3 that was based on a 1 to 5 -- response scale. A choice of 1 measured a negative response to the value strength for that variable, while a 4 or 5 response measured a positive value strength for the variable. A mean score was figured for each question and a mean-of-means was figured for the questions that addressed each research question. Each question was designed to produce the data necessary to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1: How do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school counseling experience?**

Questions 2, 9, and 10 of the questionnaire were used to determine the respondents' perception of the value of their high school counseling experience. The findings for question 2: How valuable was the career information provided to you by your counselor? -- were as follows:
When all respondents responses were evaluated, a mean of 1.8 or 44% indicated that the career information provided by their counselor was of no value. Only 5% felt that the information was extremely valuable.

The findings for the variables in question 9: How important was your high school counseling to you? -- were as follows:

Forty percent, a mean of 1.9, felt their high school counseling was of no importance. Only 8% felt it was extremely important.

The findings for the variables in question 10: How beneficial was your career counseling in high school? -- were as follows:

Forty-nine percent, a response mean of 1.7 of the respondents felt that they did not benefit from their counseling experience. Only 3% felt they had benefited.

The mean-of-means for questions 2, 9, and 10 was 1.8. When sorted by gender and high school track placement, there were no significant differences in the respondents' responses to these questions.

Research question 2: Did guidance counselors provide an adequate amount of time to assist students with the identification of career choices?

Questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire addressed the amount of career counseling time the respondents’ perceived to have spent with a counselor while in high school.
The findings for the variables in question 3: Indicate the amount of time you felt you spent with your high school counselor were as follows:

Thirty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they had spent very little time with a counselor for scheduling of classes. A response mean of 2.3. Only 3% said they had spent an extensive amount of time.

Thirty-four percent of the respondents said they had spent no time with a counselor to change classes while 33% said they had spent very little time with a counselor to change classes. A response mean of 2.1.

When the respondents were asked if they had spent time with a counselor to discuss academic problems, 48% said they had spent no time, 28% said they had spent very little time. A response mean of 1.8. Only 1% said they had spent an extensive amount of time.

Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated that they had not spent any time with a counselor to discuss personal problems. A response mean of 1.4. One percent said they had spent an extensive amount of time with a counselor for personal problems.

When asked if they had discussed attendance problems with a counselor, 65% of the respondents said they had not seen a counselor for attendance problems. A response mean of 1.6. Two percent had spent an extensive amount of time.

When asked about seeking career information, 37% of the respondents said they had not seen a counselor for career information; 34% of the respondents said they had spent very little time with a counselor for the purpose of getting career information. A response mean of 2.0.
Forty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had not spent time with a counselor for help with career choices. Twenty-seven percent said they had spent very little time with a counselor for help with career choices. A response mean of 1.9.

When the respondents were asked if they had seen a counselor for job information, 55% said they had not. A response mean of 1.7.

Question 4: Did you feel you were able to spend the time you needed with a counselor for career planning? -- was measured by a yes/no response. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said they did not feel they were able to spend the time they needed with a counselor for career planning.

When question 3 was sorted by gender, there was no significant difference in the responses. When question three was sorted by high school track placement, there was a significant difference between those respondents who were college preparatory students and those students in general and vocational education tracks. A greater number of general and vocational education students felt they had spent time with a counselor for attendance problems. A response mean of 1.8 for the general education students and a mean of 1.3 for college preparatory students responses illustrated the respondents' perception of time spent discussing attendance problems.

When asked about time spent with a counselor for career information, college preparatory students indicated that they had spent more time with a counselor for career information while general and vocational education students had a mean score of 1.8.

College preparatory students felt they had spent more time with a counselor for help with career choices. A response mean score of 2.1 versus a mean score of 1.7 for
general and vocational education students. The general and vocational students felt they had not spent any time with a counselor for help with career choices.

There were no significant differences among the college preparatory students and general and vocational education students on the other variables in question 3.

**Research question 3: How do students perceive the accuracy, validity, and timeliness of the information that was provided by guidance counselors?**

Questionnaire questions 1, 6, and 12 addressed the respondents' perceptions of the accuracy, validity and timeliness of their career counseling information.

**Question 1:** Did you feel that your high school guidance counselor provided you with up-to-date career information? -- solicited a yes/no response. Sixty-six percent of the respondents said they felt that they were not provided with up-to-date information.

The data for the variables in question 6: How accurate was the career information you received in high school? -- were as follows:

Fifty-one percent of the respondents felt that the career information they received was somewhat accurate. A response mean of 1.9.

The data for the variables in question 12: What level of importance do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for job and career information? -- were as follows:

Forty-five percent felt that their counselors did not place any importance in their need for job and career information, while 38% indicated they felt that their counselor
placed some importance in their need for job and career information. A response mean of 1.8.

The mean-of-means for questions 1, 6, and 12 was 1.3. When these questions were sorted by gender, there were no significant differences in the responses. There were significant differences when sorted by high school track placement for question 6. Those respondents who were in the college preparatory track felt that their counselors provided them with career information that was somewhat accurate. The mean score for the college preparatory respondents was 2.1 while the response mean for the general and vocational track was 1.8.

Research question 4: Did students perceive that guidance counselors had accurate knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information needed by students to make an informed career choice?

Questionnaire questions 5, 7, and 8 addressed the respondents' perceptions of their counselor's knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information needed to help make informed career choices.

The data for the variables in question 5: Knowing what you know now, do you feel that your high school guidance counselor had an accurate knowledge of the academic and technical skills you would need after high school? -- were as follows:

Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that they felt that counselors were somewhat knowledgeable of the technical and academic skills they would need after high school. A response mean of 1.9.
The data for the variables in question 7: How knowledgeable was your counselor about college requirements? -- were as follows:

Thirty-nine percent of the respondents felt their high school counselors were very knowledgeable while 32% of the respondents said they felt their high school counselors were only somewhat knowledgeable of college requirements. A response mean of 2.5.

The data for the variables in question 8: How knowledgeable was your counselor about trade school requirements? -- were as follows:

While 44% of the respondents felt that their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable, 30% said that they felt that their counselors were not knowledgeable. Only twenty-two percent said they felt their counselors were very knowledgeable about the requirements needed for trade school. A response mean of 2.0.

The mean-of-means for questions 5, 7, and 8 was 2.1. When these questions were sorted by gender there were no significant differences in the responses. There was a difference in question 7 when the responses were sorted by high school track placement. More college preparatory students felt that their counselors were knowledgeable of college requirements. This was indicated by a mean of 2.7 for the college preparatory respondents and a mean of 2.4 for the general and vocational education respondents. There were no significant differences by track placement for questions 5 and 8.

Research question 5: Do community college vocational students, who completed college preparatory, general education, or vocational education differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the value of high school career counseling?
Questionnaire questions 11 and 13 sought to determine if college preparatory students differed from general and vocational education students in their perceptions of the value of their high school career counseling experience.

The data for the variables in question 11: How much importance did your high school counselor attach to your making tentative career choices before leaving high school? -- are indicated below:

When all the respondents scores were figured together, 45% said they felt that their counselors did not place any importance in their making career choices ($\bar{x} = 1.9$). There were no significant differences when sorted by gender and high school track placement.

The data for the variables in question 13: What level of emphasis do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for college counseling? -- were as follows:

When all the respondents were figured together, 33% said they felt that their counselors placed no emphasis on their need for college counseling. Thirty-one percent felt that their counselors placed very little emphasis in their need for college counseling. Twenty-seven percent felt that their counselors placed some emphasis in their need for college counseling. A response mean of 2.1.

When the responses were sorted by gender, more male respondents said that their counselors placed some emphases in their need for college information. Female respondents felt that the counselors placed no emphases in their need for college information. A response mean of 2.3 for male respondents and 1.8 for female respondents. A mean response of 2.3 for college preparatory respondents felt that their
counselors emphasized their need for college counseling while only a mean response 2.0 for general and vocational track respondents felt their counselors emphasized their need for college counseling.

Questionnaire question 14 -- What was your most valuable source of career information? -- sought to determine where the respondents felt they had gotten their most valuable source of career information. One hundred and ninety-seven of the respondents marked what they felt to be their source of information. Five percent said their source was from high school guidance counselors. Twelve percent indicated that their source was from high school career classes. Sixteen percent said teachers. Forty-two percent said their source came from their families. Sixteen percent indicated that friends were their source. Television was the source for 7%. No respondents said that books were their most valued source of career information.

When the variables in question 14 were sorted by gender and high school track placement, there were no significant differences. The mean scores -- males 4.0, females 3.7, college preparatory 3.8, and general education 4.0 -- showed that they felt that their most valued source of career information came from their families.

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

How do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school counseling experience? To determine how the respondents perceived the value of their experience the percentage and mean score of the responses to questions 2, 9, and 10, were examined. A mean-of-means for the students’ perception of the value of their
counseling experience was 1.8. Considering a response scale of 1 to 4, the responses showed that students’ perceptions of the value of their counseling experience was negative. When the value of the experience was evaluated by gender and high school track placement, there were no significant differences. The mean-of-means of 1.8 indicated that the respondents had a negative view of the value of their experience.

**Research Question 2**

Did guidance counselors provide an adequate amount of time to assist students with the identification of career choices? To determine the amount of time the respondents felt they had spent with their high school counselor, eight variables were developed to measure time. Question 3 sought to measure how the respondents’ felt they had spent time with a counselor while in high school. The first variable measured the amount of time spent scheduling classes. A mean of 2.3 indicated that the respondents felt they spent very little time with a counselor for scheduling of classes. The second variable measured the amount of time spent changing class schedules. The respondents reported, by a mean of 2.1, that they had spent very little time with a counselor for the purpose of changing class schedules. Variable number 3 measured the amount of time spent discussing academic problems. This produced a response mean of 1.8 that indicated that the respondents felt that they had spent no time discussing academic problems. The fourth variable for question 3 sought to determine the amount of time spent discussing personal problems. A mean of 1.4 indicated that the respondents did not spend any time discussing personal problems. Variable number 5 asked about the amount of time the respondents felt they spent with a counselor because of attendance problems. A mean of 1.4 verified
that they felt they had spent no time with a counselor because of attendance problems.

Variable number 6 asked about time spent with a counselor for the purpose of obtaining career information. A mean of 2.0 indicated that felt they had spent very little time for the purpose of obtaining career information. The seventh variable sought to determine how much time the respondents had spent with a counselor for help with career choices. A mean score of 1.9 shows that they felt they had spent no time with a counselor for help with career choices. Finally, variable number 8 asked the respondents about the amount of time they had spent with a counselor for the purpose of obtaining job information. A mean of 1.7 verified that they felt they had spent no time with a counselor for the purpose of obtaining job information. When the eight variables were evaluated on a response scale of 1 to 5, the respondents said they felt they had spent no or very little time with a counselor.

The mean-of-means for the eight variables for question 3 was 1.9.

Question 4 asked if the respondents felt they were able to spend the time they needed with a counselor for career planning. This question solicited a yes/no response. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said they did not feel they were able to spend the time needed.

When the responses were sorted by gender and high school track placement, gender showed that there were no differences in how they perceived the amount of time spent with a counselor. When sorted by high school track placement there were differences in how the respondents perceived the amount of time spent for attendance problems. General and vocational education respondents said they had spent more time for attendance problems. For career information and help with career choices, college
preparatory students said they had spent more time. college preparatory respondents indicated they had spent more time in the areas of career information and career choices then had general and vocational respondents, overall responses were negative.

**Research Question 3**

How do students perceive the accuracy, validity, and timeliness of the information that was provided by guidance counselors? Questions 1, 6, and 12 sought to determine how the respondents perceived the accuracy of the information provided by their guidance counselors. Question 1 asked if the respondents felt the information they had received was up-to-date. Sixty-four percent answered no. A mean score of 1.9 for question 6 showed that the respondents did not feel that the information they had received was accurate. A mean response of 1.3 for career information indicated that the responses to question 12 were negative.

When the responses were sorted by gender and high school track placement, there were no differences by gender. There was a difference by high school track placement. College preparatory respondents indicated that they felt that their counselors had provided them with career information that was accurate. The mean-of-means for questions 6 and 12 was 1.3. A response scale of 1 to 4 and a mean score of 1.3 showed that the respondents did not feel that the career information was accurate or up-to-date.

**Research Question 4**

Did students perceive that guidance counselors had accurate knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information needed by students to make an informed career choice? Questions 5, 7, and 8 sought to measure how the respondents perceived
the knowledge counselors demonstrated when they sought information about academic and technical skills that would be needed after graduation. Question 5 asked about the counselors' knowledge of the technical and academic skills needed after high school. A response mean of 1.9 showed that the respondents did not feel their counselors possessed knowledge of the academic and technical skills they would need after high school.

Question 7 inquired about the counselors' knowledge of college requirements. A response mean of 2.3 indicated that the respondents felt that their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable of college requirements. How the respondents viewed their counselors' knowledge of college requirements was more positive, but when based on a 1 to 4 response scale the responses were not a strong positive. Asked if their counselors were knowledgeable of trade school requirements, there was a response mean of 2.0. The respondents felt their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable. Very few respondents felt their counselor was extremely knowledgeable. A mean-of-means for 5, 7, and 8 of 2.0 showed that the respondents perceived that their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable.

When questions 5, 7, and 8 were evaluated by gender there were no significant differences in the responses. There were differences in the respondents' perceptions when evaluated by high school track. More college preparatory respondents said their counselors were knowledgeable of college requirements.

**Research Question 5**

Do community college vocational students who completed college preparatory, general education, or vocational education, differ significantly in their perceptions
regarding the value of high school career counseling? To evaluate this, questions 11 and 13 were used. Question 11 asked the respondents how they felt about the importance counselors attached to their making tentative career plans. A response mean of 1.9 showed that they felt there was no importance attached to their making tentative career plans. This did not change when the responses were evaluated by high school track placement. Question 13 looked at the respondents' perception of the level of emphasis placed on their need for college counseling. The respondents indicated, by a mean score of 2.1, that their counselors placed some emphasis on their need for college counseling. When the responses were evaluated by high school track placement, college preparatory respondents felt that their counselors emphasized the need for college counseling. General and vocational education respondents felt their counselors did not emphasize the need for college counseling. When the mean scores were evaluated college preparatory respondents had a more positive perception of the value of their counseling experience.

**Supplementary Findings**

Question 14 -- What was your most valuable source of career information? -- was asked to determine what the respondents most valued source of career information was. The findings showed that the majority of the respondents looked first to their families and second to their friends and teachers for career information. Counselors and career classes (when combined) only accounted for 17% of the respondents' source of career information. Family, friends and teachers (when combined) accounted for 74% of the respondents' source of career information. Forty-two percent of the 74% of the responses were for the family. From these findings, it could be concluded that the majority of
students sought their help and information from outside the school setting. The responses to question 14 also support the respondents' overall negative responses to questions 1 through 13.

Discussion

Population Demographics

With 73% of the respondents male and 27% female, there was the possibility of gender bias. (see figure 1) The high percentage of male respondents supports the fact that more males enroll in vocational programs. Six of the eight community colleges' vocational programs surveyed were traditionally male dominated. (see figure 7)

Fifty-three percent (N=111) of the respondents were in the 18 to 25 age group. This data shows that the majority of the respondents were only 1 to 7 years removed from their high school career counseling experience and, therefore, should have an accurate perception of their high school counseling experience. Many of the respondents in this age group were working toward their first career.

The respondents' educational background indicated that they were a highly motivated group. Ninety-four percent (N=195) had graduated from high school. Only 6% of the respondents said they had not completed high school. Of that group half had received their GED. (see figure 2)

High school track placement was asked to determine the number of respondents who were in college preparatory, general education, or vocational education track. Thirty-eight percent were college preparatory students, 51% were general education students and 10% were vocational education students. (see figure 3) When the
questionnaires were evaluated by respondents’ high school track placement, there were significant differences in some of the respondents answers. When asked about time spent with a counselor, career information, college requirements, and emphasis placed on college counseling; college preparatory respondents said they had spent more time. The college preparatory respondents also felt the counselors' information was accurate, and that counselors placed more emphasis on their need for college counseling.

The respondents current level of education sought to determine the extent of their educational experience. (see figure 4) Sixteen percent were in their first year of community college, 26% were in their second year of community college, and 39% were community college graduates. When second-year students and graduate students were combined, 65% of the respondents had spent two years or more in higher education. The findings of 39% community college graduates verified that some of those respondents were working toward a second career. This also reflects on the present state of California’s economy that has generated many workers needing to be retrained.

In order to determine the respondents’ socio-economic status their fathers’ and mothers’ occupations and education were considered. When occupation was evaluated, more of the parents were skilled and semi-skilled workers -- 62% for the fathers and 49% for the mothers. Of these two categories more fathers were skilled workers (38%) while it was the same number for skilled and semi-skilled workers for the mothers. (see figure 1) More fathers were professionals (18%) than mothers (2%). More mothers were unemployed (20%) versus 4% of fathers. These findings support the high number of male respondents (73%) enrolled in community college vocational programs.
When fathers' and mothers' education was evaluated, the fathers' level of education was higher than that of the mothers. More mothers were high school graduates (34%) but only 25% of the fathers had graduated from high school. Seventeen percent of the mothers had some community college, 16% of the fathers had some community college. The percentage of mothers and fathers to have completed some community college was only one percentage point different (16% for fathers and 17% for mothers). More fathers were community college graduates (22%) than mothers (12%). Twenty-two percent of the fathers had an advanced degree while only 12% of the mothers held advanced degrees. (see figure 2) These findings support the fact that, traditionally more men sought higher education and vocational training than women. However, this trend is changing.

The data collected on the parents' occupation and education reflects the social norms of the father as the one with the higher level of education and the one who worked outside of the home. This was reflected in the fact that 73% of the respondents were male. The fathers' level of education and occupation would have an effect on the respondents' career choices.

**Research Question 1**

How do community college vocational students perceive the value of their high school counseling experience?

The data indicated that the respondents did not value their high school counseling experience. A response scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating minimum strength and 4 a maximum strength held for the variables, produced a response mean of 1.8. This verified
that the response to the value held by the respondents for their career counseling experience was negative.

The questions that reflected respondents' perception of value of the information provided sought to evaluate the value respondents placed on the importance of their high school career counseling. According to background findings in the review of literature, there could be three reasons for the respondents' negative perception: (1) the vocational maturity of the respondents, (2) the counselors' accessibility, and (3) the value counselors placed on the respondents' need for career counseling.

**Research Question 2**

Did guidance counselors provide an adequate amount of time to assist students with the identification of career choices?

The way counselors allocate their time with students affected how the respondents perceived their counseling experience. Eight variables, based on a 1 to 5 response scale, were used to determine how counseling time was used. There was a response mean for all eight variables of 1.9. These responses indicated that no time was spent with a counselor for academic problems, personal problems, and attendance problems. Very little time was spent with a counselor for seeking career information, help with career choices, and job information. Some time was spent with a counselor for the scheduling of classes, changing of classes, and getting career information. When the variables were sorted by high school track placement, general and vocational education students spent more time with a counselor for attendance problems. College preparatory respondents said they spent more time with a counselor for career information and career choices. These
findings support the literature that indicates that counselors spend more time with college preparatory students. When the respondents were asked if they were able to spend the time they felt they needed with a counselor for career planning, the majority of the respondents said they were not able to spend the time they felt they needed. How counselors allot their time and student vocational maturity could be variables that influenced the responses.

**Research Question 3**

How do students perceive the accuracy, validity and timeliness of the information that was provided by guidance counselors?

The way the respondents viewed the quality of the information provided had an effect on the value they placed in their counseling experience and the amount of time they would spend with a counselor. The data indicated that the respondents did not feel they received up-to-date career information. The findings also revealed that the respondents did not feel their counselors placed any importance on their need for job and career information. When the data was evaluated by high school track, college preparatory respondents felt the information provided to them was somewhat accurate.

**Research Question 4**

Did students perceive that guidance counselors had accurate knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information needed by students to make informed career choices?

The respondents felt that their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable. This was reflected by their responses to the counselor's knowledge of college and trade school
requirements. As a group, the respondents felt their counselors were somewhat knowledgeable of these requirements. When the data were evaluated by high school track, college preparatory respondents felt their counselors were knowledgeable of college requirements.

**Research question 5**

Do community college vocational students who completed college preparatory, general education, or vocational education, differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the value of high school career counseling?

All respondents said they felt that their counselors did not place any importance on their need for making tentative career plans. There was no difference in the responses when sorted by track placement. The respondents felt their counselors emphasized the need for college counseling. College preparatory respondents said their counselors placed more emphasis in their need for college counseling. These findings support the fact that counselors felt more knowledgeable of college requirements than career planning.

When all 13 questions were sorted by high school track, there were only six variables that recorded any difference in the perceptions of the respondents. These were three variables that measure time spent, two variables that measured the accuracy of career information, and one variable that measured the knowledge of college counseling.

The concluding question 14 -- What was your most valuable source of career information? -- summarized the respondents' perception of their career counseling experience. Forty-two percent of the respondents said their primary source of career
information was their families. When the variables were sorted by gender and high school track placement, school was not the primary source; the family was.
Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine community college vocational students' perceptions of the value of their high school career counseling experience. Initially, based on a literature review, assumptions were made about variables that may have an effect on the way the respondents perceived the value of their counseling experience. Data were gathered that addressed these assumptions. These data were evaluated to determine how their perceptions affected career choices. The following conclusions were made.

After considering the findings, one could conclude that the counseling experience was of little value. The respondents consistently expressed negative agreement with the variables that were fundamental to the measurement of the perception of value. Part 1 of the survey sought to determine how the relationship between the demographic profile and the perception of value affected the respondents. High school track placement reflected how the respondents perceived their counseling experience by the track they were placed in while in high school. One variable indicated a difference when the findings were evaluated by gender.

Those assumed relationships between the respondents' demographic profile and their perceived values of the counseling experience were evident, specifically, the
socio-economic status of the respondents' parents. The parents' status had an influence on the respondents' career choices. More fathers were community college graduates or college graduates with advanced degrees (33%). Also, more fathers' occupations were professional (18%), technical and managerial (38%), and skilled (24%). Since 73% of the community college vocational respondents were male, their fathers would have had an influence on their career choices.

Although the responses verified a negative perception, differences in perception were observable when the findings were evaluated by high school track placement. College preparatory students indicated that they had spent more time with counselors for career information and help with career choices. They felt that counselors placed more emphasis on the need for college counseling. General and vocational education respondents said they spent more time with counselors for attendance problems. These findings were supported by the data that indicated that counselors tended to spend more of their career counseling time with college-bound students. More male respondents felt counselors emphasized college counseling. These findings suggested that there may be a gender equity issue when counseling students.

When data were evaluated by all respondents, some variables had a stronger value response. Other variables continued to retain the same negative response. The negative perception of the value of the counseling experience was reflected when examining the responses to the variables. First, the data indicated that the respondents felt they had not received career information that was of value. Second, the respondents indicated that the career counseling they experienced was of no value, or benefit to them. These responses
supported the findings that either counseling programs were not in place to meet students' needs or the services needed were not offered. The vocational maturity of the respondents, while in high school, may have influenced these perceptions.

When the issue of time spent with a counselor was evaluated, data revealed that students spent very little time with counselors for scheduling classes, changing classes, and obtaining career information. No time was spent with counselors for academic problems, personal problems, attendance problems, help with career choices, and obtaining job information. According to the literature, these were areas counselors allocated counseling time for with students. These data indicated that counseling tasks assigned to counselors were not the services students needed or sought assistance for. Also, the findings supported other studies that found only a small percentage of high school students ever saw a counselor. These conclusions indicated why many students make inappropriate high school program decisions and poor career choices. On the other hand, when the respondents did seek the assistance of a counselor for career guidance, they said they were not able to spend the time they needed. This supported other data that found that counselors were assigned too many students to enable them to do an effective job. It also supported the findings that emphasized that counselors spend little time with students for career guidance because their time was taken up with administrative duties.

When data that addressed the value of information obtained by respondents were evaluated, the respondents did not feel the information was of value. When asked about the accuracy of the information, the response indicated that information received was not accurate or not up-to-date. They also felt counselors did not place any importance on
their need for career information. The lack of current information and the importance counselors placed on the need for information made students seek out other sources for their information. These findings supported other data that indicated the responsibility to seek help with career guidance and information was up to the student. Counselors tended to focus on the needs of the students while in high school and not consider the students' needs after high school.

The Professional Standards Committee of the National Career Development Association outlined the minimum competencies needed by counselors to assume the role of counselor. According to these competencies, school counselors should come to their position with knowledge of the technical and academic skills and information students would need when they graduated from high school. Understandably, data collected for this study revealed that the respondents had a negative perception of counselors' knowledge of the academic and technical skills and information they would need after high school. The students' perceptions could be due to their level of vocational maturity or their inability to access a counselor rather than the counselors lack of knowledge. Besides, counselors may not perceive the students' need for information as important. Consequently, counselors do not consider providing information an important part of their counseling duties.

Respondents did feel that counselors were somewhat knowledgeable of trade school and college requirements. More college preparatory respondents said counselors were knowledgeable. General and vocational education respondents felt counselors lacked knowledge of trade school and college entrance requirements. Their response could reflect
the fact that due to the students' level of vocational maturity they tend not to seek out a counselor for information. These findings supported the findings from other studies that indicated counselors tended to allocate their counseling time for college-bound students. Counselors seemed to focus only on the high school needs of the general and vocational education students. These findings supported the fact that counselors viewed their role as that of "gatekeeper" of the students' high school years. That role involved track placing of students and setting up their course of study. Though, as gatekeeper, counselors had an influence over students' school program and career choices.

When the questions that addressed the importance of making career plans were sorted by track placement, there were no differences in the findings. College preparatory, general and vocational education respondents all felt that counselors did not attach any importance to their making tentative career plans. Again, counselors tended to focus on their role as "gatekeeper" of students' high school program giving little time or emphasis to students' future needs. College preparatory respondents did feel that counselors placed an emphasis on their need for college counseling. These findings supported other data that concluded that counselors preferred to work with college-bound students. They perceived college-bound students to have a higher level of motivation and focus on what they want. Furthermore, college counseling and college requirements were areas that counselors were familiar with because of their personal experience and background.

When the respondents were asked where their most valued source of career and job information came from, the majority said their family (40%). Only 15% of the respondents indicated that their source of career information came from counselors or
career classes. These results reflected the family's involvement in the respondents' career choices. Apparently, the family spent the time to assist the respondents with career and job-related information. Also the family had a personal investment in the respondent's career decisions. Respondents also viewed parents and family members as people who had knowledge of the world of work.

The demographic findings revealed that the majority of parents were employed in skilled, semi-skilled, technical/managerial positions, or owned their own businesses. A greater number of parents had an educational level of some community college or better. The fathers' occupational and educational level were higher than the mothers'. These findings would have an influence on the respondents' enrollment in a vocational program. It also supported the findings that students would seek family help with career and work related guidance rather than seek the professional expertise of a guidance counselor.

In conclusion, this study examined areas that would have affected the respondents' perception of the value of their high school experience. The demographic profile revealed that the majority of the respondents were high school graduates with vocational career goals. The family was the strongest influence on their career choices. The findings supported a negative perception of the counseling experience when the respondents' perceptions were evaluated for: (1) the value of their high school experience, (2) time spent with a counselor, (3) the knowledge of counselors, (4) the value and accuracy of information, and (5) the perception of their experience by track placement; the findings supported a negative perception of the counseling experience. These findings support the
need to evaluate the purpose and function of high school career counseling programs. The role and responsibilities of the counselor need to be examined.

**Recommendations**

President Bill Clinton's signing of the "School-To-Work Opportunities Act" placed a national focus on schools' need for "systemic change." This act was designed to encourage states to restructure schools and curricula. Legislation recommended that curricula should be restructured to focus more strongly on applied learning and work-related schooling. After examining the results of this study, the need to include counseling programs in the restructuring process so they reflect more of the needs of all students should be given thoughtful consideration. All students need to be involved in career guidance programs, not just the 10% of students who are college-bound.

After a review of the literature and after evaluating the findings, guidance programs need to be restructured to become a more important part of the national "systemic change" in education. This study recommends three principle areas for restructuring counseling programs. The first area would be teacher and counselor training programs. The second area would be the reassessment of the role and responsibilities of counselors. The third area would be the development and implementation of career programs that would span from kindergarten through high school.

Counselors should come to their positions with a knowledge of the workplace that is accurate, timely and up-to-date. The findings indicated that the respondents in this study did not perceive that counselors' knowledge of career requirements and the workplace was either current or accurate. Many of the career paths in the twenty-first
century will not require a college degree, but will require training after high school. The workplace of the twenty-first century will require students to have accurate and up-to-date information and knowledge. Counselor training programs need to provide the counselors with the tools and knowledge needed to aid students. Training programs for teachers, who are preparing to work with students in elementary and middle schools, need to emphasize the development of curricula that will develop student vocational maturity.

School districts need to reassess the roles assigned to counselors. The findings indicated that respondents did not see counselors for the reasons commonly associated with the duties of counselors. These findings supported other findings that counselors spend much of their time with administrative duties and paperwork. The counselors' role needs to be restructured to emphasize the career needs of all students. Since the average student-to-counselor ratio is 1-400, meeting each student's career counseling need can be a difficult task. Counselors should be able to reach more students in the classroom setting. Thus, a larger portion of their day should be spent in the classroom. As a result of this expanded exposure, students should leave high school with at least one solid tentative career plan.

Career preparation should begin in the primary grades and continue through the students' years in school. In elementary school, teachers need to focus on developing the career awareness of students. In middle school, students need to be able to explore many careers. High school students need to focus on tentative career decisions. Students should not be expected to obtain the vocational maturity needed to make decisions as important as career choices in their last two years of high school. School districts need to
make the development of vocational maturity an important component of their master plan.

A more specific recommendation would be to have counseling programs, at the secondary level, be more responsive to every student's future career needs. More focus needs to be put on what there is for the students after high school. To accomplish this, students need work and career exposure. Counselors need to reorder their responsibilities to make career exploration and planning their priority. The goal of the educational process should be to prepare our youth to take their place in society. To successfully accomplish preparation for life beyond high school, a concern for all students' future in the workplace should be a vital part of all professional educators.

Other studies in California have addressed elementary and middle school career development and found that no programmatic career development efforts are in place. Middle school programs address what traditionally should be in elementary school. Further, since middle school career development does what is usually done in elementary school, high school programs address what is considered appropriate for middle school. The conclusion is that, California students are at a real disadvantage because they have a retarded or interrupted career maturity. This creates a real problem for the community college and places the student at a disadvantage in terms of realistic career choices. Community colleges are the place students go to prepare themselves for a chosen career, not the place where they try to figure out what career path to follow.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Letter to Instructors
April 26, 1994

Dear Colleague:

As a graduate student in vocational education at California State University, San Bernardino, I have developed the enclosed questionnaire, which is based on a review of literature, to determine community college students' perceptions of their high school guidance counseling experience with regards to their post-secondary career choices.

I would appreciate your help with the distribution of the questionnaire to your students. The questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete. Enclosed in the envelope with the questionnaire is a stamped addressed envelope so you can return the questionnaires. If you could have the questionnaires back before May 10, it would be very helpful.

If you would like to receive the results of the study, please check below and return this letter with the questionnaires:

_____ Send me a copy of the results of your study.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Linda Sage
Appendix B

Letter to Respondents
April 26, 1994

Dear Fellow Students:

In an effort to better understand the nature of your high school counseling experience, I am conducting a study for my Masters Degree in Vocational Education. This study is designed to gather information regarding your perception of high school counseling and how effective it was in helping you while in the career decision making process.

It will take you about 5 minute or less to complete the questionnaire. Please follow the directions and return the questionnaire to your instructor. The information you provide will be strictly confidential and you will not be identified individually. The results of this study will assist us with the development of an effective career counseling and decision making program to better prepare school counselors.

Please accept my sincere appreciation for your help with this most important and worth while study.

Sincerely,

Linda A. Sage
Appendix C

Questionnaire
Guidance Counseling Experience

Student Survey

Part I

Introduction: Complete the questions in part 1 by marking the appropriate response.

All responses are confidential.

1. Are you (check one)
   _____ Male
   _____ Female

2. What is your age group? (check one)
   _____ 18 - 25
   _____ 26 - 30
   _____ 31 - 35
   _____ 36 - 40
   _____ 41 and older

3. (A) Are you a high school graduate?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

   (B) If no, do you have a GED?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

4. What was your track placement in high school? (check one)
   _____ College preparatory
   _____ General education
   _____ Vocational/occupational
5. What is your highest level of education? (check one)
   ______ First year college
   ______ Second year college
   ______ Community college graduate
   ______ Trade school graduate
   ______ College graduate

6. Do you plan to continue your education in (check one)
   ______ Apprenticeship program.
   ______ Trade school.
   ______ Military.
   ______ Four year college.
   ______ Undecided.
   ______ No.

7. What is your father's occupation? (check one)
   ______ Professional (e.g. doctor, lawyer, teacher)
   ______ Technical, managerial, or own business
   ______ Skilled worker (e.g. carpenter, electrician, secretary, etc.)
   ______ Semi-skilled worker or factory worker
   ______ Unskilled worker
   ______ Unemployed

8. What is your mother's occupation? (check one)
   ______ Professional (e.g. doctor, lawyer, teacher)
   ______ Technical, managerial, or own business
   ______ Skilled worker (e.g. carpenter, electrician, secretary, etc.)
   ______ Semi-skilled worker or factory worker
   ______ Unskilled worker
   ______ Unemployed
9. What is your father’s highest level of education? (check one)

_____ Not a high school graduate
_____ High school graduate
_____ Some community college
_____ Trade school
_____ A.A. or A.S. degree
_____ B.A. or B.S. degree

10. What is your mother’s highest level of education? (check one)

_____ Not a high school graduate
_____ High school graduate
_____ Some community college
_____ Trade school
_____ A.A. or A.S. degree
_____ B.A. or B.S. degree
Part II

Instructions: The following questions relate to your career counseling experience while in high school. Answer each question as accurately as possible.

1. Did you feel that your high school guidance counselors provided you with up-to-date career information?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

2. How valuable was the career information provided to you by your counselor?
   (check one)
   _____ Not valuable  _____ Somewhat valuable  _____ Very valuable  _____ Extremely valuable

3. Indicate the amount of time you feel you spent with your high school counselor.
   (check one for each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of time spent</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Considerable</th>
<th>Extensive</th>
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<td>Scheduling classes</td>
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<td>Changing schedules</td>
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<td>Attendance problems</td>
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<td>Career information</td>
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<td>Career choices</td>
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<td>Job information</td>
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</table>
4. Did you feel you were able to spend the time you needed with a counselor for career planning?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

5. Knowing what you know now, do you feel that your high school guidance counselor had an accurate knowledge of the academic and technical skills you would need after graduation? (check one)
   Not Somewhat Very Exceedingly
   _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable

6. How accurate was the career information you received in high school? (check one)
   _____ Not accurate _____ Somewhat accurate _____ Very accurate _____ Extremely accurate

7. How Knowledgeable was your counselor about college requirements? (check one)
   Not Somewhat Very Exceedingly
   _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable

8. How knowledgeable was your counselor about trade school requirements? (check one)
   Not Somewhat Very Exceedingly
   _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable _____ Knowledgeable

9. How important was your high school counseling to you? (check one)
   _____ Not important _____ Somewhat important _____ Very important _____ Extremely important
10. How beneficial was your career counseling in high school? (check one)
   _____ Not beneficial   _____ Somewhat beneficial   _____ Very beneficial   _____ Extremely beneficial

11. How much importance did your high school counselor attach to your making a tentative career choice before leaving high school? (check one)
   _____ No importance   _____ Very little importance   _____ Some importance   _____ Much importance

12. What level of importance do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for job and career information? (check one)
   _____ Not important   _____ Somewhat important   _____ Very important   _____ Extremely Important

13. What level of emphasis do you feel your high school counselor placed on your need for college counseling? (check one)
   _____ No emphasis   _____ Very little emphasis   _____ Some emphasis   _____ A lot of emphasis

14. What was your most valuable source of career information? (check one)
   _____ School guidance counselor
   _____ Career classes (all vocational and R.O.P.)
   _____ Teachers
   _____ Family
   _____ Friends
   _____ Television
   _____ Books
BIBLIOGRAPHY


McAuliffe, G. J. (1991) Assessing and treating barriers to decision making in career classes. The Career Development Quarterly. 40. 82 - 92


