Alabama Funeral Service Licensee's Perspectives of Funeral Service Education in Alabama as Related to Preparation for Professional Practice

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
December 12, 2015

Keywords: Funeral service education, Adult education, Funeral service licensure, Professional practice, Funeral director, Embalmer

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that Alabama funeral service licensees had towards their academic preparation for entry-level funeral service careers in a professional field that was changing. More specifically, this study identified and examined specific learning objectives within the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) curriculum outlines. Those curriculum content areas included: Communication Skills, Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology. A second purpose of this study was to determine what suggestions, if any, Alabama funeral service licensees had towards improving ABFSE curriculum in order to better prepare licensees for entry-level employment. This study was significant because previous research, for various reasons, did not include funeral service licensees from the State of Alabama. To gather data, an online survey was adapted from previous research of LuBrant (2013) that examined similar data on a national level. There were three adult education concepts used as the theoretical framework of this study. They were: 1) Houle's Typology by Cyril Houle, 2) Andragogy by Malcolm Knowles, and 3) Experiential Education/Learning proposed in several variations by John Dewey, David Kolb, and Roger Fry.

Acknowledgments

To God be the glory! I would like to express my appreciation to so many who have encouraged and helped me along the way to this doctoral degree. My parents, Reverend Raymond Eugene (Gene) and the late Charlotte Opal Herring Ennis, taught me at an early age that education was important. Going to college was not an option for me - it was a requirement. Without my parent's financial and emotional support, most of my degrees would not have been possible. My mother died in 2008, and I miss her every day. My father continues to be my rock, mentor and friend. Thanks Dad! My life would not be complete if it were not for my wife and best friend, Sherrie. I am so grateful for the love and support that she has given to me over the years. There have been financial sacrifices and long, lonely evenings and days while I have been researching and writing this dissertation. I love you, honey…thank you! To my children, who are both students here at Auburn University, thanks for your support and taking care of your mom while I have been doing this research. Who would have thought that I would be in college at the same time with my children? War Eagle!

I also want to thank Dr. William (Bill) Counce and Venus N. R. Smith. Dr. Counce has been an influence in my life for many years as my Funeral Service Education Instructor and then as my colleague, mentor and friend. I cannot say enough about my colleague and friend, Venus Smith. While Venus is my boss, she is really more a friend than a boss. I know she has my back, and she has been overly supportive of me during this process of doctoral work. Thanks to

both of you! In addition to Dr. Counce and Ms. Smith, I would like to thank the administration, faculty and staff of Jefferson State Community College for their support and encouragement.

In addition to those previously mentioned, I also would like to thank Dr. Michael LuBrant and the University of Minnesota for allowing me to extend the research that he began years ago. The body of knowledge gained for the funeral service profession in the State of Alabama has been enhanced due to your generosity. I also thank Mr. Charles Perine, Executive Secretary, of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service; the Board staff; the members of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service; Deana Gillespie, Research Manager for the National Funeral Directors Association; the funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama who took their time to contribute to this research; and to my friends and colleagues for your support in this endeavor.

Last and not least, I want to thank Dr. James (Jim) Witte, Dr. Maria Witte, Dr. Leslie Cordie, Dr. Chih-hsuan Wang, and Dr. David Pascoe. Truly, truly without your support, direction and guidance, this doctoral degree would not be possible. I can never express my true gratitude for your influence on my life and work. Thank you! I also would like to thank the Auburn University College of Education, Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology, and the Adult Education program for allowing admittance to the college, department and program to pursue this degree. Finally, to one of the loves of my life, Auburn University, I want to say thank you. This is my second degree from Auburn. I am proud to be a member of the "Auburn Family," and I truly consider myself to be an "Auburn Man."

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List of Abbreviations

ABFS	Alabama Board of Funeral Service
ABFSE	American Board of Funeral Service Education
Board	Alabama Board of Funeral Service
BSCC	Bishop State Community College
CANA	Cremation Association of North America
COA	Committee on Accreditation (of ABFSE)
CUC	College and University Council (of ABFSE)
ICCFA	International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association
ICFSEB	International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards
JSCC	Jefferson State Community College
NBE	National Board Exam (Administered by ICFSEB)
NFDA	National Funeral Directors Association
NFD&MA	National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The National Funeral Directors Association's *U.S. Death Statistics: 1960-2050* (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniño (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniño's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were educationally and competently prepared to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Problem Statement

Recent research studies related to this topic have not included Alabama funeral service practitioners in surveys and samples. The reason was most likely that Alabama practitioners

either didn't know of the research or elected not to participate. In either case, there was a gap in information to determine if the Alabama practitioners' perceptions were the same as or different from those in previous research studies. All funeral service practitioners who graduated from an accredited mortuary college, no matter of geographic location, were expected to be prepared and proficient for entry-level employment and for the changes in consumer preferences, such as cremation and "green" dispositions; changes in family structure, such as divorce, single-parents and civil unions/same sex marriages; and the psychological changes in attitudes towards death, funerals, funeral directors and long-held traditions.

This inquiry led to review of mortuary education, including the specified learning objectives, as related to preparation of Alabama funeral service practitioners for entry-level employment, especially related to the change in consumer preferences. As mentioned by LuBrant (2013) in his previous research, the assumption made by state licensing boards, employers and interested parties was that the mortuary school curriculum developed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) was sufficient to prepare graduates/licensees for entry-level employment. Information gathered from Alabama funeral service practitioners on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum, learning outcomes, and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Additionally, more research was needed to determine what, if any, changes the Alabama licensees recommended to mortuary school curriculum that would have helped them in preparation for entry level job requirements and the changing consumer.

Purpose of the Study

Following the suggestions of LuBrant (2013) in Chapter 5 of his doctoral dissertation, that more contemporary peer-reviewed research in mortuary science needed to be conducted, this study focused on funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama to determine if the perceptions and attitudes were similar or dissimilar from those on the national level. Alabama funeral service practitioners were notably absent from previous contemporary research studies. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions that licensed funeral service practitioners in Alabama had towards the American Board of Funeral Service's learning objectives for content areas to determine perceived importance of those learning objectives, academic preparation to master those objectives, and perceived adequacy of those objectives towards professional practice in a changing environment. This study replicated the work of LuBrant's (2013) research with adaptations to the population, a more narrow focus on curriculum content areas, and a purposeful selection of curriculum content areas into one version of the survey that was based upon the literature review. For this study, the population included those individuals who completed all requirements for the A.A.S. degree in Funeral Service Education from any accredited ABFSE mortuary program in the United States in or after 1962, were licensed to practice as a funeral director/embalmer in the State of Alabama, worked in the funeral profession within the previous twelve month, and were at least 19 years of age or older. A second purpose of this study was to determine what changes, if any, licensees suggested to the objectives in the purposeful selection of ABFSE subject areas covered in this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perceptions of the ABFSE learning objectives and the contemporary practice of funeral service?
2. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of the ABFSE learning objectives and adequacy of those objectives for contemporary practice in funeral service?
3. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of having been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed and mastery of the ABFSE learning objectives?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
5. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
6. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
7. What is the relationship, if any, between prior work experience before graduation and perception of functioning as a competent, entry-level funeral director and embalmer?
8. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer and the type of institution where the licensee pursued her/his funeral service education?
9. What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?
10. What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

Significance of the Study

Alabama funeral service licensees were absent, and therefore underrepresented, in research connected to mortuary school curriculum related to job preparation and, Alabama funeral service licensees were absent, and therefore underrepresented, in suggested mortuary curriculum changes, if any, that would have been beneficial to job preparation. This study was

significant because it included the voice of licensed funeral directors and embalmers to the body of knowledge that currently existed in related research. Secondly, information gathered from licensees on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Research of a more robust nature was needed in Alabama to determine what, if any, changes the licensees recommended to mortuary school learning objectives that would have helped them in their present job position. LuBrant's (2013) study focused on national responses where this research focused on the State of Alabama. The significance of this study was that this was the first state-level study in recent times, particularly a state in the Southern United States that differed from funeral service trends in other geographic areas of the country. As there were other Southern states with similar beliefs, values, and demographics, this study could be generalizable to other groups.

Limitations

1. Due to the number of learning outcomes (n=177) for the American Board of Funeral Service (ABFSE) curriculum outlines and time constraints for licensees to complete the survey, perceptions for all 177 objectives were not measured.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were made:

1. This study did not include practical embalmers who did not have to graduate or complete a course of study from an ABFSE accredited mortuary college.
2. This study did not include funeral directors who did not have to graduate from a mortuary college accredited by ABFSE.
3. This study did not include licensees prior to 1962 since mortuary schools were not accredited by ABFSE until 1962.
4. This study did not include licensees who have not worked or had an active role in a funeral home in the past 12 months.

5. This study only included funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama.
6. This study did not include licensees under the legal age of 19 in the State of Alabama.
7. This study did not research the relationship (positive or negative) between mortuary curriculum objectives and passage of national or state licensure exams required for licensure.
8. This study did not research differences, if any, between licensees who completed their mortuary education by distance education versus those licensees who completed their education in the traditional classroom.
9. This study did not survey all 177 objectives for the 20 ABFSE curriculum content areas.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

1. The licensees involved in this study were representative of all funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama who graduated or completed a course of study from an ABFSE accredited mortuary college.
2. Graduates/Completers of ABFSE accredited funeral service education programs using the traditional educational delivery method and the distance learning educational method were equally qualified.
3. The academic characteristics of the students varied since there was a variation in backgrounds, education level, and primary reason for enrolling in a funeral service education program.
4. After licensure, experiential learning varied by the licensee's employment environment and the personal learning style of the licensee.
5. Cremation percentages continued to rise in the State of Alabama during the course of this study.
6. Participants answered the questionnaires honestly and consistently and only took the survey instrument one time.

Definitions

The following definitions of terms were furnished to provide, as nearly as possible, clear and concise meanings of terms as used in this study.

Baby Boom(er) Generation – persons born between the years of 1946 and 1964.

Cremation – "the reduction of a dead human body to inorganic bone fragments by intense heat in a specifically designed retort" (ICFSEB, 2012, p. 11).

Disposition – The choice made on if the deceased will be buried, entombed, cremated, donated for medical research, buried at sea, etc.

Distance Education – Funeral Service Education courses offered via the internet by learning software.

Embalming – "Process of chemically treating the dead human body to reduce the presence and growth of microorganisms, to temporarily inhibit organic decomposition, and to restore an acceptable physical appearance" (ICFSEB, 2012, p. 89).

Graduates – students who completed all requirements for the required degree in Funeral Service Education. This degree was accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education and included both the arts and sciences courses.

Green/Environmental – See *Natural.*

Hybrid Cemetery – a cemetery that allows both traditional ground burials and natural burials.

Licensees – those individuals who have met all requirements for licensure as established by state law and the Alabama Board of Funeral Service and have been granted licenses to practice in one of the following capacities: funeral director only, embalmer only, or as funeral director & embalmer.

Mortuary College(s) – a college, university, or school that offers a program of study in Funeral Service Education that is accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education.

Natural – "In natural burial, the body is buried, without embalming, in a natural setting. Any shroud or casket that is used must be biodegradable, nontoxic, and of sustainable material. Traditional standing headstones are not permitted" (NFDA, "Trends in Funeral Service," 2014, "Green Funerals")

Student(s) – an adult learner who has graduated from high school or who has earned a General Education(al) Diploma and attends a mortuary college.

Traditional Education – students who attend class on-campus in a brick-and-mortar facility.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the study, presented the problem, purpose, research questions, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 included a review of related literature concerning the history of funeral service in Alabama, the role of mortuary education in Alabama, accreditation and licensure in Alabama and the lack of participation and information on Alabama licensees in past research. Chapter 3 reported the procedures utilized in this study, including the population and sample; instrumentation; the data collection; and the data analysis. The findings

of the study were presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 included a summary of the study, conclusions, implications and recommendations for further practice and research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The National Funeral Directors Association's *U.S. Death Statistics: 1960-2050* (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniño (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniño's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were prepared educationally and competently to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Recent research studies related to this topic have not included Alabama funeral service practitioners in surveys and samples. The reason was most likely that Alabama practitioners either didn't know of the research or elected not to participate. In either case, there was a gap in

information to determine if the Alabama practitioners' perceptions were the same as or different from those in previous research studies. All funeral service practitioners who graduated from an accredited mortuary college, no matter of geographic location, were expected to be prepared and proficient for entry-level employment and for the changes in consumer preferences: cremation and "green" dispositions; changes in family structure, such as divorce, single-parents and civil unions/same sex marriages; and the psychological changes in attitudes towards death, funerals, funeral directors and long-held traditions.

This inquiry into a changing environment led to a review of mortuary education (that included the specified learning objectives) as it related to preparation of Alabama funeral service practitioners for entry-level employment. As mentioned by LuBrant (2013) in his previous research, the assumption made by state licensing boards, employers and interested parties was that the mortuary school curriculum developed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) was sufficient to prepare graduates/licensees for entry-level employment. Information gathered from Alabama funeral service practitioners on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum, learning outcomes, and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Additionally, more research was needed to determine what, if any, changes the Alabama licensees recommended to mortuary school curriculum that would have helped them in preparation for entry level job requirements and the changing consumer.

Research Questions

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9. What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?
10. What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

Funeral Directing and Embalming in the State of Alabama

History of Funeral Directing and Embalming in Alabama:

"As far back as 50,000 years ago, man exhibited concern for the dead. Neanderthal burials included food, ornamental shells, and stone tools" (Lensing, 2001, p. 46). The American

civil war would be no different. Embalming was defined as the, "process of chemically treating the dead human body to reduce the presence and growth of microorganisms, to temporarily inhibit organic decomposition, and to restore an acceptable physical appearance" (Mayer, 2012, p. 699). Ancient Egyptians were credited with the first embalming practices which were primarily religious in nature (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). The practice of embalming ebbed and flowed over the following centuries and in Europe embalming was primarily performed to preserve cadavers for medical research (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). As America was settled by English colonists, the tradesman undertaker from England was noticeably absent from ship manifests. Early colonists were rugged survivalists who undertook the burial of their dead when the need arose (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). As described in the textbook *Mortuary Administration and Funeral Management* by Professional Training Schools (1983), "In the United States most of the early funeral customs were introduced from England. The early American undertaker, in the period up to the Civil War, did very little in the way of embalming" (p. 8). As the colonies formed, entrepreneurs hung shingles to provide necessities related to death and burial; however, embalming was not readily accepted due to religious objections, cost, and lack of skilled laborers to perform the task (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Prior to the Civil War, the main method of preservation was ice placed in various contraptions and inventions (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Trompette and Lemonnier (2009) also commented that, "In the 19th century, the technical innovations developed by undertakers focused on refrigeration processes and resulted in a series of patents for cold storage lockers" (p. 14). The way in which bodies were handled changed with the bloody massacre known as the American Civil War. Trompette and Lemonnier (2009) solidified this thought when they found, "Funeral historians agree that the American Civil War marked a turning point in 'The American Way of Death',

notably in terms of the legitimization and democratization of embalming for body display" (p. 15).

As was the case in other wars, the soldiers were required to march or be transported to the place of battle…for most, this was away from home. As America was a religious country, a common tradition and desire was to be buried beside family in the church cemetery, also known as "God's Acre" (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). To be left unburied or not buried with family was considered a tragedy (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). While there were individual cases where soldiers were returned home, Mayer (2012) noted that overall , "At the beginning of the Civil War, as in all previous wars fought by the United States, there was no provision for return of the dead to their homes…the military dead were buried in the field near where they fell in battle" (pp. 486-487). The problem with preparing and transporting the dead was more due to logistics, resources and time rather than respect. Kelly (2012) found that, "Even in times of war, treating enemy dead with reverence has often been a matter of military protocol" (p. 37). Due to the availability of chemical arterial embalming preservation and the desire of soldiers and family to have the fallen soldier buried at home, the rise of "embalming surgeons" was born (Mayer, 2012). Dr. Thomas Holmes was one of the most famous Civil War embalming surgeons due to his inventions and having embalmed around 4,000 bodies, including Union Colonel Elmer Ellsworth. Ellsworth's embalmed body was described by Mary Todd Lincoln (wife of President Lincoln) as if he were asleep (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). She was so impressed with embalming that she commissioned embalming surgeon Henry P. Cattell to prepare President Lincoln following the assignation (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Because of all the reasons mentioned, "Embalming practices became common during the Civil War because it allowed the bodies of slain soldiers to be returned home for burial" (Lensing, 2001, p. 47).

The problem for Alabama and the Confederate soldiers was explained by Mayer (2012) when he documented that, "Little, if any, embalming was available to the Southerners during the war. Virtually all embalming was done by Northerners" (p. 486). While there wasn't a counterpart to Dr. Thomas Holmes in the South, an undertaker by the name of W. R. Cornelius saw the opportunity to be an entrepreneur (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). W. R. Cornelius began working in Nashville, Tennessee and later opened "branch establishments" in Stevenson, Huntsville, and Bridgeport, Alabama (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Dr. Daniel H. Prunk also trained embalmers that were sent to Alabama (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). At the conclusion of the Civil War the physicians who had previously been "embalming surgeons" returned to the medical practice; however, the new-found demand for embalming remained following the war (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Trompette and Lemonnier (2009) stated it this way, "…the American civil war (1861-1865) quickly gave way to the invention of a new funeral model, which included the transportation and exhibition of the embalmed corpse. This model was to become widespread in the next century" (p. 15). Where there was demand and a need to be filled, people would step forward to fill that need. As a result of the Civil War, embalming for funeral purposes was firmly established in American culture (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014).

Post-civil war: At the conclusion of the American civil war, physicians returned home to the medical practices from which they came. It was only natural for them to return to the practice for which they were called and trained. Embalming, having gained notoriety during the war, experienced ebb due to several factors: availability of skilled people to perform the task, availability of chemicals and instruments, cost, and the reversion back to ice - since it was easily available, cheaper and more profitable (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). As described by

Trompette and Lemonnier (2009), the transfer of embalming knowledge wasn't one of contempt; rather, it was one of professional courtesy and education:

> Over the following decades, the professional embalming map was redrawn as physicians were more or less removed and an increasing number of undertakers and embalming chemical companies appeared. This transfer took place without competition or rivalry. Instead, physicians acted as tutors and initially, remained involved in the business, either through technical innovations, the marketing of fluids and instruments or by providing training. (p. 15)

Of interest was the fact that the American public became familiar and accustomed to the idea of having their dead embalmed. As entrepreneurs and former battle-field embalmers made the post-war transition to peace-time business owner, the rise and demand for funeral-related products would exacerbate into the 20th Century. As the 19th century came to a close, a new direction would emerge; the new direction revolved around chemical company inventions and professors of mortuary education (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014).

While many "schools" claimed to be the first to formally educate in the field of embalming, the first school designed to teach the art and science of embalming was opened around 1872 (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). Most of the early "schools" were actually started and run by chemical companies whose purpose was to train "students" to use and then purchase their chemicals (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). In addition to embalming, another aspect of death arose in the United States – cremation. The "sanitation" movement began in the 19th Century and its target was dead bodies as a source of contagion (Prothero, 2001).

The first documented cremation in a modern facility built for cremating the dead human body was performed in a private crematory owned by a retired physician, Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne (Prothero, 2001). "On December 6, 1876, in the small town of Washington, Pennsylvania, the corpse of Baron Joseph Henry Louis Charles De Palm went up in flames in an event billed as the first cremation in modern America" (Prothero, 2001, p. 15). Over the course of the next several decades, cremation was either supported as the cure-all for the sanitation movement or was opposed and held as an act of Satan to the religious (Prothero, 2001). In either case, cremation in the United States was born and would grow over the next 130 years or so to become the preferred disposition choice of Americans by 2015 (NFDA, 2014, The NFDA Cremation and Burial Report).

20th and 21st Century: The twentieth century was the golden years for the funeral profession in America. With the introduction of embalming (that required skilled labor) and smaller living spaces, many of the functions related to funerals moved from within the deceased's home to a place called a "funeral home" (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). "The twentieth century marked changes in death practices. Urbanization, advanced technology, and the construction of smaller homes all led to the rise of funeral parlors or funeral homes. Death moved out of the house and into hospitals, nursing homes and funeral homes" (Lensing, 2001, p. 47). In addition, the funeral director moved from providing paraphernalia related to funerals to providing personal services (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014).

Two areas of personal services that were required in the twentieth century were: the important role of the scientific arts, and the understanding of psychology. In the textbook, *Mortuary Administration and Funeral Management* (Professional Training Schools, 1983) this idea was fully developed when the authors stated, "The present day mortician has greatly

advanced his art and science to such a point as to make death and the ensuing grief less horrible and more understandable through proper services and psychology" (p. 8). Klicker (2007) reinforced this idea when he wrote, "…the funeral director needs a thorough understanding of grief and bereavement because the general public now has a more in-depth knowledge of the subject" (p. 10). Canine (1996) explained that death care professionals (including funeral directors) must have the ability to understand their own fears before they could "create a climate of support, respect, tolerance, and caring for bereaved individuals" (p. 7).

The Twentieth Century was not all roses for the funeral profession; in fact, it was during this time period that the stems of scrutiny and critique of a mysterious profession, called funeral service, took root. Jessica Mitford's book, *The American Way of Death* (1963), was the loudest voice against the funeral profession. Mitford (1963) believed and wrote that funeral directors were a greedy group of individuals who had set up a system by which they could prey on the emotions of the bereaved to increase profitability for the funeral home and their own pockets. Her voice was loud and resounded with segments of society. LuBrant (2013) noted that after Mitford's book was published that the trend for alternatives to the traditional funeral rite, such as cremation, began to appeal to a growing group of people who were distrustful or disenchanted with American funeral customs. Long & Lynch (2013) also noticed this abrupt, but lingering, impact that the Jessica Mitford had on the American public, "Almost immediately there was an increase in the cremation rate, which was below five percent before Mitford's book and has increased to nearly fifty percent in the decades since" (p. 73). Open and public critique of the funeral profession, has remained since the publishing of Mitford's book. In modern times, organizations, such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), national print media, and television network investigative programs, such as *Dateline*, *60 Minutes*, and *20/20*,

all took aim at the profitability, operating procedures, and the profession as a whole. Long and Lynch (2013) included and entire chapter in their book entitled "Our Own Worst Enemy." In this chapter Lynch explained how the funeral directors invited scrutiny of the critics, like Mitford, because they focused on sales techniques and products rather than on the bereaved, "the consumer – the bereaved survivor – is not better served; they have only been better sold. There is a difference" (Long & Lynch, 2013, p. 139). However, all was not lost for the funeral profession. The profession remains to this day and has thrived. Funeral directors realized errors and made changes and champions came to its defense. Long and Lynch (2013) identified this transition and directly addressed the transition to the funeral profession when they stated, "If funeral service rises to this occasion in ways that intersect with consumers' desires for more meaningful, natural, family-centered, hands-on, participatory services, funeral and cemetery professionals will thrive in the changing, greening marketplace" (p. 152).

While critics of the funeral profession took aim, others came to the defense of a profession that helped so many in a confusing and devastating time. Authors and psychologists like Paul Irion (1966), Dr. Earl A. Grollman (1977), Dr. Alan Wolfelt (1990), Thomas Long & Thomas Lynch (2013) and many others came to the defense of the funeral profession and the personal services that they offered. Most recently, Long & Lynch (2013) wrote that, "What makes a funeral one of a kind is the irreplaceable person who is dead and people to whom that death most matters. And the funeral has the ability to get the living and the dead through this maze of changing statuses" (p. 143). Wolfelt (1990) defended the profession when he wrote, "The survivors have a problem – confronting the death of someone loved. No other helping professional has the same level of intimate contact with the family at a time of death than the

funeral director" (p. 5). The twenty first century has been one of change for the funeral profession. Kopp and Kemp (2007) described it this way:

> There have been changes in consumers' beliefs as to what is considered a "traditional" funeral. Consumers have begun to request more personalized services, so that funeral homes offer a greater variety of secondary services, including "aftercare" services and support groups, community referrals, and libraries (p. 152).

As a result of the consumer preference changes, the funeral profession adapted by offering new products designed for personalization towards the deceased, food options and catering events within the funeral home, and a greater offering of post-service options to offer memorialization to the deceased. Of course, the funeral director was also trying to recapture the lost profitability from an increase in cremation that resulted in a decrease in full traditional services, casket, outer burial container, and monument sales. To this point, Long & Lynch (2013) wrote, "Funerals have always been about what humans do rather than about what they buy when someone they love dies" (p. 152). The big unknown that loomed for the funeral profession was one that was foreseen many years prior. Would the aging Baby Boomers and the increase in death rates as a result of a massive generation affect the profession? The answer so far was "Yes."

Projected Death Statistics:

This section was so important to explain the change facing the funeral profession that it was duplicated as a portion of the introductions to each chapter. For emphasis, it remained here. Due to an aging population, especially the very large baby boom generation, NFDA's *U.S. Death*

Statistics: 1960-2050 (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniňo (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniňo's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were educationally and competently prepared to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Changing Funeral Customs

When looking at changing funeral customs, Alabama was not immune to consumer changes (NFDA, 2014, Trends in Funeral Service); however, Alabama did not have the dramatic changes experienced in other states and regions of the United States (Woolbright & Stephens, 2002). Alabama continued to cling to traditional funeral traditions - which in most cases included embalming. This resistance to profession/industry changes was most evident in two areas: 1) the national statistics that showed a dramatic rise in cremation as the choice of disposition over ground burial across most of the country and 2) the popularity of the "green"/environmental movement across the United States (NFDA, 2014, Trends in Funeral

Service). According to NFDA (2014), "The public's interest in cremation continues to rise. In 2007, cremation accounted for 34.89 percent of final dispositions in the United States" (Trends in Funeral Service, Cremation on the Rise section, para. 4). Singhal (2012), who researched for the Cremation Association of North American (CANA), reported that the percentage of deaths that resulted in cremation in the United States was 40.6% in 2010 and 42.2% for 2011 and the same report showed Alabama's cremation percentage was 17.2% in 2010 and 18.6% in 2011 (Singhal, 2012). Singhal's report (2012) also indicated that Alabama consistently had the second lowest cremation percentage in the United States. While Alabama's cremation rate was lower compared to other states, there was a dramatic change in the percentage of people who selected cremation. Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Over time, cremation has become a more popular alternative for Alabama residents. Thus, the number of cremations increased from 939 in 1990 to 1,731 in 1998, an 84 percent rise" (Disposition of Bodies section, p. 14). Fritch and Altieri (2015) wrote the most recent textbook on the subject of cremation and found that, "It should be without question now that the prevalence of cremation is not by accident. The American funeral consumer is becoming comfortable with the choice of selecting cremation for their loved ones and themselves" (p. 168).

A second area where Alabama resisted national tendencies was in "green"/natural burials. According to NFDA's Trends in Funeral Service (2014), "In natural burial, the body is buried, without embalming, in a natural setting. Any shroud or casket that is used must be biodegradable, nontoxic, and of sustainable material. Traditional standing headstones are not permitted" (Green Funerals section, para. 6). Outside of private family cemeteries or religious cemeteries (predominantly Jewish or Muslim), only two public "green/natural" cemeteries (as described by NFDA) were listed for Alabama. Both of the listed "green/natural" cemeteries in

Alabama were around Mobile and were classified as “hybrid” cemeteries, meaning the cemeteries allowed both traditional and natural burials in the same cemetery (New Hampshire Funeral Resources, Education & Advocacy, Green Cemeteries in the US & Canada). While the cremation percentage in Alabama was not as high as the majority of the U.S, the fact remained that Alabama’s cremation percentage rose from 11.5% in 2006 to 18.6% in 2011 (Singhal, 2012).. Alabama was resistant to national trends; however, the state was completely immune to those changes.

Demographic Shifts: As mentioned in earlier sections of this study, society has changed in various demographic areas. These shifts have affected society and the small businesses that were charged with providing meaningful and substantive services – including the funeral profession. Notable areas of change (that had dramatic effects on businesses) were the areas of divorce, remarriage, family structure, and sexual orientation; in other words, the areas of sociology. Furthermore, as sociological shifts took place, the feelings, bias, discrimination, hatred, and the like had to be acknowledged. In short, these shifts encompassed the fields of sociology and psychology/counseling.

From a sociology perspective, the funeral profession was thrust into situations foreign in previous decades. In the early and mid-1900’s divorce was not accepted in most areas of society. Even if unhappy, couples stayed together to raise children and grandchildren. For the funeral director, that made determining who had the right to dispose of the dead body relatively simple. However, as divorce became more popular, followed by remarriages and the blending of children from previous marriages, the lines of authorizing agent for rights related to the dead body were blurry. The lines were so convoluted that state legislatures enacted laws that expressly set forth the order in which a person or class of persons could exercise the rights related to the final

disposition of a dead body. This concept also held true as same-sex unions and marriages became legal in some states but not in others. The legal authority of disposition became cloudy, especially in cases where a death occurred in a state that did not recognize same-sex unions or marriage. As previously described, it was clear in this study that the funeral service education curriculum area of sociology was of utmost importance. Family units and structure, or lack thereof, was important. This was echoed in the Sociology textbook by Professional Training Schools, Inc. (2002) when it stated, "The impact the death of a member has on the remaining family members is the main concern and nucleus of all services offered by the funeral director. Your clients are 'the family'" (p. 15). Furthermore, the psychological implications of divorce, remarriage, blended families, sexual orientation, as well as, the feelings and emotions related to who had the rights to disposition of a dead body could not be overlooked. These areas affected the family unit - especially where conflict between members was present.

From a psychology and counseling perspective, it was clear that funeral professionals were required to have the ability to identify situations where conflict exacerbated underlying feelings related to dying, death, comfort and grief. Canine (1996) reinforced this idea when he stated that: "An understanding of bereavement rituals is valuable information for the death care professional…It is useful for caregivers to be aware of people who suffer from complicated grief reactions" (p. 175). The funeral director was quickly thrust into situations within family structures where conflict was the norm. This responsibility and duty to help resolve conflict was not a choice; rather, it was thrust upon the funeral professional by the requirement of the job. This was described by Raether and Slater (1975) when they wrote:

> Funeral directors do not choose as to whether or not they will be counselors. Their

> only choice is will they be good or bad counselors. By the very nature of the care-taking and care-giving service inherent in the duties and responsibilities of a funeral director, he assumes the role of the counselor not by choice but by his advice, direction, and practice (p. 1)

Wolfelt (1990) described the role of a funeral director this way, "I believe the funeral director is a counselor. The question is whether he or she will be helpful, neutral, or harmful in the interpersonal arena" (p. 5). Klicker (2007) further outlined the unique nature funeral directors held in the grief process when he wrote:

> Funeral directors are part of a unique helping profession. No other profession cares for both the deceased and the survivors in a way the funeral director is expected to do…Funeral directors must have the technical skills to prepare the deceased for funeralization activities and are expected to care for grieving family members in an ethical, caring, and empathetic manner (p. 4)

Martin (1977) recognized decades ago that psychology was critical to the success of the funeral director and the bereaved family when he wrote, "Whether he realizes it or not every successful mortician is successful in the application of psychological principles…We service people at a time when they need comfort, counsel and direction" (p. vii).

Communication / "Soft Skills": The business and consumer environment was clearly changed over the past few decades. This change was clearly identified by business leaders,

educations and all levels of government. This change was determined to be so important that in 2013 Alabama Governor Robert Bentley commissioned the Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force (Office of the Governor, State of Alabama, 2014) to address this issue. When he established this commission, Governor Bentley stated that:

> Educators around the state and at all levels possess unique expertise in the education, preparation, and training of students for success in career endeavors. Similarly, leaders in business and industry have unique insight in regard to the appropriate development of skills and preparation necessary for success in their respective fields. It is only through frequent, meaningful communication around education and workforce issues that these leaders can realize the mutually reinforcing benefits that these entities can have upon each other (p. 3).

In this report, that was entitled *Governor's College and Career Ready Task Force: Report on Recommendations to Governor Robert Bentley* (Office of the Governor, State of Alabama, 2014), the committee determined that it was essential for the workforce to have professional skills that were also termed "soft skills," The reasoning was simple - traditional educational training, also termed "hard skills" left many in the workforce at a disadvantage when the technologies and work environment changed. By having "soft skills," the workforce was determined to have the ability to adapt to the changes and new skills required. As funeral homes, cemeteries, and crematories were considered small businesses, this insight by Governor Bentley's task force was applicable to the funeral profession, as well. The commission's report (Office of the Governor, State of Alabama, 2014) further defined the idea of soft skills when it wrote that:

> Although there are many definitions for soft or essential skills, most suggest that they are personal attributes or characteristics that enable an individual to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people…Although not a comprehensive list, examples of soft or essential skills would include strong work ethic, positive attitude, good communication skills, time management abilities, problem-solving skills, acting as an effective team player, appropriate self-confidence, ability to accept and learning from criticism, flexibility and adaptability, and working well under pressure (p. 14)

As this information related to funeral service and funeral service education, it was clear that a curriculum strong in "soft skills" was imperative to several key areas: future workforce preparation, beginning a career at entry-level positions, and sustained success in the funeral service workforce. For these reasons, the funeral service education curriculum area of communication skills appeared to be a significant area that needed to be developed and investigated. As the report (Office of the Governor, State of Alabama, 2014) suggested, communication skills and teaching of related soft skills fell to the educators in high schools, community colleges, and universities around the state; in fact, the report and the governor charged educators with opening its doors to anyone in the community who wanted to be taught these skills on demand. Adults wanted to be educated and it fell to the community colleges and career programs to develop, offer, and teach these skills and programs.

Education

Adult Education

There were three adult education concepts used as the theoretical framework of this study: 1) Houle's Typology by Cyril Houle; 2) Andragogy by Malcolm Knowles; and 3)

Experiential Education/Learning proposed (in several variations) by John Dewey, David Kolb, and Roger Fry. The first concept was Houle's Typology. In research conducted by Cyril Houle (1961), he found that learning was a life-long process. He suggested that within the concept of life-long learning, adults could be classified into three groups characterized by a primary reason why they learned; the three groups were: goal-oriented, activity-oriented and learning-oriented (Houle, 1961). This theory of grouping the learners was many times called "Houle's Typology." Houle (1961) suggested that: A) goal-oriented learners used education and life-long learning to accomplish goals; B) activity-oriented learners used education and life-long learning for the activity itself and for reasons other than learning; and C) learning-oriented learners used education and life-long learning for the simple joy of learning something new. Houle's typology was a perfect model when compared to why many individuals chose to enter the funeral profession (ABFSE, 2014, Frequently Asked Questions section, What type of person becomes a funeral director? section, para. 4).

The second concept used as a theoretical framework for this study was Andragogy. The first documented use of the term "andragogy" was by a German school teacher named Alexander Knapp; however, Malcolm Knowles made andragogy popular in the United States (Witte, 2013). Simply stated, andragogy was the process of how adults learned (Knowles, 1988). Stated another way, Witte (2013) suggested that andragogy, from an educators perspective, was how the educator helped adults learn. Witte said that in order for adults to practice andragogy, the learner had to take responsibly for his own education. Knowles (1988) explained the role of the learners' experience when he said:

> As people grow and develop they accumulate and increasing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing rich resource for learning – for themselves

> and for others. Furthermore, people attach more meaning to learnings they gain from experience than those they acquire passively. Accordingly, the primary techniques in education are experiential techniques - laboratory experiments, discussion, problem-solving cases, simulation exercises, field experience, and the like. (p. 44)

As this related to funeral service in Alabama, apprenticeships were required for education and for licensure. Additionally, licensees gained field experience, on-the-job training and learning from the actual job within the Alabama funeral homes. Each licensee was responsible for his own learning.

The third concept used as a theoretical framework for this study was the concept of Experiential Education/Learning as developed by John Dewey. Dewey (1938/1997) suggested that adult learners brought with them life experiences that made learning modules and concepts individualized based upon those experiences. He believed that lessons devoid of experience hadn't allowed students to learn from interacting with the lesson or information (Dewey, 1938/1997). David Kolb (1984) suggested that learning came from experiences. Heather Coffee (2014), with the University of North Carolina's School of Education, stated that:

> In 1975 Kolb and Roger Fry developed the "Experiential Learning Cycle." within this learning cycle, it is suggested that first, a person participates in a certain action that initiates thought about how the action might instigate other reactions under similar or different circumstances. Based on reflection, the learner better understands how the general principle changes when different actions are taken.

> Finally, the learner is able to apply the concept in multiple circumstances. (Modern Experiential Learning Theory section, para. 3)

Mortuary Education:

American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). According to ABFSE's *Accreditation Manual* (2013), anyone who graduated in the field of funeral service after 1962 was under the authority of ABFSE:

> The predecessor of the American Board of Funeral Service Education was established in 1946 as the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education (Joint Committee) by joint resolutions of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards of the United States (renamed the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards in 1998 - ICFSEB) and with the concurrence of the several associations of school and colleges concerned with funeral service education… In 1959, the name of the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education was changed to the American Board of Funeral Service Education…In 1962, authority for accreditation of funeral service institutions/programs was transferred from the Conference to the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). The ABFSE has continued that function since then, serving as the sole accrediting agency in the United States in the field of funeral service education. (p. 1-1)

Anyone who wanted to obtain licensure in Alabama could graduate from any ABFSE-accredited mortuary college – even if the college was located outside of Alabama. Alabama has two mortuary colleges: Bishop State Community College in Mobile and Jefferson State Community

College in Birmingham. According to the *ABFSE Directory* (2013), Jefferson State Community College was ABFSE accredited in 1976 and Bishop State was ABFSE accredited in 1988. ABFSE is composed of the mortuary science/funeral service education programs/institutions across the United States, as well as, three major professional funeral service association groups in the U.S. According to the *ABFSE Directory* (2013), "There are 58 accredited programs or institutions; 46 are public and 13 are private. The 58 institutions offer a total of 2 diplomas, 56 associate degrees, and 7 baccalaureate degrees" (p. 7). Bishop State (BSCC) only offered the Associates in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree accredited by ABFSE that included both funeral directing and embalming. Jefferson State (JSCC) also offered the accredited A.A.S. degree in Funeral Service Education; however JSCC also offered two non-ABFSE accredited funeral director only certificates – a 27 hour short certificate and a 36 hour long certificate. BSCC only offered a few courses (mainly the general education courses) via distance education. JSCC offered the majority of the courses for both the A.A.S. degree and the two certificates via distance education and also offered the same courses via traditional education on campus.

ABFSE, under the advisement of the U.S. Department of Education, created an autonomous committee within ABFSE charged with the duty of accreditation and re-accreditation of programs (ABFSE, 2013, *Manual on Accreditation*). This committee was called the Committee on Accreditation (COA) and was autonomous in governance and budget from ABFSE. The COA was composed of 12 total members - six are member institutions (three public institutions and three private institutions), three were national funeral association members, two were public members who were not associated with ABFSE, and one member was from the College and University Council (CUC), which was a standing committee of ABFSE that was composed of the 58 member schools (ABFSE, 2013, *Manual on Accreditation*). The

COA of ABFSE published accreditation standards for all member institutions. Hence, the curriculum for Alabama's Funeral Service Education Programs was prescribed by ABFSE and adherence was mandatory for initial accreditation and subsequent re-accreditation (ABFSE, 2013, *Manual on Accreditation*).

Curriculum and learning objectives. The ABFSE curriculum was developed by a process repeated each year. Mortuary college educators within ABFSE were appointed by the ABFSE president to serve on the Curriculum Committee. In addition to educators, practitioners from funeral-related associations were members of the committee and involved in curriculum review. The mix of educators and funeral licensees/practitioners ensured that the curriculum met the needs of both the classroom and the funeral home. The ABFSE Curriculum Committee met in the summer of each year for an intensive review of curriculum content areas and the learning objectives for each area. Each content area was reviewed at least once every five years. The ABFSE Curriculum Committee recommended proposed changes to the ABFSE Executive Committee, the Committee on Accreditation, and the general ABFSE membership. If those recommended changes were adopted, they were then implemented into the individual mortuary school curriculum. As of 2015, there were twenty curriculum content areas that each contained specific learning objectives (Table 1). As displayed in Table 1, there were a total of 177 learning objectives for the twenty curriculum content areas. Mortuary college students were expected to master each learning objective prior to graduation/completion of the funeral service education program. The State of Alabama adopted and codified that in order to practice funeral directing/embalming in the state, a person must graduate from an ABFSE accredited program (Ala. Code 1975 § 34-13). Hence, the ABFSE learning objectives were important for consideration and study.

Table 1

American Board of Funeral Service Education's Learning Objectives by Curriculum Area

ABFSE Curriculum Area	*n*	% (Rounded)
Accounting	13	7
Anatomy	15	9
Business Law	9	5
Chemistry	6	3
Communication Skills	4	2
Cremation	10	6
Embalming	18	11
Ethics	4	2
Federal Trade Commission	4	2
Funeral Directing	11	6
Funeral Merchandising	7	4
Funeral Service Law	5	3
Funeral Service Management	9	5
Funeral Service Psychology & Counseling	12	7
History of Funeral Directing	5	3
Microbiology	6	3
Pathology	4	2
Restorative Art	12	7
Small Business Management	17	10
Sociology	6	3

N = 177

Educational requirements of licensure. According to NFDA (2014), there were estimated to be 32,800 U.S. funeral directors for 2012 and 8,190 U.S. embalmers for 2009 (Trends and Statistics section, para. 1). According to the Executive Director of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service, as of June 5, 2014 there were 1,116 licensed funeral directors and 915 licensed embalmers who held active licenses in the State of Alabama (Charles Perine, personal communication, June 5, 2014). 77 of the 915 licensed embalmers were "practical embalmers"; practical embalmers were individuals who were issued a practical embalmer's license in 1975 based on experience only and did not have to graduate from a mortuary college (Charles Perine, personal communication, June 5, 2014). The reason practical embalmer's licenses were issued was to appease practitioners and to gain their support for legislation that required licensure for funeral directors (Charles Perine, personal communication, June 5, 2014). Hence, practical embalmers were not required to complete/graduate from mortuary school and were issued a license based upon experience only. After 1975, this "practical embalmer" designation was no longer available. While there had been attempts by some in the profession to open another window that would grant embalming licenses to individuals based upon experience only, the profession pushed back such attempts to ensure mortuary education was a requirement for licensure as an embalmer. After 1975, Alabama law clearly stated that licensed embalmers in Alabama were required to graduate from an ABFSE accredited mortuary college; however, funeral directors had no educational requirement as a condition for licensure prior to a law that went into effect October 1, 2011. This law required funeral directors to complete a course of study from an ABFSE accredited mortuary program/school (Ala. Code 1975 § 34-13). There was one exception to the October 2011 law. Anyone who had earned a bachelor's degree in any discipline and only wanted to become licensed as a funeral director was exempt from the

mortuary college requirement; hence, mortuary college completion for these individuals was voluntary (Ala. Code 1975 § 34-13). The history was convoluted but in short, all people who sought funeral service related licensure in Alabama after October 1, 2011, except for the bachelor's degree exemption for funeral directors only, were required to graduate or complete a course of study from an ABFSE accredited mortuary college.

Previous Funeral Service Research Related to Mortuary Education and Preparation for Employment:

Similar to the field of Adult Education, Funeral Service Education was a field that had only gained educational significance in the mid to late 1900's. While Dr. Thomas Holmes and others perfected the art and science of embalming during the U.S. Civil War, it took many more decades to transverse funeral service education from chemical companies, teaching how to use their products, to legitimate accredited programs of study (Habenstein & Lamers, 2014). In fact, it wasn't until the 1960's that legitimate accreditation of mortuary colleges was undertaken by an accrediting body, and 1972 before the American Board of Funeral Service Education was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the sole accrediting body for all associate and bachelor's degrees in the field (American Board of Funeral Service Education, Manual on Accreditation, 2013). Within the accreditation framework, there were several types of colleges and universities in which Funeral Service Education was taught. Only a few programs offered a bachelor's degree while most offered the minimum educational requirement of an associate's degree; In addition, most mortuary schools were housed in a community college or private single-purpose educational institution (American Board of Funeral Service Education, ABFSE Directory, 2013).

Because most mortuary programs were taught in community colleges and private single-purpose institutions, instead of tenure-tracked research universities, little peer-reviewed studies and research related to the field of Funeral Service Education existed. Related to this exam question, 15 peer-reviewed Funeral Service Education studies exist and 10 of them were doctoral dissertations. Fritch (2011) observed this phenomenon when he stated, "limited research literature exists in the field of funeral service education. Most publications related to this discipline are opinion in nature published in trade journals rather than peer-reviewed journals" (pp. 73-74). LuBrant (2013) noted in his doctoral dissertation that, "Scholarly literature pertaining to mortuary science education is sparse" (p. 59). As mentioned earlier, most funeral service programs were taught by instructors who were not required to perform research or obtain degrees above a master's level. Fritch (2011) also noted this when he wrote, "The fact that 80% of the funeral service education chairs…have not been formally trained to conduct research likely contributes to the lack of research that exists in the field of funeral service education" (p. 74).

Also of interest was the fact that the first peer-reviewed doctoral dissertation found in this research was not published by William Counce (1981) until the early 1980's. Again, this pointed to the infancy in the modern field of peer-reviewed funeral service education research. Following Counce (1981), there were two additional doctoral dissertations (Poston, 1987; Taggart, 1989) published in the 1980's. There was then a 16 year break in peer-reviewed literature in the field of funeral service education. Shaw (2005) broke the 16-year silence with the publication of his doctoral dissertation, and he was then followed by three doctoral dissertations in 2010 (Marsaglia, 2010; Patterson, 2010; Reinhard, 2010); two in 2011 (Fritch, 2011; Taylor, 2011); and one in 2013 (LuBrant, 2013).

Outside of doctoral dissertations, the only other peer-reviewed source for funeral service education was the *Journal of Funeral Service Education* (JFSE). JFSE was started by the University Mortuary Science Education Association which was a sub-group of mostly public members of the American Board of Funeral Service of Education (ABFSE). As LuBrant (2013) noted in his doctoral dissertation, "The last known issue of the JFSE was published in October, 2007. There is no known index of articles published in the JFSE" (p. 60). Hard copies of previous JFSE editions were housed and maintained by the mortuary science faculty at Southern Illinois University. The researcher was able to secure two hard copies of the JFSE. The first copy was Volume 11, no. 1 (2005) and the second was Volume 13, no. 1 (October 2007). As noted by LuBrant (2013), the October 2007 issue was the last issue known to be published. Inconsistency in the review and publication of peer-reviewed articles was noted by Shaw & Fleege (2005) when they wrote in their opening editorial letter, "This issue is the first for us as co-authors. Unfortunately, this journal has a history of inconsistency" (p. 5). In JFSE 11(1) from 2005 there were three articles published: two by Fleege (2005) and one by Miller (2005). In JFSE 13(1) from 2007 there were two articles published: Tolboom & McNamee (2007) and Fleege & Shaw (2007). The JFSE articles varied in research methodology; for example, one of the studies by Fleege (2005) used a management theory proposed by Ouchi (1981) as the basis for analysis. Only two of the five articles were quantitative statistical analysis research studies. Three of the five articles were authored or co-authored by a tenured-track faculty member in a funeral service education program. Several of the qualitative articles used outside documents to substantiate the findings without statistical analysis. The 2007 edition was far more substantial from a research perspective than the 2005 edition. In the Tolboom & McNamee (2007) study, the most significant findings of the quantitative research were that: funeral service classes were

found to be important for passage of a the national licensing exam; pre-requisite based courses were better predictors of success as was GPA in a small number of courses. In the Fleege & Shaw (2007) study, there were high degrees of correlations between: rise in cremation and income levels; rise in cremation and decrease in traditional religions; rise in cremation and an increase in educational attainment; and a rise in cremation and an increase in immigration rates.

Outside of doctoral dissertations and the old editions of the *Journal of Funeral Service Education*, the only other sources of funeral service related studies were opinion pieces and non-peer-reviewed survey studies. The main source of funeral-related survey data was published by the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). According to Deana Gillespie, Research Manager of NFDA, data from surveys were only reported with basic means and standard deviations; however, no statistical tests or peer-reviewed research were performed because it was not needed on the trade association level (personal communication, January 16, 2015). While peer-reviewed funeral service education research was limited, the question was then, "should more peer-reviewed research be conducted?" The answer to this question was offered by Fritch (2011) when he wrote, "vast opportunities exist in this field with regard to future studies and the development of theory, both of which could impact the practice involved in funeral service education" (p. 74).

Doctoral dissertations constitute the overwhelming body of peer-reviewed research with funeral service education. Of the 10 doctoral dissertations, five used a quantitative method; three used a qualitative method; and two used a mixed model between quantitative and qualitative. More specifically, in the two mixed-model studies, one or more survey questions were used to gather participant attitudes or suggestions which were then coded into themes; however, the main focus of the study was substantially quantitative.

The dissertations also were overwhelming non-experimental in nature. This was not surprising since all of the studies were education-based and were written by faculty members within funeral service education programs. This concept was also supported in literature when Wiersma & Jurs (2009) wrote that, "Nonexperimental quantitative research is probably the single most widely used research type in educational research" (p. 189). In the review of funeral service education peer-reviewed literature, another predominate factor within the research design was a focus on correlational relationships. Again, Wiersma & Jurs (2009) supported this finding when they found that, " Nonexperimental quantitative research is broad in scope, ranging from status quo studies to ex post facto research, which may be causal-comparative or correlational in nature (p. 190).

The literature review also found that in all of the studies, some form of survey was used to collect data from the participants. In most cases, the researcher developed the survey and then used pilot surveys with participant comments to fine tune the data collection instrument and to test for validity. In addition to pilot surveys, the researcher's used various statistical tests, including Cronbach's alpha, for reliability testing. A few of the dissertations used purposeful sampling, especially those qualitative studies where the researcher identified themes where more information was needed; however, most of the data collection surveys used random/non-purposeful sampling within the identified population. Wiersma & Jurs (2009) explained that, especially in non-experimental research, two main types of survey designs exist: longitudinal and cross-sectional. In this review of funeral service education literature, the survey instruments overwhelmingly used the cross-sectional design. As defined by Wiersma & Jurs (2009) cross-sectional survey design, "involves data collection at one point in time from a sample or more than one sample representing two or more populations" (p. 197).

The review of literature indicated that several types of statistical analysis were used in the research studies. In the qualitative studies and the qualitative portions of the mixed studies, different forms of coding were used. For qualitative survey questions, responses were coded into themes or classifications. Several pre-established scales were used within the qualitative studies. For example, Reinhard (2010) used the Participation Reasons Scale (Groteleuschen, 1985) and the Information Preference Scale (Bauer, 1996). For the quantitative studies, the statistical analysis included: descriptive data; t-tests; ANOVA; Pearson Product-Moment correlations; and various forms of regression.

As mentioned previously, any research in the field of funeral service education was important due to the infancy and scarcity of peer-reviewed studies. The 10 doctoral dissertations that constitute the body of funeral service education research made important contributions to the body of knowledge. Counce (1981) researched changes in the curriculum for funeral service education programs, specifically the addition of psychology and sociology, and reported that, "no formal change in attitude about formal education occurred even though the curriculum changed" (p. 79). Poston (1987) sought to examine personal variables of students to determine if they were predictors for success on the national licensing exam. His research indicated that ACT scores and overall GPA in funeral service education courses were good predictors for success on the exam (Poston, 1987). Taggart (1989) examined personal factors that influenced funeral practitioner's perceptions of academic preparation for employment. His research indicated that job rank/status within the funeral home, age, and rank within the graduating class were statistically significant factors to consider (Taggart, 1989).

After a 16 year silence, Shaw (2005) researched the personal traits of funeral service education students and then compared them to the funeral home workplace. He used John

Holland's "The Self Directed Search" (SDS) to determine if there was congruence between the two groups. Using the SDS, Shaw (2005) found a moderate fit between the two groups and found that three variables were statistically significant: race, self-reported GPA, and education level. In 2010, three dissertations were published. Marsaglia (2010) studied the meaning that funeral directors placed on professional continuing education. Having used a phenomenological method to conduct interviews, Marsaglia (2010) suggested that: participants supported professional continuing education; overall, participants enjoyed continuing education; participants believed that continuing education was necessary for maintaining skills and staying current on new trends; participants used and shared the knowledge they gained from continuing education; and that participants had preferences for topics, settings for learning, etc. While these contributions were noteworthy, it must be stated that the very small, purposeful sample (n=10) and limited geography (Allegheny County, Pennsylvania) of this study brought to question any generalizability for the greater population.

Patterson (2010) conducted a follow-up study from Poston's (1987) original doctoral dissertation because of four factors he believed changed since the original study: the increase of women in the field; more racial diversity since the previous study; the increase in the number of funeral service education programs; and, the new use of distance education in funeral service education programs. The purpose of Patterson's (2010) research was to re-study factors that may have led to success on the National Board Exam (NBE) and then to determine if there was a statistical difference between performance on the NBE between traditional in-class students and distance learning students (internet). Key findings of his research included: distance education students scored higher overall on the NBE Arts portion of the exam and on three of those sub-tests than did the in-class students; male students scored higher on the NBE Arts and Sciences

sections; those students who had relatives in the field and those who had work experience prior to mortuary college scored higher on the Arts portion of the NBE exam; and, reaffirmed Poston's (1987) finding that mortuary college GPA was the best indicator of success on the NBE exam. Indications were that the males in the study were also the ones who had family in the field and had the opportunity to gain work experience prior to mortuary college (Patterson, 2010).

Reinhard (2010) studied the external accreditation team members from the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) from 1999 to 2007 to determine: the demographic composition of the members; reasons and causes for participation by using Groteleuschen's (1980) Participation Reasons Scale and Bauer's (1996) Information Preference Scale; perceived importance of information sources; and perceptions of training and support received to serve on the teams. Her study suggested that collegial learning was the overwhelming reason for participation on the teams and that training was sparse and inadequate for what participants perceived to be needed to participate on the teams; also, suggestions were made to increase training for team members (Reinhard, 2010). In 2011, two studies were published.

Fritch (2011) researched factors that could be used, outside of ABFSE accreditation, for students to evaluate and rank mortuary schools by quality. While informative, Fritch's (2011) research did not determine, with statistical significance, factors, other than ABFSE accreditation, that were used to define and rank mortuary schools. Taylor (2011) conducted a historical qualitative study with the purpose of, "making a contribution to the clarification of the role of the funeral director in society" (p. 230). She suggested four main themes from her research, all of which were intended to be a catalyst for change within the funeral profession: failed attempts to control the funeral service environment; a gap between leaders in the field and the masses within the field; internal professional conflicts; and, unclear requirements of what credentials and

education was required to practice (Taylor, 2011). Finally, LuBrant (2013) had the most detailed and comprehensive doctoral dissertation to date. The purpose of his research was to measure, on a national scale, funeral service practitioner's perceptions on the importance, academic preparation received, and adequacy of ABFSE curriculum subject areas and specific learning objectives within each of those areas (LuBrant, 2013). In addition to this intensive quantitative study, a single qualitative survey question was included for practitioner's suggestions for changes needed in any of the previously mentioned areas. LuBrant (2013) suggested that, "practitioners generally perceive the learning objectives of the curriculum as both important and adequate" (p. 171); but that, "practitioners perceived that the funeral service education program they completed did not adequately prepare them to master a significant portion of the curriculum" (p. 173). Additionally, LuBrant (2013) reported significant findings and questioned the requirement that mortuary students were required to take the NBE exam as a condition of graduation from an ABFSE accredited mortuary college. A review was made into the qualitative suggestions for improvements to mortuary education; the most common idea from the practitioners was to increase the amount of experiential learning for students while they were in mortuary school. Surprisingly, no significant mention was made to increase cremation education – even though there was an increase in demand for cremation from society (LuBrant, 2013).

In conclusion, there was limited peer-reviewed literature related to the field of funeral service education. The current educational requirement of an associate's degree and that most mortuary colleges were located in community colleges or single-purpose private institutions have led to this scarcity. ABFSE accreditation only required a master's degree to teach funeral service education – another factor that contributed to the fact that there were only 15 peer-reviewed documents relevant to this research question, 10 of which were substantial doctoral dissertations

from educators within the field. Those 10 studies were the focus of this literature review. While the literature was sparse, Fritch (2011) stated it best when he wrote, "vast opportunities exist in this field with regard to future studies and the development of theory, both of which could impact the practice involved in funeral service education" (p. 74). This review indicated that more peer-reviewed research is needed in the field of funeral service education.

Summary

A review of the literature determined that previous scholarly research related to the field of funeral service education was limited in scope and authored overwhelmingly by educators seeking advanced degrees. Outside of scholarly research, private marketing-based reports and association statistics and reports were the norm; hence, non-scholarly research in the field of funeral service education was not peer-reviewed. Also clear in the literature was the important role that adult education had in funeral service education. As mortuary schools were private and public institutions of higher learning, the role of these institutions in adult learning was undeniable.

What was clear from the review of literature was that society has changed, especially over the past few decades. As a result of those changes, the funeral profession's consumers adapted to new ideas and demands for service which have caused the profession to adapt with those changes or become obsolete as a result of having been near-sighted or obtuse. These changes required the funeral professional to have "soft skills," including good communication skills, and a deep understanding of sociology and psychology related to the changed family structure. One area that changed dramatically as a result of demographic shifts was the disposition choice of cremation instead of burial for the deceased. This trend was resisted in the

southern United States (including Alabama); however, the trend did show significant percentage increases over previous years. The difference for Southern states, including Alabama, was that embalming was still a significant element even in a percentage of those who selected cremation as the final disposition choice. The literature review also indicated that funeral directors and the act of funeral directing were present in all forms of disposition: burial, cremation, anatomical donation, entombment, etc. Therefore, from the literature review six areas of funeral service education curriculum rose above the others. These six areas appeared to be critical to the funeral professions ability to adapt to a changing business climate and overall environment. From a review of the literature, it was clear that the learning objectives in the curriculum content areas of Communication Skills, Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology were key areas that transcended all others. These six content areas were universally important across all demographics and dispositions types.

Chapter Three: Methods

Introduction

The National Funeral Directors Association's *U.S. Death Statistics: 1960-2050* (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniño (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniño's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were educationally and competently prepared to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Recent research studies related to this topic have not included Alabama funeral service practitioners in surveys and samples. The reason was most likely that Alabama practitioners either didn't know of the research or elected not to participate. In either case, there was a gap in

information to determine if the Alabama practitioners' perceptions were the same as or different from those in previous research studies. All funeral service practitioners who graduated from an accredited mortuary college, no matter of geographic location, were expected to be prepared and proficient for entry-level employment and for the changes in consumer preferences, such as cremation and "green" dispositions; changes in family structure, such as divorce, single-parents and civil unions/same sex marriages; and the psychological changes in attitudes towards death, funerals, funeral directors and long-held traditions.

This inquiry led to a review of mortuary education, that included the specified learning objectives, as related to preparation of Alabama funeral service practitioners for entry-level employment, especially related to the change in consumer preferences. As mentioned by LuBrant (2013) in his previous research, the assumption made by state licensing boards, employers and interested parties was that the mortuary school curriculum developed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) was sufficient to prepare graduates/licensees for entry-level employment. Information gathered from Alabama funeral service practitioners on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum, learning outcomes, and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Additionally, more research was needed to determine what, if any, changes the Alabama licensees recommended to mortuary school curriculum that would have helped them in preparation for entry level job requirements and the changing consumer.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perceptions of the ABFSE learning objectives and the contemporary practice of funeral service?
2. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of the ABFSE learning objectives and adequacy of those objectives for contemporary practice in funeral service?
3. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of having been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed and mastery of the ABFSE learning objectives?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
5. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
6. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
7. What is the relationship, if any, between prior work experience before graduation and perception of functioning as a competent, entry-level funeral director and embalmer?
8. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer and the type of institution where the licensee pursued her/his funeral service education?
9. What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?
10. What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

Methods

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) (2013) was recognized by the United States Department of Education to accredit all associate and bachelor degree programs in Funeral Service Education (Manual on Accreditation, 2013). ABFSE had 20 curriculum areas that included 177 total learning objectives (see Table 1). Due to the number of overall learning objectives and the ability to reduce the survey instrument to a manageable and time effective research tool, six of the major curriculum areas were selected for use in this research. The six areas used in this study were identified as a result of the literature review in Chapter 2 and were presented in Table 2. This study focused on the ABFSE learning objectives of Communications, Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology. These areas were selected because: 1) Alabama had one of the highest percentages of traditional funeral services that included burial (and embalming in most cases) in the United States (Woolbright & Stephens, 2002), and 2) the changing funeral consumer required that funeral directors be prepared to interact with changing demands (National Funeral Directors Association, 2014, Trends in Funeral Service, para. 1). Additionally, as cremation as a form of final disposition was on the rise, embalming remained as a viable component in some of those cases. Psychology, especially related to the bereaved, was a prevalent part of both traditional burial and cremation arrangement conferences.

Following and adapting the suggested future research suggestions of LuBrant (2013), this study focused on funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama. Because Alabama's licensees were absent in prior research, the Alabama Board of Funeral Service (Board) was petitioned for support in this research. On July 8, 2014 the Board voted to support and assist in

Table 2

Studied American Board of Funeral Service Education's Learning Objectives by Curriculum Area

ABFSE Curriculum Area	*n*	% of Learning Objectives Studied
Communication Skills	4	6.6
Cremation	10	16.4
Embalming	18	29.5
Funeral Directing	11	18.0
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	12	19.7
Sociology	6	9.8
Total Learning Objectives Studied	61	100.0

N = 61

the research (see Appendix A). The Board took the sample population parameters established by the researcher (defined in the Sample section) and then anonymously identified the sample population based upon the Board's licensee database. Once identified, the Board (anonymous to the researcher) sent a blind copy e-mail to the sample population licensees with the link to the survey instrument. The Board also sent a blind copy reminder e-mail with the survey link two weeks following the original e-mailed invitation to participate. All electronic correspondence from the board had a bold statement that stated that participation in the survey was completely voluntary and that no negative action from the Board would result from lack of participation in the survey. Furthermore, all correspondence from the Board to potential research participants

was sent blind copy to ensure that licensees could not identify other potential participants. The data were collected between June 1 and June 30, 2015.

Sample

The population included all licensed funeral directors and embalmers who met the following conditions: 1) Licensed as a funeral director or embalmer in the State of Alabama; 2) Graduated from an American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) accredited mortuary school in or after 1962; 3) Has practiced funeral directing and/or embalming in the past twelve months; and 4) Is 19 years of age or older. Charles Perine, Executive Secretary, of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service used the previous qualifications and determined that the entire population was 832 as of June of 2015 (Charles Perine, personal communication, June 17, 2015). With the preceding four criteria established, the Executive Secretary of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service identified those in the population who were qualified to take the survey - 832 individuals total. The Executive Secretary placed the Information Letter with survey link (see Appendix B) that had been pre-approved by the Auburn University Institutional Research Board (IRB) on the Alabama Board of Funeral Service Education's website. The Information Letter was also included in the Alabama Board of Funeral Service's July 2015 Quarterly Newsletter (See Appendix C), and e-mailed the Information Letter with survey link to licensees who met the four qualifications. A reminder e-mail was sent by the Executive Director of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service to those he identified eligible to participate in the survey. The electronic reminder was e-mailed two weeks prior to the close of the survey (Charles Perine, personal communication, June 17, 2015).

Instrumentation

With expressed permission (see Appendix D), the original survey developed by LuBrant (2013) was used in this study. The original survey instrument was entitled *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2011* included curriculum areas and learning objectives that were delimitations for this study. The survey was modified only to the extent that it conformed to the current study and excluded questions not relevant to this research. The adapted survey used for this study was entitled the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* (see Appendix E). One demographic question within the survey was reformatted based upon recommendations from LuBrant. LuBrant had asked the year in which the survey participant was born and indicated that an easier format would have been to simply ask their age. This minor change was made to the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*.

The *Mortuary Science Survey 2011* was examined for validity and reliability in April of 2011 (LuBrant, 2013). The original survey instrument contained learning objectives in American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum content areas. A pilot test was conducted by LuBrant using a convenience sample of 24 individuals. As a result of the pilot test, it was determined that the survey was too long and there was significant participant drop out. Three identical surveys, that each contained relatively equal numbers of learning objectives, were developed as a result of the original pilot testing. A second pilot test with four individuals from a convenience sample was conducted by LuBrant. The second pilot test indicated that only a few minor changes were needed; more specifically that, "minor changes were made to the presentation of some survey questions, which were perceived to be either unclear or ambiguously worded" (LuBrant, 2013, p. 80). No other changes were made to the *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*.

The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* that was adapted from the original *Mortuary Science Survey 2011* was also pilot tested. A convenience sample of ten licensed funeral professionals from Alabama was selected to review the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*. Only one minor change was suggested to the formatting of a few demographic questions. This change included reformatting the survey answers from one long list that required the user to scroll down to select the desired answer to a column format where all answers were inside of one answer field/screen. The column format was more user friendly, especially to those who used hand-held mobile devices to take the survey. Other than the minor format changes, no other changes were made to the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*. Like the *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the pilot test for the *2015 Mortuary Science Survey* found that no further changes were needed. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* was submitted to the dissertation committee chair, Dr. James Witte, for approval. Approval from Dr. Witte was received and the survey was then submitted to the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Approval of the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*, the Information Letter, and research protocols were approved by the Auburn University IRB on May 17, 2015 as "Exempt" under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). The documents and protocols were approved by Auburn University's IRB under protocol number 15-184 EX 1508 for the period of May 17, 2015 to May 16, 2018.

Data Collection

Like the *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* was only offered in an electronic form. No hard copies of the survey were available. The participants for the survey clicked on the survey link that took them to a live version of the survey within the Auburn University Qualtrics software program. By clicking on the link, the survey participants agreed that they had read the Information Letter for consent and agreed to take the survey. There

were no access codes or passwords required to gain access or to complete the survey instrument. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* was available from June 1, 2015 to June 30, 2015. Responses to the survey were anonymous and no identifiable personal information, such as the participant's name, IP internet address, e-mail address, or physical locations, were gathered or captured.

Survey data were securely collected and stored in the Qualtrics software program on the encrypted and password protected Auburn University internet server. The data were protected and required a username and password by the primary researcher, Jzyk S. Ennis, to access the data from the survey. This unique password was known only to the primary researcher.

Data Analysis

The secured data that were collected from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were entered into and analyzed by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Statistical analysis for the data received from the *Mortuary Science Survey* 2015 mirrored and replicated the statistical analysis conducted in LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey* 2011. Therefore, statistical analysis that was conducted on the sample data included: descriptive data; comparison of means; Mann-Whitney *U*-test; Kruskal-Wallis test; Pearson product-moment correlations; Pearson's chi-square test; and, a qualitative question coded into 14 themes.

Summary

Based upon the literature review conducted in Chapter 2 that identified key areas of interest for funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama, and the pilot study by LuBrant (2013) that indicated that all learning objectives of the American Board of Funeral Service Education's curriculum content areas were too many for one single survey, this study focused on

one survey that contained the learning objectives for: Communications, Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology. An adapted form of Dr. LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey 2011* was used for this study. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* was pilot tested, approved, and released for participants from June 1, 2015 until June 30, 2015. No personally identifiable information was collected from the participants.

Data for the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were collected using the Qualtrics software program. Access to collected and stored data was limited to the principal investigator and two members of the dissertation committee by password protection. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software. This analysis included: descriptive data; comparison of means; Mann-Whitney *U*-test; Kruskal-Wallis test; Pearson product-moment correlations; Pearson's chi-square test; and, a qualitative question coded into 14 themes.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The National Funeral Directors Association's *U.S. Death Statistics: 1960-2050* (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniño (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniño's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were educationally and competently prepared to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Recent research studies related to this topic have not included Alabama funeral service practitioners in surveys and samples. The reason was most likely that Alabama practitioners either didn't know of the research or elected not to participate. In either case, there was a gap in

information to determine if the Alabama practitioners' perceptions were the same as or different from those in previous research studies. All funeral service practitioners who graduated from an accredited mortuary college, no matter of geographic location, were expected to be prepared and proficient for entry-level employment and for the changes in consumer preferences, such as cremation and "green" dispositions; changes in family structure, such as divorce, single-parents and civil unions/same sex marriages; and the psychological changes in attitudes towards death, funerals, funeral directors and long-held traditions.

This inquiry led to review of mortuary education, including the specified learning objectives, as related to preparation of Alabama funeral service practitioners for entry-level employment, especially related to the change in consumer preferences. As mentioned by LuBrant (2013) in his previous research, the assumption made by state licensing boards, employers and interested parties was that the mortuary school curriculum developed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) was sufficient to prepare graduates/licensees for entry-level employment. Information gathered from Alabama funeral service practitioners on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum, learning outcomes, and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Additionally, more research was needed to determine what, if any, changes the Alabama licensees recommended to mortuary school curriculum that would have helped them in preparation for entry level job requirements and the changing consumer.

Organization of Data Analysis

The data from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were organized and presented in Chapter 4 in a format that accompanied the research questions. One hundred eighty-two people attempted the survey; however, only 117 participants actually met the survey qualifications, or actually completed the survey once started and were included in this data (overall 35.7% drop-out rate). Therefore, for this survey and analysis, N = 117. Chapter 4 began with the descriptive demographic data from the survey participants. Particular focus was placed on the presentation of data as it related to gender of participants. Demographic tables presented in Chapter 4 were constructed to compare the similarities or differences between genders in each category. Focus on gender was necessary in order to address a specific research question.

After the demographic results, Chapter 4 then addressed how the data were analyzed. Each research question was stated and then the data for each question were presented. Hypotheses for each research question were stated and statistical tests were presented and explained using the data from the survey. Chapter 4 was then concluded with a summary section in preparation for Chapter 5.

Demographic Results

A total of 117 participants were included in the survey results; however, 12 participants did not answer the demographic questions. A demographic description was as follows:

Gender, Ethnicity, and Race: The demographic characteristics by gender, ethnicity and race were presented in Table 3. There were 117 participants included in the final study. Twelve survey participants did not answer the demographic questions related to gender, ethnicity, and race. Of the 105 participants that did answer the demographic questions, none answered that

they were Hispanic or Latino. Eighty-five participants were male (81%) and 20 participants were female (19%). One participant was American Indian or an Alaskan native (1%), 14 participants were African-American (13%), and 90 participants were Caucasian (86%).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: Race and Ethnicity by Gender

	Gender				
Race	Male(*n*)	%	Female (*n*)	%	Totals by Race
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Asian	0	0	0	0	0
Black or African- American	11.0	10.5	3.0	3.0	14.0
Native, Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	0
White or Caucasian	74.0	70.5	16.0	15.0	90.0
Totals by Gender	85.0	80.9	20.0	19.1	105.0

N = 105

Years of College Education Completed and Type of Institution where funeral service education was completed: Data for the demographic information related to the participant's educational level were presented in Table 4, and data for the demographic information related to the type of institution where the participant completed mortuary school were presented in Table 5. One hundred and four participants answered the demographic question related to education and 105 related to the type of mortuary school/institution attended. The majority of survey participants had four or more years of education. Specifically, 55 of the 104 (52.8%) survey participants had four or more years of education. When the type of mortuary school attended by the participants was examined, the overwhelming majority had completed a

public institution. Specifically, 96 of the 105 (91.4%) participants who answered the survey question had completed their degree from a public mortuary school.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: Education by Gender

Education Completed	Gender Male (*n*)	%	Female (*n*)	%	Total by Years
One Year	1	1	0	0	1
Two Years	21	20	3	3	24
Three Years	20	19	2	2	22
Four Years	16	15	6	6	22
Five or More Years	26	25	9	9	35
Totals by Gender	84	80.8	20	19.2	104

N = 104

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: Type of Institution Completed by Gender

Type of Institution	Gender Male (*n*)	%	Female (*n*)	%	Totals by Institution
Private, single-purpose	7	6.7	1	0.95	8
Private, offering multiple degree programs	0	0	1	0.95	1
Public	77	73.3	19	18.1	96
Totals by Gender	84	80.0	21	20.0	105

N = 105

Employment Position/Ownership: Data related to the demographic information of job position/ownership within the funeral home were presented in Table 6. Overall, 55% of the survey participants, who responded to this question, were non-managers/owners compared to 45% who indicated that they were in some management or ownership capacity.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: Employment Position by Gender

	Gender				
Position	Male (*n*)	%	Female (*n*)	%	Totals by Position
Manager/Owner	40	38.0	7	7.0	47
Non-Manager/ Non-Owner	45	43.0	13	12.0	58
Totals by Gender	95	90.5	20	19.5	105

N = 105

Funeral-Related Work Experience Prior to Completion of Mortuary School: Survey participants were asked the following question: "*Which one of the following two statements most accurately describes the extent to which you were able to gain work experience at a funeral home prior to completing your funeral service education program: 1) I did have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program, 2) I did not have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program?*" One hundred and five participants answered this question and the data were presented in Table 7. Ninety-one of the 105 (86.6%) participants had funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: Work Experience by Gender

Work Experience	Gender Male (*n*)	%	Female (*n*)	%	Totals Work Experience
Experience prior to completing mortuary school	75	71.4	16	15.2	91
No experience prior to completing mortuary school	9	8.6	5	4.8	14
Totals by Gender	84	80.0	21	20.0	105

N = 105

Data Analysis

Data from the Mortuary Science Survey 2015 were used to analyze the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perceptions of the ABFSE learning objectives and the contemporary practice of funeral service?

Alabama practitioner's perception of the importance of each learning objective towards the contemporary practice of funeral service was measured on a Likert scale that ranged from a score of 1 to 5 in the original survey. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* survey question values were: 1 (*Extremely Important*), 2 (*Very Important*), 3 (*Important*), 4 (*Somewhat Important*), and 5 (*Not Important*). To enable comparison to LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the data from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were recoded to the following values: 5 (*Extremely Important*), 4 (*Very Important*), 3 (*Important*), 2 (*Somewhat Important*), and 1 (*Not*

Important). A mean score of perceived importance was computed for each of the 61 learning objectives in the current study. The results were presented in Table 8. To identify learning objectives that Alabama funeral service licensees perceived as either (*Not Important*) or (*Somewhat Important)*, mean scores for each learning objective were examined to determine if any learning objective mean had a value of 2 (*Somewhat Important*) or 1 (*Not Important*). None of the mean scores for the 61 learning objectives had a value below 3 (*Important*). Fifty of the 61 learning objective means were greater than 4.0 (*Very Important* to *Extremely Important*). The lowest mean score for any of the 61 learning objectives (M = 3.20, SD = 1.19) was observed for Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling learning objective 7: *Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling therapy*. The highest mean score for any of the 61 learning objectives (M = 4.72, SD = 0.60) was observed for Embalming learning objective 10: *Identify and demonstrate the ethical practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming*.

Research Question 2: To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of the ABFSE learning objectives and adequacy of those objectives for contemporary practice in funeral service?

In the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*, Alabama funeral service practitioners were presented with a question at the end of each curriculum area's learning objectives. The participants were asked: *Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of [the name of the subject area was specified] presented on the*

Table 8

Perception of the Importance of Learning Objectives by ABFSE Curriculum Content Area

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Communication Skills	1	Identify the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication	110	4.31	1.01
	2	Recognize the importance of listening skills	110	4.68	0.61
	3	Recognize the significance of group dynamics	110	4.18	0.88
	4	Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines	110	4.57	0.68
Cremation	1	Discuss the historical significance of cremation	104	3.39	1.15
	2	Identify the primary consideration for funeral directors working with those interested in cremation as a method of disposition	104	4.02	0.91
	3	Describe the importance of legislative and regulatory compliance	103	4.31	0.93
	4	Describe considerations recommended when using third party crematories	103	4.33	0.92
	5	Explain the importance of using appropriate paperwork to document cremation related decisions, including forms required by state and local agencies and those designed for legal protection	104	4.61	0.70
	6	Distinguish between cremation containers, containers for cremated deceased, and other related merchandising options	101	4.11	0.96
	7	Explain the specific elements of the FTC Funeral Rule that applies to cremation	101	4.36	0.88
	8	Identify services and trends in conjunction with cremation	102	4.20	0.91
	9	Describe options for proper disposition of cremated deceased including legal restrictions and local customs	103	4.41	0.81
	10	Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased	103	4.37	0.90

-- Table 8 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Embalming	1	Explain how the handling, treatment and disposition of the dead human body meets the sociological, psychological, theological, physical and legal requirements of family and community	106	4.48	0.80
	2	Identify the causes and manners of death whereby notification of death to public officials is required	107	4.30	0.95
	3	Explain the concepts of sanitation, disinfection, temporary preservation, and restoration of human remains	107	4.62	0.70
	4	Understand and employ the necessary terminology to facilitate communication with members of allied professions and the public	107	4.51	0.74
	5	Explain and identify cooperation with professional agencies and their responsibilities with respect to the dead human body, agencies include but are not limited to, medical examiner and/or coroner, hospitals, organ procurement agencies, OSHA, FTC	107	4.52	0.74
	6	Demonstrate and describe the use of embalming instruments, equipment and sundries, and embalming techniques and procedures	106	4.59	0.73
	7	Describe the general chemical principles of embalming fluids and calculation, and summarize the chemical components	106	4.16	1.03
	8	Demonstrate and explain adequate methods of self-protection from communicable and infectious diseases, personal and environmental protective measures, and hazardous chemicals	106	4.62	0.70
	9	Discuss and demonstrate safe environmental work practices through proper disposal of contaminated materials, and proper methods of disposal of blood and body fluids during and following the embalming process	106	4.56	0.76
	10	Identify and demonstrate the ethical practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming	105	4.72	0.60

-- Table 8 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Embalming	11	Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections	105	4.40	0.92
	12	Explain how the vascular system is used to distribute and diffuse embalming chemicals to the tissues of the body	103	4.45	0.83
	13	Identify and document body conditions, embalming techniques and procedures performed with written embalming reports based on embalming analysis	104	4.44	0.89
	14	Explain the problems caused by, and the embalming treatments for various causes of death, including but not limited to infections, communicable diseases, trauma, pathological conditions, and disaster situations	105	4.55	0.75
	15	Identify the treatment for organs and tissues recovered	104	4.33	0.96
	16	Explain and demonstrate the preparation of the infant, autopsy and non-autopsy embalming techniques and procedures	103	4.49	0.84
	17	Explain and demonstrate cavity embalming procedures and postmortem conditions of discolorations, decomposition, dehydration, general body conditions, vascular difficulties, moisture considerations, radiation and their embalming treatments	104	4.52	0.80
	18	Integrate information learned in Microbiology, Anatomy, Pathology Chemistry, and Restorative Art to predict a protocol to be used for the embalming process	104	4.33	0.86
Funeral Directing	1	Determine and identify the primary responsibilities of the funeral director, including regulatory and legislative compliance	103	4.44	0.81
	2	Explain the time frames in which the services of the funeral director are typically provided (i.e. pre-need, at-need, and post funeral follow up)	103	4.19	0.89

-- Table 8 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Funeral Directing	3	Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures	102	4.37	0.84
	4	Demonstrate and understanding of transferring human remains from the place of death to the funeral home using generally accepted procedures and equipment	103	4.54	0.71
	5	Apply communication skills necessary to meet with a family in the arrangement conference	102	4.68	0.65
	6	Identify and describe various religious funeral customs as practiced in America	102	4.29	0.94
	7	Describe fraternal funeral procedures and military honors	101	4.31	0.87
	8	Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals	102	4.30	0.83
	9	Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains	100	4.37	0.79
	10	Exhibit knowledge of the specific vocabulary associated with funeral service	101	4.39	0.87
	11	Explain terminology and considerations unique to cremation arrangements	100	4.32	0.89
Funeral Psychology and Counseling	1	Recognize the application of general psychology to funeral service	116	4.01	0.99
	2	Describe the values and purposes of the funeral rite for the family and friends	117	4.29	0.96
	3	Recognize the typical grief reactions and responses	117	4.19	0.98
	4	Describe the theories of grief	114	3.39	1.13
	5	Describe issues relating to children and death	114	4.07	0.99
	6	Explain how grief affects the family	116	4.00	1.02
	7	Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling therapy	116	3.20	1.19
	8	Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor	114	3.24	1.21

-- Table 8 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	9	Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques	116	3.60	1.15
	10	Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities	115	3.72	1.06
	11	Recognize and understand personal resources for coping with loss and stress	116	3.86	1.02
	12	Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate community or professional resources	116	3.97	1.05
Sociology	1	Demonstrate an understanding of the application and purpose of sociology in funeral service	112	3.63	1.00
	2	Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural requirements and cultural diversities of each family the funeral director is privileged to serve	112	4.08	0.98
	3	Identify the family governing systems found in our society	111	3.65	1.17
	4	Identify with the different types of family structures	111	3.84	1.12
	5	Be aware of the changing social factors which affect funeral rites and the families that are served by the funeral directors	112	4.24	0.91
	6	Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure	112	4.07	0.96

previous page(s) of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe that a(n) [name of subject area] curriculum based on the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* survey question values were: 1 (*Strongly Agree*), 2 (*Agree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 4 (*Disagree*), and 5 (*Strongly Disagree*). To enable comparison to LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the data from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were recoded to the following values: 5 (*Strongly Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 2 (*Disagree*), and 1 (*Strongly Disagree*). A mean score of practitioner's degree of agreement with curriculum adequacy, as it related to practice in contemporary funeral service, was calculated for each of the six curriculum content areas examined in this study. The results are presented in Table 9 and are ordered from highest curriculum mean to lowest curriculum mean. All curriculum content area mean scores were greater than 3.0 (*Agree* that a curriculum based on the included learning objectives was adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service). The highest mean score (M = 4.27, SD = 0.82) was observed for the curriculum content area of Embalming. The lowest mean score (M = 3.80, SD = 1.13) was observed for the curriculum content area of Cremation.

Table 9

Perception of Adequacy of the ABFSE Learning Objectives Grouped in Descending Order by Curriculum Content Area

Curriculum Content Area	*n*	M	SD
Embalming	105	4.27	0.82
Funeral Directing	103	4.08	0.89
Communication Skills	110	3.91	1.04
Sociology	111	3.90	0.91
Funeral Service Psychology & Counseling	112	3.86	0.96
Cremation	103	3.80	1.13

Research Question 3: To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of having been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed and mastery of the ABFSE learning objectives?

Participants were asked the following question for each learning objective: *What is your perception of the preparation you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?* Alabama practitioner's perception of the preparation of each learning objective towards mastering the learning objective was measured on a Likert scale that ranged from a score of 1 to 5 in the original survey. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* survey question values were: 1 (*Excellent Preparation*), 2 (*Very Good Preparation*), 3 (*Good Preparation*), 4 (*Minimal Preparation*), and 5 (*No Preparation*). To enable comparison to LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the data from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were recoded to the following values: 1 (*No Preparation*), 2 (*Minimal Preparation*), 3 (*Good Preparation),* 4 (*Very Good Preparation*), and 5 (*Excellent Preparation*). Identical to LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey* 2011, a mean score of perceived preparation to master each learning objective was computed for each of the 61 learning objectives in the current study. The results were presented in Table 10. All 61 learning objective means were examined to determine if any objective was identified by the participant as having (*No Preparation*) or (*Minimal Preparation)* towards mastering that specific learning objective. None of the mean scores for the 61 learning objectives had a value < 3.0 (*Good Preparation)*. The lowest mean score for any of the 61 learning objectives (M = 3.19, SD = 1.46) was observed for Cremation learning objective 10: *Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased*. The highest mean score for any of the 61 learning

Table 10

Perception of Preparation from Mortuary Education to Master Each Learning Objective *Grouped by ABFSE Curriculum Content Area*

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Communication Skills	1	Identify the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication	110	3.69	1.09
	2	Recognize the importance of listening skills	111	3.81	1.08
	3	Recognize the significance of group dynamics	110	3.56	1.17
	4	Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines	109	3.51	1.21
Cremation	1	Discuss the historical significance of cremation	102	3.46	1.24
	2	Identify the primary consideration for funeral directors working with those interested in cremation as a method of disposition	103	3.34	1.29
	3	Describe the importance of legislative and regulatory compliance	102	3.42	1.36
	4	Describe considerations recommended when using third party crematories	101	3.24	1.37
	5	Explain the importance of using appropriate paperwork to document cremation related decisions, including forms required by state and local agencies and those designed for legal protection	100	3.51	1.39
	6	Distinguish between cremation containers, containers for cremated deceased, and other related merchandising options	101	3.35	1.32
	7	Explain the specific elements of the FTC Funeral Rule that applies to cremation	101	3.40	1.42
	8	Identify services and trends in conjunction with cremation	102	3.23	1.24
	9	Describe options for proper disposition of cremated deceased including legal restrictions and local customs	101	3.23	1.37
	10	Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased	98	3.19	1.46

-- Table 10 Continues –

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Embalming	1	Explain how the handling, treatment and disposition of the dead human body meets the sociological, psychological, theological, physical and legal requirements of family and community	105	4.16	0.99
	2	Identify the causes and manners of death whereby notification of death to public officials is required	105	3.88	1.04
	3	Explain the concepts of sanitation, disinfection, temporary preservation, and restoration of human remains	106	4.30	0.91
	4	Understand and employ the necessary terminology to facilitate communication with members of allied professions and the public	105	4.02	1.05
	5	Explain and identify cooperation with professional agencies and their responsibilities with respect to the dead human body, agencies include but are not limited to, medical examiner and/or coroner, hospitals, organ procurement agencies, OSHA, FTC	103	3.98	1.12
	6	Demonstrate and describe the use of embalming instruments, equipment and sundries, and embalming techniques and procedures	106	4.35	0.90
	7	Describe the general chemical principles of embalming fluids and calculation, and summarize the chemical components	105	4.23	0.94
	8	Demonstrate and explain adequate methods of self-protection from communicable and infectious diseases, personal and environmental protective measures, and hazardous chemicals	105	4.26	0.99
	9	Discuss and demonstrate safe environmental work practices through proper disposal of contaminated materials, and proper methods of disposal of blood and body fluids during and following the embalming process	104	4.20	1.03
	10	Identify and demonstrate the ethical practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming	103	4.24	0.97

-- Table 10 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Embalming	11	Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections	103	4.41	0.87
	12	Explain how the vascular system is used to distribute and diffuse embalming chemicals to the tissues of the body	105	4.39	0.88
	13	Identify and document body conditions, embalming techniques and procedures performed with written embalming reports based on embalming analysis	104	4.18	0.96
	14	Explain the problems caused by, and the embalming treatments for various causes of death, including but not limited to infections, communicable diseases, trauma, pathological conditions, and disaster situations	104	4.16	1.01
	15	Identify the treatment for organs and tissues recovered	103	3.97	1.08
	16	Explain and demonstrate the preparation of the infant, autopsy and non-autopsy embalming techniques and procedures	103	3.81	1.16
	17	Explain and demonstrate cavity embalming procedures and postmortem conditions of discolorations, decomposition, dehydration, general body conditions, vascular difficulties, moisture considerations, radiation and their embalming treatments	103	4.10	1.03
	18	Integrate information learned in Microbiology, Anatomy, Pathology Chemistry, and Restorative Art to predict a protocol to be used for the embalming process	101	4.05	1.02
Funeral Directing	1	Determine and identify the primary responsibilities of the funeral director, including regulatory and legislative compliance	103	4.04	1.06
	2	Explain the time frames in which the services of the funeral director are typically provided (i.e. pre-need, at-need, and post funeral follow up)	102	3.81	1.11

-- Table 10 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Funeral Directing	3	Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures	100	3.64	1.21
	4	Demonstrate and understanding of transferring human remains from the place of death to the funeral home using generally accepted procedures and equipment	100	3.81	1.19
	5	Apply communication skills necessary to meet with a family in the arrangement conference	100	3.71	1.20
	6	Identify and describe various religious funeral customs as practiced in America	102	3.96	1.03
	7	Describe fraternal funeral procedures and military honors	101	3.77	1.09
	8	Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals	98	3.39	1.31
	9	Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains	100	3.54	1.17
	10	Exhibit knowledge of the specific vocabulary associated with funeral service	102	4.05	0.94
	11	Explain terminology and considerations unique to cremation arrangements	99	3.56	1.26
Funeral Psychology and Counseling	1	Recognize the application of general psychology to funeral service	114	3.82	1.04
	2	Describe the values and purposes of the funeral rite for the family and friends	115	4.07	1.01
	3	Recognize the typical grief reactions and responses	114	3.86	1.04
	4	Describe the theories of grief	110	3.85	1.04
	5	Describe issues relating to children and death	113	3.46	1.23
	6	Explain how grief affects the family	113	3.72	1.13
	7	Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling therapy	112	3.38	1.16
	8	Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor	111	3.38	1.23

-- Table 10 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Objective Number	Learning Objective	*n*	M	SD
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	9	Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques	111	3.39	1.21
	10	Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities	112	3.34	1.17
	11	Recognize and understand personal resources for coping with loss and stress	113	3.42	1.16
	12	Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate community or professional resources	113	3.32	1.27
Sociology	1	Demonstrate an understanding of the application and purpose of sociology in funeral service	111	3.69	1.07
	2	Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural requirements and cultural diversities of each family the funeral director is privileged to serve	110	3.70	1.13
	3	Identify the family governing systems found in our society	110	3.59	1.12
	4	Identify with the different types of family structures	111	3.65	1.16
	5	Be aware of the changing social factors which affect funeral rites and the families that are served by the funeral directors	110	3.56	1.13
	6	Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure	111	3.66	1.18

objectives (M = 4.41, SD = 0.87) was observed for Embalming learning objective 11: *Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections*.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Participant's perception of the importance of each learning objective was assigned the following values: 1 (*Not Important*), 2 (*Somewhat Important*), 3 (*Important*), 4 (*Very Important*), and 5 (*Extremely Important*). Participant's perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objective was grouped by curriculum content area. Level of agreement used a Likert scale with the following values assigned: 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly Agree*). A new variable, Mean Score Importance (MEAN_IMPT), was created for each curriculum content area covered in the survey by averaging each participant's perception of the importance of each learning objective in that specific area. A series of Pearson product-moment correlation statistics was run for each of the six curriculum content areas. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows.

H_o: There was no correlation between participant's perception of importance and perception of adequacy for each curriculum content area

H_a: There was a correlation between participant's perception of importance and perception of adequacy for each curriculum content area

The data from the statistical tests were presented in Table 11. The null hypothesis for each of the six curriculum content areas was rejected. Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the importance of each curriculum content area's

learning objectives and perception of the adequacy of a curriculum in each content area constructed upon those learning objectives.

Table 11

Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Tested Variables Grouped by ABFSE Curriculum Content Area

Curriculum Content Area	Importance x Adequacy	Importance x Preparation	Adequacy x Preparation
Communication Skills	.415*	.438*	.788*
Cremation	.302*	.347*	.729*
Embalming	.465*	.563*	.738*
Funeral Directing	.426*	.487*	.766*
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	.318*	.495*	.630*
Sociology	.484*	.521*	.698*

*Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 5: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Participant's perception of the importance of each learning objective was assigned the following values: 1 (*Not Important*), 2 (*Somewhat Important*), 3 (*Important*), 4 (*Very Important*), and 5 (*Extremely Important*). Participant's perception of academic preparation was also measured on a Likert scale and was assigned the following values: 1 (*No Preparation*), 2 (*Minimal Preparation*), 3 (*Good Preparation),* 4 (*Very Good Preparation*), and 5 (*Excellent Preparation*). The new variable, Mean Score Importance (MEAN_IMPT) that was created and used in Research Question 4, was again used for this analysis. A new variable, Mean Score Preparation (MEAN_PREP), was created using the participant's perception of their personal academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each learning objective and was grouped by each curriculum content area. A series of Pearson product-moment correlation statistics was run

for each of the six curriculum content areas. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows.

H_o: There was no correlation between perception of importance of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for each curriculum content area

H_a: There was a correlation between perception of importance of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for each curriculum content area

The data from the statistical tests were presented in Table 11. The null hypothesis for each of the six curriculum content areas was rejected. Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the importance of each curriculum content area's learning objectives, and participant's perception of their academic preparation for entry level employment in funeral service.

Research Question 6: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Participant's perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objective was grouped by curriculum content area. Level of agreement used a Likert scale with the following values assigned: 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly Agree*). Participant's perception of academic preparation was also measured on a Likert scale and was assigned the following values: 1 (*No Preparation*), 2 (*Minimal Preparation*), 3 (*Good Preparation),* 4 (*Very Good Preparation*), and 5 (*Excellent Preparation*). The new variable, Mean Score Preparation (MEAN_PREP) that was created for Research Question 5, was used again for this analysis. The other variable included for this analysis was the adequacy variable

for each curriculum content area. A series of Pearson product-moment correlation statistics was run for each of the six curriculum content areas. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows.

> H_o: There was no correlation between perception of the adequacy of a curriculum based on learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for each curriculum content area
>
> H_a: There was a correlation between perception of the adequacy of a curriculum based on learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for each curriculum content area

The data from the statistical tests were presented in Table 11. The null hypothesis for each of the six curriculum content areas was rejected. Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the adequacy of each curriculum content area's learning objectives, and participant's perception of their academic preparation for entry level employment in funeral service.

Research Question 7: What is the relationship, if any, between prior work experience before graduation and perception of functioning as a competent, entry-level funeral director and embalmer?

The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* asked participants to respond to the following questions: First, "w*hich one of the following two statements most accurately describes the extent to which you were able to gain work experience at a funeral home prior to completing your funeral service education program?"* There were two options for selection: 1 (*I did have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program)*, or 2 (*I did*

NOT have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program). The second question asked, "*To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer.'"* The second question provided the following options for selection: 1 (*Strongly Agree*), 2 (*Agree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 4 (*Disagree*), and 5 (*Strongly Disagree*). For comparison to LuBrant's (2013) survey, the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* responses were recoded to: 1 (*Strongly Disagree*), 2 (*Disagree*), 3 (*Somewhat Agree*), 4 (*Agree*), and 5 (*Strongly Agree*).

A Mann-Whitney *U*-test was performed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the perception of having obtained the minimum qualifications for entry-level employment following mortuary school when compared to funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as:

> H_o: There was no difference between the two groups (those who had previous funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school and those who did not) when compared to funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school. Therefore, there is no tendency for the ranks in one group to be systematically higher (or lower) than the ranks in the other group.
>
> H_a: There was a difference between the two groups (those who had previous funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school and those who did not) when compared to funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school. Therefore, the ranks in one group are systematically higher (or lower) than the ranks in the other group.

A Mann-Whitney *U*-test, with $\alpha = .05$, was used to compare the ranks for the $n = 91$ participants in the Group 1 (those who did have funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school) and the $n = 14$ participants in Group 2 (those who did not have funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school). The results indicated no significant difference between the two groups; therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. $U = 520.0$, $p = .209$, with the sum of the ranks equal to 4706 for Group 1 (those who did have funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school) and 859 for Group 2 (those who did not have funeral-related work experience prior to completion of mortuary school).

Research Question 8: What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer and the type of institution where the licensee pursued her/his funeral service education?

The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to determine if there was a statistical difference in perception of having been prepared to function as an entry-level funeral professional when grouped by the type of mortuary school that the participant completed. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

> H_o: There was no difference in perception of having been prepared to function as an entry-level funeral/director embalmer between Group 1 (those who attended a private single purpose mortuary school), Group 2 (those who attended a private school that also offered courses of study in areas other than funeral service), and Group 3 (those who attended a public institution for mortuary school). Therefore, there is no tendency for

the ranks in one group to be systematically higher (or lower) than the ranks in the other groups.

H_a: There was a difference in perception of having been prepared to function as an entry-level funeral/director embalmer between Group 1 (those who attended a private single purpose mortuary school), Group 2 (those who attended a private school that also offered courses of study in areas other than funeral service), and Group 3 (those who attended a public institution for mortuary school). Therefore, there is a tendency for the ranks in one or more group(s) to be systematically higher (or lower) than the ranks in the other groups.

The Kruskal-Wallis Test, with $\alpha = .05$, was used to compare the ranks for the $n = 8$ participants in the Group 1 (those who attended a private single purpose mortuary school), the $n = 1$ participant in Group 2 (those who attended a private school that also offered courses of study in areas other than funeral service), and the $n = 96$ participants in Group 3 (those who attended a public institution for mortuary school). The results indicated no significant difference between the three groups; therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. $U = .674$, $p = .714$, with the mean rank equal to: 51.50 for Group 1 (those who attended a private single purpose mortuary school), 74.50 for Group 2 (those who attended a private school that also offered courses of study in areas other than funeral service), and 52.90 for Group 3 (those who attended a public institution for mortuary school).

Research Question 9: What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?

The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* asked participants to respond to the following question: *Which of the following ranges captures your present annual income from your work in funeral service?* There were 12 salary ranges provided: 1 (*At the present time, I do not earn any income from work in funeral service*), 2 (*Less than $10,000)*, 3 (*$10,000 to $19, 999*), 4 (*$20,000 to $20,999*), 5 (*$30,000 to $30, 999*), 6 (*$40,000 to $40, 999*), 7 (*$50,000 to $50,999*), 8 (*$60,000 to $60,999*), 9, (*$70,000 to $70,999*), 10 (*$80,000 to $80,999*), 11 (*$90,000 to $90,999*) and 12 (*$100,000 or Above*). A Pearson's chi-square test was performed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of observed frequencies across the annual funeral-related income categories for men and for women. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as:

> H_o: There was no difference in the distribution of observed frequencies across the annual funeral-related income categories for men and women
>
> H_a: There was a difference in the distribution of observed frequencies across the annual funeral-related income categories for men and women

A Pearson's chi-square test, with $\alpha = .05$, was performed to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of observed frequencies across the annual funeral-related income categories for men and for women. The observed frequencies were presented in Table 12. There was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of observed frequencies between the annual funeral-related incomes for men and for women, $\chi^2 = 18.30(10)$, $p = .050$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 12

Observed Frequencies in Annual Funeral-Related Income by Gender

Annual Funeral-Related Income	Male (f_o)	Gender %	Female (f_o)	Gender %	Totals by Income (f_o)
Less than $10,000	3	3.8	1	5.0	5
$10,000 - $19,999	3	3.8	2	10.0	7
$20,000 - $29,999	3	3.8	3	15.0	9
$30,000 - $39,999	10	12.5	7	35.0	24
$40,000 - $49,999	22	27.5	0	0.0	22
$50,000 - $59,999	17	21.3	2	10.0	21
$60,000 - $69,999	6	7.5	1	5.0	8
$70,000 - $79,999	6	7.5	3	15.0	12
$80,000 - $89,999	1	1.0	0	0.0	1
$90,000 - $99,999	3	3.8	0	0.0	3
$100,000 or More	6	7.5	1	5.0	8
Totals by Gender	80	100.0	20	100.0	100

N = 100

Research Question 10: What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

There were a total of 34 participants who responded to this question. Five of those comments were excluded from analysis because they did not directly relate to the research question. The excluded responses were: "I have no suggestions;" "My salary has nothing to do with survey;" "N/A;" "Jefferson state community college helped me achieve the education needed to help families through the grieving process, and the ability to carry out the full preparations of preparing their loved ones for the viewing and service than the burial itself. Al *[sic]* the lectures challenge me to be the best I could be, physically, mentally and professionally;" and, "At the present time continued education offers no real advance in daily skills used by funeral directors and embalmers active in funeral service that possess *[sic]* a degree in mortuary science. I believe that these continued education seminars are good for those

that were granted a funeral directors license in the state of Alabama without possession of a degree in mortuary science but graduates of a college of mortuary science should be exempt from this requirement." Using LuBrant's (2013) 14 themes from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the remaining 29 responses from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were arranged and presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Alabama Practitioner Recommendations for Improving the Quality of Funeral Service Education Offered at ABFSE-Accredited Programs

Theme	Frequency
Need to expand experiential learning activities prior to/during funeral service education program	11
Expand curriculum in the sciences/embalming skills	4
Need to increase/expand inter-professional relations between Schools and practitioners	4
Curriculum needs to be more relevant to death-care services families want today	2
Concerns about the National Board Examination	2
Expand the curriculum related to cremation	2
Need to increase college educational requirements to become a funeral director	1
Need for better education of psychology of death/value of funeral to grief process	1
Concerns about salary/work schedule/workplace culture	1
Expand curriculum related to knowledge of business management skills/office procedures	1
Concerns about the effectiveness of on-line education	0
Need for separate funeral director/embalmer licenses and/or a Funeral director-only curriculum	0
Require that all funeral service programs be accredited by the ABFSE	0
Too much emphasis is being placed on "teaching to" the National Board Examination	0

N = 29

In regard to the theme *Curriculum needs to be more relevant to death-care services families want today*: A Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 38 years of funeral experience, commented that, "more services are events, so learning event planning is important."

Another Caucasian male, who was also a manager/owner but with 33 years of funeral experience, commented that, “When I completed funeral service education courses…it was a day when pre-need was at a minimal and Cremation was almost non-existent in our area. It was almost 100% traditional funerals.”

The overwhelming response in the survey comments was related to the theme *Need to expand experiential learning activities prior to/during funeral service education program*: A Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 37 years of experience, commented, “We got the basics most of education came from on the job.” This sentiment was also found with an African-American male, who was a manager/owner with 15 years of experience, when he commented, “Hands on experience!” Likewise, a Caucasian female, who was a non-manager/owner with 10 years of experience, commented that:

> I feel that the funeral service program is too focused on terminology and not focused enough on practicality. Afterall *[sic]*, the funeral service industry is a trade and I feel that the program makes it more booked based. I think that "mock arrangement conferenes" *[sic]* should have been staged and that should be a grade for funeral directing. If one doesn't know how to conduct arrangements properly isn't that defeating the whole purpose of them being a funeral director? I wished that we would have recieved *[sic]* more hands on training on the restorative art end of things. I really feel that is one thing that I am insufficient in, especially waxing. I thought the clay head was a complete waste of time and the clay molds nothing like wax on skin. The funeral service program has been around for numerous years and I feel that they have the resources in order for cadavers to be available and utilized.

The experiential aspect of learning was repeated several times; for example, a Caucasian male, who was a non-manager/owner with 15 years of funeral experience, emphatically commented, "PERHAPS MORE OF A HANDS-ON APPROACH."

While two participants expressed comments regarding the need to expand cremation curriculum, double that number commented that the technical/embalming curriculum needed to be expanded. A Caucasian female, who was a non-manager/owner and had 2 years of experience commented, "When I attended college we were given minimal experience on cremation services." A Caucasian male, who was a manager with 27 years of experience, had a similar response, "I would love to see stress placed on the rules and regulations of cremation. Also, more instruction on the practice of cremation." A Caucasian male, who was a manager with 38 years of experience, had a balanced approach when he commented:

> The value of quality embalming and preparation of the body for the family to view. Don't be thrilled when you have to close the casket. I believe direct cremation is on the rise because of poor embalming. Who wants to spend $10,000 and not recognize who is in the casket. With that said teach cremation is a type of disposition just like burial. Instill the value of having a service with body present if quality embalming is available.

A Caucasian male, who was a non-manager/owner with 10 years of experience, also expressed more emphasis on the technical/embalming curriculum when he stated, "In restoration need more training in cosmetics and hairdressing." A Caucasian male, who was a non-manager/owner with 6 years of experience, commented that, "Many of the science courses could be combined into what is actually need *[sic]* for funeral science." Finally on the subject of embalming, a Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 21 years of experience, commented:

Embalming, with specific reference to features and restoration, is an absolute must. The quality of the work we do seems to be lacking. The retail portion of the industry seems to have become the driving force, reducing educated and licensed individuals to nothing more than salesmen and saleswomen of trinkets and the like. It seems as though we have drifted from selfless care and concern, the timeless mixture of personal professionalism, and have allowed "what can we sell" to be the battle cry. This self-focused ideology has filtered down to entry level personnel, as they seem more concerned with "what can this company do for me" rather than "how can I help others." In my summation, the real intrinsic value and respectable mystery of our industry should be on the intangibles of excellence in service, attitude, and in body presentation.

For the theme *Need to increase/expand inter-professional relations between schools and practitioners*, several comments were made. A few of the comments bordered on inclusion; however, each offered a perspective on the relationship or perspective with mortuary schools. A Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 37 years of experience, commented that, “too hard to get good help, schools putting out (SCI) type employees instead of funeral professionals.” An African-American male, who was a non-manager/owner with 6 years of experience, stated that, “A more concentrated effort needs to be made to hire instructors from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds to teach in these programs. If they are not available, working professionals should be invited to come into the programs and lecture or conduct workshops. Diversity is key.” An African-American male, who was a non-manager with 3 years of experience, replied that, “Have more of a unified front being the National Funeral Directors Association and the Alabama Funeral Directors and Mortician Association when sharing information and seminars.” Finally in regard to this question, a Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 12 years of experience, suggested to:

> Seek more advice from well-respected, independent funeral home owners/managers who actually deal with families as to what is most important when dealing with families and not seek advice from those who have been influenced by working for one of the larger corporations whose main goal is to satisfy the needs of its shareholders. Too much emphasis is placed on what has to be done to comply with laws, statutes, regulations, etc. and not how to care for people. The most valuable lesson I've learned is treating people with kindness, love and respect will go further than any knowledge of the "funeral business." The one phrase I've never forgotten from my time in funeral service education is, "Get your money before the tears dry." That may be the most callous thing I've heard from a funeral director, and it's *[sic]* things like that which give a black eye to the industry as a whole.

There were several themes that received one response per theme. A few of the examples included: An African-American female, who was a non-manager/owner with 3 years of experience stated that, “There should be more BS degree program options available;” A Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 44 years of experience suggested that, “I would like to see counseling introduced into the program;” and, a Caucasian male, who was a manager/owner with 46 years of experience, commented to:

> Stress the importance of the time required to service a family well. This is not an 8-5 service...it is 24/7. There will be times that you loose *[sic]* your time off, your birthdays, your anniversary, your families' birthdays and other times. Know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have a calling on your life to be a funeral director/embalmer. Be thankful that you have the calling on you to serve families in need. Be sympathetic and learn from all situations. There will not be a STANDARD for all services. The particulars might be

> the same, but learn to adjust quickly! Don't use the funeral home occupation for a stepping stone or temporary job. You are wasting my time as an owner and the service to families will not be your priority.

Finally, there were two comments related to the theme of *Concerns about the National Board Examination*. An example of the comments was from a Caucasian male, who was a non-manager/owner with 20 years of experience:

> I have talked to recent graduates of funeral service programs in several areas of the country. It seems as though the National Board Exam is no longer an entry level exam. From what I am told, no longer is it a set number of questions from each subject studied. I have had a few tell me that their test had a bunch of cremation on it and then had some tell me their test did not have any cremation on it. I think that by and large the curriculum set by the American Board is adequate. I am just not so sure how they are justifying the national exam anymore. It seems as if the person has not worked in a funeral home for several years, they just cannot pass that test. I think if anything needs to change, the test needs to be looked at and revised to more adequately test ENTRY level and not seasoned funeral persons

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*. Descriptive statistics and data for the survey participants were explained in text and tables and were presented grouped by gender. Descriptive statistics for race and ethnicity, educational level, type of mortuary school attended, employment position, work experience, and annual funeral-related income were examined and displayed. Data and statistical analysis for each of the research

questions was presented individually, and included the following statistical tests: comparison of means; Mann-Whitney *U*-test; Kruskal-Wallis test; Pearson product-moment correlations; Pearson's chi-square test; and, a qualitative question coded into 14 themes. Finally, results of the qualitative research question were coded by themes and then presented using actual quotes from the survey participants.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

The National Funeral Directors Association's *U.S. Death Statistics: 1960-2050* (2014) contained information that the U.S. death rate was expected to raise from 8.3 deaths per thousand in 2010 to 9.7 deaths per thousand in 2050. On the state level, Woolbright and Stephens (2002) found that, "Alabama's death rate is rising due to the aging of its population" (p. 1). Trent (n.d.) echoed this trend for Alabama when she found that, "the aging of the baby boom generation (the oldest boomers turned 65 in 2011) will push up the state's death rate" (p. 1). Maniño (2011) found that the death rates in the Southeast region, including Alabama, were higher in 2009 than other areas in the country; specifically, the research showed that the death rate for Alabama was 920.3 deaths per 100,000 people when the U.S. rate was 741.0 deaths per 100,000 people. Maniño's (2011) research also demonstrated that Alabama's death rate was third in the Southeast region only behind Mississippi (926.3 per 100,000) and Tennessee (926.0 per 100,000). Alabama's population has aged and the numbers of deaths were expected to increase over the next several decades. Hence, one purpose of this study was to determine if the funeral licensees in the State of Alabama were educationally and competently prepared to handle the increased numbers of deaths.

Recent research studies related to this topic have not included Alabama funeral service practitioners in surveys and samples. The reason was most likely that Alabama practitioners either didn't know of the research or elected not to participate. In either case, there was a gap in

information to determine if the Alabama practitioners' perceptions were the same as or different from those in previous research studies. All funeral service practitioners who graduated from an accredited mortuary college, no matter of geographic location, were expected to be prepared and proficient for entry-level employment and for the changes in consumer preferences, such as cremation and "green" dispositions; changes in family structure, such as divorce, single-parents and civil unions/same sex marriages; and the psychological changes in attitudes towards death, funerals, funeral directors and long-held traditions.

This inquiry led to a review of mortuary education, that included the specified learning objectives, as related to preparation of Alabama funeral service practitioners for entry-level employment, especially related to the change in consumer preferences. As mentioned by LuBrant (2013) in his previous research, the assumption made by state licensing boards, employers and interested parties was that the mortuary school curriculum developed by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) was sufficient to prepare graduates/licensees for entry-level employment. Information gathered from Alabama funeral service practitioners on their perception of the relationship of mortuary college curriculum, learning outcomes, and career readiness would be beneficial to mortuary schools, regulators, funeral associations, employers and the general public. Additionally, more research was needed to determine what, if any, changes the Alabama licensees recommended to mortuary school curriculum that would have helped them in preparation for entry level job requirements and the changing consumer.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used in this study:

1. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perceptions of the ABFSE learning objectives and the contemporary practice of funeral service?
2. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of the ABFSE learning objectives and adequacy of those objectives for contemporary practice in funeral service?
3. To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of having been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed and mastery of the ABFSE learning objectives?
4. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
5. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
6. What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?
7. What is the relationship, if any, between prior work experience before graduation and perception of functioning as a competent, entry-level funeral director and embalmer?
8. What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer and the type of institution where the licensee pursued her/his funeral service education?
9. What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?
10. What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

Summary

The review of literature indicated that the environment in which funeral service existed had changed since the beginning of the embalming movement in the American Civil War. Cremation instead of burial, as the final form of disposition, continued to rise over the past several decades and was expected to continue into the foreseeable future. Consumers of funeral

and cremation services, and their ideologies and preferences, had also changed in the past decades. Funeral homes and funeral directors were expected to adapt to those changes. Mortuary schools were the institutions responsible for educating practitioners, and the curriculum was assumed to be important, adequate, and capable of producing graduates that had obtained the minimum qualifications to perform as entry-level practitioners. Mortuary schools in the United States were accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) and the curriculum for education was developed and administered by ABFSE. Previous research by LuBrant (2013) investigated if the ABFSE curriculum was perceived by practitioners around the United States as being important, adequate, and capable of producing the qualifications necessary for employment. Alabama did not have any funeral service practitioners who responded to LuBrant's survey. As Alabama and other Southern states were found to have values that many times varied from other parts of the country, it was important to study if those perceptions were similar or different from LuBrant's (2013) findings. LuBrant's (2013) *Mortuary Science Survey 2011* was adapted for Alabama. The *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* was administered from June 1, 2015 until June 30, 2015 to funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama who met four qualifications: 1) completed/graduated from an ABFSE accredited mortuary school in or after 1962; 2) licensed in the State of Alabama; 3) practiced in the previous 12 months, and; 4) was 19 years of age or older.

One hundred eighty-two people attempted the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015*. Of the 182 attempts, 117 individuals met the qualifications and completed the majority or all of the survey. The entire population, who met the qualifications at the time of the survey, was 832 funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama. *The Mortuary Science Survey 2015* contained 61 learning objectives from the ABFSE curriculum content areas of: Communication Skills,

Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology. These areas were selected based upon the literature review. There were ten research questions that were statistically tested. Data analysis was performed using SPSS software. This analysis included: descriptive data; comparison of means; Mann-Whitney U-test; Kruskal-Wallis test; Pearson product-moment correlations; Pearson's chi-square test; and, a qualitative question coded into 14 themes. The results of those tests were included in Chapter 4 and conclusions were presented below.

Conclusions

The conclusions for the ten research questions examined and presented in Chapter 4 were as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perceptions of the ABFSE learning objectives and the contemporary practice of funeral service?

All of the 61 American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) learning objectives examined in this study were perceived by the Alabama funeral service licensees as important, and the majority of those learning objectives were considered very important to the contemporary practice of funeral service in the State of Alabama (see Table 8). The curriculum content area that measured the highest by practitioners was the ABFSE curriculum content area of Embalming. These findings were consistent with the findings for similar ABFSE curriculum content areas and learning objectives researched by LuBrant (2013).

Research Question 2: To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of the ABFSE learning objectives and adequacy of those objectives for contemporary practice in funeral service?

All six of the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) curriculum content areas examined in this study were perceived by the Alabama funeral service licensees as adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service in the State of Alabama. The ABFSE curriculum content area of Embalming was again perceived as the most adequate by the practitioners in Alabama; however, while still perceived as adequate, the curriculum area of Cremation was perceived as the least adequate of the six content areas. With cremation growing over the past decades, this finding was not surprising. Alabama licensees differed from the sample in LuBrant's (2013) study, in that, Alabama licensees found the curriculum content areas of Funeral Directing and Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling as "Adequate" for the contemporary practice of funeral service (see Table 9). LuBrant's (2013) sample did not agree that these two content areas were "Adequate" for contemporary practice in funeral service.

Research Question 3: To what extent is there a relationship between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of having been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed and mastery of the ABFSE learning objectives?

Alabama funeral service licensees perceived that they had been adequately prepared, by the mortuary school they attended, to master all 61 American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) learning objectives that were studied. As in previous research questions, Alabama practitioners had the strongest perceptions of adequate preparation in the curriculum content area of Embalming. These findings were different from LuBrant's (2013) findings for

several of the learning objectives. The learning objectives for Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling had been reviewed and updated by ABFSE between LuBrant's (2013) study and this study. For the learning objectives that were similar in the curriculum area of Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, Alabama licensees perceived themselves as having been adequately prepared to master objectives 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 12 by the mortuary school they completed (see Table 8). LuBrant's (2013) sample did not perceive themselves as having been adequately prepared, by the mortuary school they completed, to master those same learning objectives. The learning objectives for ABFSE curriculum areas of Communication Skills, Embalming, Funeral Directing, and Sociology were the same between LuBrant's (2013) study and this study. Alabama licensees perceived themselves as having been adequately prepared, by the mortuary school they completed, for the following ABFSE learning objectives: 4 of the Communication Skills curriculum; 3, 8, and 9 of the Funeral Directing curriculum; and, 3, 4, and 6 of the Sociology curriculum (see Table 10). LuBrant's (2013) sample did not perceive themselves as having been adequately prepared, by the mortuary school they completed, to master those same learning objectives. Therefore, there was a difference in thirteen ABFSE learning objectives.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the importance of each of the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) curriculum content area's learning objectives and perception of the adequacy of a curriculum in each content area constructed upon those learning objectives. LuBrant (2013) found similar findings for ABFSE curriculum areas that were statistically significant in his study

except for the area of Communication Skills. LuBrant (2013) found a negative correlation between the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of adequacy for a curriculum based on those learning objectives for the ABFSE curriculum content area of Communication Skills. In this study, there was a positive correlation for Communication Skills (see Table 11).

Research Question 5: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the importance of each of the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) curriculum content area's learning objectives, and participant's perception of their academic preparation for entry level employment in funeral service. LuBrant (2013) found a negative correlation between the importance of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for the ABFSE curriculum content area of Communication Skills. In this study, there was a positive correlation for Communication Skills (see Table 11).

Research Question 6: What is the relationship, if any, between perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives among Alabama's funeral service licensees?

Statistical tests indicated there was a positive correlation between participant's perceptions of the adequacy of each of the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) curriculum content area's learning objectives, and participant's perception of their academic preparation for entry level employment in funeral service. LuBrant (2013) found a

negative correlation between the perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives and perception of academic preparation for the ABFSE curriculum content area of Funeral Directing. In this study, there was a positive correlation for Funeral Directing (see Table 11).

Research Question 7: What is the relationship, if any, between prior work experience before graduation and perception of functioning as a competent, entry-level funeral director and embalmer?

The results indicated no significant difference between those who had previous funeral-related work experience before completion of mortuary school and those who did not. Both groups perceived that they were prepared to function as competent, entry-level funeral directors and/or embalmers at the completion of mortuary school. LuBrant (2013) did not address this question in a similar manner.

Research Question 8: What is the relationship, if any, between Alabama funeral service licensee's perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer and the type of institution where the licensee pursued her/his funeral service education?

The results of the statistical test indicated no significant difference in the Alabama funeral service licensee's perception, of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer, between those who attended a private single-purpose mortuary school, or a private multi-curriculum mortuary school, or a public mortuary school. LuBrant (2013) also found that the type of mortuary school did not have an effect on the perception of being prepared to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer.

Research Question 9: What, if any, is the difference between men and women in annual income earned from working in Alabama as a funeral service licensee?

There was a statistically significant difference in the distribution of observed frequencies between the annual funeral-related incomes for men and for women. LuBrant (2013) used a different statistical test for his study; however, he also found a statistically significant difference in annual funeral-related income for the men and for the women in his study.

Research Question 10: What suggestions do Alabama funeral service licensees have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

Using LuBrant's (2013) 14 themes from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2011*, the 29 responses from the *Mortuary Science Survey 2015* were coded into similar themes (see Table 13). Overwhelmingly, the main theme was the suggestion for more experiential learning incorporated into the American Board of Funeral Service Education's (ABFSE) learning objectives and curriculum content areas. Interestingly, the next highest suggestion by the participants was to strengthen the curriculum on embalming skills. This suggestion was double the number of responses for suggesting that the cremation areas be strengthened. The findings in the previous research questions indicated that the curriculum content area of Embalming was perceived by Alabama funeral service practitioners as the most important, most adequate, and had the best preparation over the other five curriculum areas. Embalming was highly valued by the survey participants. Finally, the other area with the most responses was the suggestion of better relationships between practitioners and the mortuary schools.

Implications

Two implications of this research study were clear. First, the Alabama funeral service licensees who participated in this study had high perceptions and expectations on the curriculum content area of Embalming. This was not surprising since the literature review in Chapter 2 indicated that Alabama was a very traditional state with funeral beliefs that centered on the dead body. Therefore, preservation of that body was very important. As cremation continues to rise, this study indicated that funeral service practitioners in Alabama perceived themselves as being adequately prepared for the changes; however, they did not feel as strongly prepared for the changes on the horizon regarding cremation as they did for other areas like Embalming and Funeral Directing. This finding leads to recommendations for future research.

Second, the Alabama funeral service licensees who participated in this study perceived that more experiential, or "hands-on," learning was needed in the American Board of Funeral Service's (ABFSE) learning objectives and curriculum content areas. As each mortuary school adapts the ABFSE curriculum to personal teaching styles and student learning styles, the amount of "hands-on" training varied by school. Of interest, however, was the fact that this study found that those who had previous funeral-related work experience and those who did not both perceived themselves as having been adequately prepared for entry-level funeral service employment. Two ideas came to the forefront: 1) more hands-on experience would have increased perception of adequacy, or 2) the participants viewed recent mortuary school graduates through the prism of their own level of experience and found a disparity between the two. In short, the experienced licensees might have looked at the new licensees and thought they should have been more advanced – the same way past generations of licensees viewed the ones now making the judgments.

Recommendations

As mentioned by LuBrant (2013), the volume of scholarly, peer-reviewed research in the area of funeral service education is limited. The scholarly research that did exist was mainly from funeral service educators working on advanced degrees. As LuBrant's (2013) study and this study have indicated, the environment in which funeral service operates, especially the customer of funeral and cremation services, has changed and continues to change. With a changed environment and the desperate need for more information, education, and training, more scholarly research in this field was needed and will be needed. LuBrant (2013) mentioned in his recommendations that research was needed from consumers in addition to funeral practitioners. LuBrant's (2013) recommendation, especially as the environment continues to shift, holds true today.

Second, LuBrant's (2013) survey covered a national population, whereas, this survey focused on one Southern state with a strong-held grip on tradition and more services that included embalming and visitation with the deceased present. Additional scholarly research from other Southern states, many of which hold similar values to Alabama, would offer valuable information to the findings of this research. Furthermore, the addition of other states, especially from other areas of the United States that hold different values and traditions in areas like cremation and disposition of the deceased, would provide an interesting contrast to Southern states.

Third, over 91% of those who answered the question on type of mortuary school they attended responded that they completed a public institution; however, this information was logical given that the two mortuary colleges in the State of Alabama were public institutions.

More information is needed from practitioners who attended a private single-purpose mortuary college, and especially from those individuals who attended a private college that offered programs in fields other than funeral service education. In this survey, only one individual represented the private multi-disciplined institution. Obviously, robust research would include practitioners from all institutions that provide funeral service education.

Fourth, a follow-up study of the same population in the State of Alabama, at some point in the future, would be beneficial as it relates to gender equality in salary and wages. This study rejected the null hypothesis that said the salary ranks between men and women were equal. A review of the salary ranks in this sample clearly indicated that women were making less than the men in this sample. Sixty-five percent of the women in this sample earned below $40,000 per year compared to only 23.9% of the men in this sample who earned below $40,000 annually. More data is needed in the future, and more women are needed in future samples. A future study may afford that opportunity.

Finally, a follow-up study of the same population in the State of Alabama, at some time in the future, would be beneficial for a deeper understanding of the changing environment of funeral/cremation preferences and attitudes of Alabama. As cremation trends continue to rise in Alabama, a follow-up study in five or ten years would add to the body of knowledge and assist funeral service educators to develop curriculum and learning objectives that are meaningful and relevant to the funeral service practitioners of Alabama.

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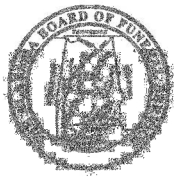
Appendix A: Letter from the Alabama Board of Funeral Service



STATE OF ALABAMA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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September 22, 2014

Dr. James Witte and the Auburn University IRB
4036 Haley Center
Auburn University, AL 36849

Dr. Witte and Auburn University IRB Members,

At the July 2014 quarterly meeting of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service ("Board"), we received information about upcoming research by one of your doctoral students, Jzyk Ennis, who is in the Adult Education / Education Foundations, Leadership and Technology department at Auburn University. Mr. Ennis has been active in many aspects and leadership positions related to funeral service in Alabama. The board is very interested in any research that Mr. Ennis will pursue over the coming months/year and is eager to learn of the results of his doctoral dissertation/research. The Alabama Board of Funeral Service supports education that affects the licensees in the State of Alabama. The board discussed, deliberated and voted to not only support the research, but also to become involved, with approval of Dr. Witte and the Auburn University IRB, in the research by doing the following:

- Authorization for the Executive Secretary and the Board staff to allow Mr. Ennis access to non-sensitive and public record historical documents (previous minutes, history of the laws, etc.)
- Authorization for the Executive Secretary and the Board staff to send electronic (e-mail) invitations to qualified licensees who have been identified by the Board staff [only] using parameters set up by Mr. Ennis and Dr. Witte. Within the electronic invitation will be the anonymous link to the questionnaire. In addition to the electronic invitation, the Board staff will include the anonymous survey link in our quarterly newsletter and the Board's website [lfsb.alabama.gov]. All invitations and correspondence will be noted as educational research and that participation is voluntary. There will be no incentive, including monetary, to participate. Likewise, there will be no punishment or retribution

to any licensee who does not wish to participate. To protect the identity of licensees/participants in the research, e-mail identities and invitations to participate will not be disclosed to Mr. Ennis or Dr. Witte. This step also allows the Board to comply with Federal and state privacy laws.

Again, the Alabama Board of Funeral Service supports education of our licensees and results of research that may assist our profession. The Board is pleased to learn of upcoming research to be conducted by Mr. Jzyk Ennis under the direction of his dissertation committee chair, Dr. James Witte. We are fully committed to supporting and assisting Mr. Ennis' doctoral dissertation/research. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on behalf of the Board.

Best regards,

Charles M. Perine
Executive Secretary
Alabama Board of Funeral Service

Appendix B: Auburn University Information Letter

Please add this approval information in sentence form to this letter. Send your updated letter to the IRB with a live link to the survey.

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 5/17/15 to 5/16/18 Protocol # 15-184 EX 1506

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

(**NOTE:** DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER

"Alabama Funeral Service Licensees' Perception of Funeral Service Education and Readiness for Professional Practice in a Changing Environment"

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the perception that licensed funeral directors/embalmers in Alabama have towards the American Board of Funeral Service's learning objectives for content areas to determine perceived importance of those learning objectives, academic preparation to master those objectives, and perceived adequacy of those objectives towards professional practice in a changing environment. The study is being conducted by Jzyk S. Ennis, under the direction of Dr. James Witte in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You are invited to participate in this survey if you are: 1) a licensed funeral director/embalmer in the State of Alabama; 2) have graduated from a Funeral Service Education program accredited by ABFSE in or after 1962; 3) have worked in some capacity in funeral service as either a licensed funeral director and/or embalmer within the last 12 months and; 4) are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through Qualtrics. Your total time commitment will be approximately 15-20 minutes. Your participation is completely anonymous and voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; however, if you feel uncomfortable while answering the questions, you can withdraw at any time by closing your browser window. Once you've submitted anonymous data, it cannot be withdrawn since it will be unidentifiable. Your privacy and the data you provide will be protected by not asking for any personally-identifying information and by not capturing your computer's Internet Protocol (IP) address. Your participation in this research is confidential. All survey data will be gathered into Qualtrics software using an open-access link that does not identify you or your computer. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral dissertation, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology, the Alabama Board of Funeral Service, or Jzyk S. Ennis.

Other than your time, there is no cost to participate in this research. While there is no monetary compensation for your participation in this study, you responses will be valuable to educators, policy-makers, client-families, and licensees in the State of Alabama.

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 3684-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jzyk S. Ennis at jse0008@auburn.edu / (205) 821-0454 or Dr. James Witte at witteje@auburn.edu / (334) 844-3054.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW. YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP.

Thank you,

Jzyk S. Ennis

Principal Investigator / Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 5/17/15 to 5/16/18 Protocol # 15-184 EX 1508

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 5/17/15 to 5/16/18. Protocol # 15-184 EX1508

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_a5EtFWzc2UN3SgB

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Appendix C: July 2015 Alabama Board of Funeral Service Quarterly Newsletter

June 1, 2015

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Examination

The Alabama Board of Funeral Service has certified the following individuals with The Conference as having met the qualification to take the Alabama State Law Exam and the Alabama Funeral Director and/or Embalmer Exam:

Michael Atwood	Natasha A. Braddy	Earnest Green	Charlie D. Nelson
Antonia T. Perryman	Ramona C. Russell	Melesa F. Mayes	Daisy C. White
Danny E. Holloway	Laura P. Whisenant	Christina M. Boling	John D. Mohn, Sr.
Timothy L. Howard	Jay P. Fisher	Charles G. Cannon	Danetta Cottrell
Rickney B. Hunter			

Once an individual has taken the exam and met all the requirements for licensure, they will appear before the Board for an interview and final approval for licensure.

The Conference

As stated in previous notices, the Alabama State Law, Funeral Director and Embalmer's exams will be given by The Conference through Pearson VUE testing centers at five locations statewide. The exam fees and applications are to be submitted by the applicant to The Conference. The state license fees, applications, and affidavits shall be submitted to the Board office.

The Conference: www.theconferenceonline.org Phone: 479-442-7076

Pearson VUE:	Birmingham	Decatur	Dothan	Mobile	Montgomery
	205-982-2063	256-552-0667	334-671-7007	251-343-2601	334-271-8995

Board Meeting

The Board will hold its fourth regular meeting of fiscal year 2015 on **July 13, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.** in Room 304 of the Alabama State House. Matters or subjects not on the agenda are not guaranteed for discussion at the meeting. **Licensees who attend the quarterly board meeting will receive hour for hour CE Credits for attending.**

Interview

The following individuals will come before the Board on July 13, 2015 to interview for final approval for licensure:

Crenisha Wiggins	Nathan L. McCradic	Brittany Chancey	Teresa Schnur

Renewal Time

The Board will no longer mail renewal notices to licensees. Pursuant to Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 34-13-53(d), License renewal applications for fiscal year 2015 will be emailed to licensees, apprentices, and establishment at multiple times during the month of June and throughout the renewal period. The deadline to renew without penalty is September 30, 2014. Failure to receive a notice does not excuse anyone from renewing by the deadline. If you fail to submit your paperwork for renewal by the September 30th deadline, an additional $50 late penalty will be applied. **Licensees may also go to the "Forms" tab of the Board's website at www.fsb.alabama.gov and print a renewal notice.**

The ONLINE RENEWALS system will open June 1st.

Licensees who used the online system last year, must use the Login and Password they created when they registered last year. Licensees that will use the Online Renewal system for the first time this year, must follow the instruction attached to the renewal notice.

Licensees, Apprentices, and Establishments can renew their individual license(s) online through the Board's website.

INSPECTION REPORT

ALL ESTABLISHMENTS: Inspection reports and invoices will be emailed to the email address the Board has on file for the establishment. The email will be from the following email address: notifications@alabamainteractive.org

The invoice will be emailed shortly after the inspection is completed. Failure to receive an invoice does not excuse an establishment from paying the inspection fee within the 45 day time allotment for inspection fees to be paid. Inspection fees can be paid online by going to the Homepage of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service website and click on the "PAY INSPECTION FEE" button. Establishments should login using the same login information they use to renew their establishment license.

Violations

Case No.	Charge	Penalty
ABFS14-036	Aided unlicensed practice. §34-13-56(a)(2)(i). Misrepresentation and Fraud. §34-13-56(a)(2)(a). Unlicensed individuals engaging in business of funeral directing. . §34-13-70(a).	Fined $5500.00 plus ($1265.00 refunded to the complainant.) 1 year probation for Managing Funeral Director, for employee Funeral Director, and for the Establishment.
ABFS15-003	Aided unlicensed practice. §34-13-56(a)(2)(i). Funeral Service and Interment conduct without being in actual charge of a funeral director. §34-13-111(b).	Fined $5000.00. 2 year probation for Managing Funeral Director and the Establishment

At the last meeting, the Board approved the following for licensure:

Funeral Director	Funeral Director & Embalmer	Embalmer
Carlos D. Black	Robynne E. Gray	Terrence E. Windham
Brain D. Goodloe	Danae A. Magee	Danny E. Holloway
~~Sandra Bisenti~~	~~Charles M. Sherman~~	
	~~Terry D. Cheikin~~	
	~~Joey R. Morris~~	

~~Establishments~~

~~Cope-Keahey Funeral Home (Buyout by Randy Keahey) – Evergreen~~

~~Searcy Funeral Home & Crematory – Daleville~~

~~Grace Memorial Funeral Home (Buyout of Saints FH) – Florence~~

~~Grace Memorial Funeral Home (Buyout of Saints FH) – Sheffield~~

~~Heritage Funeral Home – Hartford~~

~~Carson, Wise & West Funeral Home – Greenville~~

"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

Jimmy Dean

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The Alabama Board of Funeral Services will offer continuing education credit to licensees that attend quarterly board meetings.

Approved Continuing Education Providers 2014-2015

A Center for Continuing Education (Insurance)
800.344.1921
dharrison @acceducation .com

ABFS
334.242.4049
www.fsb.alabama.gov

APEX (continuing education solutions)
800.769.8996
apexces.com

Batesville Casket Company
812.934.7500
batesville.com

Dignity University
713.525.7348
Dignity.university@Sci-us.com

Funeral Compliance, LLC
865.405.7085
funeralcompliance@gmail.com

FuneralReview.com LLC
funeralreview.com

International Order of the Golden Rule
800.63 .8030
www.ogr.org/webinars

Matthews Cremation
800.327.2831
matthewscremation .com

NFDA&MA
800.434.0958
nfdama.com

Practicum Strategies
800.731.4714
pshomestudy.com

Thanos Institute
800.742.8257
thanosinstitute.com

Academy of Graduate Embalmers
770.445.3180
academyga@aol.com

AFDA
334.956.8000
www.alabamafda.org

Atlantic Coast Insurance Company
205.529.0005
AlabamaPreneed@gmail.com

CANA-Cremation Association of North America
312.245.1077
cremationassociation.org

Epsilon Nu Delta Mortuary Fraternity
951.683.5400

FuneralContinuingEducation.com
718.608.6000
www.funeralcontinuingeducation.com

Gupton Jones College of Funeral Service
800.848.5352 www.gupton-jones.edu

Jzyk Ennis
205.821.0454 jzykennis @charter.net

Mobile Memorial Gardens Funeral Home
251.661.7700
service@mobilememorialfuneals.com

National Funeral Professionals Association
251.441.7688
tristatemorturay@gmail.com

Smalls Mortuary Inc. and Cremation Services
251.990.3929
smallsmortuary.com

The Dodge Company, Inc.
800.443.6343
seminars@dodgeco.com

Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice, Inc.
866. 431.2377

AFDA&MA
www.alabamafdma.org

Aurora Casket Company, Inc.
800.457.1111
auroracasket.com

Community Grief Support Service
205.870.8667
ssweatcgss@bellsouth.net

Funeral CE (a service of Web CE)
877.332.8480
www.Funeralce.com

FuneralDirectorCEUs.com
250.744.3595

The University of Alabama
205.348.9966

Jefferson State Community College
205.856.7847
vriley@jeffstateonline.com

NFDA
800.228.6332
nfda.org

Pierce Mortuary Colleges
888.547.9600
pierce.edu

Tennessee Funeral Directors Association
615.321.8792
office@tnfda.org

The Independent Funeral Group
865.977.0027
info@theindependentfuneralgroup.com

Jefferson State Community College

Funeral Service Education Program

Free—2 Hour Continue Education Seminar

Jefferson Campus Lurleen Wallace Hall, Room 300 Tuesday, July 14, 2015

9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Panel Discussion:

Funeral Service Issues Related to the Probate Courts

Description

This two hour (2 CE's) seminar is designed for funeral service education students and funeral service licensees in the State of Alabama to gain insight on how the probate court system operates and deliberates on issues related to funeral service cases. The probate judges and Mr. Jeremy Sumner, Esquire, a licensed attorney will discuss issues related to wills, trusts and powers of attorney. Mr. Charles Perine, Executive Secretary of the Alabama Board of Funeral Service, will discuss the funeral service laws of Alabama and how they apply in cases of conflict between authorizing agents.

Specifically the following issues will be addressed:

- Common-law marriages as they relate to authorizing agents
- Conflicts within client families and Alabama funeral service laws in cases of conflict
- Standing of funeral homes in cases of conflict and indemnification of funeral homes for following the laws and orders of a probate court
- Process of how to file a petition to a probate court including: paperwork/forms, fees, and the process.
- Factors judges assess before making a ruling: including the deceased's wishes, estates, etc.
- Weight of law and enforcement of judicial actions/orders
- Wills, trusts, and powers of attorney

AUBURN UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

(**NOTE**: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER

"Alabama Funeral Service Licensees' Perception of Funeral Service Education and Readiness for Professional Practice in a Changing Environment"

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the perception that licensed funeral directors/embalmers in Alabama have towards the American Board of Funeral Service's learning objectives for content areas to determine perceived importance of those learning objectives, academic preparation to master those objectives, and perceived adequacy of those objectives towards professional practice in a changing environment. The study is being conducted by Jzyk S. Ennis, under the direction of Dr. James Witte in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You are invited to participate in this survey if you are: 1) a licensed funeral director/embalmer in the State of Alabama; 2) have graduated from a Funeral Service Education program accredited by ABFSE in or after 1962; 3) have worked in some capacity in funeral service as either a licensed funeral director and/or embalmer within the last 12 months and; 4) are age 19 or older.

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through Qualtrics. Your total time commitment will be approximately 15-20 minutes. Your participation is completely anonymous and voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this study; however, if you feel uncomfortable while answering the questions, you can withdraw at any time by closing your browser window. Once you've submitted anonymous data, it cannot be withdrawn since it will be unidentifiable. Your privacy and the data you provide will be protected by not asking for any personally-identifying information and by not capturing your computer's Internet Protocol (IP) address. Your participation in this research is confidential. All survey data will be gathered into Qualtrics software using an open-access link that does not identify you or your computer. Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill the requirements of my doctoral dissertation, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting. Your decision about whether or not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology, the Alabama Board of Funeral Service, or Jzyk S. Ennis.

Other than your time, there is no cost to participate in this research. While there is no monetary compensation for your participation in this study, you responses will be valuable to educators, policy-makers, client-families, and licensees in the State of Alabama.

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, LEADERSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jzyk S. Ennis at jse0008@auburn.edu / (205) 821-0454 or Dr. James Witte at witteje@auburn.edu / (334) 844-3054.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION ABOVE, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, PLEASE CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW. YOU MAY PRINT A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP.

Thank you,

Jzyk S. Ennis

Principal Investigator / Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from **May 17, 2015** to **May 16, 2018**. Protocol # **15-184 EX 1505**

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_enBkIFw4Aui3knH

4036 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36849-5221; Telephone: 334-844-4460; Fax: 334-844-3072

www.auburn.edu

Appendix D: LuBrant Permission and Consent

Jzyk Ennis

From:	Michael LuBrant <mpl@umn.edu>
Sent:	Wednesday, June 25, 2014 9:17 AM
To:	Jzyk Ennis
Cc:	Michael LuBrant
Subject:	Re: Dissertation
Attachments:	Mortuary Science Survey 2011-1.rtf

Hi, Jzyk,

Thanks for the note and your interest in my research work. You are welcome to use any part(s) of the survey instrument I designed for my dissertation for your own dissertation research work. Since you want to use only parts of the survey, I recommend that you pilot your version of the survey with a few folks prior to full administration, just to make sure all is clear, there are no errors in text, etc. (You adviser will be able to help you with this, of course.)

Attached is an MS Word version of the entire survey instrument. As you will note, the layout I used for the on-line version (as published in the appendix of my dissertation) looks very different from what appears on the attachment, but the questions are the same. Please note, as well, that some of the learning objectives have changed since I did my research, so obviously you will want to reference the most current ABFSE outlines to make sure you have the most recent information for your work.

If you have any questions, or need anything else in writing from me, please let me know. You have my numbers, so please feel free to call anytime. Good luck as you move forward with completing your degree.

Sincerely,
Michael

On Fri, Jun 6, 2014 at 9:49 AM, Jzyk Ennis <jennis@jeffstateonline.com> wrote:

Michael,

Thank you for sending your dissertation to me back in March. I am now entering the formation stage of my proposed research, and I am formally requesting your permission to use your dissertation as a springboard for my research. As you noticed in your sample population, there were no practitioners who responded to your survey request from Alabama...this is common in most studies. Hence, Alabama is absent from most research. My plan is to develop research focused on Alabama and a few of the objectives from one or two of the main ABFSE curriculum courses. Based on previous experience, I think that if I use the entire curriculum and objectives for each course (as in your study), it will substantially limit my survey completion/participation.

In addition to referencing your research and per your previous offer, I am also requesting permission to use your survey/questionnaire and format. If you have a Microsoft Word or Excel version, it would be most helpful. As you have already tested the survey for construct validity and with a pilot survey, I would only need to make minor adjustments. I thank you in advance for your consideration!

1

If I have your permission, any letter or documentation that I can submit to my major professor and the IRB at Auburn University would be most helpful!

Most sincerely,

Jzyk

From: Michael LuBrant [mailto:mpl@umn.edu]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2014 2:28 PM
To: Jzyk Ennis
Subject: Dissertation

Hi, Jzyk,

It was nice to catch up this afternoon - I look forward to seeing you next month here in Minneapolis.

As promised (for better or for worse!) attached is a copy of my dissertation. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Good luck on your work -- I know you will be successful, and trust me, it does feel especially good when all is finally *done*!

See you soon, Michael

--
Michael P. LuBrant, Ph.D.
Director, Program of Mortuary Science
University of Minnesota
420 Delaware Street SE; MMC 740

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Voice: 612.624.3980
Fax: 612.626.4163
Web: www.mortuaryscience.umn.edu

Appendix E: Mortuary Science Survey 2015

Mortuary Science Survey 2015 - IRB Approved - Live Version

Q2 Mortuary Science Survey 2015 Permission expressly granted to Jzyk S. Ennis by Dr. Michael LuBrant for the use and modification of the Mortuary Science Survey 2011for the purpose of doctoral dissertation research. The original survey instrument copyright, Michael LuBrant - All Rights Reserved - 2011

Q3 Part 1: Eligibility. The following questions are asked in order to determine your eligibility to participate in this study. When did you complete your funeral service education?

- ❍ I completed my funeral service education prior to 1962. (1)
- ❍ I completed my funeral service education either during or after 1962. (2)

If I completed my funeral serv... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q4 The population of interest for this research study is that of individuals who have completed an ABFSE-accredited program of funeral service. The ABFSE began accrediting funeral service programs in 1962. An online listing of all funeral service education programs presently accredited by the ABFSE appears at the following Web site: http://www.abfse.org/html/directory.html. Unfortunately, programs that no longer exist and/or no longer maintain ABFSE-accreditation do not appear on the Web site. If 1) you completed a program of funeral service that no longer exists and/or no longer maintains ABFSE accreditation, and 2) you would like to determine if that program was accredited by the ABFSE at the time you completed the program, you may contact the ABFSE either by telephone at (816) 233-3747, or visit the ABFSE on the Web at www.abfse.org for assistance in answering this question. To the best of your knowledge, did you complete a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q5 During the past 12 months were you employed by, and/or did you derive any income from work for/at a funeral establishment in the State of Alabama that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and funeral services to the public?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q6 Do you presently hold a valid Alabama state-issued license that permits you to practice funeral directing and/or embalming?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q7 Are you 19 years of age or older?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q9 Part 2: Your Perceptions of the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) Learning Objectives, Your Funeral Service Education, and the Adequacy of These Objectives for Professional Practice.

ESTIMATED TIME TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY: 10 Minutes

OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY AND INSTRUCTIONS:The entire ABFSE core funeral service education curriculum is grounded upon 177 learning objectives that cover 20 content areas. Mindful of the amount of time required for participation in this study, the survey has been created so that you will only evaluate the following six (6) curriculum content areas (these areas compose 34.5% of the overall learning objectives and will appear in a different order on the survey): Communication Skills, Cremation, Embalming, Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, and Sociology

First, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the IMPORTANCE of each learning objective to the contemporary practice of funeral service. In this research, the scale of perceived importance ranges as follows: Extremely important - Very important - Important - Somewhat important - Not important - No opinion.

Next, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering each learning objective. In this research, the scale of perceived preparation ranges as follows: Excellent preparation - Very good preparation - Good preparation - Minimal preparation - No preparation - Can't remember/Unable to answer.

Finally, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the ADEQUACY of each set of learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service. In this research, your perception of curriculum adequacy will be measured by asking you to indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe that a [e.g. Embalming] curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." The measurement scale used for this question ranges as follows: Strongly agree - Agree - Somewhat agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree - No opinion.

Q10 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Recognize the application of general psychology to funeral service (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the values and purposes of the funeral rite for the family and friends (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the typical grief reactions and responses (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the theories of grief (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe issues relating to children and death (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain how grief affects the family (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling therapy (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize and understand personal resources for coping with loss and stress (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate community or professional resources (12)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q11 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Recognize the application of general psychology to funeral service (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the values and purposes of the funeral rite for the family and friends (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the typical grief reactions and responses (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the theories of grief (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe issues relating to children and death (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain how grief affects the family (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Differentiate between the types and styles of	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

counseling therapy (7)						
Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize and understand personal resources for coping with loss and stress (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate community	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

or professional resources (12)						

Q12 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that a funeral service psychology and counseling curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q13 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Demonstrate an understanding of the application and purpose of sociology in funeral service (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural requirements and cultural diversities of each family the funeral director is privileged to serve (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the family governing systems found in our society (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify with the different types of family structures (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Be aware of the changing social factors which affect funeral rites	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

and the families that are served by the funeral directors (5)						
Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q14 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Demonstrate an understanding of the application and purpose of sociology in funeral service (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural requirements and cultural diversities of each family the funeral director is privileged to serve (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the family governing systems found in our society (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify with the different types of family structures (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Be aware of the changing social factors which affect	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

funeral rites and the families that are served by the funeral directors (5)						
Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q15 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that a sociology curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q16 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Identify the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the importance of listening skills (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the significance of group dynamics (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q17 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Identify the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the importance of listening skills (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Recognize the significance of group dynamics (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q18 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that a communication skills curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q23 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Explain how the handling, treatment and disposition of the dead human body meets the sociological, psychological, theological, physical and legal requirements of family and community (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the causes and manners of death whereby notification of death to public officials is required (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the concepts of sanitation, disinfection, temporary preservation, and restoration of human remains (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand and employ the necessary terminology to facilitate communication	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

with members of allied professions and the public (4)						
Explain and identify cooperation with professional agencies and their responsibilities with respect to the dead human body, agencies include but are not limited to, medical examiner and/or coroner, hospitals, organ procurement agencies, OSHA, FTC (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate and describe the use of embalming instruments, equipment and sundries, and embalming techniques and procedures (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the general chemical principles of	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

embalming fluids and calculation, and summarize the chemical components (7)						
Demonstrate and explain adequate methods of self-protection from communicable and infectious diseases, personal and environmental protective measures, and hazardous chemicals (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss and demonstrate safe environmental work practices through proper disposal of contaminated materials, and proper methods of disposal of blood and body fluids during and following the embalming process (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify and demonstrate the ethical	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming (10)						
Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain how the vascular system is used to distribute and diffuse embalming chemicals to the tissues of the body (12)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify and document body conditions, embalming techniques and procedures performed with written	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

embalming reports based on embalming analysis (13)						
Explain the problems caused by, and the embalming treatments for various causes of death, including but not limited to infections, communicable diseases, trauma, pathological conditions, and disaster situations (14)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the treatment for organs and tissues recovered (15)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain and demonstrate the preparation of the infant, autopsy and non-autopsy embalming techniques and procedures (16)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain and demonstrate cavity embalming procedures	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

and postmortem conditions of discolorations, decomposition, dehydration, general body conditions, vascular difficulties, moisture considerations, radiation and their embalming treatments (17)						
Integrate information learned in Microbiology, Anatomy, Pathology Chemistry, and Restorative Art to predict a protocol to be used for the embalming process (18)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q24 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Explain how the handling, treatment and disposition of the dead human body meets the sociological, psychological, theological, physical and legal requirements of family and community (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the causes and manners of death whereby notification of death to public officials is required (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the concepts of sanitation, disinfection, temporary preservation, and restoration of human remains (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Understand and employ the necessary terminology	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

to facilitate communication with members of allied professions and the public (4)						
Explain and identify cooperation with professional agencies and their responsibilities with respect to the dead human body, agencies include but are not limited to, medical examiner and/or coroner, hospitals, organ procurement agencies, OSHA, FTC (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate and describe the use of embalming instruments, equipment and sundries, and embalming techniques and	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

procedures (6)						
Describe the general chemical principles of embalming fluids and calculation, and summarize the chemical components (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate and explain adequate methods of self-protection from communicable and infectious diseases, personal and environmental protective measures, and hazardous chemicals (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss and demonstrate safe environmental work practices through proper disposal of contaminated materials, and proper	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

methods of disposal of blood and body fluids during and following the embalming process (9)						
Identify and demonstrate the ethical practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain how the vascular system is used to distribute and diffuse embalming	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

chemicals to the tissues of the body (12)						
Identify and document body conditions, embalming techniques and procedures performed with written embalming reports based on embalming analysis (13)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the problems caused by, and the embalming treatments for various causes of death, including but not limited to infections, communicable diseases, trauma, pathological conditions, and disaster situations (14)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the treatment for organs and tissues recovered (15)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain and	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

demonstrate the preparation of the infant, autopsy and non-autopsy embalming techniques and procedures (16)						
Explain and demonstrate cavity embalming procedures and postmortem conditions of discolorations, decomposition, dehydration, general body conditions, vascular difficulties, moisture considerations, radiation and their embalming treatments (17)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Integrate information learned in Microbiology, Anatomy, Pathology Chemistry, and Restorative	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Art to predict a protocol to be used for the embalming process (18)						

Q25 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that an embalming curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q26 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Discuss the historical significance of cremation (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the primary consideration for funeral directors working with those interested in cremation as a method of disposition (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the importance of legislative and regulatory compliance (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe considerations recommended when using third party crematories (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the importance of using appropriate paperwork to document cremation related decisions,	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

including forms required by state and local agencies and those designed for legal protection (5)						
Distinguish between cremation containers, containers for cremated deceased, and other related merchandising options (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the specific elements of the FTC Funeral Rule that applies to cremation (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify services and trends in conjunction with cremation (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe options for proper disposition of cremated deceased including legal restrictions and local customs (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q27 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Discuss the historical significance of cremation (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify the primary consideration for funeral directors working with those interested in cremation as a method of disposition (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe the importance of legislative and regulatory compliance (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe considerations recommended when using third party crematories (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the importance of using appropriate paperwork to	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

document cremation related decisions, including forms required by state and local agencies and those designed for legal protection (5)						
Distinguish between cremation containers, containers for cremated deceased, and other related merchandising options (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the specific elements of the FTC Funeral Rule that applies to cremation (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify services and trends in conjunction with cremation (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe options for proper disposition of	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

cremated deceased including legal restrictions and local customs (9)						
Demonstrate understanding of requirements for shipping cremated deceased (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q28 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that a cremation curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q29 How IMPORTANT do you believe these learning objectives are to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

	Extremely Important (1)	Very Important (2)	Important (3)	Somewhat Important (4)	Not Important (5)	No Opinion (6)
Determine and identify the primary responsibilities of the funeral director, including regulatory and legislative compliance (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the time frames in which the services of the funeral director are typically provided (i.e. pre-need, at-need, and post funeral follow up) (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate an understanding of transferring human remains from the place of death to the funeral home using generally accepted procedures and equipment (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Apply communication skills necessary to meet with a family in the arrangement conference (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Identify and describe various religious funeral customs as practiced in America (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Describe fraternal funeral procedures and military honors (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Exhibit knowledge of the specific vocabulary associated with funeral service (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain terminology and considerations unique to cremation arrangements (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q30 What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering these learning objective?

	Excellent preparation (1)	Very good preparation (2)	Good preparation (3)	Minimal preparation (4)	No preparation (5)	Can't remember/Unable to answer (6)
Determine and identify the primary responsibilities of the funeral director, including regulatory and legislative compliance (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain the time frames in which the services of the funeral director are typically provided (i.e. pre-need, at-need, and post funeral follow up) (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Demonstrate an understanding of transferring human remains from the place of death to the funeral home using generally accepted procedures and equipment (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Apply communication skills necessary to meet with a family	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

in the arrangement conference (5)						
Identify and describe various religious funeral customs as practiced in America (6)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Describe fraternal funeral procedures and military honors (7)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals (8)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains (9)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Exhibit knowledge of the specific vocabulary associated with funeral service (10)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Explain terminology and considerations unique to cremation arrangements (11)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q31 Reflecting on your perception of the ADEQUACY of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service psychology and counseling presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"I believe that a funeral directing curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q40 To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)	No Opinion (6)
"Upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer." (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q41 Which one of the following two statements most accurately describes the extent to which you were able to gain work experience at a funeral home prior to completing your funeral service education program? (By work experience, we mean full- or part-time employment at a funeral home, and/or clinical placement at a funeral home (such as a practicum) during your funeral service education program.)

- ❍ I did have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program. (1)
- ❍ I did NOT have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program. (2)

Q32 Part 3: Demographic Questions Related to Your Personal Characteristics as a Survey Participant.

Q33 Which one of the following statements most accurately describes the majority of the work you have done in funeral service during the past 12 months?

- ❍ I have worked primarily as a funeral director. (1)
- ❍ I have worked primarily as an embalmer. (2)
- ❍ I have worked primarily as both a funeral director and an embalmer. (3)
- ❍ Other (4)

Q34 At the present time, do you MANAGE a funeral establishment in the State of Alabama that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and funeral services to the public?

- ❍ Yes (1)
- ❍ No (2)

Q35 In what year did you complete your funeral service education program?

- ❍ 2015 (1)
- ❍ 2014 (2)
- ❍ 2013 (3)
- ❍ 2012 (4)
- ❍ 2011 (5)
- ❍ 2010 (6)
- ❍ 2009 (7)
- ❍ 2008 (8)
- ❍ 2007 (9)
- ❍ 2006 (10)
- ❍ 2005 (11)
- ❍ 2004 (12)
- ❍ 2003 (13)
- ❍ 2002 (14)
- ❍ 2001 (15)
- ❍ 2000 (16)
- ❍ 1999 (17)
- ❍ 1998 (18)
- ❍ 1997 (19)
- ❍ 1996 (20)
- ❍ 1995 (21)
- ❍ 1994 (22)
- ❍ 1993 (23)
- ❍ 1992 (24)
- ❍ 1991 (25)
- ❍ 1990 (26)
- ❍ 1989 (27)
- ❍ 1988 (28)
- ❍ 1987 (29)
- ❍ 1986 (30)
- ❍ 1985 (31)
- ❍ 1984 (32)
- ❍ 1983 (33)
- ❍ 1982 (34)
- ❍ 1981 (35)
- ❍ 1980 (36)
- ❍ 1979 (37)
- ❍ 1978 (38)
- ❍ 1977 (39)
- ❍ 1976 (40)
- ❍ 1975 (41)

- ❍ 1974 (42)
- ❍ 1973 (43)
- ❍ 1972 (44)
- ❍ 1971 (45)
- ❍ 1970 (46)
- ❍ 1969 (47)
- ❍ 1968 (48)
- ❍ 1967 (49)
- ❍ 1966 (50)
- ❍ 1965 (51)
- ❍ 1964 (52)
- ❍ 1963 (53)
- ❍ 1962 (54)

Q36 What is the total number of years of college education you have completed, including both funeral service and non-funeral service education?

- ❍ 1 (1)
- ❍ 2 (2)
- ❍ 3 (3)
- ❍ 4 (4)
- ❍ 5+ (5)

Q37 At what type of institution did you complete your funeral service education?

- ❍ Private institution offering only a funeral service program (1)
- ❍ Private institution offering multiple academic programs, including funeral service (2)
- ❍ Public institution (e.g. community college) (3)

Q38 Over the course of your working career, what is the total number of years that you have been employed by, and/or derived income from work for/at, a funeral establishment(s) in the STATE OF ALABAMA that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and funeral services to the public?

- ❍ 1 (1)
- ❍ 2 (2)
- ❍ 3 (3)
- ❍ 4 (4)
- ❍ 5 (5)
- ❍ 6 (6)
- ❍ 7 (7)
- ❍ 8 (8)
- ❍ 9 (9)
- ❍ 10 (10)
- ❍ 11 (11)
- ❍ 12 (12)
- ❍ 13 (13)
- ❍ 14 (14)
- ❍ 15 (15)
- ❍ 16 (16)
- ❍ 17 (17)
- ❍ 18 (18)
- ❍ 19 (19)
- ❍ 20 (20)
- ❍ 21 (21)
- ❍ 22 (22)
- ❍ 23 (23)
- ❍ 24 (24)
- ❍ 25 (25)
- ❍ 26 (26)
- ❍ 27 (27)
- ❍ 28 (28)
- ❍ 29 (29)
- ❍ 30 (30)
- ❍ 31 (31)
- ❍ 32 (32)
- ❍ 33 (33)
- ❍ 34 (34)
- ❍ 35 (35)
- ❍ 36 (36)
- ❍ 37 (37)
- ❍ 38 (38)

- ❍ 39 (39)
- ❍ 40 (40)
- ❍ 41 (41)
- ❍ 42 (42)
- ❍ 43 (43)
- ❍ 44 (44)
- ❍ 45 (45)
- ❍ 46 (46)
- ❍ 47 (47)
- ❍ 48 (48)
- ❍ 49 (49)
- ❍ 50+ (50)

Q39 What is your gender?
- ❍ Male (1)
- ❍ Female (2)

Q40 What is your ethnicity?
- ❍ Hispanic or Latino (1)
- ❍ Not Hispanic or Latino (2)

Q41 What is your race?
- ❍ American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- ❍ Asian (2)
- ❍ Black or African American (3)
- ❍ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)
- ❍ White / Caucasian (5)

Q42 How old are you (you age in years)?

- ❍ 19 (1)
- ❍ 20 (2)
- ❍ 21 (3)
- ❍ 22 (4)
- ❍ 23 (5)
- ❍ 24 (6)
- ❍ 25 (7)
- ❍ 26 (8)
- ❍ 27 (9)
- ❍ 28 (10)
- ❍ 29 (11)
- ❍ 30 (12)
- ❍ 31 (13)
- ❍ 32 (14)
- ❍ 33 (15)
- ❍ 34 (16)
- ❍ 35 (17)
- ❍ 36 (18)
- ❍ 37 (19)
- ❍ 38 (20)
- ❍ 39 (21)
- ❍ 40 (22)
- ❍ 41 (23)
- ❍ 42 (24)
- ❍ 43 (25)
- ❍ 44 (26)
- ❍ 45 (27)
- ❍ 46 (28)
- ❍ 47 (29)
- ❍ 48 (30)
- ❍ 49 (31)
- ❍ 50 (32)
- ❍ 51 (33)
- ❍ 52 (34)
- ❍ 53 (35)
- ❍ 54 (36)
- ❍ 55 (37)
- ❍ 56 (38)
- ❍ 57 (39)
- ❍ 58 (40)
- ❍ 59 (41)

- ❍ 60 (42)
- ❍ 61 (43)
- ❍ 62 (44)
- ❍ 63 (45)
- ❍ 64 (46)
- ❍ 65 (47)
- ❍ 66 (48)
- ❍ 67 (49)
- ❍ 68 (50)
- ❍ 69 (51)
- ❍ 70 (52)
- ❍ 71 (53)
- ❍ 72 (54)
- ❍ 73 (55)
- ❍ 74 (56)
- ❍ 75 (57)
- ❍ 76 (58)
- ❍ 77 (59)
- ❍ 78 (60)
- ❍ 79 (61)
- ❍ 80 (62)
- ❍ 81 (63)
- ❍ 82 (64)
- ❍ 83 (65)
- ❍ 84 (66)
- ❍ 85 (67)
- ❍ 86 (68)
- ❍ 87 (69)
- ❍ 88 (70)
- ❍ 89 (71)
- ❍ 90+ (72)

Q43 Which of the following ranges captures your present annual income from your work in funeral service?

- ❍ At the present time, I do not earn any income from work in funeral service (1)
- ❍ Less than $10,000 (2)
- ❍ $10,000-$19,999 (3)
- ❍ $20,000-$29,999 (4)
- ❍ $30,000-$39,999 (5)
- ❍ $40,000-$49,999 (6)
- ❍ $50,000-$59,999 (7)
- ❍ $60,000-$69,999 (8)
- ❍ $70,000-$79,999 (9)
- ❍ $80,000-$89,999 (10)
- ❍ $90,000-$99,999 (11)
- ❍ $100,000 or more (12)

Q45 Part 4: Closing Comments- Your Opportunity to Provide Written Feedback. You have just completed a detailed survey about funeral service education in the United States and the State of Alabama, a significant portion of which focused on select learning objectives upon which the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum is based.

Q46 In the space below, please share any suggestions you may have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered through programs accredited by the ABFSE: