

School Counselors' Levels of Self-Efficacy Providing  
Career Counseling in the Middle School Setting

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#### **ABSTRACT**

After a critical review of the literature on school counselor self-efficacy and Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996) this cross-sectional study of practicing middle school counselors was conducted. The study identified levels of career counseling self-efficacy in a sample of 143 practicing middle school counselors across Virginia using the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified (O'Brien, Heppner, Flores, & Bikos et al., 1997), and a subscale of the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). In addition, mean differences in career counseling self-efficacy across experiences such as work as a school counselor, work as a teacher, and recent training in career counseling were explored. Finally, the relationship between career counseling self-efficacy and amount of time spent providing career counseling was identified using a correlation analysis. Implications for school counselors, counselor educators, and administrators are discussed.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

School counselors are uniquely qualified educators who promote academic standards, enhance student success, and prepare all students for college and career opportunities (American School Counseling Association, 2009). The Transforming School Counseling Initiative in 1997 (Education Trust, 2012), the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; US Department of Education, 2001), and the implementation of the American School Counseling Association National Model (ASCA, 2003, 2005, 2012) have prompted the integration of a variety of programs and research to promote student success (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010; Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009; Sink, 2005; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). School counselors can provide leadership through utilizing their personal strengths, areas of expertise, and training experiences to support opportunities for students to succeed (Fitch & Marshall, 2004; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010; Sink, 2005).

School counselors are expected to provide personal/social, academic, and career counseling services for students in PK-12 public schools. Comprehensive school counseling programs are designed to promote a systematic approach for offering appropriate support to students through all three domains in order to promote school success. Career counseling is one of the areas that school counselors are expected to address with all students. School counselors work directly and indirectly with students to offer community-based, school-wide, grade specific, classroom, small group, and individual programming and support in the career domain.

Research suggests that career counseling needs to begin early for all individuals (e.g., Evans & Burck, 1992). Children explore the world of work, examine themselves, and understand how these two are related through the dynamic process of career exploration (Hartung, Porfeli, &

Vondracek, 2005; Hirschi, Niles, & Akos, 2011). In addition, research has indicated that such career preparation had a significant positive direct effect on school engagement, which significantly increased student grades (Perry, Liu, and Pabian, 2010). The process of career exploration, which can begin early in life, paves the way for students to plan for a future career. It is helpful to have counselors involved in the planning process. In fact, career planning interventions with counselor facilitation have been found to be significantly more effective than non-counselor led interventions (Whiston, Brecrieisen, & Stevens, 2003).

In this study the focus is on the role of a school counselor to provide career counseling and how confident school counselors are in their abilities in the career domain. Specifically, this study examined school counselors' self-efficacy providing career counseling in public middle schools. In addition, this study identified if school counselors' self-efficacy providing career counseling varies across years of school counseling experience, teaching experience, or recent training in career counseling. Finally, the relationship between career counseling self-efficacy and the amount of time spent providing career counseling was explored.

### **Context of the Study**

Anchored in Bandura's (1986, 1995) Social Cognitive Theory, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) offers a framework for developing an understanding of the interaction between individuals, their behaviors, and the environment (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Lent & Brown, 2006; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000). Connecting self-efficacy to the career development process offered a foundation for development of the Social Cognitive Theory of educational/occupational interest, choice, and performance (Lent, et al., 1994) prior to SCCT. O'Brien and Heppner (1996) proposed extending the theory to understand and influence interest, engagement, and performance of career counseling.

SCCT had three core social cognitive constructs: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996). These core constructs were later expanded to also include contextual supports and barriers (Lent & Brown, 2006). Self-efficacy, the first of the four constructs conceptualized by Bandura (1986; 1997), was the primary focus of this study. Self-efficacy plays a part in determining people's actions (Bandura, 1986; 1997). It centers on the belief one has in her or his ability to perform a task. Counselor self-efficacy has been shown to relate to counselor performance (Lent et al., 2006; Sutton & Fall, 1995). For the purposes of this study the percentage of time that school counselors spend providing career counseling represents their performance.

An individual's self-efficacy can increase through four primary sources. These sources are personal performance, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Contextual supports and barriers also impact the self-efficacy of an individual. Lent and Brown (1996) identified "foreclosed occupational options" as describing perceived barriers that individuals believe to block them from feeling confident in their abilities. When there is a lack of confidence it stifles the ability to increase self-efficacy. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) described self-efficacy as the level an individual expects to be successful performing a task. Personal self-efficacy can influence the behavior of individuals (Bandura, 2001; Owens, Bodenhorn, & Bryant, 2010).

Self-efficacy of counselors is an important aspect of effective counseling (Bandura, 1995; Larson & Daniels, 1998) and promotes adaptive delivery of school counseling services to meet the needs of diverse student populations (Bandura, 1995; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Crook, 2010; Larson & Daniels, 1998). School counselors have many opportunities to utilize the primary sources of self-efficacy development (personal performance, vicarious learning, social

persuasion, physiological and affective states) (Bandura, 1997) within the school setting to increase self-efficacy. School counselor self-efficacy may be influenced by many things such as graduate training, service-learning, internships, professional development, and years of experience (Barbee, Scherer, & Combs, 2003; Lent et al., 2003; Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, & Kolocek, 1996; O'Brien et al., 1997; Tang, Addison, LaSure-Bryant, Norman, O'Connell, & Stewart-Sicking, 2004). In addition, counselors experience both external and internal barriers to offering career counseling, which may impact self-efficacy. External barriers that school counselors may face in implementing career counseling include limited time, resources, and support. On the other hand, school counselors can embrace supports such as faculty collaboration, community buy-in, interdisciplinary opportunities, and administrative support.

School counselors have varied training and experiences that may contribute to internal barriers of personal self-efficacy beliefs, and in turn affect the delivery of career programming. This study focuses on school counseling self-efficacy in the career domain. Although school counselors face barriers, there are opportunities to increase career counseling self-efficacy. Four factors positively impacting the self-efficacy of school counselors were identified as important by school counselors both with and without teaching experience and included a) supportive administration, b) teaching experience, c) supportive staff, and d) professional development (Scoles, 2011).

Training experiences, including pre-practicum experiences, the practicum class, practicum experiences, receiving feedback, and internship experiences, have been found to influence school counselor self-efficacy in multiple studies (Barbee, et al., 2003; Barnes, 2004; Betz, 2004; Daniels & Larson, 2001; Lent et al., 2003; Melchert, et al., 1996; O'Brien, et al., 1997; Tang, et al., 2004). Structured and supervised pre-practicum service-learning experiences,

integrated into the curriculum, had a significant positive relationship with counselor self-efficacy (Barbee et al., 2003). However, coursework and counseling-related work experience had an even stronger influence on self-efficacy than pre-practicum service-learning experiences (Barbee et al., 2003). Self-efficacy of counselors-in-training enrolled in a practicum class increased between the beginning and the end of the semester (Lent et al., 2003). During a practicum experience, students receive feedback on their work. Daniels and Larson (2001) suggested that feedback provided to counselors on their performances led to increased self-efficacy.

In addition to the internship experience in general, the length of internship, and prior counseling-related work experience were positively correlated with counseling self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2004). Reiterating the importance of training, a significant relationship existed between the level of graduate training and self-efficacy (Sipps, Sugden, & Faiver, 1988). Sipps et al. (1988) found that third and fourth year graduate students had higher self-efficacy scores than first and second year students. This is similar to findings which indicated that the level of training of counseling psychology students accounted for slightly more of the variance in self-efficacy than the amount of clinical experience (Melchert et al., 1996). Related to school counselors specifically, those who received training in implementing the ASCA National Model obtained significantly higher School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale scores than those that did not receive training in implementing the national model (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). As indicated in the examples above, it is clear that a variety of training experiences influence a counselor's self-efficacy.

Because self-efficacy relates to one's confidence in the ability to perform a specific task, there may be different levels of self-efficacy for different types of tasks that counselors perform. Not only does counselor self-efficacy vary between individual counselors, it also varies between

specific counseling competencies. An increase in career counseling self-efficacy has been found in counseling students who experienced a career counseling practicum (Heppner, Multon, Gysbers, Ellis, & Zook, 1998) as well as those who received increased amounts of career counseling instruction (O'Brien et al., 1997). O'Brien et al. (1997) found that graduate students showed an increase in their career counseling self-efficacy after completing a course in career counseling. Students reported a need for additional training and supervised practice in the career counseling domain (Lara, Kline, & Paulson, 2011). In addition to formal career-specific training, counselors can also increase self-efficacy through gaining more experience providing career counseling.

Overall counseling self-efficacy is one way to view a counselor's confidence in his or her counseling ability. In studies of school counselors' overall self-efficacy (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005), those with three or more years of school counseling experience had higher self-efficacy than those with less experience, which supports the findings of Lent et al. (2003). There was an increase in the mean of each scale measured by Lent et al. (2003) depending on the amount of experience counselors reported. In the study, counselors were clustered into three groups: counselors with less than one year of experience, counselors with one to three years of experience, and counselors with more than three years of experience. As the amount of experience represented by each group increased, self-efficacy increased. The number of years of counseling experience was found to be not only related to self-efficacy, but it was also found to be related to the work done by school counselors. School counselors with more years of experience are more likely to practice as they prefer, which may include more or less time spent providing career counseling (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). In another study, counselors with no counseling experience or supervision reported lower counseling self-efficacy

than those with counseling experience and supervision (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Some evidence of the importance of experience working as a counselor has also been shown in an international study (Bakar, Zakaria, & Mohamed 2011). Although these three studies provided evidence to support that experience increases self-efficacy (Lent et al., 2003; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Bakar, et al., 2011), one potential limitation is that beginning counselors may underestimate the complexity of counseling and therefore overrate their ability when self-reporting (O'Brien et al., 1997; Heppner et al., 1998). Because of this limitation, findings based on self-reported self-efficacy scores must be interpreted with caution.

Some school counselors have experience teaching in a K-12 school prior to becoming a school counselor and some do not. Prior teaching experience of school counselors is valued by teachers (Quatro, 1999). Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) found that school counselors with teaching experience reported significantly stronger self-efficacy than those without teaching experience and the researchers identified this as an area for future research. There have been different stances as to whether school counselors should have prior teaching experience (Baker, 1994; Olson & Allen, 1993; Quatro, 1999; Smith, Crutchfield, & Culbreth, 2001). The number of states that require prior teaching experience as part of school counseling certification requirements has dropped from approximately 33 states in 1970 to seven states in 2008 (as cited in Bringman & Lee, 2008). Skills school counselors use to provide classroom guidance, which may involve developing, organizing, and leading lessons (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Schmidt, 2008), are similar skills to those used by effective teachers (Akos, Cockman, & Strickland, 2007; Bringman & Lee, 2008). Beginning school counselors without teaching experience may be less comfortable managing a classroom of students (Geltner & Clark, 2005; Peterson & Deuschle, 2006), which would make providing classroom guidance in the career domain more challenging.

Counseling self-efficacy plays a part in determining counselors' actions (Larson & Daniels, 1998) and has been shown to relate to counselor performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998), exemplifying SCCT (Lent et al., 2002). To identify self-efficacy in specific areas of counseling expertise, it is important to consider components of training and experience related to the domain of interest. Counseling experiences have consistently been found to impact career counseling self-efficacy (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Lent et al., 2003). In addition, career counseling self-efficacy has been linked to career-specific training rather than total years of counseling experience (O'Brien et al., 1997; Soresi, Nota, & Lent, 2004). Higher self-efficacy in career counseling roles was found among school counselors who were engaged in more career counseling (Mitcham-Smith, 2005). In addition, there were moderate to strong correlations between counselor self-efficacy and self-reported counseling performance (Larson et al., 1998).

In addition to counseling self-efficacy, school counselors' perceptions may also contribute to their actions. School counselors' perceptions of career counseling were investigated in a statewide survey conducted by Osborn and Baggerly (2004). They wanted to learn about the preferences, priorities, and predictors of career counseling and testing for school counselors. The study revealed that school counselors at all levels would prefer to spend significantly more time on career counseling and testing than they are providing in practice. Similarly, Anctil, Smith, Schenck, and Dahir (2012) found a positive relationship between the priority placed on career counseling activities and the implementation of career counseling services. When comparing the time spent providing career counseling to the priority of school counselors, results suggested that the amount of career counseling being provided is significantly lower than the priority placed on the career domain. Anctil et al. (2012) also found that school counselors who followed a model

or guideline for a school counseling program were more likely to place higher priority on career development.

Many school counselors do not spend the recommended amount of time on appropriate duties (Baggerly, 2002; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). School counselors would like to spend less time on non-counseling activities (Borders & Drury, 1992; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Whiston & Sexton, 1998), which would allow them to have more time to provide career counseling. It is sometimes difficult for school counselors to offer ideal career guidance and counseling to students because of time constraints related to administrative duties (Anctil et al., 2012; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004).

It is difficult for counselors to be engaged in meaningful work when their self-efficacy is weak or when they do not foresee measurable gains in desired outcomes (Lent et al., 1994; O'Brien & Heppner, 1996). School counselors with low self-efficacy in career counseling could have a direct impact on middle school students by reducing the quantity of career counseling opportunities. Not only could less career counseling be provided to middle school students but the quality may also be impacted by school counselors' low self-efficacy.

### **Problem Statement**

School counselors are responsible for providing career counseling for students in middle school; however, low self-efficacy, limited experience in school counseling, a lack of previous teaching experience, and a lack of recent training could limit the quality and extent of career counseling they may be able to provide.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the self-efficacy of Virginia middle school counselors who are charged with providing career counseling to the students in their schools. This study identifies how career counseling self-efficacy varies across experiences such as work as a school counselor, work as a teacher, recent training in career counseling, and the amount of time spent providing career counseling.

## **Research Questions**

1. What are school counselors' levels of self-efficacy in career counseling as measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale?
2. How does middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling vary by a) years of school counseling experience, b) previous K-12 teaching experience, or c) recent training in career counseling?
3. What is the relationship between middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time spent providing career counseling?

## **Definition of Terms**

In this section, the definitions for professional school counselor, career counseling, career awareness, career exploration, and career planning are presented.

*Professional School Counselor:* An employee of a school district who works with students, parents, school faculty, staff, and the community to provide academic, personal/social, and career counseling programming and interventions for students within the K-12 school setting.

*Career Counseling:* Counseling services with an emphasis on career awareness, career exploration, and/or career planning.

*Career Awareness:* Developing a sense of understanding of the world of work. Having knowledge about different work roles and occupations in society.

*Career Exploration:* Willingness to utilize career information resources available (Sharf, 2006) to investigate possible future career options in addition to incorporating learning experiences in the career domain. Resources may include parents, teachers, counselors, and other adults in their lives, print resources, audio/visual resources, on-line resources, interactive media, and others.

*Career Planning:* Creating a pathway to obtain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be able to pursue a desired career.

*Self-Efficacy:* Centers on the belief one has in her or his ability to perform a task (Bandura, 1986; 1997)

### **Overview of Method**

A quantitative research design was used for this study. The researcher examined school counselor self-efficacy in the career counseling domain. The participants were school counselors practicing in middle schools throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. To offer convenience to participants and to increase the response rate, data from the school counselors was collected by an electronic survey (Qualtrics). School counselors were recruited by an email, which informed participants of the purpose of the study. The e-mail that was sent to possible participants requested an informed consent, described the procedures of the study, identified anticipated risks and benefits, confidentiality, and provided participants permission to withdraw by exiting the survey. The participants completed a questionnaire and the information they provided was used to compile the data set used for this study. A school counselor was invited to participate if he or she was a current middle school (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade) counselor in Virginia at the time of the

study and his or her e-mail information was provided on a district and/or school website. The electronic survey included three instruments: an Information Questionnaire that was used to collect data about personal experiences and training, the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified (O'Brien, et al., 1997), and a subscale of the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board approval was secured prior to data collection. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics are reported in Chapter Four to provide information about school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling. An analysis of variance was conducted to compare means and a correlation was conducted to determine if a relationship exists between career counseling self-efficacy and time spent providing career counseling. These results are also reported in Chapter Four.

### **Limitations**

Currently, there is not an instrument that measures the career counseling self-efficacy of school counselors specifically. There are two instruments that are related to the construct. The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale evaluates the overall self-efficacy of school counselors, while the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale is designed for counselor training purposes and to investigate the role of counselor self-efficacy in the process and outcome of career counseling (O'Brien et al., 1997). Therefore, these two instruments provided general results about career counseling self-efficacy in the school setting.

Characteristics of school counselors who participated in this study will influence the results. For instance, participants who have a strong interest in the career domain may have been more likely to participate than those with low interest because the focus of the survey was

important to them. This difference in career counseling interest may limit the ability to generalize the results to all middle school counselors.

The nature of an instrument that requires self-reporting represents perceptions at one point in time. When reporting self-efficacy of a school counselor, an individual's perception may be influenced by recent exposure to training, a lack of training, recently completing a successful program with students, or social desirability.

### **Description of Document**

This document is divided into five chapters. Chapter One has provided an introduction to the study. The introduction is followed by Chapter Two, which provides a review of the literature that is relevant to the study. After the literature is summarized and critiqued, Chapter Three provides the reader with a description of the methodology of the study. The final two chapters of this document provide the results of the study (Chapter 4) and a discussion of the findings (Chapter 5). References and study materials are provided in the appendices.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of the Literature**

School counseling has been defined by The Education Trust (2009) as “a profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment to reduce the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede student academic success” (p. 1). As school counselors work with students from many different backgrounds, ability levels, and home environments, it is essential to be mindful that all students do not have the same exposure to career opportunities. In the school setting, counselors have the responsibility to provide avenues for all students to learn about and identify ways to access a variety of career options. Considering the broader sociocultural and cognitive factors that impact students, it is clear that career counseling is much more complex than matching persons and environments (Perrone, Perrone, Chan, & Thomas, 2000). In addition, effective career counseling involves combining the career concerns and the psychosocial issues of students with the counselor’s knowledge and self-efficacy in the career counseling domain (O’Brien, et al., 1997; Perrone et al., 2000).

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to counselor self-efficacy, training, experience, and behavior. The review begins with background information related to career counseling in the schools including barriers and limitations, standards, perspectives on providing career counseling, and a description of the theoretical framework for the study.

#### **The Importance of Career Counseling**

Career development is an ongoing process occurring throughout one’s life. Students begin to develop career awareness in elementary school, explore careers during middle school, and move into career preparation and planning in high school and beyond. The findings of Evans

and Burck (1992) indicated the importance of beginning career exploration early. The importance of having counselor engagement in the career exploration process is evidenced in the work of Whiston, et al. (2003). Career counseling “connects school to the future, thereby enhancing students’ academic motivation by providing them with meaning and purpose” (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007, p. 56). As young adolescents learn about themselves and the world of work they are more likely to make informed career decisions. Career counseling is needed in middle school in order to meet standards and inspire young adolescents to make preliminary career decisions (Osborn & Reardon, 2006) to be prepared to take desired high school classes in preparation for future career pathways.

In order for students to know how to prepare, they must have an idea of the career paths that are of interest. Young adolescents are able to use their interests, abilities, values, and beliefs to guide how and what they learn (Hartung et al., 2005). Many adolescents form their work-related interests, values, plans and expectations based on their experience in school (Skorikov & Vondracek, 1997). Although this occurs, “It is possible that students do not understand the connection between choices they make in middle school and subsequent educational and career options.” (Akos et al., 2004, p.60). School counselors can facilitate opportunities for students to identify these connections.

Not only can connections be identified through career counseling, but career exploration may also be a protective factor to promote school engagement. In a study of ninth graders, Kenny, Blustein, Haase, Jackson, and Perry (2006) found that higher levels of career planfulness and positive career expectations were associated with school engagement. In addition to promoting school engagement, career exploration may be a protective factor to promote academic motivation (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007). Findings suggested school counselor activities

that facilitated self-awareness and awareness of future career and educational choices in the career domain may be important contributors to academic motivation (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007). In another study, career preparation had a direct positive effect on school engagement, which directly increased grades (Perry et al., 2010). Establishing these connections between a student's academic preparation and possible career options benefits students.

In schools with fully implemented comprehensive counseling programs, including career counseling, students self-reported higher grades, perceived they are prepared for the future, and experienced a sense of belonging and safety (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997). Younger students in a school with a comprehensive school counseling program, over time, do better on academic achievement tests than their peers in schools without a comprehensive school counseling program (Sink & Stroh, 2003). Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001) found that middle school students enrolled in schools with a comprehensive school counseling program had higher grades and recognized school as more relevant than students in schools with less comprehensive school counseling programs. More recently, a study by Perry et al. (2010) found that an increase in career preparation increased school engagement and, in turn, student grades.

Throughout their educational experiences, opportunities are provided to students' to learn about themselves and make choices about the direction of their futures. Each adolescent has a different set of interests, skills, abilities, values, and beliefs that impact choices he or she makes in school and for their future. Schools with more fully implemented comprehensive counseling programs have increased school engagement and grades (Perry et al., 2010); therefore, it is important to identify what promotes these positive outcomes. Studies in career counseling (Anctil, et al., 2012; Kenny, et al., 2006; Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007) provide a springboard for school counselors to advocate for career development services in K-12 schools to promote

students' school engagement (Kenny et al., 2006), academic motivation (Scheel & Gonzalez, 2007), and achievement (Anctil, et al., 2012).

### **Barriers and Limitations to Providing Career Counseling in Schools**

In addition to the internal factors, described below, that impact the career counseling work of school counselors, there are external factors that often create barriers. External barriers that school counselors may face in implementing career counseling include a lack of community or parental support. On the other hand, school counselors can embrace supports such as faculty collaboration, community buy-in, interdisciplinary opportunities, and administrative support.

Internal factors that school counselors may face in implementing career counseling include limited time, resources, and support. In the school setting counselors are often called upon to perform tasks that are not related to their training. These non-counseling tasks often take time away from school counselors' ability to provide comprehensive school counseling programming such as career counseling. School counselors desire to be engaged in promoting positive student outcomes and would prefer to spend less time on non-counseling related activities (Borders & Drury, 1992; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Whiston & Sexton, 1998).

When school counselors are able to avoid being tasked with non-counseling duties, they are able to spend time developing and enhancing their comprehensive program to meet student needs. One way school counselors develop their school counseling programs is by following a model, guidelines, or standards for school counseling, which includes career counseling. The next section will describe the middle school career counseling standards in Virginia.

### **Career Counseling Standards for Virginia Middle Schools**

Career counseling offers opportunities for students to acquire information for their future educational and career plans (Virginia Department of Education, 2004). The Career

Development Standards for School Counseling Programs in Virginia Public Schools support the overarching goal that “students will investigate the world of work in order to make informed career decisions” (Virginia Department of Education, 2004, p.2). Specific career counseling standards for middle school students are identified as follows:

Students in grades 6-8 will:

- MC1. Identify the relationship of course content, educational achievement, and career choices,
- MC2. Identify personal preferences, skills, and interests that influence career choices and success,
- MC3. Understand the effect of career choices on quality of life,
- MC4. Understand that behaviors such as punctuality, courtesy, proper dress and language, and hard work are essential to success in the job market,
- MC5. Demonstrate understanding of the education and training needed to achieve career goals,
- MC6. Demonstrate employability skills such as individual initiative, teamwork, problem solving, organization, and communication,
- MC7. Use research skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret career and educational information, and
- MC8. Demonstrate awareness of educational, vocational, and technical training opportunities available in high school. (VDOE, 2004, p. 5)

These standards provide a guideline for how school counselors should be channeling their efforts in the career domain for middle grades students. The Career Counseling Standards for Virginia provide a framework similar to other models used by middle school counselors such as

the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). School counselors who reported efforts to incorporate the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) were more likely to practice school counseling in a way that was desirable (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Although the standards are in place, school counselors face barriers and limitations implementing career counseling services. One barrier could be differing perspectives on the value of career counseling. The next section will describe some of the perspectives regarding career counseling.

### **Perspectives on Providing Career Counseling**

Although the importance of career exploration is clear, the attitudes and perspectives of individuals in the field of school counseling may include uneasiness and uncertainty surrounding career counseling. There is evidence to support the value of career counseling in the school setting (Anctil et al., 2012; Barker & Satcher, 2000; Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). However, there is also some evidence that career counseling theory and research are perceived to have relatively low importance (Perrone, et al., 2000). These mixed findings in the literature may indicate mixed perspectives of school counselors in relation to career counseling. It could also reflect a difference in perspectives regarding the action of providing career counseling verses the theory behind the action. Although this study will focus on the beliefs and actions regarding the ability to provide career counseling, it is important to acknowledge these perspectives. The following section will describe the framework for the proposed study.

### **Social Cognitive Career Theory**

This section describes the theoretical framework of the proposed study. First, a historical account of the theory will be provided, followed by a description of the theory and its constructs. Lent, et al.'s 1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides the theoretical foundation

for the proposed study. Anchored in Bandura's (1986, 1995) Social Cognitive Theory, SCCT offers a framework for developing an understanding of the interaction between individuals, their behaviors, and the environment (Lent & Brown, 2006; Lent, et al., 2000). Connecting SCCT to school counselors and their counseling behaviors allows this study to identify the relationship between school counselors and their beliefs as well as behaviors. O'Brien & Heppner (1996) proposed extending the theory to understand components that influence interest, engagement, and performance of career counseling. This extension works well in the proposed study in order to identify the time school counselors spend providing career counseling in the middle school setting. The current study aims to identify career counseling self-efficacy beliefs of school counselors and to determine if there is a relationship with previous school counseling experience, previous K-12 teaching experience, training in career counseling, and the amount of time spent providing career counseling. SCCT centers on factors pertaining to the mutual relationship and ongoing interaction between a person, their behavior, and the environment (Albert & Luzzo, 1999; Lent et al., 2000; Lent & Brown, 2006). Originally, there were three social cognitive constructs of SCCT, which are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting (Lent et al, 1994, 1996). Later, the core constructs of the theory were expanded to also include contextual supports and barriers (Lent & Brown, 2006). The follow paragraphs will elaborate on these four proposed constructs of SCCT.

Self-Efficacy, the first of the four constructs was conceptualized by Bandura (1986; 1997) and it centers on the belief one has in his or her ability to perform a task. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) described self-efficacy as the level an individual expects to be successful performing a task. School counselors have many opportunities to utilize the primary sources that can influence self-efficacy (personal performance, vicarious learning, social persuasion,

physiological states, and affective states) (Bandura, 1997) within the school setting to increase self-efficacy. The ongoing interaction between a person, his or her behavior, and the environment indicates that self-efficacy impacts the other constructs of SCCT. Next is a description of the second construct, outcome expectations.

Outcome expectations refer to the predicted outcome of an event or interaction. Outcomes are the “consequence of an act, not the act itself” (Bandura, 1986, p.391). Bandura (1986) suggests that anticipated outcomes are dependent upon how well an individual believes he or she will be able to perform in a given situation. Performance outcomes and learning experiences affect self-efficacy & outcome expectations. Expectations may have a direct effect on the way individuals perceive their personal goals.

Personal Goals refer to plans to accomplish certain tasks within a given amount of time. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that goals, with conditional requirements, enhance motivation (Bandura, 1986). “Goals not only provide direction and create incentives for action, they also figure prominently in the development of self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1986, p.470). When individuals participate in and are informed of their progress toward a goal, some will develop personal goals spontaneously (Bandura, 1986). Attaining challenging goals creates self-satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. Goals for school counselors could include utilizing school counseling standards as their guideline. Although there may be appropriate personal goals set by school counselors, they may encounter supports and barriers as they work toward these goals.

Contextual supports and barriers also impact the self-efficacy of an individual. Lent & Brown (1996) identified “foreclosed occupational options” as describing perceived barriers that individuals believe to block them from feeling confident in their abilities. A lack of confidence stifles the ability to increase self-efficacy in a specific task, such as career counseling, because

there may not be many opportunities to practice skills related to the task. Barriers that school counselors may face include limited time, limited resources, and limited support to implement a comprehensive school counseling program, which includes career counseling. On the other hand, school counselors can embrace supports such as caring faculties, community buy-in, interdisciplinary opportunities, and administrative support.

These central propositions of SCCT offer a framework and provide context to illuminate the purpose of the theory and the direction of this study. The interaction between people, their behavior, and their environment provides a highly dynamic relationship. Performance in educational activities is the result of ability, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and established goals. “All things being equal, the people with the highest level of ability and the strongest self-efficacy beliefs perform at the highest level” (Brown, 2003, p.46). School counselors have varied training experiences and personal self-efficacy beliefs, which impact the delivery of a career counseling program. This study focuses on one of the central propositions, self-efficacy. In the following section, self-efficacy theory will be discussed along with literature related to self-efficacy which will indicate the need for the proposed study. Literature relating self-efficacy to training, experience, and counseling behavior will be reviewed.

### **Self-Efficacy**

As stated earlier, self-efficacy centers on the belief one has in her or his ability to perform a task (Bandura, 1986; 1997; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). School counselors have many tasks, including providing career counseling. A school counselor’s self-efficacy in career counseling specifically can increase through four primary sources, which include personal performance, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Contextual supports and barriers impact the self-efficacy of school counselors in the career

counseling domain. Although a lack of confidence in ability to provide career counseling makes it more difficult to increase self-efficacy in this domain, there are methods that are effective. School counselors have many opportunities to utilize the primary sources of self-efficacy development within the school setting to increase self-efficacy in the career domain. School counselor self-efficacy in career counseling may be influenced by many things such as graduate training, post-graduate training, and years of experience. The following three sections will discuss counselor self-efficacy as it relates to training, experience, and behavior.

**Counselor self-efficacy and graduate training.** There is evidence to support that an increase in self-efficacy occurs in graduate students during their training program (Tang et al., 2004; Melchert et al., 1996; Sipps et al., 1988). This may be due to many factors such as experiential learning opportunities and supervisory feedback, which have the potential to impact a graduate student's self-efficacy (Barbee et al., 2003; Lent et al., 2003; Daniels and Larson, 2001). Not only can overall counseling self-efficacy increase with training, but domain specific changes in self-efficacy have also been found (Heppner et al., 1998; O'Brien et al., 1997; Soresi et al, 2004). Students may need additional training and supervised practice in a particular domain to increase their self-efficacy related to that area of counseling (Lara et al., 2011). This section includes three sub-sections related to counselor self-efficacy and the training that graduate students receive. The following sub-sections describe counselor self-efficacy related to the level of graduate training, experiential learning opportunities, and career specific training.

***Counselor self-efficacy and level of graduate training.*** As graduate students in counseling-related programs progress through a training program, they develop skills related to the discipline they have chosen. Through the process of learning counseling skills, practicing those skills, and receiving feedback, students experience a change in their self-efficacy beliefs.

The following three studies elaborate on the self-efficacy of graduate students in counselor education (Tang et al., 2004), counseling psychology (Melchert et al., 1996), and a study that combines four different counseling graduate programs (Sipps et al., 1988).

The first study described in this section focuses on counselor education students and the factors that cause variance in their self-efficacy. Through quantitative study Tang et al. (2004) examined whether age, prior work experience, number of courses taken, and number of internship hours have a positive relationship with counseling self-efficacy. One hundred and sixteen counselor education students recruited from six different counselor education programs in the midwestern area of the United States were part of the study. Three programs had CACREP accreditation and three did not. The sample consisted of Caucasian Americans (83%), African Americans (13%), and other racial/ethnic identities (4%) with an average age of 32.17 years and a standard deviation of 8.6 years. Instruments used for the study included a demographic questionnaire and the Self-Efficacy Inventory (Friedlander & Snyder, 1983).

Results indicated that the primary source of variance in self-efficacy was the number of training hours and prior counseling-related work experience a counselor education student had experienced (Tang et al., 2004). Students who had more course work, more internship hours, and more related work experience perceived they were more competent in specific domains. There were no significant differences found between students in a CACREP program and those in a Non-CACREP program related to total counseling self-efficacy,  $t(114) = 1.850, p < .067$ . Self-efficacy was most strongly linked with coursework ( $r = .59, p < .01$ ), internship hours ( $r = .47, p < .01$ ) and clinical instruction ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ). One of the limitations of the study involves the quantity versus the quality of training experiences (Tang et al., 2004). It is important to consider the quality of the training graduates receive in order to identify what works well. Counselor

education students need quality learning opportunities and mastery experiences to increase self-efficacy. These training experiences may be provided in many formats. Training in career counseling should not only be examined from a quantity viewpoint, but training in career counseling also needs to be examined for quality.

The next study focuses on counseling psychology students and the relationship of training and years of clinical experience to self-efficacy. Melchert et al. (1996) studied the level of training of counseling psychology students and the relationship with self-efficacy. The sample of 138 participants included 1<sup>st</sup> year masters students (34%), 2<sup>nd</sup> year masters students (22%), post-masters doctoral students (38%), and post-doctoral professional psychologists (5%). The instruments used were the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) and The Self-Efficacy Inventory (Fridlander & Snyder, 1983). Utilizing the CSES and multiple regression analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the level of training and years of clinical experience and counselor self-efficacy. In addition, the findings indicated that the level of training accounted for slightly more of the variance in CSES scores than the amount of clinical experience.

Although the first two studies focus on the self-efficacy of counselor education students (Tang et al., 2004) and counseling psychology students (Melchert et al., 1996), the next study focuses on the self-efficacy of graduate students from four different counseling programs. Sipps et al. (1988) conducted a study that examined the relationship between the year in a graduate training program and the self-efficacy in using basic counseling skills with 78 trainees in graduate counseling methods classes at two Midwestern universities. The design of the study involved a factorial design with outcome expectations and efficacy expectations as the dependent variables. Participants were first year through fourth year graduate trainees from four counseling

programs; counseling psychology ( $n = 27$ ), community counseling ( $n = 34$ ), guidance and counseling ( $n = 14$ ), and marriage and family counseling ( $n = 3$ ). The race/ethnicity of the participants was not reported. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 61 years with a mean of 34.97 years.

Participants were asked demographic information such as year in the counseling program, counselor training, and counseling experience (Sipps et al., 1988). The materials used included a booklet containing the intake note, verbal response descriptions, a self-efficacy questionnaire, and videotape. The cover sheet included background information on the “client” and descriptions of the response categories. The videotape included 19 separate statements that were presented by an actress portraying a client. After each statement there was a minute break for the participants to indicate which response category was to be used. The booklet provided a space for students to write their responses. The first statement “How likely is it that your response will lead to the desired outcome?” was used to assess outcome expectations and the second statement “How likely is it that you will be able to follow through on your response?” measured efficacy expectations. Located at the top of each sheet was an 11-point scale which ranged from 0 (*very uncertain*) to 100 (*very certain*) in intervals of 10. Participant response sheets were collected and scored by two independent scorers.

The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between the level of graduate training and efficacy expectations (Sipps et al., 1988). These results related to counselor trainees representing many areas of specialty. The findings indicated that there is a change in the self-efficacy of graduate students during their counselor training program. First-year students reported higher efficacy expectations than second year students. Second year students reported the lowest level of efficacy expectations, which were significantly lower than students at each of

the other three levels. As for the relationship between student level of graduate training and outcome expectations, fourth year students expressed a greater likelihood that their responses would bring about their self-reported, intended results than either the first or second year students. Students near the end of a training program seemed to be more congruent in regards to their efficacy expectations and their counseling ability. The number of training hours and prior counseling-related work experience impacted how graduate students in counselor education perceived their own competency (Tang et al., 2004). However, the level of counseling training accounted for slightly more of the variance in counselor self-efficacy for counseling psychology students than for the amount of clinical training (Melchert et al., 1996). Counselor training programs in many disciplines have been researched regarding graduate school level and self efficacy. In the study described above a significant relationship existed between the level of graduate training and self-efficacy (Melchert et al., 1996; Sipps et al., 1988). In addition to the level of graduate training, another way to examine the experience of counselors in training is by considering the experiential components of the training experience.

***Counselor self-efficacy and experiential graduate training.*** Counselor training programs include experiential learning opportunities for students to practice counseling skills, receive feedback, and make connections between content and practice. Experiential training for graduate students in a counseling-related program may include a pre-practicum, practicum, or internship experience. The first two of the three studies in this section elaborate on the self-efficacy of graduate students in a pre-practicum (Barbee et al., 2003) and a practicum experience (Lent et al., 2003). The third study in this section focuses on the relationship of feedback and self-efficacy of counseling students (Daniels & Larson, 2001).

The first study examines self-efficacy of counselor education students with a pre-practicum experience to students without the same experience. Structured and supervised pre-practicum service-learning experiences were infused into the training for counselor education students (Barbee, et al. 2003). The pre-practicum service-learning experiences had a significant positive relationship with counselor self-efficacy; however, in comparison, coursework and experience with counseling-related work had a stronger influence on self-efficacy (Barbee, et al., 2003). Over two semesters, 113 pre-practicum counseling students were recruited from two universities. One university incorporated a pre-practicum service-learning training component (treatment group) and the other regional university did not provide similar training (control group). Of the total participants, 77 were from the university with the service-learning opportunity and 39 participants reported being involved in the service-learning experiences.

The instruments used for the study (Barbee et al., 2003) included a demographic questionnaire, the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES; Melchert et al., 1996), and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberg, Gorusch, & Lushene, 1970). Students were asked to report the number of completed counseling courses (hours) to determine the level of counselor training/development, previous counseling-related work experience, and total service-learning experience (clock hours). Participants with service-learning experience indicated higher levels of self-efficacy than those who did not participate ( $p < .030$ ). A multiple regression analysis indicated an overall significant positive relationship,  $F(3, 107) = 6.75, p < .001$ , between counselor self-efficacy and the independent variables with 37% of the total variance explained. An analysis of the coefficients revealed the individual effect of each independent variable on counselor self-efficacy, which were service-learning ( $R^2 = 2.5\%$ ), previous counseling-related

work experience ( $R^2 = 8.5\%$ ), and counselor training/development ( $R^2 = 21.8\%$ ) (Barbee et al., 2003).

Practicum experiences may be a more common form of experiential learning than a pre-practicum experience. The practicum experience allows graduate students to put theory into practice. Lent and colleagues (2003) desired to develop a measure of self-efficacy related to overall counselor activity and used a 10-point scale from 0 (*no confidence*) to 9 (*complete confidence*) to have students share their beliefs. The participants included 345 students enrolled in a helping skills training class for advanced undergraduates ( $n = 159$ ), master's level practicum experience ( $n = 118$ ) or various levels of a doctoral program ( $n = 68$ ). The instruments used were the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE) and their newly developed Counselor-Activity Self-Efficacy Scales (CASES). In order to identify change in CASES scores during practicum training, a subset of the sample ( $n = 62$ ) took the scales at the beginning (1<sup>st</sup> week) and at the end (15<sup>th</sup> week) of a semester-long master's level practicum experience.

Lent et al. (2003) found the self-efficacy of counselors-in-training enrolled in a practicum class increased between the beginning and the end of the semester. There was an increase in the mean of each scale measured by Lent et al. (2003) depending on the amount of experience counselors reported. Counselors were clustered into three groups based on prior helping or counseling experience, which included: counselors with less than one year ( $n = 65$ ) counselors with one to three years ( $n = 97$ ), and counselors with more than three years of prior helping or counseling experience ( $n = 97$ ). As the amount of experience represented by each group increased, the self-efficacy increased.

During experiential training such as practicum and internship, graduate students in counselor-related programs receive feedback related to their performance. Daniels and Larson

(2001) investigated the influence of performance feedback about a mock counseling session on counseling self-efficacy with 45 graduate trainees. The participants were enrolled in a graduate program in a counseling-related field, including school counseling. Counseling psychology or counselor education/school counseling students represented 71% of the sample. Instruments used for the study included a demographic form, The Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory (COSE; Larson et al., 1992), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, 1983), and a Manipulation Check.

First, participants were given a packet of information, which included a description of a mock client. Each participant provided a 10-minute mock counseling session for the mock client and then the researcher had the student estimate his or her performance. Then the participant would complete the STAI-S. Once completed, the researcher gave the participants randomly selected feedback and then had the participant complete the posttest COSE and posttest STAI. The findings suggested that positive feedback provided to counselors on their performances lead to increased self-efficacy, while negative feedback decreased counseling self-efficacy (Daniels & Larson, 2001). In addition, the researchers indicated that to become an efficacious counselor, trainees need multiple mastery experiences with positive feedback and specific suggestions for improvement.

When counselors-in-training practice counseling skills, receive feedback, and make connections between content and practice, their self-efficacy tends to increase (Barbee et al., 2003; Lent et al., 2003; Daniels & Larson, 2001). There is evidence to suggest that graduate students in a pre-practicum (Barbee et al., 2003) and a practicum experience (Lent et al., 2003) and those receiving positive feedback (Daniels & Larson, 2001) have an increase in their overall counseling self-efficacy beliefs.

***Counselor self-efficacy and career-specific training.*** Just as the training of graduate students impacts overall counseling self-efficacy, there is evidence that career-specific training increases self-efficacy in the career domain (O'Brien et al., 1997; Heppner, et al., 1998; Warnke & Kim, 1993). Two studies focused on the career counseling self-efficacy of counseling students after completing a course in career counseling (O'Brien et al., 1997; Lara et al., 2011).

In order to run additional reliability and validity tests of the CCSES, O'Brien et al. (1997), used a sample of graduate students ( $n = 40$ ) enrolled in career counseling courses. The majority of the graduate student participants were female (70%) and the mean age for all participants was 28.30 years. The sample represented individuals who identified as Caucasian (78%), African American (10%), Hispanic (8%), and Asian American (5%). The majority were enrolled in master's programs in counseling psychology (85%) and 15% were studying at the doctoral level. The graduate students' career counseling mean experience level was 0.57 years ( $SD = 0.84$ ).

The results indicated that the internal consistency for the CCSES total score for the graduate students was .93. Correlated  $t$  tests identified significant differences between the pre and posttest total scores for the CCSES for the students enrolled in a career counseling course. O'Brien et al. (1997) found that graduate students showed an increase in their career counseling self-efficacy after completing a course in career counseling. There was no indication of a relationship among years of career or emotional-social experience and scores on the CCSES.

Heppner et al. (1998) conducted the first study that examined the relationship between career counseling self-efficacy and process and outcome variables with clients. Twenty-four graduate students in a counseling psychology program completed their first practicum focusing on career related concerns of adults and were the focus of this study. The clients ( $n = 55$ ) were

career clients in a career counseling setting. Both the graduate students and the clients completed demographic forms. The graduate students also completed the CCSES (O'Brien et al., 1997). The clients completed Career Transitions Inventory (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994), and Career Decision Profile (Jones, 1989). In addition, the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989) was completed, three target goals were identified, and the Career Decision Profile Decidedness Subscale (Jones, 1989). A MANOVA was conducted on the CCSES to test the overall impact of the counseling practicum. The findings indicated that there was a significant difference between the pre and post test on the CCSES total score. Univariate tests revealed that all subscales of the CCSES also were significant. Although findings indicated there was an increase in career counseling self-efficacy for counseling students who experienced a career counseling practicum, more self-efficacy did not always indicate better results with clients. When a counselor has high self-efficacy it does not mean that he or she possesses identified skills to support their personal belief in their ability to perform a task. Beginning counselors may not understand the complexity of counseling and therefore may believe that their counseling abilities are stronger than they are in practice.

One form of training that allows students to get experience providing career counseling is a practicum experience centered on career counseling. Warnke and Kim (1993) presented qualitative data representing the perceptions of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year doctoral students enrolled in a career practicum experience. The responses of the students related to their perceptions of the relationship between career and personal counseling, attitudes toward career services, and career interventions. Although the doctoral students had prior academic coursework and practicum experiences, they had little experience providing career interventions. As the students became familiar with domain specific techniques and instruments, they became more comfortable

providing career counseling. The students counseled individual career clients and worked with an external group by developing or implementing (or both) programming in the career domain. In addition, each student made a formal case presentation to the class. Also, the group of students directly or indirectly identified how the class topics intersected with intervention skills, both career and personal counseling, and the students' attitudes toward career counseling. Through the career counseling practicum experience outlined above, doctoral students gained an understanding of the interconnectedness of career counseling to other areas of counseling (Warnke & Kim, 1993).

Another form of training for counselors-in-training is a seminar. An advanced career counseling seminar designed for graduate students in counseling was evaluated for the effectiveness of the seminar (O'Brien & Heppner, 1996). During the seminar 14 graduate students were enrolled in a 6-week course that met each week for 90 minutes. During the six week experience, students focused on career counseling skills, discussed literature related to career counseling, and provided three supervised career counseling sessions to three to six undergraduate students. There were 11 students who agreed to participate in the research study that included a mix of 6 doctoral (54.5%) and 5 masters (45.5%) students. Prior to participating in the seminar, the students reported their experience with career counseling ( $M = 1.70$  years,  $SD = 1.77$ ). The participants were asked to complete the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (CCSES; O'Brien & Heppner, 1995) and a demographic information questionnaire at the beginning of the seminar and then again seven weeks later. A  $t$ -test was performed to compare the pretest and the posttest total scores. Participants reported higher self-efficacy after experiencing the 6 week course, however, changes in interest in providing career counseling were not statistically significant.

When students are exposed to training experiences, they may have a shift in their perspective regarding career counseling and their training needs. Attitudes toward career counseling were explored using grounded theory methods (Lara, et al., 2011). The sample included six full time counseling students in their first year of the program. There were five Caucasians and one African American, five females and one male ranging in age from 24 to 42 years. Different counseling educational tracks represented in the sample were career counseling ( $n = 1$ ), community counseling ( $n = 1$ ), mental health counseling ( $n = 3$ ) and couple and family counseling ( $n = 1$ ). Interviews were conducted with the participants around the midpoint of the semester, six weeks later, and final interviews within two weeks after the semester ended. Upon completion of the data analysis, member-checking interviews were conducted. At the beginning of the course it seemed that institutional influence was a basis for the participants' career counseling attitudes. The three properties included in this were familiarity with career counseling, reactions to others' comments and curriculum requirements, and observations of faculty career counseling attitudes. During the course, four categories emerged, which included instruction, personal value, applicability, and outcomes.

Findings indicated that participants perceived the need for practical experience performing career counseling upon conclusion of the career counseling course (Lara et al., 2011). Participants also indicated the importance of support/feedback during their development as well as the need for more training in career counseling. Participants had the theoretical knowledge from learning concepts and skills related to career counseling but did not feel competent to conduct career counseling. Therefore, students reported the need for additional training and supervision in the career counseling domain (Lara, et al., 2011). One limitation to this study is

that the students voluntarily participated so students who finished the course with negative feelings about career counseling may have chosen not to participate in the study.

The studies described above have shown the level of graduate training has an impact on counselor self-efficacy (Tang et al., 2004; Melchert et al., 1996; Sipps et al., 1988). In addition to the overall impact that a program can have on a graduate student, experiential learning opportunities and feedback have the potential to impact a graduate student's self-efficacy (Barbee et al., 2003; Lent et al., 2003; Daniels & Larson, 2001). Not only can overall counseling self-efficacy increase with training, but domain specific changes in self-efficacy have also been found. For example, career counseling self-efficacy increased over the course of a career counseling practicum experience (Heppner et al., 1998) and career counseling self-efficacy has also been linked to career-specific training rather than total years of counseling experience (O'Brien et al., 1997; Soresi et al., 2004). Students in counseling programs may need additional training and supervised practice in the career counseling domain to increase their self-efficacy in career counseling (Lara et al., 2011).

**Counselor self-efficacy and post-graduate training in career counseling.** Although the majority of studies regarding counselor self-efficacy and training relate to the training counselors receive during their graduate program, practicing counselors also have training opportunities after they complete their program. This section focuses on a study of counselor self-efficacy and post-graduate training in career counseling specifically.

Soresi et al. (2004) examined the relationship of self-efficacy to the length and type of career counseling training received by Italian career service providers ( $n = 218$ ) who applied to attend a vocational counseling course. The participants mean age was 39.28 years ( $SD = 9.58$ ,  $range = 24-62$ ) and they reported a range of 1 to 20 years of experience ( $M = 6.79$ ,  $SD = 4.32$ ) in

providing career services and a range of 8 to 200 hours of previous formal training in vocational counseling ( $M = 64.82$ ,  $SD = 46.86$ ). The participants provided career services through centers (40%), schools (35%), and private practice (25%). The participants reported spending an average of 13.19 hours per week ( $SD = 7.41$ , range = 5-36 hours) providing career counseling.

The instrument used to measure career counseling self-efficacy in the study by Soresi et al. (2004) was developed by Nora and Soresi (2000) and consists of 27 items representing specific career counseling tasks. Participants responded on their ability by using a scale of 1 (*not at all sure*) to 7 (*very sure*). Four factors of the instrument, the number of items representing each factor and the coefficient alpha values for the study were (a) understand clients' career problems (14 items; .91), (b) promote academic success through educational counseling (4 items; .80), (c) deal with problems of indecision and choice (5 items; .80), and (d) provide career information (4 items; .79).

Participants in the intervention phase of the study were career counselors who had applied for the in-service training and were randomly assigned to one of two training conditions ( $n = 30$  per condition). The training in each condition consisted of 40 weekly 3-hour sessions during the academic year. Approximately 60% of the time was spent on theory, while approximately 40% of the time was spent doing experiential learning activities (Soresi et al., 2004).

Findings indicated that the amount of previous career counseling training correlated moderately with three of the factors, which included understand clients' career problems ( $r = .41$ ;  $p < .01$ ), educational counseling ( $r = .46$ ;  $p < .01$ ), and problems of indecision and choice ( $r = .25$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (Soresi et al., 2004). The correlation of amount of training reported to the results of the providing career information scale was small and not significant ( $r = .11$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Years of

counseling experience produced only small correlations with the self-efficacy scales. Regardless of prior field-based experience, counselors who had relatively higher amounts of career counseling training reported higher levels of career counseling self-efficacy than those who had less training on three of the four self-efficacy factors.

The career service providers worked in both school and community settings; however the study was conducted in Italy where the nature of previous training, education, supervision, and work duties are not necessarily comparable to those experiences of school counselors in Virginia. Another area to consider is that this study was conducted with career service providers who attended a vocational counseling course, which may indicate they were seeking more information about counseling in the career domain. Other counselors within the school setting may not be as interested in seeking opportunities for additional training in career counseling.

Post-graduate training in career counseling is one way in which practicing school counselors have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in the career domain. Increased knowledge and skills have the potential to impact the self-efficacy of school counselors and perhaps increase their willingness to provide more career counseling.

**Counselor self-efficacy and counseling experience.** According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT; Bandura, 1986, 1995), mastery experiences have the potential to increase self-efficacy and it is possible for experiences in a certain area of expertise to positively impact self-efficacy. Several studies have found that self-efficacy is a function of counseling experience (Bakar et al., 2011, Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Lent et al., 2003). In this section, the first piece of literature that will be discussed is a review of the CSE literature in relation to the SCT constructs (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Next, overall counselor-self efficacy and counseling experience will be described (Lent et al., 2003) followed by two studies on

school counselor self-efficacy specifically (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The final study reiterates the importance of experience for school counselors by investigating the self-efficacy of an international group of school counselors (Bakar et al., 2011).

Larson and Daniels (1998) summarized 32 studies in the Counseling Self-Efficacy (CSE) literature. The summary focused on the strengths of the relationships of CSE to SCT constructs. They found that most often counselors with no experience or supervision had a lower CSE than those with experience or supervision. Once counselors gained some experience and/or supervision, the relationship of CSE to experience seemed minimal. They also found that beginning practicum seemed to increase CSE in most trainees, while advanced practicum did not seem to increase CSE.

Some evidence of the impact of experience on CSE has also been shown in an international study. Approaching the next study with caution regarding interpretation is important because of the differences in school counselor preparation and school counselor roles outside the United States. In a study of Malaysian school counselors, for instance, there was a weak positive significant correlation between counseling self-efficacy and experience as a counselor ( $r = .195$ ;  $p = .000$ ) (Bakar, et al., 2011). Counselors in Malaysian schools are also trained to teach in addition to counsel. In this sample 27.5% of the school counselors were also teaching. The sample was comprised of school counselors with different levels of training with 82% holding a bachelor's degree and 15.8% holding a post-graduate degree (Bakar et al., 2011).

Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) conducted several studies; however, this section will focus on the analysis of responses from practicing school counselors (Study 2). A list of attendees was collected from a ASCA national conference to identify possible participants for this study. Conference attendees who lived overseas or who were counselor educators were omitted from

the list, which left 582 individuals who were sent the survey, consent, and a demographic form. Two hundred twenty-six usable surveys were returned, which was a return rate of 38.7%. Those respondents with teaching experience reported significantly stronger self-efficacy than those without teaching experience  $F(1, 223) = 8.236, p < .01, R^2 = .04$ . There was a significant difference in SCSE scores when the group of students was compared with the group of practitioners sampled in Study 2,  $F(1, 340) = 2 = 9.89, p < .0001, R^2 = .08$ . Those respondents who had completed graduate school and had at least 1 year of experience had higher self-efficacy than those who did not. Also, those who had been practicing school counselors for 3 or more years reported significantly stronger self-efficacy than those who had been practicing for fewer than 3 years,  $F(1, 220) = 7.037, p < .01, R^2 = .03$ . As mentioned above, a significant difference was found in school counseling self-efficacy between school counselors with and without prior teaching experience and it was identified as an area for future research.

**Counselor self-efficacy and teaching experience.** The number of states that require prior teaching experience as part of school counseling certification requirements has dropped from approximately 33 states in 1970 to 7 states in 2008 (as cited in Bringman & Lee, 2008). Skills school counselors use to provide classroom guidance are similar skills to those used by effective teachers (Akos et al., 2007; Bringman & Lee, 2008). As described in conceptual articles, school counselors without teaching experience may be less comfortable managing a classroom of students than those with teaching experience (Geltner & Clark, 2005; Peterson & Deuschle, 2006), which would make providing classroom guidance in the career domain more challenging. In fact, in their qualitative study, Desmond, West & Bubbenzer found that novice school counselors without prior teaching experience reported a need for support with lesson planning and delivery (2006). The study, described below, also found that previous teaching

experience becomes unimportant once school counselors obtain experience working as counselors in the schools. In order to provide more details regarding the findings, the following four studies (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Desmond et al., 2006; Geltner & Clark, 2005; Peterson & Deuschle, 2006) will be described below.

An investigation of the relationship between previous teaching experience and practicing school counselors' perceived confidence in providing classroom guidance lessons was conducted (Bringman & Lee, 2008). Participants were middle school counselors who were members of ASCA. A total of 117 returned surveys were usable. The majority of the respondents were female (84%). The criterion variables were measured using two questions that had the middle school counselors rank their competence to conduct classroom lessons both with and without a teacher in the classroom. The predictor variables were teaching experience with a range of 1 to 35 years ( $M = 6.03$ ,  $SD = 6.65$ ) and school counseling experience ( $M = 10.86$ ;  $SD = 7.44$ ). Middle school counselors reported the percentage of time that they provided classroom lessons ( $M = 15.64$ ,  $SD = 12.16$ ). Multivariate multiple regression analyses were conducted by using two models. The first model only used classroom teaching experience, while the second model used both classroom teaching experience and school counseling experience. Both the competence to conduct classroom lessons alone ( $M = 9.11$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) and with a teacher present ( $M = 9.20$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) were analyzed (Bringman & Lee, 2008). The two criterion variables were highly correlated with each other ( $r = .63$ ,  $p = .00$ ). As the first model was tested, the influence of teaching experience (Wilks' lambda = .94,  $F[2, 111] = .88$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ ) on the two criterion variables was significant. The second model revealed the influence of school counseling experience on the two criterion variables was significant (Wilks' lambda = .92,  $F[2, 110] = 4.20$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ), although unlike previous results, no significant effect was found with teaching

experience using the second model (Wilks' lambda = .97,  $F[2, 110] = 1.76, p = .12$ ). When follow-up analyses were conducted findings indicated that school counseling experience was the only variable that was significantly related to changes in both criterion variables. A post hoc analysis was conducted using *t*-test and the results found statistically significant differences between school counselors with ( $M = 9.36, SD = 90$ ) and without ( $M = 8.62, SD = 1.38$ ) teaching experience on reported competence in providing classroom lessons without a teacher ( $t[114] = -3.49, p = .01$ ). When interpreting these results consider that most (about 70%) counselors (with and without teaching experience) self reported their competence providing classroom lessons as a "9" or "10" on a 10-point Likert scale with 1= low and 10 = high. The mean ratings for both school counselors with and without teaching experience were relatively high; therefore, caution should be used when interpreting the statistically significant results because the practical significance may be limited.

These results need to be viewed with caution due to the fact that the information is self-reported and although the counselors may report confidence, they may not perform competently. This study was restricted to a specific subset of middle school counselors and had a low response rate (18.5%). The subset restriction may have excluded other middle school counselors who would have chosen to participate. Despite the limitations there is some evidence for middle school counselors with teaching experience reporting higher competence in providing classroom lessons than those without teaching experience.

The next two pieces of literature in this review describe a school counseling training model (Peterson & Deuschule, 2006) and effective strategies for counselors in middle school (Geltner & Clark, 2005). Peterson and Deuschule (2006) developed a model for preparing school counseling students without previous teaching experience. The model included five focal points

of training and supervision to prepare school counseling students without teaching experience. The five areas of focus are information, immersion, observation, structure, and awareness, which are not intended to be sequential; rather they have the potential to overlap through the program. Although there may be a steep learning curve for non-teacher school counselors-in-training, by the end of an internship there is little or no difference between teachers and non-teachers in their confidence and competence as school counselors as they gain more information about the environment of the school. While school counselors-in-training progress through their program they need to have as many experiences in the school culture as possible. In this model Peterson and Deuschule (2006) recommended that behavioral observations of children and adolescents be conducted in the school setting. Not only were observations of individual students recommended, but it was also recommended for counselors-in-training to observe the school as a culture. The supervision needs to have structure, which includes the site supervisor being aware of the expectations of their role. Awareness of child or adolescent development needs to begin early in the program through development-focused experiences. The development of classroom skills is important and instruction related to classroom management is beneficial after they have begun their first field experience in a school. Likewise classroom observations of effective classroom management may also help develop classroom management skills.

Geltner and Clark (2005) described effective classroom guidance strategies for school counselors in the middle school setting. The authors suggested preparation, managing the environment, engaging students and managing their behavior as the foundation to create a climate of learning and comfort for middle school students. Although the role of a school counselor is different from that of teachers, classroom strategies need to be shifted slightly due to the nature of the work, making the strategies equally as effective as those used by classroom

teachers. It is possible that school counselors with teaching experience have had more opportunities to practice these strategies and feel more confident in their abilities to provide classroom guidance.

There are opportunities for school counselors both with and without teaching experience to receive support through other school counselors who may take on the role of a mentor. Qualitative research was conducted by Desmond et al. (2006) to identify how mentoring helps school counselors without teaching experience transition to the school environment. Participants in this study included two mentoring pairs. The mentees were provisionally licensed in the state of Ohio and did not have a teaching license or teaching experience. The mentoring pairs represented two school districts and were required to have been in the mentoring relationship for at least a year. The first mentoring pair consisted of a 60 year old mentor with 14 years of teaching experience along with 18 years experience as a school counselor, while the mentee was 47 years old and had experience owning her own business prior to becoming a counselor. They worked in the same urban school and shared approximately 590 students on their caseload. The second mentoring pair consisted of a 55 year-old mentor with 26 years of teaching experience and 5 years of school counseling experience, while the mentee was 33 and had a master's degree in community counseling with experience working in a university disability office. Two interviews were conducted with each participant and the mentors answered the same interview questions as the mentees. The second pair worked in different schools within the same school district and the mentor had a caseload of about 650 students while the mentee had a caseload of about 500.

A collective case study approach was used and therefore a within-case analysis was performed. Once the recorded interviews were transcribed a list of preliminary coding categories

was developed. From the potential themes, more specific themes were developed. Two main categories of themes emerged which were “Themes grouped by the school environment” and “Themes grouped by the profession of school counseling”. Within the first category, the following themes were identified: learning the school environment, being open to learning, and having teaching experience. Within the second category, the three main themes were: benefits of mentoring, motivations for engaging in mentoring, and mentoring contributing to professional development.

In regards to the theme of teaching experience, both mentors and mentees agreed that prior teaching might be helpful but it is not necessary to become an effective counselor. The participants indicated that school counselors need to understand the experiences of teachers because they are working side by side in collaboration to support students. Both mentees believed that mentoring has the potential to be beneficial for school counselors without teaching experience; however, they did not believe that their lack of teaching experience was a deficit in the school environment. They each were bringing other life experiences with them as they moved into the position of a school counselor and they were able to utilize strengths and skills differently from those who had teaching experience. Another area mentioned that the mentees acknowledged was they felt the need to prove themselves to the teachers especially when calling students out of the classroom environment.

**Counselor self-efficacy and counseling behavior.** Personal self-efficacy can influence the behavior of individuals (Bandura, 2001; Owens, et al., 2010). A couple of studies explored the how school counselors deliver counseling services (Anctil et al., 2012; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Those studies of school counselors in preK-12 settings are described below.

Practices of school counselors in the delivery of career counseling in pre-K through 12 schools were explored in a recent cross-sectional study (Anctil, et al., 2012). Priority placed on career counseling, time devoted to delivery of career development services, differences between new and experienced counselors in priority placed on career counseling, and continuing education needs in career development were all investigated. Participants included 1016 practicing school counselors who were members of ASCA or their state school counselor association. The majority of participants were female (85.2%), held a master's degree (87.2%), and were certified school counselors (88.4%). More than half (75.3%) of the participants were graduates of a CACREP accredited masters program and 83% of the participants reported attending at least two continuing education trainings per year. Data representing school counselors were reported in aggregate although participants were working in a variety of settings. Almost all participants (92.6%) worked in public schools, which included school counselors in elementary (23%), middle (24.5%), high (44.3%), and K-12 (7.4%) school settings.

Participants reported spending various amounts of time delivering programming in the three domains. Approximately 46% of respondents reported spending less than 20% of their time providing career counseling services, while fewer respondents reported spending less than 20% of their time in the academic (15.8%) and personal/social (15.5%), (Anctil et al., 2012). A chi-square analysis demonstrated there was a significant difference in the time spent on the delivery of academic  $\chi^2(25, N = 811) = 248, p > .001$ , and personal/social development  $\chi^2(25, N = 811) = 101.05, p > .001$ , as compared to career development services. When comparing the time spent providing career counseling to the priority of school counselors, results suggested that the amount of career counseling being provided is significantly lower than the priority placed on the career domain,  $\chi^2(20, N = 813) = 279.52, p > .001$  (Anctil et al., 2012). Additionally, it is

interesting that more experienced counselors in the sample placed a lower priority on career development. Some limitations to this study include the fact that it was a convenience sample. Participants were not recruited directly, which made it difficult to compute an accurate response rate.

Many variables such as the school level (elementary, middle, high), years of experience as a school counselor, number of students per school counselor, the amount of time spent on non-counseling related activities and professional development have been identified as influencing the practice of school counselors (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). These influencing factors can have a positive or a negative effect on a counselor's practice.

A study was conducted to identify whether school counselors prefer to spend more time providing interventions associated with a comprehensive school counseling program rather than time on other tasks (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Six hundred school counselors were selected to represent two southern states equally (300 each). From this group, a random sample of 100 school counselors representing each K-12 setting (elementary, middle, high) were invited to participate. A total of 361 usable surveys were returned and used for analysis. The response rate was 60%. More than 90% of the participants earned a master's degree in school counseling, while nearly half (48.1%) completed their training prior to 1990. The survey instruments included the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS), the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSS), the School Climate Scale (SCS), and demographic information. The SCARS (Scarborough, 2005) is designed to measure the frequency a school counselor actually performs job-related duties as well as the frequency the school counselor desires to perform the duties. Next, the CSS (Sutton & Fall, 1995) which was modified from a teacher efficacy scale by Gibson and Dembo (1984) is designed to measure aspects of school counseling self-efficacy

including efficacy and outcome expectancy. The CSS consisted of 33 items and counselors were asked to use a 6-point Liker-type scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Nineteen of the items were used in the research study. Lastly, the SCS (Sutton & Fall, 1995), consisting of 27 items, was designed to measure the attitude and influence of others within the school environment toward the counselor and the counseling program. Paired sample *t* tests were conducted on the four intervention subscales (Counseling, Consultation, Coordination, and Curriculum) of the SCARS, the total intervention score, and each of the three non-counseling related activity subscales (Clerical, Fair Share, and Administrative). Results from paired sample *t*-tests using the SCARS indicated statistically significant differences for the total scale score between actual and preferred frequencies ( $t = -21.22, p < .001, d = 1.02$ ). In regards to the non-counseling related activity subscales, each were statistically significant (Clerical:  $t = 13.96, p < .001, d = .48$ ; Fair Share:  $t = 18.87, p < .001, d = .87$ ; and Administrative;  $t = 13.20, p < .001, d = .71$ ). In addition, findings suggested that the years of professional experience were related to the difference between school counselors' actual practice in the school setting and whether or not they were practicing school counseling as they desired. Evidence indicating that this relationship between experience and practice exists may tell us more about how school counselors provide school counseling.

**Factors impacting school counselor self-efficacy** School counselors are uniquely placed within a school's system that allows the potential for specific factors that are part of that system to contribute to an increase in school counselor self-efficacy beliefs. Two studies (Sutton & Fall, 1995; Scoles, 2011) related to the factors impacting school counselor self-efficacy were conducted in two different states 16 years apart, yet they found similar results. The two studies are presented in detail and a summary of the similarities is provided at end of this section.

School counselors were surveyed by Sutton & Fall (1995) to examine the influence of school climate, counselor role, staff relationships, and selected demographic variables on school counselor self-efficacy and outcome expectancy. The participants were certified school counselors with an average of 8 years of experience. The school counselors were working in K-8 elementary (36%), secondary (7-12; 58%), and K-12 (6%) schools. In order to conduct the study, all public school counselors in Maine were mailed a questionnaire (N = 383) and 316 were returned. The questionnaire contained four sections which included 14 demographic information questions, 5 questions regarding percentages of time, the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSS), and a revised version of the School Climate Scale (SCS).

Once the data was collected, a principal-component factor analysis was conducted to identify the underlying factor structure of counselor responses. A three factor structure was identified which included efficacy expectancy for being a school counselor, efficacy expectancy for the role of individual counseling in the school, and outcome expectancy. First, stepwise multiple regression techniques were used to assess school climate, counselor roles, and demographic variables (independent variables) for their relation to school counselor efficacy expectancy-multifaceted role (dependent variable). Findings indicated that  $R$  was significantly different from zero,  $F(12,197) = 3.03, p < .001$  in the first analysis (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Two variables, which contributed significantly to the prediction equation, were staff support and the grade level that the counselor provided counseling support. The second multiple regression analysis assessed the contribution of school climate, counselor roles, and demographic variables to counselor efficacy expectancy (counseling role). Findings indicated that  $R$  was statistically different from zero,  $F(12, 197) = 1.85, p < .05$ . Staff and administrative support contributed significant variance to efficacy expectancy. The third multiple regression analysis assessed the

contribution of school climate, counselor roles, and demographic variables to counselor outcome expectancy. Findings indicated that R was statistically different from zero,  $F(12, 197) = 6.77, p < .001$ . Staff support, administrative support, and non-related services contributed significant variance to efficacy expectancy. The other two stepwise multiple-regression analyses, which examined counselor efficacy expectancy (Counseling role) and counselor outcome expectancy as the dependent variables indicated that colleague support was the strongest predictor of self-efficacy in both analyses. Colleague support was found to be the strongest predictor of self-efficacy in school counselors and school counselor self-efficacy can be influenced by school climate.

Scoles (2011) used a causal-comparative research design and compared the self-efficacy of school counselors with teaching experience to those without teaching experience. Participants were gathered from a convenience sample of school counselors. There were 1,335 surveys distributed to “professional members” of the Ohio School Counselor Association and the response rate was 9.7%, with 129 surveys being completed. The respondents were 81.4% female and 18.7% male ranging in age from 25 to 70 years old with an average age of 47.8 years. The majority of the respondents classified themselves as White (91.5%), while there were also Black/African American (4.7%), Asian (0.8%), and Other (2.3%) racial/ethnic backgrounds represented. The respondents reported an average of 12.8 years of experience as a school counselor and they represented elementary (36.4%), middle (12.4%), high (47.3%), and other (3.9%) PreK-12 settings. The sample included school counselors who reported previous experience as a classroom teacher (79.8%) and school counselors without teaching experience (20.2%). The survey completed by the participants included the SCSE (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) to measure self-efficacy, two open-ended questions related to factors impacting self-

efficacy, and a demographic questionnaire to learn more about the respondents. Scoles conducted a two-tailed *t*-test to evaluate mean differences in school counselor self efficacy between those with prior teaching experience and those without.

Although the study reported results for each subscale of the SCSE, this review will only include the results related to the Career and Academic Development subscale and the cumulative scale score on the entire SCSE. Results of the study indicated that there were no significant differences found between scores on the Career and Academic Development subscale between school counselors with experience as a classroom teacher ( $n = 103$ ,  $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) and those without that experience ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ );  $t(129) = 1.89$ ,  $p = 0.061$ , two tailed (Scoles, 2011). At the conclusion of the self-efficacy questionnaire, school counselors had the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions seeking to identify their perspectives on factors that have a positive impact on their self-efficacy as a school counselor and those that have a negative impact. A multiple level content analysis was used in analyzing the responses. As for the positive factors, the top three mentioned by school counselors with prior teaching experience ( $n = 103$ ) were supportive administration (24.5%), experience (21.6%), and teaching experience (14.8%), while the top three identified by school counselors without prior teaching experience ( $n = 26$ ) were supportive administration (34.5%), supportive staff (27.6%), and seeing success (20.7%). In addition to these factors, both groups identified professional development as a factor contributing to positive self-efficacy in their professional performance. The top three negative factors impacting self-efficacy reported by school counselors with prior teaching experience included caseload (16.0%), unrelated responsibilities (16.0%), and insufficient time (13.0%), while the top three for school counselors without prior teaching experience were non-supportive staff (20.7%), caseload (17.2%), and an unsuccessful experience (13.8%).

Although school counselors face barriers within the system of a school, there are also opportunities to increase career counseling self-efficacy. Two factors that contributed significantly to predicting self-efficacy were staff support and the grade level in which the counselor provided counseling support (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Four factors positively impacting the self-efficacy of school counselors were identified as important by school counselors included a) supportive administration, b) teaching experience, c) supportive staff, and d) professional development (Scoles, 2011). When a school counselor has positive factors in the system in which they work, it is more likely they will report higher self-efficacy.

**Counselor self-efficacy and school counseling.** School counselors have many opportunities to utilize the primary sources of self-efficacy development (personal performance, vicarious learning, social persuasion, physiological and affective states) (Bandura, 1997) within the school setting to increase self-efficacy. These opportunities may include training on implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, which includes career counseling.

Self-efficacy is an important aspect of effective counseling (Bandura, 1995; Larson & Daniels, 1998). Effective counseling may be delivered in various formats. Some delivery methods may be more appropriate for specific situations and populations than others. We know that school counselors are in roles where they have the potential to work with diverse student populations and need to be able to adapt their delivery to meet the needs of students. Self-efficacy may be an important component of adapting the delivery of school counseling services, which includes career counseling, to meet the needs of diverse student populations (Bandura, 1995; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Crook, 2010).

School counselors' perceptions of career counseling were investigated in a statewide survey conducted by Osborn and Baggerly (2004). They wanted to learn about the preferences,

priorities, and predictors of career counseling and testing for school counselors. The study consisted of elementary (63%), middle (20%), and high (16%) school counselors in Florida. The Florida School Counselors Survey 2000 was the larger scale which included the career counseling and career testing questions. The survey asked school counselors descriptive attributes, the amount of time spent on counselor duties, time spent on state testing, supervision, and counseling and career theory. For the study, duties were categorized using the ASCA National Model. The two categories were appropriate duties (classroom guidance, individual counseling, small group counseling, consultation, academic advising, and coordination of 504 or Child Study Team meetings) and inappropriate duties (student registration, coordination of state testing, administrative duties, disciplining students and miscellaneous duties such as lunch duty). School counselors rated their self-efficacy for each of the duties on a 4-point rating scale. Findings indicated that 79% of elementary, 59% of middle, and 31% of high school counselors reported spending less time on career guidance than they preferred. A multiple regression revealed that the main predictor of actual career counseling time was the actual time spent on career testing, which accounted for 18% of the variance. The study revealed that school counselors at all levels in Florida would prefer to spend more time on career counseling and testing. It is interesting to note that while time spent career testing is a main predictor of actual time spent on career counseling, approximately three-fourths of the middle and high school counselors reported spending very little time on career testing. This study had the limitation of being conducted in Florida, which may not accurately represent other states. Also, only one school counselor per school completed a survey, which may not represent the other counselors in their settings.

## Summary

There is evidence to support an increase in overall counseling self-efficacy beliefs of graduate students during their training program (Tang et al., 2004; Melchert et al., 1996; Sipps et al., 1988; Barbee et al., 2003; Lent et al., 2003; Daniels and Larson, 2001) and career domain specific changes in self-efficacy have also been found, particularly after career domain specific training or experience (Heppner et al., 1998; O'Brien et al., 1997; Soresi et al., 2004; Warnke & Kim, 1993). There may be a need for additional training and supervised practice in a particular domain to increase domain specific self-efficacy (Lara et al., 2011), as practicing school counselors who have more training in the career domain may report higher self-efficacy than those with less training.

Several studies have found that self-efficacy is a function of counseling experience (Bakar et al., 2011, Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Lent et al., 2003). Additionally, the skills school counselors use to provide classroom lessons in the career counseling domain are similar skills to those used by effective teachers (Akos et al., 2007; Bringman & Lee, 2008). As such, it may be that those school counselors with teaching experience are more self-efficacious in the career counseling domain than those without teaching experience. Although prior teaching experience may be helpful, it is not necessary to become an effective counselor (Desmond et al, 2006). Peterson and Deuschle suggested a school counseling training model (2006) and Geltner and Clark wrote about effective strategies for counselors in middle schools (2005) in their conceptual articles described above.

Two studies revealed some factors that can have a positive impact on school counselor self-efficacy (Scoles, 2011; Sutton & Fall, 1995). Supportive administration, teaching experience, a supportive staff, and professional development had a positive impact on self

efficacy (Scoles, 2011). In addition, staff support and the grade level that the school counselor serves in the school setting significantly contributed to predicting self-efficacy (Sutton & Fall, 1995).

Personal self-efficacy can influence the behavior of individuals (Bandura, 2001; Owens, et al., 2010). Results from Anctil et al. (2012) suggested that the amount of career counseling being provided is significantly lower than the priority placed on the career domain. The years of professional experience were related to the difference between school counselors' actual practice and whether or not they were practicing as they desired (Scarborough & Clubreth, 2008). The delivery of career counseling in the school setting can be impacted by the school counselor's self-efficacy in the career counseling domain. Therefore, it is important to identify the relationships between self-efficacy and school counseling experience, previous teaching experience, training in career counseling, and the time spent providing career counseling. Self-efficacy may be an important factor when adapting the delivery of school counseling services to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Bandura, 1995; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 1995; Crook, 2010).

## Chapter Three

### **Methodology**

The purpose of the study was to examine school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and to examine how career counseling self-efficacy may vary across experiences such as work as a school counselor, work as a teacher, and recent training in career counseling as well as the amount of time spent providing career counseling. Participants were school counselors practicing in public middle schools in Virginia. They were recruited via email and completed the instrument electronically. The following questions were examined through quantitative study:

1. What are school counselors' levels of self-efficacy in career counseling as measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale?
2. How does middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling vary by a) years of school counseling experience, b) previous K-12 teaching experience, or c) recent training in career counseling?
3. What is the relationship between middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time spent providing career counseling?

This chapter focuses on the methodology that was used for the study. It includes information about the research design, participant selection, survey procedures, and the instruments that were used for the study.

#### **Overview of Method**

A quantitative research design was used for this study. The study examined school counselor self-efficacy in the career counseling domain. School counselors practicing in middle schools throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia with publicly available email addresses were invited to participate in the study. To offer convenience to participants and to increase the

response rate, data from the school counselors were collected by an electronic survey (Qualtrics). School counselors were recruited by an email, which contained all of the appropriate disclosure documents to make sure the participants were informed of the purpose of the study. The e-mail sent to possible participants included disclosure about the purpose of the study, a request for informed consent, procedures of the study, anticipated risks and benefits, confidentiality, compensation, and permission to withdraw. The professional school counselors who chose to participate completed a questionnaire and the information they provided was used to compile the data set used for this study. The researcher secured Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board approval prior to data collection.

### **Research Design**

A quantitative research design was used for this study. This design was chosen because of the nature of the research questions. The questions sought to identify relationships between variables and mean differences across subgroups.

### **Participants**

The population was professional middle school counselors practicing in the Commonwealth of Virginia in a public middle school that housed students in grades 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>. The sampling frame included those school counselors who met the above criteria and had e-mail information available publicly on-line. In order to be consistent with the middle school concept, school counselors working in schools with a different configuration of grade levels were not included in the study. This allowed for comparisons to be made with settings serving a particular population. In addition to the school setting, participants had at least a master's degree education. Some of the school counselors may have received counseling credentials during their careers such as a Licensed School Counselor (LSC), Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), or

a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC). Participants' years of experience providing school counseling varied and some counselors had prior teaching experience while some did not.

The researcher obtained a list of all school districts and all middle schools for sixth through eighth graders by using the Virginia Department of Education website. This resource was used to compile the name of the school, physical address, and phone number. Once the basic school information had been gathered for each school, e-mail addresses of school counselors were collected by linking to the publicly available district and school websites as needed. The researcher chose to gather school counselor contact information in this manner so that all school counselors who meet the criteria had the same opportunity to be invited to participate in the study.

### **Survey Procedures**

The school counselors who were given the opportunity to participate in the study likely had convenient access to computers because they were all working in public middle school settings. Therefore, an electronic survey was the method used for data collection due to the increased efficiency and to provide greater convenience for the participants. Such on-line surveys can provide quality, valid results (Sue & Ritter, 2007) and have been found to have comparable results to surveys physically mailed to participants (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The recruitment email had a direct link to the survey in order to provide convenience and ease of use for the participants. The recruitment e-mail included disclosure about the purpose of the study, a request for informed consent, procedures of the study, anticipated risks and benefits, confidentiality, compensation, and permission to withdraw (see Appendix A).

Participants were offered an incentive to complete the survey. When the participants reached the end of the survey they received a note of thanks for their time and willingness to

participate in the study. As a token of appreciation, participants were given the opportunity to vote for an organization that person would like to receive the \$100.00 donation. Participants were provided with five options: Virginia School Counselors Association, Virginia Counselors Association, Virginia Alliance for School Counseling, Virginia Career Development Association, and Virginia Middle School Association. Participants were informed of the organization receiving the most votes and that organization received a \$100 donation by the researcher in gratitude to the participants for their time in completing the survey. See Appendix B for the initial recruitment e-mail.

Two follow-up e-mails were sent to non-respondents including a link to the survey after the first initial e-mail. It is recommended to have follow-up email contacts to increase the response rate of on-line surveys (Cook, Heath, Thompson, 2000). The first follow-up email (Appendix C) was sent seven days after the initial recruitment email. The second follow-up email (Appendix D) was sent three days after the first follow-up email. The link to the survey connected the participants to the survey, which included three instruments. These instruments are described in the next section.

### **Instruments**

The following three instruments were used to collect data for this quantitative study: an Information Questionnaire developed by the researcher which included demographic and background information, the Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified (CCSES; O'Brien, et al., 1997), and a subscale of the School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). A panel of current Masters-level Counselor Education students was asked to review the Questionnaire to provide feedback to the researcher prior to data collection. Panel members were asked to take the survey and report the time it took to complete. They were also

asked to identify whether any of the items, structure, wording, or format was confusing and provide suggestions for improvement.

### **Information Questionnaire**

The Information Questionnaire was designed by the researcher to gather demographic, descriptive, and personal experience information that was used to describe the sample and to answer the research questions. Demographic information solicited on the questionnaire included age, gender, and ethnicity/race. Descriptive information asked of participants included the participants' highest level of education, CACREP accreditation status of the training program, licensure status, membership in professional associations, perceived support of colleagues, the number of students on the participant's caseload, and confidence implementing two components of recently passed Virginia legislation related to career counseling. In addition, the questionnaire asked for information about experiences that are variables in the research questions which included school counseling experience, teaching experience, and number of hours of formal career counseling training in the last three years. See Appendix F for the complete questionnaire.

### **Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified**

The Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale was developed to provide a psychometrically sound instrument for investigating the role of counselor self-efficacy in the process and outcome of career counseling (O'Brien et al., 1997). The CCSES is a 25-item instrument with an internal consistency reliability of .96 (O'Brien et al., 1997). The instrument is divided into four subscales, which make up the entire scale. The components included in the CCSES and their reported internal consistency reliability estimates are the Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills (TPAS, .93) containing 10 items, Vocational Assessment and Interpretation Skills (VAIS, .94) containing six items, Multicultural Competency Skills (MCS, .92) containing six items, and

Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research (TWER, .76) containing three items (O'Brien et al., 1997). Participants rated the items on a 0-4 Likert-type scale (0 = *Not Confident*, 2 = *Moderately Confident*, 4 = *Highly Confident*).

The researcher modified the original instrument by making changes to the terminology used to describe the recipient of counseling services. In the original scale, the terms “client” and “career client” were replaced with the term “student” to be more in line with the school counselor terminology. The researcher made minimal changes in order to make sure that the modified version was closely aligned with the original instrument in order to maintain validity and reliability. Permission was granted from the first author to the researcher to make these changes (K. O'Brien, personal communication, January 7, 2013). See Appendix F for the complete modified instrument.

### **School Counselor Self Efficacy Scale-Subscale**

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE) was developed to provide a psychometrically sound instrument to evaluate school counselors' self-efficacy (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The entire scale has 43 items that evaluate five different components. The components included in the SCSE and their reported subscale internal consistency reliability coefficients are Personal and Social Development (.91) containing 12 items; Leadership & Assessment (.90) containing 9 items; Career and Academic Development (.85) containing 7 items; Collaboration (.87) containing 11 items; and Cultural Acceptance (.72) containing 4 items. The Career and Academic Development subscale is the only subscale that was used in this study to identify self-efficacy of career counseling as it relates specifically to counselors in the school setting. Participants rated the items on a 1-5 Likert-type scale (1 = *Not Confident*, 3 =

Moderately Confident, 5 = *Highly Confident*). See Appendix F for the Career and Academic Development Subscale of the SCSE including the two additional items.

### **Data Analysis**

The statistical software used for data analysis was The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The following statistical analyses were conducted:

#### **Research question 1: What are school counselors' levels of self-efficacy in career counseling as measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale?**

In order to address the first research question, descriptive statistics were reported for total career counseling self-efficacy as identified by both the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale independently. Descriptive statistics were compiled by computing means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores for total career counseling self-efficacy and subscales of career counseling self-efficacy. Means and standard deviations of the 25 items of the modified Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (CCSES-Modified) and the seven items of the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale were calculated. The results were used to identify the items on each instrument with the highest and lowest self-efficacy means.

#### **Research question 2: How does school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling vary by a) years of school counseling experience, b) previous K-12 teaching experience, or c) recent training in career counseling?**

The second research question required two analyses of variance (ANOVA) and a *t*-test to determine if there were statistically significant differences among means. a) Participants were given the opportunity to report their years of counseling experience both full and part time, then

the researcher combined these to get a total number. This number was obtained by taking the total reported number of years as a full time school counselor and adding that to .5 multiplied by the reported number of years as a half-time school counselor. Then, the researcher created discrete levels to represent groups of experience once the data had been collected in order to conduct the analysis. Identifying the range of experience of the sample and using a scale appropriate for the sample determined the discrete levels. These three levels represented those who had the least experience, those in the middle, and those with the most experience as a school counselor. The researcher conducted an ANOVA with these groups and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale mean and a separate ANOVA with the identified groups and the CCSES-Modified mean. b) The researcher obtained an answer of “yes” or “no” to indicate previous teaching experience. A separate value was given to answers of “yes” and “no” and the values were used to run a *t*-test with the mean for the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale and the CCSES-Modified mean. See question number three on the Information Questionnaire. c) The participant indicated the total number of hours of conference presentations, workshops, or trainings that focused primarily on career counseling within the last three years. First, the researcher identified the range of the number of hours of training participants reported receiving in career counseling within the last three years. Then, the researcher created discrete levels to represent groups of recent training once the data was collected in order to conduct the analysis.

**Research question 3: What is the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time spent providing career counseling?**

The third research question required a correlation to analyze the relationship between school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time (measured in percent) spent providing career counseling.

### **Summary**

This chapter included an overview of the methodology for the study, a description of the research design, participants, survey procedures, instruments, and a summary of the data analysis that was performed.

## Chapter Four

### Results

This study was designed to address three research questions related to middle school counselors' self-efficacy providing career counseling. This chapter describes the participants, provides a brief description of the instruments, the data cleaning process, and a description of the sample. In addition, this chapter provides results for each of the following research questions.

1. What are school counselors' levels of self-efficacy in career counseling as measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale?
2. How does middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling vary by a) years of school counseling experience, b) previous K-12 teaching experience, or c) recent training in career counseling?
3. What is the relationship between middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time spent providing career counseling?

### Participants

The sample for this study was middle school counselors working in the Commonwealth of Virginia. All participants were working in a school housing students in grades six through eight at the time the survey was completed. The original sampling frame consisted of 576 individuals with publically available email addresses. After the recruitment e-mail was sent, there were nine people who indicated they were not able to participate. These included three individuals who sent a return e-mail indicating that they were out of the office during the survey administration, three were not currently a middle school counselor, two reported needing school division approval, and one person had difficulty accessing the survey. This reduced the actual sampling frame to 567. Before beginning data analysis, a review of participant responses and

missing items was conducted. The data cleaning procedures described below resulted in a final sample of 143 participants, which is a 25% response rate.

## **Instruments**

### **Information Questionnaire**

The researcher created a 17-item Information Questionnaire to collect background information from all participants. The Information Questionnaire gathered data on participants' demographic and professional experiences. This instrument was used to collect information to describe the sample as well as to provide information about the independent variables for analysis.

### **Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified**

The Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified (O'Brien et al., 1997) was used to assess overall career counseling self-efficacy. Participants were asked to indicate their level of confidence in their ability to provide career counseling. The CCSES-Modified contains 25 items that are rated on a 0-4 Likert-type scale (*0 = Not Confident, 4 = Highly Confident*); however, during data collection, the scale was a 1-5 Likert-type scale (*1 = Not Confident, 5 = Highly Confident*); for consistency and to limit complicated instructions for the participants. Within the CCSES-Modified there are four subscales which measure Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills, Vocational Assessment and Interpretation Skills, Multicultural Competency Skills, and Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research.

### **School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale-Subscale**

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale-Career and Academic Development subscale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) was used as an instrument specifically designed for school counselors to examine self-efficacy in the career domain. Using a 1-5 Likert-type scale (*1 = Not*

*Confident, 5 = Highly Confident*), participants indicated their level of confidence with seven items on this subscale.

### **Data Cleaning**

One hundred and sixty-one respondents answered survey items. There were 18 respondents who omitted 15% or more of the items from the CCSES-Modified or the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale. The researcher removed those respondents from the study, which changed the total remaining respondents to 143. Of the 143 remaining, there were eight respondents who had missing responses on the two self-efficacy scales. These eight respondents each omitted one item that was used to measure career counseling self-efficacy on the CCSES-Modified or the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale. Each omitted item was replaced with the individual's scale mean by using mean imputation (Montiel-Overall, 2006) and those respondents were included in the analyses. There were also additional respondents who omitted items on the information questionnaire. Those omissions are noted below in the description of the sample. When the omitted item was part of an analysis for Research Question 2 or 3, the respondent was removed from the affected analysis.

### **Description of the Sample**

The sample can be described by data collected through the information questionnaire related to several personal characteristics and professional experiences of the participants. Of the 143 participants, 23 (16.1%) were male and 117 (81.8%) were female (three participants omitted this item). Regarding race, 110 participants (76.9%) identified as White/Caucasian, 20 (14.0%) African American, four (2.8%) Hispanic/Latino, one (0.7%) Multiracial, and five (3.5%) preferred not to answer (three participants omitted this item).

Regarding training, the participants reported their highest level of education with 125 participants (87.4%) reporting a Master's degree as the highest level of education, 11 (7.7%) with an Education Specialist degree, and six (4.2%) with a Doctoral degree (one participant omitted this item). Regarding career training, 119 (83.2%) participants have successfully completed a three-credit hour course in career counseling, 16 (11.2%) have not successfully completed a three-credit hour course in career counseling, and six (4.2%) did not know if they had successfully completed a three-credit hour course in career counseling (two participants omitted this question).

Regarding training implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, 123 (86.0%) have received this type of training, and 17 (11.9%) have not received this type of training (three participants omitted this item). Participants reported the models for a comprehensive school counseling program that they use with 112 (78.3%) participants using the American School Counseling Association Model, 50 (35%) using the Virginia Model for School Counseling, 49 (34.3%) using a District Model, three (2.1%) using another model, and eight (5.6%) not using any model.

Overall, participants feel that their career counseling efforts are supported by their administration most of the time or always 105 (77.2%) (two participants omitted this item), while 90 participants (66.2%) indicated feeling supported by teachers most of the time or always (one participant omitted this item). Regarding professional credentials, participants' credentials include 118 (82.5%) Licensed School Counselors, 13 (9.1%) Provisionally Licensed School Counselors, 11 (7.7%) Nationally Certified Counselors, 13 (9.1%) Licensed Professional Counselors, and one (0.7%) Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor, while 10 (7.0%) reported having other designations. Regarding professional associations, participants reported

being members of the American Counseling Association 15 (10.5%), American School Counselors Association 57 (39.9%), Virginia Counselors Association 41 (28.7%), Virginia School Counselors Association 52 (36.4%), Virginia Alliance for School Counselors 15 (10.5%), Virginia Middle School Association 2 (1.4%), and 50 (34.9%) reported no association affiliation.

### **Findings**

The reliability for the CCSES-Modified overall scale was  $\alpha = 0.941$  and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale was  $\alpha = 0.871$ . The CCSES-Modified had four subscales which were Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills (N of items = 10,  $\alpha = 0.820$ ), Vocational Assessment and Interpretation Skills (N of items = 6,  $\alpha = 0.855$ ), Multicultural Competency Skills (N of items = 6,  $\alpha = 0.913$ ), and Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research (N of items = 3,  $\alpha = 0.747$ ). The two instruments (the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale) had a strong positive 2-tailed Pearson correlation (0.792), which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This was obtained using the CCSE-Modified total score ( $M = 77.93$ ,  $SD = 13.6$ ) and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale total score ( $M = 29.93$ ,  $SD = 4.08$ ). The results from the survey responses were used to answer the three research questions and the findings are described below.

#### **Research Question #1: What are school counselors' levels of self-efficacy in career counseling as measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale?**

Counselors' self-efficacy in the career counseling domain was measured by the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale. According to the CCSES-Modified, counselors felt least confident in the areas of Multicultural Competency Skills and Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research, while they reported the most

confidence in their Therapeutic Process & Alliance Skills. The percentage of respondents who chose each response is indicated in Table 1 along with the mean and standard deviation for each item on the CCSES-Modified. The results are presented using the original scale in order for the results of this study to be more easily compared to other studies that were conducted using the CCSES. The CCSES-Modified is divided into subscales, therefore Table 2 provides descriptive statistics and reliability for each subscale and the total scale.

Table 1  
*Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified*  
*Individual Item Responses (N = 143)*

	% Response					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	0	1	2	3	4		
1. Select an instrument to clarify a student's abilities.	1	11	27	42	18	2.64	0.95
2. Provide support for a student's implementation of his/her career goals.	1	2	8	36	52	3.38	0.79
3. Assist a student in understanding how his/her non-work life (e.g., family leisure, interests, etc.) affects career decisions.	--	1	5	36	57	3.50	0.66
4. Understand special issues related to gender in career decision-making.	1	4	13	50	33	3.10	0.81
5. Develop a therapeutic relationship with a student.	1	3	5	26	65	3.50	0.83
6. Select an instrument to clarify aspects of a student's personality which may influence career planning.	2	8	18	39	34	2.94	0.88
7. Explain assessment results to a student.	1	4	12	32	52	3.31	0.87
8. Terminate counseling with a student in an effective manner.	--	--	9	39	52	3.43	0.66
9. Understand special issues related to ethnicity in the workplace.	1	4	21	46	27	2.94	1.01
10. Understand the special issues that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students may have in career decision-making.	4	13	32	33	19	2.50	1.05
11. Provide knowledge of local and national job market information and trends.	3	11	29	36	21	2.62	1.02
12. Choose assessment inventories for a student which are appropriate for the student's gender, age, education, and cultural background.	3	5	26	41	26	2.82	0.97

13. Assist the student in modulating feelings about the career decision-making process.	1	4	12	49	35	3.14	0.81
14. Apply knowledge about current ethical and legal issues which may affect the career counseling process.	3	13	27	36	21	2.59	1.05
15. Understand special issues present for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in the workplace.	5	17	33	29	16	2.35	1.09
16. Communicate unconditional acceptance to a student.	--	--	1	17	82	3.80	0.43
17. Select an instrument to assess a student's interests.	--	2	10	37	51	3.37	0.75
18. Select an instrument to clarify a student's values.	--	9	18	37	36	3.00	0.95
19. Understand special issues related to gender in the workplace.	1	11	15	49	25	2.85	0.94
20. Understand special issues related to ethnicity in career decision-making.	1	10	19	50	20	2.77	0.93
21. Listen carefully to concerns presented by a student.	--	--	--	4	96	3.96	0.20
22. Synthesize information about self and career so that a student's problems seem understandable.	--	--	5	36	59	3.54	0.59
23. Help a student identify internal and external barriers that might interfere with reaching his/her career goals.	--	1	7	32	61	3.52	0.66
24. Use current research findings to intervene effectively with a student.	1	6	24	42	27	2.88	0.92
25. Be empathetic toward a student when the student refuses to accept responsibility for making decisions about his/her career.	--	1	8	34	57	3.47	0.68

*Note: (0 = Not Confident, 2 = Moderately Confident, 4 = Highly Confident)*

Table 2  
*Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale-Modified  
 Subscale Scores (N = 143)*

	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	Item <i>M</i>	Item <i>SD</i>
<i>Subscales</i>							
Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills (10 items)	21	40	35.24	4.05	0.82	3.52	0.40
Vocational Assessment and Interpretation Skills (6 items)	5	24	18.08	4.21	0.86	3.01	0.70
Multicultural Competency Skills (6 items)	0	24	16.52	4.79	0.91	2.75	0.80
Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research (3 items)	3	12	8.09	2.44	0.75	2.69	0.81
<i>Total Scale</i>							
Total Instrument Score (25 items)	32	99	77.94	13.60	0.94	3.12	0.54

*Note: (0 = Not Confident, 2 = Moderately Confident, 4 = Highly Confident). Scale was converted back to 0-4 for comparison with other studies.*

The School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale-Career and Academic Development subscale provided items specifically designed for a school setting. The percentage of respondents who chose each response is indicated in Table 3 along with the mean and standard deviation for each item on the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale.

Table 3  
*School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale-Subscale Individual Item Responses  
 (N = 143)*

	% Response					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. Implement a program which enables all students to make informed career decisions.	1	3	20	34	43	4.16	.89
2. Deliver age-appropriate programs through which students acquire the skills needed to investigate the world of work.	--	2	18	34	46	4.24	.81
3. Foster understanding of the relationship between learning and work.	--	0	9	40	51	4.42	.65

4. Teach students to apply problem-solving skills toward their academic, personal, and career success.	--	1	8	36	55	4.45	.69
5. Teach students how to apply time and task management skills.	--	2	6	35	57	4.46	.71
6. Offer appropriate explanations to students, parents, and teachers of how learning styles affect school performance.	--	2	15	39	44	4.24	.79
7. Use technology designed to support student successes and progress through the educational system.	--	6	22	44	29	3.96	.86

Total Subscale Score 29.93 4.08

*Note: (1 = Not Confident, 3 = Moderately Confident, 5 = Highly Confident)*

**Research Question #2: How does middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling vary by a) years of school counseling experience, b) previous K-12 teaching experience, or c) recent training in career counseling?**

In order to address this research question, two one-way between subjects ANOVAs were conducted to compare the career counseling self-efficacy of middle school counselors with different years of experience as a school counselor and different amounts of recent training in career counseling. Each ANOVA was conducted with both the CCSES-Modified total score and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale total score. A *t*-test was conducted to identify if there was a difference between career counseling self-efficacy of those with and without previous experience as a teacher.

The number of years of counseling experience for participants ranged from one year to 30 or more years. Regarding full-time teaching experience in a K-12 school, 47 (32.9%) participants had experience, while 94 (65.7%) did not have this experience (two people omitted this item). The number of hours of recent career counseling training ranged from less than one hour (12 participants) to more than 80 hours (one participant).

Full-time school counseling experience was calculated by year and each year of part-time school counseling experience represented half of a year. These were added together to get the total school counseling experience. Participants were separated into three groups determined by their years of experience providing school counseling (*least amount of experience* = 1-8.5 years; *moderate amount of experience* = 9-15.5 years; *most amount of experience* = 16-30 or more years). The groups were created so that approximately 1/3 of the sample would be represented in each group. See Table (4) below for the frequency and percent of each group.

Table 4  
*Counseling Experience in K-12 Schools*

	Frequency	Percent
Least Amount of Experience (1-8.5 years)	43	30.5
Moderate Amount of Experience (9-15.5 years)	52	36.9
Most Amount of Experience (16-32 or more)	46	32.6
Total	141	100.0

The results of the ANOVA for years of school counseling experience are displayed in Table 5. The means and standard deviations of the group of school counselors with the most school counseling experience ( $M = 79.4, SD = 13.7$ ), the middle group ( $M = 75.8, SD = 13.4$ ), and the group with the least amount of experience ( $M = 78.9, SD = 13.8$ ) were calculated for the CCSE-Modified. In addition, the means and standard deviations for the most experienced school counselors ( $M = 29.7, SD = 4.6$ ), the middle group ( $M = 29.9, SD = 3.6$ ), and the least experienced school counselors ( $M = 30.1, SD = 4.2$ ) were calculated for the SCSE Subscale.

Table 5

*ANOVA Results Grouped by Years of Experience as a School Counselor*

		Sum of Squares	df	M Square	F	Sig.
CCSES- Modified Total	Between Groups	390.365	2	195.183	1.050	.353
	Within Groups	25656.613	138	185.917		
	Total	26046.979	140			
SCSE Subscale Total	Between Groups	5.932	2	2.966	.175	.840
	Within Groups	2342.678	138	16.976		
	Total	2348.610	140			

Significance level at  $p < 0.05$

To identify teaching experience, two groups were formed, representing those who had teaching experience ( $n = 47$ ) and those who did not ( $n = 94$ ). Those who had teaching experience completed the CCSES-Modified ( $M = 82.2$ ,  $SD = 9.7$ ) and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale ( $M = 30.9$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ) and those without teaching experience also completed the CCSES-Modified ( $M = 75.8$ ,  $SD = 14.7$ ) and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale ( $M = 29.4$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ).

An independent t-test was performed to compare the means of each scale for those who had teaching experience and those without teaching experience. For the CCSES-Modified, the assumption of homogeneous variances was not satisfied (Levene's test,  $F = 7.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The mean score for the teaching experience group ( $M = 82.2$ ,  $SD = 9.7$ ) was statistically higher than the mean score for those without teaching experience ( $M = 75.8$ ,  $SD = 14.7$ ),  $t = -3.06$ ,  $p = .003$ .

For the SCSE, the assumption of homogeneous variances was satisfied (Levene's test,  $F = 3.71$ ,  $p = .055$ ). The mean score for group with teaching experience ( $M = 30.9$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ) was not statistically different from the mean score for the group without teaching experience ( $M = 29.4$ ,  $SD = 4.3$ ),  $t = -2.03$ ,  $p = .045$ .

Next, participants were separated into three groups determined by their hours of training in career counseling in the last three years (*least amount of recent training* = 1-6 hours; *moderate amount of recent training* = 7-12 hours; *most amount of recent training* = 13-80 or more hours of training). See Table (7) below for the frequency and percent represented in each group. The group with the least amount of recent training completed the CCSES-Modified ( $M = 75.3$ ,  $SD = 12.7$ ) and the SCSE-Subscale ( $M = 29.4$ ,  $SD = 3.9$ ). The group in the middle also completed both the CCSES-Modified ( $M = 76.2$ ,  $SD = 14.5$ ) and the SCSE-Subscale ( $M = 29.1$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ) as did the group with the most amount of recent training in career counseling (CCSES-Modified:  $M = 86.5$ ,  $SD = 11.1$ ; SCSE-Subscale:  $M = 32.6$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ). The results of the ANOVA for recent training in career counseling are displayed in Table 7.

Table 6  
*Hours of Training in Career Counseling in the Last Three Years*

	Frequency	Percent
Least Training (1-6 hours)	64	45.4
Moderate Training (7-12 hours)	49	34.8
Most Training (13-80 or more)	28	19.9
Total	141	100.0

Table 7

*ANOVA Results Grouped by Recent Training in Career Counseling*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CCSES-Modified Total	Between Groups	2636.592	2	1318.296	7.727	.001
	Within Groups	23543.281	138	170.603		
	Total	26179.872	140			
SCSE Subscale Total	Between Groups	263.822	2	131.911	8.702	.000
	Within Groups	2091.979	138	15.159		
	Total	2355.801	140			

\*\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Tukey's post hoc test was selected to further explore the results by comparing groups of counselors by their recent training in career counseling. Post hoc test comparisons indicated that the total score for the participants with the least amount of recent training ( $M = 75.3$ ;  $M = 29.4$ ) was significantly different from those with the most amount of training ( $M = 86.5$ ;  $M = 32.6$ ) for both the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE-Subscale. In addition the total score for school counselors with a moderate amount of training ( $M = 76.2$ ,  $M = 29.1$ ) was significantly lower than those with the most amount of training for both instruments.

Upon further investigation of the CCSES-Modified results, a post hoc Tukey test showed that the mean of the group with the most training was significantly higher than the means of the other two groups. ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, the mean of the group with moderate training was significantly higher than the mean of the group with the least training ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, a post hoc Tukey test with the SCSE Academic and Career Subscale showed that the mean of the group with the least training was significantly lower than the means of the other two groups ( $p < .05$ )

**Research Question #3: What is the relationship between middle school counselor self-efficacy in career counseling and the amount of time spent providing career counseling?**

Participants reported the percentage of time they spend providing responsive services to students in the three school counseling domains as well as testing coordination and other non-counseling related activities. The averages and standard deviations of the percentage of time spent in each area are represented in Table 8. One participant omitted this item, therefore n = 142.

Table 8

<i>Allocation of Percentage of Time</i>		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal/Social Counseling	36.25	15.39
Academic Counseling	23.32	10.47
Career Counseling	12.15	6.98
SOL Testing Coordination	11.83	12.88
Other non-counseling related activities	16.44	12.55

A correlation was done to identify the relationship between the amount of time spent providing career counseling and both instrument totals. The findings reveal that there is no statistically significant relationship between CCSES-Modified and time providing career counseling and a statistically significant weak positive relationship ( $r = .286$ ) at the .001 level (2-tailed) between the SCSE-Subscale and Time Providing Career Counseling.

**Summary**

There were several key findings from this study of middle school counselors' self-efficacy with career counseling. First, it is important to note that there was a wide range in the total CCSE scores for middle school counselors. As a group, these counselors were the most

confident in their Therapeutic Process & Alliance Skills, while they were the least confident in Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research.

Secondly, middle school counselors' self-efficacy in career counseling was not found to be significantly different across varying levels of experience as a school counselor. This was found to be true when conducting an ANOVA with both the CCSES-Modified and SCSE Subscale. When examining K-12 teaching experience, a significant difference between those with and those without teaching experience was found using the CCSES-Modified total score and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale score. Significant differences were also found in the CCSES-Modified and SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale scores across levels of recent training in career counseling.

Finally, a 2-tailed Pearson Correlation indicated there is a positive correlation between the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale total and the percentage of time school counselors indicated they spend providing career counseling. There was not a statistically significant relationship between CCSES-Modified and time spent providing career counseling.

## Chapter Five

### **Discussion**

In this chapter, the results of the study are discussed. First, a brief overview of the importance of this topic will be presented followed by the purpose of this study. Next, each research question will be addressed using results from this study. Finally, limitations of this study are discussed and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings.

### **Overview of the Study**

The findings of Evans and Burck (1992) indicated the importance of beginning career exploration early. This study focuses on career counseling in the middle school setting. Middle school students in a school with a comprehensive school counseling program, which includes career counseling, have been shown to recognize school as more relevant than those students in schools with a less comprehensive program (Lapan et al., 1997). Counselor engagement in the career exploration process is important as evidenced in the work of Whiston et al. (2003) and counselors acknowledge the importance of career counseling; however, research indicates that school counselors are spending less time providing career counseling than they desire (Osborn & Baggerly, 2004). The amount of career counseling being provided is significantly lower than the priority placed on career counseling (Anctil et al., 2012). Many factors such as the years of experience as a school counselor, the amount of time spent on non-counseling related duties, and professional development have been identified as influencing the practice of school counselors (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008).

This study examined the career self-efficacy of middle school counselors in Virginia as indicated by the CCSES-Modified (O'Brien et al., 1997) and the SCSE Career and Academic

Development subscale (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 1995). Once the career counseling self-efficacy of Virginia middle school counselors was reviewed, the researcher examined four constructs. The researcher identified if there was a difference between the career counseling self-efficacy of the middle school counselors based on previous school counseling experience, teaching experience, or recent training in career counseling. The researcher also identified if there was a relationship between career counseling self-efficacy and the amount of time they spent providing career counseling.

### **Participants**

Participants for the study included middle school counselors who were current counselors in schools that housed students in grades six through eight in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The sampling frame consisted of 567 middle school counselors who represented a range of school counseling experience, both with and without teaching experience, and a range of hours of recent training in career counseling. The final sample consisted of 143 participants, yielding a response rate of 25%.

Of the 143 participants, 125 (87.4%) reported having a Master's degree as their highest degree, while 11 (7.7%) had an Education Specialist degree, and six (4.2%) had a Doctoral degree (one person omitted this item). Participants' ages ranged from 25 to over 65 years with an average age of 45 years ( $SD = 11$ ), when respondents who reported being 65 and over were coded as 65. One hundred and seventeen (81.8%) of the participants were female and 23 (16.1%) were male (three participants omitted this item). Regarding race, 110 participants (76.9%) were White/Caucasian, 20 (14.0%) were African American, four (2.8%) were Hispanic/Latino, one (0.7%) was Multiracial, and five (3.5%) preferred not to answer (three participants omitted this item).

## Descriptive Data

The researcher developed an Information Questionnaire that was used to collect background information from each participant regarding his or her personal and professional experiences. Several of these items are included in this discussion as the information is relevant to the current study.

### Professional Experiences

Counselors were asked to share about their counseling experience, any K-12 teaching experience, and recent training in career counseling. Participants reported a mean of 13.3 years of experience providing school counseling ( $SD = 7.4$ ). The majority (77.2%) of the middle school counselors who completed this survey indicated that they felt that their career counseling efforts are supported by the school administration. Participants were asked to indicate what percentage of their time they spent doing a variety of tasks. It was found that middle school counselors in this study reported spending the least percentage of their time providing career counseling ( $M = 12.15\%$ ,  $SD = 6.98\%$ ) as compared to the time they spend providing counseling in the other two domains (Personal/Social, Academic). The results also indicated that there was not as much variance for the time providing career counseling as compared to the variance in the other domains. Also notable was the finding that participants reported spending more time involved in “other non-counseling related activities” ( $M = 16.44$ ,  $SD = 12.55$ ) than providing career counseling. When asked about professional affiliations, 50 (34.9%) of participants reported no association affiliation. This is unique to this sample, as other studies in this area have used a professional association membership list as a sampling frame.

Regarding full-time teaching experience in a K-12 school, 65.7% of the participants did not have teaching experience and 32.9% did have teaching experience (two people omitted this

item). In this study, for those with teaching experience, the range of years of this type of experience was from three to 33 years, with an average of 11.6 years of teaching experience. When conducting the *t*-test for Research Question 2, participants were sorted into two groups: one for those with no teaching experience and one for those with teaching experience.

In regards to career training, 83.2% of the participants had successfully completed a three-credit hour career counseling course and 86.0% of the participants received training implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, which includes career counseling. These results indicated that the majority of the participants had acquired some background knowledge to provide career counseling during their formal training and/or during their career in the field. In regards to recent training in career counseling, counselors were asked to approximate how many hours of training in career counseling they had in the last three years. Over half of the participants (54.2%) had received seven hours or less of career training during the previous three year period and approximately one-fifth of the participants (20.4%) had 12 or more hours of recent training in career counseling.

### **Self-Efficacy Providing Career Counseling**

In order to answer the first research question, the middle school counselors were asked to complete the CCSES-Modified and the Career and Academic Development subscale of the SCSE. Descriptive statistics were reported for self-efficacy as identified by both the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale. Self-Efficacy in providing career counseling was measured using the 25-item CCSES-Modified developed by O'Brien et al. (1997) and modified for this study. On the 5-point Likert-type scale used for this survey, counselors had a mean total score of 77.94 ( $SD = 13.6$ ). The mean value for middle school

counselors in this study compares with the findings of O'Brien et al. (1997) in a study of psychologists, which found the average CCSES score was 79.03 ( $SD = 1.05$ ).

On the four CCSES-Modified subscales, middle school counselors had a mean score of 3.52 ( $SD = 0.40$ ) for Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills, 3.01 ( $SD = 0.70$ ) for Vocational Assessment and Interpretation Skills, 2.75 ( $SD = 0.80$ ) for Multicultural Competency Skills, and 2.69 ( $SD = 0.81$ ) for Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research. Overall, middle school counselors reported the highest levels of self-efficacy in Therapeutic Process and Alliance Skills ( $M = 3.52$ ), while the lowest reported self-efficacy was in Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research ( $M = 2.69$ ). It is important to note that the Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research subscale only had three items. Although the Multicultural Competency Skills subscale did not have the lowest mean score, two items in this subscale had the lowest individual item means. The two items (#10, #15, see Appendix F) both addressed special issues that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students face related to career decision making ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) and the workplace ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ).

Self-Efficacy providing career counseling was also measured using the 7-item Career and Academic Development subscale of the SCSE developed by Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005). On the 5-point Likert-type scale used for this survey, counselors had a mean total score of 30 out of 35 possible points ( $SD = 4.1$ ). Middle school counselors expressed the most self-efficacy teaching students how to apply time and task management skills ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and teaching students to apply problem-solving skills toward their academic, personal, and career success ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = .69$ ). Interestingly, these two items were the only two items that used the active verb “teach” in the description. This could be an area for future research. The lowest individual item mean on the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale was related to

using technology designed to support student successes and progress through the educational system ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = .86$ ).

### **Career Counseling Self-Efficacy Differences with Experience and Training**

For research question two, two ANOVAs and a *t*-test were conducted to determine if there were statistically significant differences among means. In order to examine school counseling experience, three groups were created to represent those middle school counselors with the least, those in the middle, and those with the most school counseling experience. There were no significant differences found between the career counseling self-efficacy of the three groups. It was surprising to not find a significant difference between career counseling self-efficacy and counseling experience, because several studies have found that self-efficacy is a function of counseling experience (Bakar et al., 2011; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Lent et al., 2003). Experience as a school counselor ranged between one to 22 years ( $M = 6.34$ ,  $SD = 3.47$ ) for the study by Bakar et al. (2011). Also, Lent et al. (2003) studied a group of students who reported an average of 3.03 years of previous counseling-related experience ( $SD = 4.02$ ) with a range of zero to 25 years. These differing results may be associated with how the counseling experience was dispersed and grouped in the various studies. For instance, in a study of the overall self-efficacy of school counselors, those with three or more years of school counseling experience ( $n = 187$ ) had higher self-efficacy than those with less experience ( $n = 35$ ) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The findings of the current study may be more closely aligned with the work of Soresi et al. (2004) who found that career counseling experience ( $M = 6.79$  years,  $SD = 4.32$  years) produced only small correlations with the self-efficacy scales in a study of Italian career service providers.

To examine teaching experience, two groups were formed which were those with teaching experience and those without that experience. A *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the self-efficacy between those with ( $M = 82.2, SD = 9.7$ ) and those without ( $M = 75.8, SD = 14.7$ ) teaching experience on the CCSES-Modified. In addition, a statistically significant difference in self-efficacy was also revealed between those with ( $M = 30.9, SD = 3.4$ ) and without ( $M = 29.4, SD = 4.3$ ) teaching experience on the SCSE Career and Academic Subscale. This finding contradicts the findings of a study conducted with school counselors in Ohio (Scoles, 2011). The study by Scoles examined school counselors across multiple settings and did not find a significant difference between the school counselors with ( $n = 103, M = 4.02, SD = 0.60$ ) and those without ( $n = 26, M = 3.76, SD = 0.66$ ) teaching experience on the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale;  $t(129) = 1.89, p = 0.061$ . However, in regards to overall school counseling self-efficacy, Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) found that respondents with teaching experience ( $n = 183$ ) reported significantly stronger self-efficacy ( $M = 182.8, SD = 19.7$ ) than those without ( $n = 42$ ) teaching experience ( $M = 173.2, SD = 19$ )  $F(1,223) = 8.236, p < .01, R^2 = .04$ .

Recent training in career counseling was reported by participants and then three groups were created to represent the least, moderate, and the most amount of recent training. Findings indicated school counselors with more career counseling training had significantly higher scores on both the CCSES-Modified and the Career and Academic Development subscale of the SCSE than those school counselors with less career counseling training. These findings are consistent with other studies that have found that career counseling self-efficacy has been linked to career-specific training rather than total years of counseling experience (O'Brien et al., 1997; Soresi et al., 2004).

### **Career Counseling Self-Efficacy and Delivery**

For the third and final research question, the researcher examined if there was a correlation between career counseling self-efficacy and the amount of time middle school counselors spend providing career counseling. It is interesting to note that there was a weak positive correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) for the SCSE-Career and Academic Development subscale and the percent of time the school counselor spends providing career counseling but there was not a statistically significant relationship between the CCSE-Modified and time spent providing career counseling. The CCSE-Modified and the SCSE-Career and Academic Development subscale had a significant 2-tailed Pearson correlation (0.792) at the 0.01 level; therefore, one would expect to find that the two instruments would produce similar results, which is the case here, although one is statistically significant and one is not. Larson and Daniels (1998) found the relationship of counselor self-efficacy and counselor performance seemed to be moderate when performance measures and counseling self-efficacy had similar content, like the measures used in the this study. The SCSE was designed specifically for school counselors, which may indicate that the content was more directly linked to the work done by school counselors and therefore the relationship with self-efficacy would be stronger than the relationship between the general career counseling measure and self-efficacy.

Another consideration is that school counselors with more years of experience were found to be more likely to practice school counseling as desired (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) and more experienced school counselors placed less priority on career development than counselors with less experience (Anctil et al., 2012). The sample for the current study was highly experienced as compared with other studies, which suggests the school counselors were practicing as they wish. The school counselors could have high career counseling self-efficacy

but place less importance on career counseling, therefore choose to spend less time in that area of focus. Higher career counseling self-efficacy may be an essential prerequisite for performance but it does not necessarily drive a school counselor's choice to provide more career counseling. Other factors such as interest in, value of, and support for career counseling efforts may be contributing factors.

### **Limitations**

These findings should be considered in light of the limitations of the study. Due to the nature of instruments that involve a self-report, the results are based on the current perception of the participants and not objective assessments of the effectiveness of their work. Also, it may be more socially and professionally desirable to have confidence in your abilities and therefore some participants may have answered the way they thought they should. In addition, when participants reported about their training experiences, the quality of these experiences is not known by the researcher. The question of quantity versus quality of training could be an area for further research.

This study was limited to those middle school counselors who had publically available e-mail addresses and were working in Virginia. There may have been other Virginia middle school counselors who were not invited to participate because their e-mail addresses were not publically available. Participation in this study was voluntary and the non-respondents also represent middle school counselors; however, their perceptions are not represented in these findings. In addition, the results are based solely on the experiences of Virginia middle school counselors, which may or may not represent the work of school counselors in other states and at the elementary and high school levels. The results for school counselors in other states may vary if they were to take the same survey. School counselors are given many opportunities to take a

variety of surveys. Due to the nature of a survey requiring dedicated time devoted to provide feedback, middle school counselors may be tired of spending their time doing surveys and might experience survey fatigue. Also, there may have been individuals who were not interested in career counseling and chose not to participate because of this lack of interest.

As with any web-based research, there may have been technology glitches that minimized the opportunity for possible participants to provide their responses. For instance, the school server may have blocked the ability to participate in the survey or an e-mail filter may have sent the request for participation to a spam folder. Also, because individuals entered the data and the researcher analyzed the data, there is always the limitation of human error. For instance, it is possible that some participants may have intended to choose a certain answer choice and clicked one other than their intended choice.

### **Implications**

The findings of the current study inform important implications for practicing school counselors, counselor educators, and school administrators. By utilizing the results to make strategic changes in current practice, career counseling services for students can be improved. Improving career counseling services for students may result in increased student engagement and academic and career success (Perry et al., 2010).

### **School Counselors**

In general, the practicing school counselors in this study had ample self-efficacy with regard to providing career counseling. However, there are certain items on the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale that middle school counselors have more confidence in than others. Counselors felt least confident in the areas of Multicultural Competency Skills ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) and Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and

Career Research ( $M = 2.69$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). Specifically, two items emerged with the lowest self-efficacy means and they were “Understand special issues present for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in the workplace” ( $M = 2.35$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and “Understand the special issues that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students may have in career decision-making” ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). National advocacy efforts and legislation related to LGB students are always changing which means there is an on-going need for new information to be learned. Thus, continuing education opportunities could be an avenue to support the lifelong learning and development of school counselors.

Because this sample of school counselors was more experienced, they may have completed their formal training before culturally appropriate counseling for LGB students was a requirement in CACREP-accredited programs. It is important for counselors to be competent working with LGB students in the middle school setting (c.f., Farmer, Welfare, & Burge, 2013) because Sarin-Williams and Diamond found that initial awareness of sexual orientation usually occurs between the ages of eight and eleven (as cited in Farmer, Welfare, & Burge, 2013). School counselors could benefit from specific training regarding the needs and issues of students with varied sexual orientations. It is important for school counselors to recognize their individual training needs and seek specific training in areas of weakness providing career counseling. Training opportunities for school counselors should be in the form of continuing education to provide current information and fill gaps that may exist between the information available when the school counselor completed graduate school and current trends.

There was not a significant difference in the career counseling self-efficacy of the three groups representing varied school counseling experience in this study. Previous studies have found a difference in school counseling self-efficacy between those school counselors with three or less years of experience as compared to those with more (e.g., Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005).

As stated earlier, the sample for the current study was generally more experienced than those school counselors included in other studies, which may indicate that there is not much of a change in career counseling self-efficacy over the course of time after the initial first three years of school counseling experience. This is an area of strength that allows the current study to offer a new perspective regarding the career counseling self-efficacy of school counselors. With this minimal change in self-efficacy, it would be helpful to know the other factors contributing to the changes that occur after a school counselor's initial few years of experience. Learning more about school counselor competence, program implementation, and how they assess and evaluate the school counseling program would provide valuable information.

School counselors with teaching experience had higher career counseling self-efficacy than those that did not have teaching experience. Previous studies speculated that teaching experience better prepared school counselors for classroom management and lesson planning (Peterson & Deuschule, 2006) but those were not explicitly part of the self-efficacy measures used in this study. In this study, the evidence of higher self-efficacy in career counseling could reflect their increased preparation in specific academic disciplines. It could be that because these school counselors were previously trained in a specific academic area they are more confident in talking with students about careers in that particular career cluster (e.g., Science teachers who become school counselors may be well prepared to discuss careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics with students). Conversely, this, potentially narrow, view of career opportunities may limit the career exploration of students if school counselors do not include a wide array of career options. This possibility would be an excellent area for further research. School counselors without teaching experience although statistically lower in self-efficacy than those school counselors with teaching experience still had high career counseling self-efficacy.

This suggests that school counselors without teaching experience have an overall confidence in their ability to provide career counseling. Once school counselors have completed a few years of experience providing career counseling it appears that most do not report low self-efficacy. Instead, their self-efficacy in providing career counseling is relatively high, however, similar to those with teaching experience, they need tailored continuing education to address specific areas of competence. Tailored continuing educational opportunities could incorporate modeling and supervision to increase self-efficacy in specific competencies (Bandura, 1997). During the initial few years of school counseling, those without experience in the school setting may be adjusting to new ways of managing their time, balancing multiple roles/responsibilities, incorporating community involvement, working with parents, fostering collaborative relationships, and becoming familiar with local resources. All of these tasks take time and effort and could impact a school counselor's self-efficacy to provide adequate services to students. It may be helpful for school counselors without teaching experience to ask for support and suggestions from a mentor at the school to learn from their experiences.

The participants who had the most recent training in career counseling had significantly higher career counseling self-efficacy than those who had the least amount of recent training. School counselors who would like to feel more confident in their ability to provide career counseling may want to consider seeking out career counseling training opportunities. The results of this study indicated that although the overall self-efficacy for this sample of school counselors was high, there were areas of deficit. In this case, a workshop focused on LGB needs related to careers, modern gender issues in careers, or the use of technology for career counseling could provide relevant training for school counselors. Training opportunities may take many forms such as an in-service, a class, a conference, a seminar, a self-study, or a workshop. In

addition, the format may be on-line, in-person or a hybrid. In order to facilitate training, school counselors could ask their director of guidance or an administrator for in-service training or self-study materials in order to learn more information about the areas of deficit. Another avenue for growth and development for school counselors to consider is utilizing the strengths of their peers by organizing a peer consultation and supervision group to give and receive feedback.

Perhaps tailored continuing education could be part of the solution for school counselors, with and without prior teaching experience, who need to provide more career counseling. Another consideration relevant to this particular study is that, because the Academic, Personal Social, and Career domains intersect, it could be difficult to specify how much of an individual or group session is focused on a concept that falls in the career domain versus the academic or personal/social domain. In practice, the distinction is not important, as is insuring that students receive career counseling experiences. In order to quantify career counseling efforts, school counselors need to be more intentional in providing career counseling and making sure the career counseling standards are addressed for all students. In studies like this one and accountability measures in practice, it is more difficult to quantify career counseling work when it is blended with work in other domains. It may be helpful for school counselors to consider identifying how career counseling is being implemented through the comprehensive school counseling programing at their schools. This may increase awareness of how career counseling is already being implemented and identify ways to infuse more career counseling throughout the school year.

School counselors may be surprised to see how other middle school counselors are spending their time. A large percentage of middle school counselors' time was reported to be spent coordinating testing or doing other non-counseling related tasks, which provides an

opportunity for school counselors to advocate for the intended role of a school counselor. School counselors are uniquely trained to provide supplemental support for students in the academic, personal/social, and career domains in order to promote student success; therefore, it would be advantageous if they were able to utilize their time in a way that is consistent with the needs of students. This is particularly important for middle school counselors providing career counseling because middle school students are preparing academic and career plans that will serve as a guide through high school and post-secondary educational endeavors.

Although the majority of school counselors report the importance of career counseling, middle school counselors acknowledge that they spend less time on career counseling than they prefer (Osborne & Baggerly, 2004). There is a need to help school counselors reprioritize the importance of career counseling, which includes recognizing and acknowledging how career counseling intersects with academic and personal/social counseling in K-12 schools (Anctil et al, 2012). This could be achieved by providing more evidence between career counseling and student learning outcomes (Turner & Conkel, 2010).

School counselors need to demonstrate the importance of career counseling and how non-counseling related tasks take time away from their ability to offer adequate career counseling for students. School counselors should gather evidence and provide accountability reports about how career counseling efforts contribute to student engagement and success. School counselors could provide career information sessions for parents and students to promote meaningful career exploration opportunities. If school counselors must spend time doing non-counseling related tasks due to a lack of personnel, it may be necessary to consider hiring a substitute counselor to provide career counseling. Another avenue to address the time constraint is to hire someone with an administrative background for the non-counseling duties in order for the school counselor to

have time to incorporate adequate career counseling into their school counseling program. Test coordination is time consuming and an example of a non-counseling duty that some school counselors perform. Considering the amount of time this role requires, school counselors would find more time to provide career counseling services for students without this obligation.

In this study, the results indicated that the majority of school counselors feel supported to implement career counseling by their administration and teachers at their schools. Although they felt their career counseling efforts were supported, there were time constraints due to non-counseling duties. It is important for school counselors to consider utilizing the support of administration and teachers to collaborate when offering career counseling for students. In addition, school counselors need to provide evidence and voice their needs when time is a factor in the delivery of career counseling. School counselors are advocates for students and their success. When students are able to connect their school work with possibilities for their futures they may place more value on the work that they are doing in the classroom.

### **Counselor Educators**

Counselor educators play an important role in the preparation of school counselors and the ongoing education of practicing counselors. As described above, these middle school counselors had more confidence on certain items on the CCSES-Modified and the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale than others. Although there was a LGB self-efficacy deficit in this sample of middle school counselors, it may be less pronounced for recent graduates. Because most of the current sample graduated 10 - 30 years ago, they were likely not trained to work specifically with marginalized populations such as LGB students. It is important for counselor educators to recognize individual and group training needs regarding career counseling. The training needs of school counselors are varied because they may work with

elementary, middle, or high school students. Counselor educators may want to use an instrument such as the CCSES or the SCSE Career and Academic Development subscale to identify specific items counseling students self-identify as areas of lower career counseling self-efficacy in order to offer tailored training for their particular student group.

The world of work is continually changing which makes it important to be aware of the current trends in this area. As these changes happen, marginalized populations face unique issues in the area of career exploration and planning. Counselors need to be trained adequately to provide career counseling to clients. In addition to providing relevant information, promoting thoughtful reflection, and facilitating discussions for counselors-in-training, counselor educators could provide outreach and continuing education opportunities focused on career counseling.

Just as career counseling may be infused with academic and personal/social counseling for school counselors, counselor educators may consider infusing career counseling concepts throughout other courses and experiences during a training program. Counselor educators could model this authentic type of integration. Most of the school counselors reported successfully completing a three credit hour in career counseling; however, they may not have experienced the opportunity to provide career counseling in a structured learning-environment. Students in counseling programs may benefit from additional training and supervision in career counseling to increase their self-efficacy in career counseling (Lara et al., 2011).

Those school counselors with teaching experience had higher career counseling self-efficacy than those that did not have teaching experience. Counselor educators could talk more about various career clusters and ways to provide career counseling throughout a training program rather than just in one specific course. Counselor educators may also facilitate discussions with counselors-in-training about their own career counseling experiences which

would allow every trainee time to reflect on their experience. In addition, trainees could talk about how they have worked with people in roles other than a counselor through the career exploration and planning process.

In order to retain school counseling licensure, Virginia school counselors are to accrue 180 professional development points during a five-year period. There is not a stipulation as to the amount of points school counselors have to earn in the three domains, which means that a school counselor could choose to have all of their professional development credit earned in one area such as the Personal/Social domain. In the current study, the participants who had the most recent training in career counseling had significantly higher career counseling self-efficacy than those who had the least amount of recent training. Therefore, counselor educators should encourage continuing education in the area of career counseling for former graduates who would like to be more confident in this area. Counselor educators could encourage and provide this type of training at the local, state, regional, and national level. Not only would training help to increase career counseling self-efficacy of school counselors, it may also provide updates to the most current trends in the world of work. Encouraging school counselors to seek professional training in all three domains may provide more balanced, current, and relevant way to enhance and develop competencies. Counselor educators could also provide continuing education about the benefits of career counseling and methods for assessing the effectiveness of this type of work so school counselors are better positioned to advocate for protection of the career counseling domain.

In addition, counselor educators could provide information and education to administrators about how school counselors are trained. Because school counselors are uniquely

trained to offer specific support services to students, it is important for those in leadership to know what school counselors can contribute and their value to the school setting.

Once administrators have this valuable information then they can make more informed decisions about the best ways to support the career counseling efforts in K-12 schools.

### **Administrators**

School administrators such as school board members, principals, superintendents, and guidance directors have a tremendous impact on schools by determining staffing levels, providing funding, approving curriculum, delegating responsibility, developing a vision, and providing leadership. Individuals in these leadership positions have the privilege and the responsibility to actively support work that positively impacts the development of young people as they grow to become responsible citizens who will make contributions to society.

In this study, school counselors had a lower self-efficacy in the areas of Multicultural Competency Skills and Current Trends in the World of Work, Ethics, and Career Research as related to career counseling. Although this study did not focus on other school employees, there could be similar weaknesses for teachers. It may be helpful for administrators to know if a lack of confidence working with LGB students is a school-wide issue. If so, the administration should provide clarity about the importance of modern multicultural issues, set expectations for behavior, and provide guidance for the school community in order to best serve all students. The administration should provide visible leadership, guidance, and modeling to promote an awareness of modern multicultural items. Administrators could also talk with students about their experiences and find ways to meet the ever-changing career counseling needs of students in the K-12 setting by collaborating with the school counselor. A way that administrators could support the professional development needs of school counselors is to provide funding for more

modern technology and training in order to increase school counselors' confidence in using technology to better support students.

Larson and Daniels (1998) suggested that counselors' who perceive having support and those who have a manageable caseload seem to have higher counseling self-efficacy. Sutton and Fall (1995) found that colleague support was the strongest predictor of self-efficacy in school counselors. School counselors in this study had ample self-efficacy hence that is not the barrier to providing career counseling in this case. Although the school counselors in this study expressed a sense of support from administrators and teachers at their schools to provide career counseling, it seems that the time available for them to provide this type of counseling is limited due to other non-counseling related tasks. It is important for administrators to know about the training school counselors have received and the benefits of their work in the career counseling domain. When they know how school counselors can contribute to the school, they may be more likely to limit the time that school counselors are doing non-counseling related duties to show support for their career counseling efforts.

It is possible for administrators to advocate for school counselors to use their time to provide counseling services that match their training experiences rather than using school counselors for coordinating testing and doing other non-counseling related tasks. This could be accomplished by providing evidence of how the school counselors would use the time that they may currently be spending on test coordination or other non-counseling related duties in order to support student success in the three school counseling domains, including career counseling.

### **Conclusion**

This study has provided important new information about the self-efficacy of Virginia school counselors in the middle school setting as related to career counseling. Although some of

the findings were consistent with other studies, other research findings were contradictory when looking at this specific population of school counselors. Career counseling self-efficacy was high overall with specific areas of deficit. Among these experienced school counselors, there were not significant differences in the career counseling self-efficacy from the least experienced to the most experienced counselors. In regards to teaching experience, a significant difference in career counseling self-efficacy was found between those with and those without teaching experience. Career counseling self-efficacy was higher for the group of school counselors who had the most recent training in career counseling than it was for those who had little to no recent training in career counseling. Evidence for the relationship between school counselor career self-efficacy and time spent providing career counseling was mixed in this sample.

In conclusion, school counselors need to be lifelong learners. Working with LGB students in the career domain was an area of deficit for this group of middle school counselors. They should seek continuing education in providing career counseling for LGB students. Currently, school counselors are spending less time providing career counseling than they are doing non-counseling related duties. Counselors need to consider ways to utilize the support of administration and teachers to identify what needs to change in order for them to reallocate their time so they are able to provide more career counseling. In addition, school counselors could benefit from additional knowledge and resources to promote a gain in their confidence to use technology for providing career counseling for students.

Counselor educators need to ensure graduates of counseling programs are adequately trained to provide career counseling, specifically to LGB students. It would be helpful for counselor educators to offer opportunities for counselors-in-training to practice career counseling skills. Counselor educators should encourage trainees to be lifelong learners and to seek

continuing education opportunities after graduation. In order for practicing counselors to have meaningful continuing education opportunities, counselor educators must contribute by engaging in offering these opportunities.

School administrators need to consider the possibility of confidence working with LGB students may be a school-wide issue. It is important for administrators to know about the work that school counselors do and offer the training and resources needed to meet the needs of students. Administrators should continue to express support for the career counseling efforts of school counselors and show support by advocating for more personnel in order for students to receive adequate career counseling and to meet the demand of the non-counseling tasks that counselors are assigned.

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Appendix A:  
Informed Consent

You have been selected to participate in this research because you are a middle school counselor in Virginia and your input is vital for this study. In order to qualify for participation you must have completed at least a masters-level education and currently work as school counselor in a public middle school that houses sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The study will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The survey instrument includes questions about your training, your personal experiences and beliefs. The electronic survey link is secure and protected. The researcher will report all findings in a form that will assure confidentiality of individual participants.

There is minimal risk to participate in the study. The benefits of participation include the opportunity to provide needed data about school counselor self-efficacy and experiences working in the middle school setting. There is also the possible benefit of identifying counselor professional development needs in Virginia in the area of career counseling. Finally, if you complete the survey, you will have the opportunity to vote for one of several organizations to receive a \$100.00 donation. In appreciation for your time, the organization receiving the most votes will receive the donation.

Participation in the current study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from participating at any time. If you choose to withdraw you may do so by closing the survey window. There will be no penalty to withdraw.

By selecting the button below, you are agreeing that you have read and fully understand the information provided to you and you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

In addition, you are agreeing that you are 18 years of age or older and that you are a master-level school counselor working in a middle school in Virginia.

   I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this research study. Please take me to the survey now.

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 23, 2013

**TO:** Laura Everhart Welfare, Carrie Brill Sanders

**FROM:** Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires May 31, 2014)

**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Middle School Career Counseling Self-Efficacy

**IRB NUMBER: 13-363**

Effective April 22, 2013, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

**PROTOCOL INFORMATION:**

Approved As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 2**

Protocol Approval Date: **April 22, 2013**

Protocol Expiration Date: **N/A**

Continuing Review Due Date\*: **N/A**

\*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

**FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:**

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

## Appendix C

### Initial Recruitment Email

Dear [First Name],

I am writing to request your assistance in a research study about school counselors and career counseling. As a former school counselor and outreach coordinator for Virginia Career View, I know the value of your time. Your participation is requested because you are a middle school counselor in Virginia and your input is vital to this study. The online survey takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your identity as a participant is confidential and all findings will be reported in a form that will assure individual participant confidentiality.

If you choose to participate, you will have the opportunity to vote for one of five organizations to receive a \$100.00 donation. As a token of my gratitude for your time, I will donate \$100.00 to the organization receiving the most votes.

You may read the informed consent and decide to participate in this research study by clicking on the link below:

*[Qualtrics link inserted here.]*

If you have questions now or at any time during the survey you may contact the lead investigator, Carrie Brill Sanders, at [cbrill@vt.edu](mailto:cbrill@vt.edu).

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!

Sincerely,

Carrie Brill Sanders, PhD Candidate

Virginia Tech, Counselor Education & Supervision

## Appendix D

### First Follow-up Email

The following email was sent out seven days following the initial recruitment email:

Dear [First Name]:

If you have already participated in this survey, thank you. If you have not participated, as a former school counselor, I am writing to make a second request for your assistance in a research study about school counselors and career counseling. Your participation is requested because you are a school counselor in Virginia working in a middle school setting and your input is vital to this study. The online survey takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your identity as a participant is confidential and all findings will be reported in a form that will assure individual participant confidentiality.

If you choose to participate, you will have the opportunity to vote for one of five organizations to receive a \$100.00 donation. As a token of my gratitude for your time, I will donate \$100.00 to the organization receiving the most votes.

You may read the informed consent and decide to participate in this research study by clicking on the link below:

*[Qualtrics link inserted here.]*

If you have questions now or at any time during the survey you may contact the lead investigator, Carrie Brill Sanders, at [cbrill@vt.edu](mailto:cbrill@vt.edu). Thank you for your time and participation!

Sincerely,

Carrie Brill Sanders, PhD Candidate

Virginia Tech, Counselor Education & Supervision

## Appendix E

### Second Follow-up Email

The following email was sent out three days following the first follow-up email:

Dear [First Name]:

If you have already participated in this survey, thank you. If you have not participated, this is a final request by a former school counselor for your assistance in a research study about school counselors' self-efficacy with career counseling. Your participation is requested because you are a school counselor in Virginia working in a middle school setting and your input is vital to this study. The online survey takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your identity as a participant is confidential and all findings will be reported in a form that will assure individual participant confidentiality.

If you choose to participate, you will have the opportunity to vote for one of five organizations to receive a \$100.00 donation. As a token of my gratitude for your time, I will donate \$100.00 to the organization receiving the most votes.

You may read the informed consent and decide to participate in this research study by clicking on the link below:

*[Qualtrics link inserted here.]*

If you have questions now or at any time during the survey you may contact the lead investigator, Carrie Brill Sanders, at [cbrill@vt.edu](mailto:cbrill@vt.edu). Thank you for your time and participation!

Sincerely,

Carrie Brill Sanders, PhD Candidate

Virginia Tech, Counselor Education & Supervision

## Appendix F

### Questionnaire

#### Welcome!

This survey is divided into two sections. The first section asks for you to think about certain counseling tasks. The second section asked questions about your experiences in the school setting, training you have received, and demographic information. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, contact Carrie Brill Sanders, [cbrill@vt.edu](mailto:cbrill@vt.edu).

Please remember to scroll down to the bottom of each page and click the arrow to the right.

#### Section1:

Below is a list of activities regarding counseling. Indicate your confidence in your current ability to perform each activity according to the scale defined below. Please answer each item based on how you feel now, not on your anticipated (or previous) ability.

Not Confident		Moderately Confident		Highly Confident
0	1	2	3	4

- 
1. Select an instrument to clarify a student's abilities.
  2. Provide support for a student's implementation of his/her career goals.
  3. Assist a student in understanding how his/her non-work life (e.g., family leisure, interests, etc.) affects career decisions.
  4. Understand special issues related to gender in career decision-making.
  5. Develop a therapeutic relationship with a student.
  6. Select an instrument to clarify aspects of a student's personality which may influence career planning.
  7. Explain assessment results to a student.
  8. Terminate counseling with a student in an effective manner.
  9. Understand special issues related to ethnicity in the workplace.
  10. Understand the special issues that lesbian, gay, and bisexual students may have in career decision-making.
  11. Provide knowledge of local and national job market information and trends.
  12. Choose assessment inventories for a student which are appropriate for the student's gender, age, education, and cultural background.
  13. Assist the student in modulating feelings about the career decision-making process.
  14. Apply knowledge about current ethical and legal issues which may affect the career counseling process.
  15. Understand special issues present for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students in the workplace.
  16. Communicate unconditional acceptance to a student.
  17. Select an instrument to assess a student's interests.
  18. Select an instrument to clarify a student's values.

19. Understand special issues related to gender in the workplace.
20. Understand special issues related to ethnicity in career decision-making.
21. Listen carefully to concerns presented by a student.
22. Synthesize information about self and career so that a student's problems seem understandable.
23. Help a student identify internal and external barriers that might interfere with reaching his/her career goals.
24. Use current research findings to intervene effectively with a student.
25. Be empathic toward a student when the student refuses to accept responsibility for making decisions about his/her career.
26. Implement a program which enables all students to make informed career decisions.
27. Deliver age-appropriate programs through which students acquire the skills needed to investigate the world of work.
28. Foster understanding of the relationship between learning and work.
29. Teach students to apply problem-solving skills toward their academic, personal, and career success.
30. Teach students how to apply time and task management skills.
31. Offer appropriate explanations to students, parents, and teachers of how learning styles affect school performance.
32. Use technology designed to support student successes and progress through the educational system.
33. Design an Academic and Career Plan for students at your school.
34. Implement a process for developing an Academic and Career Plan for every student at your school.

**Section 2:**

In this section you will be asked to share about your experiences.

35. How long have you been employed as a
  - a. full-time school counselor? \_\_\_\_\_ years
  - b. part-time school counselor? \_\_\_\_\_ years
36. Approximately how many students do you currently have on your caseload? \_\_\_\_\_ students
37. Have you had previous full-time teaching experience in a K-12 classroom?
  - a. Yes            If yes, how many years? \_\_\_\_\_ years
  - b. No
38. Have you received training in implementing a comprehensive school counseling program?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

39. Indicate which, if any, of the following models for a comprehensive school counseling program you follow at your school.
- a. ASCA National Model
  - b. Virginia Professional School Counseling Program Manual
  - c. District School Counseling Model
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. No Model
40. In a school year, approximately what percentage of your time is spent providing the following:
- a. Personal/Social Counseling? \_\_\_\_\_%
  - b. Academic Counseling? \_\_\_\_\_%
  - c. Career Counseling? \_\_\_\_\_%
  - d. SOL Testing Coordination? \_\_\_\_\_%
  - e. Other non-counseling related activities? \_\_\_\_\_% **Total = 100%**
41. How often do you feel your efforts to provide career counseling are supported by the administrators at your school?
- a. Always
  - b. Usually
  - c. About half of the time
  - d. Seldom
  - e. Never
42. How often do you feel the teachers at your school support your efforts to providing career counseling?
- a. Always
  - b. Most of the Time
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Rarely
  - e. Never
43. What is your highest level of counselor-related education?
- a. I have completed a Master's degree
  - b. I have completed an Education Specialist degree
  - c. I have completed a Doctoral degree
44. In what year did you earn your highest degree? \_\_\_\_\_ (drop down menu)
45. Have you successfully completed a 3-credit hour course related to career counseling?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I don't know

46. In the last three years, approximately how many hours of conference presentations, workshops, or trainings have you attended that focused primarily on career counseling?  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours
47. What counselor-related credentials do you currently hold?
- Provisionally Licensed School Counselor
  - Licensed School Counselor
  - National Certified Counselor
  - Licensed Professional Counselor
  - Licensed Professional Counselor-Supervisor
  - Global Career Facilitator
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
48. Please indicate whether you are a member of any of the following professional associations.
- ACA-American Counseling Association
  - ASCA-American School Counseling Association
  - VCA-Virginia Counseling Association
  - VSCA-Virginia School Counseling Association
  - VASC-Virginia Alliance for School Counseling
  - NCDA-National Career Development Association
  - VCDA-Virginia Career Development Association
  - AMLE- Association for Middle Level Education
  - VMSA-Virginia Middle School Association
49. What is your age (in years)? \_\_\_\_\_ years
50. What is your gender?
- Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
  - I prefer not to answer
51. What is your race/ethnicity?
- White (Non-Hispanic)
  - African American
  - Hispanic/Latino
  - Asian
  - Native American
  - Pacific Islander
  - Multiracial
  - Other
  - I prefer not to answer