Persistent poverty is a serious problem in Georgia. Education, especially postsecondary education, could be the key to breaking poverty cycles and putting Georgia’s youth on track to build the wealth they need to get out of poverty and stay out. Teachers are information brokers, role models, and strong supports for students from low-income backgrounds (Ellis & Lane, 1963, Peters, 2008). This puts teachers in a unique position to affect change in the lives of these students by encouraging them to pursue some form of education beyond high school (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). However, to appropriately advise students, teachers need accurate and up-to-date college knowledge. This survey study examined the perceptions high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties in Georgia had about their college knowledge and to discover how often these teachers shared this college knowledge with the students they taught.

The sample for this study was 257 high school teachers who teach in selected persistent poverty counties in Georgia. Seventy-seven point eight percent of the desired sample participated in the study. Survey research revealed that the majority of teachers perceived that one of their roles as a high school teacher was to assist students in making informed decisions about postsecondary education and careers. However, college and career guidance was incorporated
into only 41.4% of teachers’ teacher preparation programs. Teachers’ major source of college knowledge information was the Internet. They possessed the most college knowledge and shared most frequently information about their state’s high school graduation requirements. They knew least about and least frequently shared information about the transfer of postsecondary education credit. There was a high positive correlation between teachers’ college knowledge and their frequency of college knowledge sharing. Analyses determined that there was no statistically significant difference in teachers’ college knowledge or frequency of college knowledge sharing based on their teaching area. Details revealing the college knowledge of these teachers are shared. Recommendations to increase teachers’ college knowledge are also provided.

INDEX WORDS: Poverty; Public Postsecondary Education; Postsecondary Advising; High School Teacher Support
HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

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HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC
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DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to all the students in the United States who are from low-income families, those from minority groups, and those at-risk of dropping out of high school and never completing any form of postsecondary education. It is a call to action for teachers all over who have the opportunity to nurture, influence, and encourage their students to be the best students they can be. These students need to become well-educated, productive, and contributing members of society—members who have the knowledge and skills required to obtain gainful employment in a career they enjoy and build the wealth required to get out of and stay out of poverty.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 2007, over 37 million Americans were living in poverty (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2008). According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Economic Research Service (USDA/ERS; 2004), a primary source of economic information and research in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 444 of America’s counties are described as persistent poverty counties. A persistent poverty county is defined as a rural county in the U.S. that has a poverty rate of 20% or more based on 1999 income reported in the 2000 Census (USDA/ERS, 2004).

Economic research suggests that individuals living in poverty face an increased risk of adverse outcomes, such as poor health and criminal activity, both of which may lead to reduced participation in the labor market (Carl Vinson Institute of Government [CVIOG], 2003). Persistent poverty counties are characterized by low employment, low income levels, low education levels, poor health indicators, high rates of juvenile arrests and adult crimes, teen pregnancy and high school dropouts (CVIOG, 2003). Wimberley and Morris (2003) suggest there is an uneven pattern in distribution of these persistent poverty counties, with most of the worst poverty levels clustered in the south.

In 2002, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG, 2003) conducted a study to examine persistent poverty in the south. This study identified widespread and persistent poverty as a major contributor to the economic difficulties facing the southeastern region of the U.S. Southern states make up the top tier of states with major economic issues caused by persistent poverty. Mississippi is the most poverty-stricken state in the U.S. Other southern states are
ranked as follows: 2-Louisiana, 4-Arkansas, 5-Kentucky, 6-Alabama, 7-West Virginia, 10-Tennessee, 12-South Carolina, and 13-North Carolina and Georgia. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Of particular interest in this study are the state of Georgia and strategies to improve the future economic well-being of Georgia’s school-age rural residents living in its persistent poverty counties.

Ninety-one of Georgia’s 159 counties are identified as counties in persistent poverty and at least a million Georgia citizens are living in poverty (see Appendix A). Of those, nearly half a million Georgians have incomes less than half the federal poverty threshold (Bishop, 2005) which is $11,161 for one person under the age of 65 and $10,289 for one person over the age of 65 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These persons are among those described as the working poor (Bishop, 2005). Because education and income are related, almost 9 billion dollars would be added to the state’s economy if every citizen over 25 years old earned a high school diploma. The increase in the state’s economy would be even greater, over 30 billion dollars, if that same population earned a college degree (Bishop, 2005).

All efforts to eradicate poverty benefit the Georgia economy; and according to Cruz (2008), the most direct way to deal with poverty is to provide jobs with decent wages. Dohm and Shniper (2007) report that occupations requiring only short-term and moderate-term on-the-job training will make up 50% of the U.S. labor market through 2016. An increase of 5 million jobs requiring at least a bachelor’s degree is expected during that same period, and the fastest growing jobs will require a high level of skill training. Of the 30 fastest growing jobs, 7 will require postsecondary vocational education and training or an associate’s degree; and 15 will require a bachelor’s degree or more (Dohm & Shniper, 2007). Because many of the higher paying jobs that are and will be available in the workforce require high-level skills, it is imperative that
today’s students get the education and training they need beyond high school to break the cycle of poverty. It is also important to note that individuals with higher education earn higher wages and are less likely to be unemployed than those with less education (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007).

Purpose Statement

The number of Georgians living their lives in cyclical poverty is enormous, yet the projected need for new employees to be highly skilled suggests an opportunity to address the problem through education and training. Many students attending schools in high poverty counties never consider further education, and those who do are often discouraged due to perceptions about entrance standards and costs (Engle, Bermeo, & O’Brien, 2006). Education, especially postsecondary education, could be the key to breaking these cycles of poverty and putting Georgia’s youth on track to build the wealth they need to get out of persistent poverty—and stay out. Our nation’s economic security depends on this happening. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), “no single factor will determine the future quality of life for all residents in your state more than whether enough adults earn college degrees and technical certificates” (Lord, Marks, & Creek, 2005, p. 1). SREB president Mark Musick poignantly submitted that

If students from minority and low-income families don’t graduate in larger numbers from high school and college, we will face a situation that America has never experienced before. The new generation will actually be less educated than today’s—and even less prepared to contribute to an economy that by 2020 will depend even more on education. (Lord et al., 2005, p. i)
Many outreach activities have been designed by educational institutions, state and federal governments, and communities to support underrepresented students in getting on the path to college. These college preparation programs have been developed to enhance and supplement schools’ standard activities to help those students who might not normally be able to go to college. It has been suggested that these programs are helpful, but may not be as effective as intended to improve college access for those students who need assistance, primarily low-income and minority students because these students are still underrepresented on college campuses across the U. S. (Corwin, Colyar, & Tierney, 2005). Students who do not have the knowledge to navigate the path to college often rely on their high schools to provide that information to them; however, several studies have noted inequities in college guidance available in public schools serving more low-income and minority students. These inequities include less time dedicated to college counseling, high student-to-counselor ratios, an infrequency of student-to-counselor contacts, and fewer visits from college recruiters (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005; Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001; Vargas, 2004).

Teachers in Georgia’s persistent poverty counties are in a unique position to affect change in the lives of the students they teach by encouraging them to pursue some form of education beyond high school (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). Becoming highly skilled and acquiring education beyond high school are the two factors thought to determine income more than any other (Schaffner & Van Horn, 2003). Therefore, the purposes of this survey study were to examine the perceptions high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties in Georgia had about their college knowledge and to discover how often these teachers shared this college knowledge with the students they taught.
Research Questions

Six research questions guided this study. They were:

1. What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

2. What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

3. What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area?

6. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is drawn from Ellis and Lane’s (1963) work which established high school teachers as the most significant nonfamilial influences on the upward mobility of students—the movement of impoverished, lower-class students to higher classes. They maintained that poor, perhaps disenfranchised youth, need direction from high school teachers for college plans in order to provide the impetus for such movement. This concept provides a basis for exploring teachers’ perceptions about the roles they play in the
education of impoverished students, and discovering perceptions of the knowledge teachers believe they have about available public postsecondary education. This concept also provides a rationale for examining how often teachers actually share their college knowledge with their students. The concept of teachers as nonfamilial influences for students has continued to surface in the ideas and research of others who espouse a similar concept (Corwin, Colyar, Tierney, 2005; Ellis, 1990; Erickson, McDonald, Elder, 2009; Floyd, 1996; Freeman, 1997; Frome & Dunham, 2002; Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

Many consider high school to be a catalyst for success in college and careers, especially for students from low-income backgrounds (Sagawa & Schramm, 2008). According to Ellis and Lane (1963), high school teachers were identified as the school’s formal network for important structural support of students as they pursued social mobility. In several instances, the high school teacher’s influence surpassed that of the parent and the guidance counselor (Ellis & Lane, 1963; Womble & Jones, 1998). In a 1987 study, Lee and Ekstrom reported that teachers have slightly more influence over students than guidance counselors. Hurley and Thorp (2002) reported similar findings 15 years later. They discovered that when asked “Who in high school has been helpful in advising on career options or options to further your education?” an overwhelming majority of students studied, 51.0 %, replied that they did not have anyone at school help them with career guidance. Twenty-one point one percent were helped by a school counselor, 24.8 % were guided by a teacher, 1.1 % were guided by a school administrator, and another 2.0 % were guided by someone else (Hurley & Thorp, 2002).

Lee and Ekstrom (1987) discovered that in many circumstances, guidance counselors did more postsecondary advising with students who were affluent, ambitious, academically talented, and from urban areas than they did with students who were disadvantaged, minority, and from
rural areas. This finding suggests that students who need advice the most probably do not get it. They also found that many students who decided to attend a two-year college and those on the general academic track, had little or no postsecondary assistance from their guidance counselors. Lee and Ekstrom report that less than half of all students in high school have access to counseling to discuss plans for their lives after high school graduation. Too often students who have the desire to attend college, but lack the proper guidance, end up being left behind because they do not have contact with a counselor until it is almost time for them to graduate from high school. They do not have adequate information about what will be expected of them in the world of work; therefore, they lack adequate knowledge to make intelligent decisions for their future (Barker, 2000).

In today’s information society, many believe having college information available for students to read in counselors’ offices, in school career centers, and on the Internet is enough for students—students will seek this information and make an appointment with a counselor to have a discussion about postsecondary education. Nevertheless, students must first be interested in a topic to seek out information or research it (CommunicationWorks, 2002). For many students, the path to postsecondary education is not simple. Often students need to be convinced that they should pursue a college education—a role for which the teacher is uniquely suited. Relationships necessary to convince students of the importance of pursuing postsecondary education can be developed by teachers. Teachers can help provide the counseling to students that counselors do not have time to provide. Because of the time spent with students, teachers can advise students and continuously encourage them by reminding them of the benefits of obtaining a postsecondary education (Engle et al., 2006). Because of their influence, teachers play a critical
role in building the foundation for society’s social and economic well-being (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kingston, & Gu, 2007).

**Importance of the Study**

Educational attainment is an indicator of one’s quality of life. It affects employment opportunities and future earnings (KewalRamani et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important for students, especially low-income students, to not only finish high school but to also pursue some form of postsecondary education or training so they may be employable in the 21st century world of work. This study is important because the economic success of the U.S. and the world rests on the availability of an educated, high-skilled, and high-performance workforce; the same holds true for the economic success of the southeast and Georgia (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

Higher education benefits individuals and our society (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob, & Cummings, 2004). Due to the need to remain competitive in a global economy America must have a more educated citizenry. Members of America’s workforce must have access to education and training so their skills are current (McDonough & Gildersleeve, 2006; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). They must possess knowledge and skills beyond those learned in high school (Rocha, 2005).

Secondary education teachers and leaders must be aware of the impact they have on postsecondary outcomes of the students they teach. Teachers and their students need to be aware that a four-year college education is not the only education one can earn to be successful. It is a common misconception that all well-paying jobs require a four-year college degree (Rosenbaum, 2004). In fact, it is estimated that in the next decade approximately 15.6 million new jobs in the workforce will require no less than some postsecondary education, although not necessarily a four-year degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Occupations requiring a four-year degree
make up only about 20% of the job share in Georgia (Georgia Department of Labor [GDOL], 2008a) which means about 80% of the job share in Georgia is for those with less than a bachelor’s degree. It is also important to note that according to Georgia’s Job Outlook (GDOL, 2006), some of highest-paid and fastest-growing occupations require at least some college training. Postsecondary educational attainment is a catalyst for positive economic effects on individuals and society; therefore, low-income students need proper information and guidance to prepare for and take advantage of postsecondary education opportunities available in Georgia (Vargas, 2004). As a former southern governor, William Winter (2000) once stated, “the road out of poverty and economic dependency runs by the schoolhouse” (p. 4). Educators can help address the chronic problem of persistent poverty and take an active role in promoting the economic growth of all citizens by promoting academic achievement and encouraging postsecondary education aspirations in all their students (Rojewski, 1999).

It is the goal of this study to describe perceptions high school teachers in select persistent poverty counties have about their knowledge of public postsecondary education (college knowledge) in Georgia. More specifically, this study seeks to contribute to existing literature by providing information about the areas teachers lack college knowledge of so that efforts may be made to increase teachers’ knowledge in these areas so they may pass this information on to their students. Findings from this study will be useful to teacher educators for curriculum planning in teacher preparation programs. Findings will also be useful to high school administrators for determining professional development needs of all teachers, but especially teachers in persistent poverty counties. The study will also provide information to educational leaders and policymakers regarding the potential influence of teachers on the state’s economic vitality.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

This review of literature focuses on postsecondary education and its potential as a tool to help eliminate poverty, an economic condition that plagues Georgia’s financial well being. Completion of education and training provided by Georgia’s technical, two-year, and four-year colleges and universities may be one way to begin moving Georgia and its citizens toward economic prosperity. Topics addressed include the economy, poverty, education, postsecondary advising, teacher support, and college knowledge.

The Economy and Poverty

The U.S. economy is hemorrhaging and has caused panic, chaos, and turmoil in economies around the globe (Dodson, 2008). There is no doubt that the nation is experiencing an economic recession. The U. S. gross domestic product has decreased, unemployment has increased, and deflation is a problem (Dodson, 2008). The government has allocated funds for bailouts of financial markets and industries to help the economy recover. Conditions of the economy of Georgia are dire as well.

Georgia is experiencing an economic recession that is forecasted to last at least 18 months and to be severe, prolonged, and dreadful. As noted by the dean of the University of Georgia Terry College of Business, Robert T. Sumichrast, Georgia’s economy will experience its “longest downturn since the Great Depression” (Dodson, 2008, para. 1). Individuals and companies have lost wealth that will be difficult to recover. Unemployment in the state has increased and has more than doubled from 4.4% in 2007 to 10.9% in 2010. The national
unemployment rate is 10.6% (GDOL, 2010). Due to market volatility and economic decline, employers will be hesitant and less apt to hire than in years past. Competition for jobs will be intense due to an increase in the labor force that will outpace job growth (Dodson, 2008), but members of Georgia’s Department of Economic Development vowed to work diligently to seek investments, jobs, and maintain assets and programs for Georgia and its citizens (Georgia Department of Economic Development [GDED], 2008). Georgia economic development leaders believe that due to Georgia’s assets, opportunities for workforce training, worldwide associations, and business friendly characteristics, Georgia will be able to attract new businesses and retain existing businesses (GDED, 2008).

The Georgia Department of Economic Development reminds its citizens and those considering moving to Georgia that Georgia is still the home of the world’s busiest airport; world’s largest airline; more than 60 public colleges, universities, and technical colleges; and headquarters for 15 Fortune 500 companies and 26 Fortune 1000 companies (GDED, 2008). Therefore, it is poised for the challenges posed by recession. Rebound from the recession is predicted to be slow. The destruction of wealth from this recession has been described as “intense” because middle class households have been damaged more than is typical in a recession, and they will have a difficult time recuperating the wealth they have lost (Dodson, 2008). The distress and economic challenges many middle class households are experiencing due to the recession is the distress individuals in low-income households have been experiencing, some of them for many years.

The U.S. has been a wealthy country with an advanced economy, but not everyone has been well off (Bernstein, 2007). Over a quarter of those who make up the full-time U.S. workforce, approximately 30 million people, do not earn enough money to adequately support
their families at a minimum standard of living (Bernstein, 2007; Cauthen, 2006). These low-wage workers are known as the “working poor” (McSwain & Davis, 2007). According to Bishop (2005), approximately 500 thousand Georgians fall into this category because their incomes are less than 50% of the federal poverty threshold, $11,161 for an individual under the age of 65 and $10,289 for an individual 65 years or older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Most individuals in poverty situations, especially the working poor, do not choose to be poor. They want to help themselves improve their living standards and the life prospects of their children (Bernstein, 2007), but work jobs that pay low wages, offer few, if any, employer benefits like health insurance, paid sick leave, retirement plans, and flexibility to handle family issues that may arise (Cauthen, 2007). According to 2009 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines, in the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia, a family or household of four is in poverty if the household income is $22,050 or less. If that same family were in Alaska, the poverty guideline is $27,570 and in Hawaii, it is $25,360 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). This amount is half of what researchers advocate is necessary to supply the basic needs of families (Douglas-Hall, Chau, & Koball, 2006). There is no place in the U.S. where a family’s basic needs can be met with this little (Cauthen, 2007). Recent economic recession has caused more individuals to fall into the unemployed and working poor categories (Mishel, Shierholz, & Marcus, 2009). Many others are one crisis or catastrophe away from financial ruin (Cauthen, 2007).

Thirteen percent of the U.S. population lives below poverty and 14.3% of Georgia’s population lives below poverty, 1.3% higher than national figures (Bishaw & Semega, 2008). At least a million people live in poverty in Georgia (Bishop, 2005). Georgia is home to three of the top ten poorest places and counties in the U.S. Clarke County (Athens), Georgia has an
estimated poverty rate of 28.7%; Bulloch County (Statesboro), Georgia’s poverty rate is 25.8%; and Bibb County (Macon), Georgia’s poverty rate is 33.0% (Bishaw & Semega). Clarke and Bulloch counties are “persistently poor” counties. Counties are defined as persistently poor if during the past three censuses (1980, 1990, 2000) 20% or more of the county’s residents are in poverty (CVIOG, 2003). Ninety-one out of 159, approximately 57%, of Georgia’s counties are persistently poor (CVIOG, 2003).

Poverty and persistent poverty cripple the economy and burden society (Bishop, 2007). These types of counties characteristically have high unemployment, low income levels, low educational levels, and poor health—all of which drain the economy, especially when they are cyclical (CVIOG, 2003). Persistent poverty anchors down the economy stunting growth (Percy, 2003; Freeman, 2005). Poor counties have depended on jobs that are disappearing like agriculture and manufacturing, and few other industries are replacing those lost jobs (CVIOG, 2003). Poverty causes industries not to locate in a community. Property values are low in poverty stricken areas. There is a lack of affordable housing. The cost of staples like food and gas are higher in poor areas (Bishop, 2007). Juvenile and adult crime flourishes in poor counties (CVIOG, 2003). Poor communities suffer from increased in health care service costs because individuals depend on community clinics and emergency rooms for their care due to an inability to afford health insurance (Knitzer, 2007). Poverty even stifles the effectiveness and performance of school systems (Bishop, 2007).

If poverty could be eliminated in those Georgia counties where it is persistent, the state’s national standings in some human and economic indicators would increase significantly. For example, Georgia’s current ranking in terms of its population living in poverty would move from 34th to 24th; and its per capita income would increase. The percentage of Georgia’s adult
population with high school diplomas and college degrees would see a dramatic increase. Similarly, Georgia’s current ranking for student scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, 49th in the nation, would move to 40th. These examples illustrate a great deal of change in a positive direction, all stimulated by an elimination of poverty (Bishop, 2005). Improving the poverty situation in the nation will require improvements in educational attainment, workforce and business development, employment, health, housing, and community infrastructure (CVIOG, 2002). A good place to begin the fight to eradicate poverty is educational attainment.

**Poverty and Education**

As Barr and Parrett (2007) so eloquently expressed:

> Education is the key factor that separates the rich from the poor, economic opportunity from economic despair, and the good life from the tragic world of the ‘other America.’ Those who are well-educated have access to the richest economic system that the world has ever known. For those who lack education, the door of opportunity is slammed shut.

The apartheid of ignorance has become an unavoidable reality in the U.S. (p. 7)

Education is an investment in the development of the nation (Rich, 1968). The lack of an educated workforce in poor counties impedes the abilities of those counties and individuals to produce goods and services that enable them to build and sustain wealth (CVIOG, 2002). The government provides work supports such as earned income tax credits, child care assistance, public health insurance coverage, and housing assistance to help low-income families survive, but dependence on these supports still leaves individuals economically vulnerable (Cauthen, 2007). Work supports are not enough to help low-income individuals gain financial independence. In order to become self-sufficient, they need education, skills, and training that will allow them to increase their worker productivity and earnings (Bernstein, 2007). Economic
prosperity and security are obtainable for anyone, regardless of race, gender, class, or social origin, if they have a high-quality education (Barr & Parrett, 2007). Postsecondary education can be a pathway out of poverty leading to economic self-sufficiency (Sokatch, 2006).

Financial security and educational attainment are connected to future employability (Ripke & Crosby, 2002; Schaffner & Van Horn, 2003). Educational level is generally a predictor of income because the more education one has, the greater one’s potential earnings (Bishaw & Semega, 2008; Stuart & Dahm, 1999). The majority of people in poverty situations lack a high school diploma (Bishop, 2005; CVIOG, 2002; Douglas-Hall, Chau, & Koball, 2006). The high school diploma is the foundational education credential used to move up the income ladder. Not having this credential is a barrier to further postsecondary educational opportunities and to obtaining well-paying jobs. In today’s economy, a high school diploma is not enough to guarantee a high-paying job; it is only enough to guarantee entry-level employment in low-wage jobs. Low-wages from entry-level work are often inadequate to maintain a reasonable standard of living (Levin & Riffel, 2000). Entry-level work is insufficient for the financial independence desired by those in poverty. The earnings required to overcome poverty and partake in the American dream come only with attainment of postsecondary education and skills (Oakes, Rogers, Silver, Valladares, Terriquez, McDonough, Renee, & Lipton, 2006; Pandey, Zhan, Neely-Barnes, & Menon, 2000; Ripke & Crosby, 2002; Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002).

The U.S. has shifted from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy, global competition has increased, and high-skilled workers are in demand (Wimberly, 2002). Employers have a surplus of talent from which to select employees. They are no longer willing to hire those who do not have basic skills that were supposed to be learned in high school. They prefer employees with advanced skills (Lehr, Clapper, & Thurlow, 2005; Tornatzky, Cutler, &
Lee, 2002). The advanced skills and training necessary for employment in this economy must be obtained through postsecondary education (Schaffner & VanHorn, 2005; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005). Even jobs that were once labeled as unskilled or low-skill, such as jobs in retail or food service, now require education, training, and licensure beyond the high school diploma (Barr & Parrett, 2007). To be successful in the 21st century workforce, people are going to have to know more, be able to do more, and be able to change and adapt. Employers demand employees with knowledge and skill sets beyond those typically learned in high school. They often require a college or postsecondary technical credential to prove that employees have developed such abilities (Rocha, 2005).

According to *Georgia’s Hot Careers to 2016*, of the careers with the fastest job growth, above average wages, and at least 100 expected annual openings, all 65 require education or training beyond the high school diploma (GDOL, 2008b). There are more job opportunities available for those who are highly educated and highly skilled (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance [ACSFA], 2001). Advances in technology and global competition have caused workers who have postsecondary education and who continually upgrade their knowledge and skills to be more desirable than workers with only basic skills (Stuart & Dahm, 1999). These workers also earn higher wages (GDOL, 2008a).

Individuals who have a postsecondary education are less likely to be unemployed than those without one (see Table 1 below). They are also more likely to experience a higher standard of living than individuals with a high school education or less (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005). During tough economic times, workers with higher education generally do better than workers without it because when they are displaced they have the option to take a step down the occupational ladder when seeking employment (Leonard, 2009). It is estimated that over a
lifetime of work, graduates from Georgia’s colleges and universities add an additional one million dollars to their earnings (Board of Regents [BOR], 2007). Those who complete postsecondary education also are able to save more, increase personally and professionally, provide a good quality of life for their children, make better consumer decisions, and participate in hobby and leisure activities (Porter, 2002).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Completed</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
<th>Median weekly earnings ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional degree</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1,555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Georgia’s Public Postsecondary Education Options

There are two major public postsecondary education systems in Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia. Both of these education systems have colleges all over the state of Georgia (see Appendices B, C). The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) is a unified system of technical colleges that provides technical education, customized business and industry training, and adult education (Technical College System of Georgia [TCSG], 2009d). The TCSG consists of 28 technical colleges plus 31 satellite campuses, 4 technical college divisions in University System of Georgia schools, and a
virtual technical college online (TCSG, 2009a, 2009d). The Technical College System of Georgia works to help Georgia and its citizens create a better future for themselves. Its mission, to provide “technical, academic, and adult education and training focused on building a well-educated, globally competitive workforce for Georgia” (TCSG, 2009b, para. 1). During the 2008 fiscal year, approximately 40% of the TCSG’s students were enrolled in program areas determined by Governor Purdue’s Commission for a New Georgia to be in high demand and critical for the future of Georgia. These program areas are Aerospace, Agribusiness, Energy and the Environment, Healthcare, Life Sciences, and Logistics and Transportation (TCSG, 2009a).

The University System of Georgia (USG) is a unified system of public colleges and universities governed and managed by the Board of Regents. The University System consists of 35 two-year and four-year colleges and universities. There are 4 research universities, 2 regional universities, 13 state universities, 8 state colleges, and 8 two-year colleges (Board of Regents [BOR], 2009a). “Creating a More Educated Georgia” is the motto of the University System (BOR, 2007, p. 1). Its mission is to “provide a strong, unified, academically excellent system of public higher education for Georgians” (BOR, 2007, p. 20). The USG seeks to contribute to the economic advancement of the state and its citizenry by “providing excellent undergraduate general education and first-rate programs leading to associate, baccalaureate, masters, professional, and doctorate degrees” (BOR, 2009c).

Georgia has a host of public postsecondary educational options in all parts of the state of which its citizens may take advantage. These higher education systems offer postsecondary credentials that range from technical certificates of credits to doctoral degrees. There are even seamless educational processes in place that allow students to articulate and transfer credits from their secondary studies to their postsecondary studies. Some of these programs include the
Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Education Career Partnerships (ECP), Dual Enrollment, and Joint Enrollment programs (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2007; Sandersville Technical College, 2007; Georgia Department of Education, 2005; Hill, 2007). For low-income students, participation in programs like Dual Enrollment increases their access to postsecondary education (Hill, 2007). They also allow students to get a head start on their postsecondary education aspirations (SREB, 2007). Research shows that students who participate in Dual Enrollment programs graduate from high school at higher rates than those who do not participate (TCSG, 2009a). Benefits of the ECP and Dual and Joint Enrollment programs include the development of a younger skilled workforce; improved secondary-postsecondary relationships; saved money for families and tax payers; shortened time to a college degree; increased income, employment and other job benefits; decreased dependency on government assistance, and decrease crime costs (Hill, 2007).

Each year, more and more low-income students graduate from high school prepared academically to enter college, but face a major economic barrier when it comes to completing their postsecondary education (Freeman, 1997; ACSFA, 2001). Although federal financial aid is available to students (Long & Riley, 2007), investment in a college degree can be a burden for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Hubbard, 1999; Porter, 2002, MacAllum, Glover, Queen, & Riggs, 2007). Georgia has made strides to make postsecondary education in Georgia more affordable through the use of Georgia lottery funds. Financial aid in the form of Accel funding from the Georgia lottery is available to pay the cost of joint enrollment courses that are required for an associate’s or bachelor’s degree (Georgia Student Finance Commission [GSFC], 2007). The HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) program, also lottery funded, is a scholarship and grant program that provides funds for students working toward
completion of certificates, diplomas, and degrees at Georgia’s technical colleges and eligible Georgia private and public colleges and universities (GSFC, 2009). Having these financial options benefits all students. However, many low-income students must know about these options in order to take advantage of them. Students must be properly advised about Georgia’s postsecondary educational options and opportunities in order to make appropriate postsecondary education institution selection decisions.

**Postsecondary Advising**

Considering the challenges of the U.S. and the global economies, it is especially important that all students receive a good education, sound career guidance, and the proper education for the careers they choose to pursue (Schargel & Smink, 2001). Poor students often grow up in neighborhoods where going to college is not the norm (Ellis & Lane, 1963), and many of them are not even motivated to complete high school (Barr & Parrett, 2007). If these students are to improve their economic situation, they must complete high school and postsecondary education (Plank & Jordan, 2001). Low-income students, in particular, must be advised that education is the key to their upward mobility (Qian & Blair, 1999). Taking advantage of postsecondary educational opportunity will place low-income students in a position to excel and overcome (Barr & Parrett, 2007). These students need to know that a postsecondary education is required for employment in today’s service, information, and technology-based labor market (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

Before graduating from high school, students should be on the path to postsecondary education and successful, rewarding careers; but, many individuals graduate from high school, flounder in the world of work, become “working poor,” and then realize that a postsecondary education is what they need to improve their social mobility and economic well-being.
(Rosenbaum, 2002). They often make great efforts to continue their education, but due to work and family responsibilities, completing a postsecondary education is extremely challenging (McSwain & Davis, 2007). This is evidence that the earlier one recognizes the importance of a postsecondary education and takes steps toward completion of postsecondary education, the better. Students need reliable advice about options available to them after high school graduation and what they need to do to prepare for those opportunities (Schargel & Smink, 2001).

To facilitate the transition between high school and the world of work, all students need postsecondary advising, especially postsecondary education advising. It is imperative that students, along with their parents, be educated about the knowledge and skills required to compete in the 21st century global world of work (SREB, 2007). Postsecondary advisement should begin as early as middle school and include information about occupations and careers, high school courses recommended for career interest areas and those required for college admission, postsecondary education institutions, and costs of attending postsecondary institutions (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997; Tierney & Venegas, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

**Sources of postsecondary advisement and support.** The guidance students need to make postsecondary plans may come from several sources. Research indicates that students’ postsecondary aspirations and choices are influenced by their parents and family, friends, community members, and school personnel (Ellis & Lane, 1963; Freeman, 1997; Hurley & Thorp, 2002; Kono, 2003; Paa & McWhirter, 2000; Sokatch, 2006). Support from these individuals also has been linked to academic success (Wentzel, 1998). For low-income students, social support networks that include family, peers, counselors, and mentors, are critical. These supporters can help students obtain and understand the information they receive about college
and the college application process (Corwin, Colyar, & Tierney, 2005).

**Parents.** Several studies have revealed that parents have the most effect on students’ postsecondary educational decisions (Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Guindon, & Richmond, 2005; Valenza, 2005). Parents are children’s first teachers, and many expect them to provide their children with all the information they need to transition after high school (Peters, 2008). Often parents from higher-income backgrounds have personal experience with college going. They expose their children to their college knowledge by sharing their experiences with them and hiring professional coaches, counselors, and tutors for their students to help prepare them for college. Students from these types of backgrounds also often attend schools where college going is the expected (McDonough & Gildersleeve, 2006; Oakes et al., 2006). Low-income parents, on the other hand, often do not have the information or the finances to buy the support they need to help prepare their students to make postsecondary decisions (Freeman, 2005; Oakes et al., 2006). Low-income students and their parents also often lack the social support networks and access to structured programs needed to execute effectively postsecondary education and career planning. A lack of guidance in the college-choice process can have a devastating effect on any student, but especially the low-income student because their parents often do not possess the aptitude, awareness, or time to provide postsecondary guidance (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob, & Cummings, 2004). Unfortunately, due to their lack of information, these students and their parents often hold misconceptions about high school course prerequisites for postsecondary admissions, postsecondary education costs, and benefits of postsecondary education completion (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).
When parents and family members can not assist students with postsecondary education planning, students often turn to individuals not in their families for guidance and support (Cheng & Starks, 2002; Ellis, 1990; Ellis & Lane, 1963; Floyd, 1996; Freeman, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1998; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996). Students of all socioeconomic backgrounds admit that they often rely on nonfamilial influences for support. These nonfamilial supporters include peers, community members, and school personnel (i.e., high school counselors and teachers) (Corwin, Colyar, & Tierney, 2005; Ellis & Lane, 1963).

**Peers and community members.** Researchers agree that the college plans of peers affect students’ postsecondary aspirations (Hossler & Stage, 1992; Sokatch, 2006). Research has shown that positive support from peers tends to increase expectations and academic achievement of underserved students (Pathways to College Network, 2007). The postsecondary plans of friends affect students’ postsecondary aspirations (Hossler & Stage, 1992) and are one of the best predictors of college enrollment for some low-income students (Sokatch, 2006). Community members often serve as mentors for students. Research has shown that all students benefit from the support of mentors; however, those with few resources benefit greatly from having a mentor (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009). Exposure to an adult mentor is related to greater high school performance and overall educational accomplishment (Erickson et al., 2009).

**School.** The mission of high schools is not only to prepare students academically or even to prepare students for college, but also to prepare students for productive careers (Rosenbaum, 2002). Society expects schools to deliver to students opportunity, accomplishment and success, safe and secure environments, quality teachers and administrators, specialized programs that work, relevant school and classroom experiences, structure, consistent rules and processes, identification of dreams and aspirations, identification of natural gifts, a plan to use those gifts,
essential skills, empowerment, a safe haven, and hope (Peters, 2008). When these deliverables are provided, schools are en route to accomplishing their economic purpose, educating students well so they have the opportunity to obtain greater personal wealth and become vital contributors to a strong national economy (Ryan & Cooper, 2004).

According to Wimberly (2002), “part of the high school’s role is to create an environment in which students can obtain knowledge and experiences that help them explore, plan, and transition into postsecondary training” (p. 6). However, in many schools, postsecondary advisement has been left to students and parents in spite of low-income parents’ lack of information (Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996). Twenty percent of the students surveyed by Hurley and Thorp (2002) revealed that they could not think of anything their high school did for them to help them with making education and career decisions. In order for the children of low-income parents to be put on the path to postsecondary education, they need guidance because they are unlikely to receive it from home or elsewhere. These students and their parents rely on schools for this information and support. Because these students need to complete postsecondary education programs in order to benefit from higher education, they must not only be advised about college entrance requirements, they also need to be told about requirements for college completion (Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996).

Schools and school personnel must be leaders in guiding students and helping them plan for their future. School environments provide an opportunity for access to adults who become personal advocates for students. These individuals (e.g., administrators, counselors, teachers, and other staff members) assist students in navigating high school and postsecondary education and career preparation. Every student, but especially low-income students, benefit from knowing that they are continually cared about by at least one adult in the school (Wimberly, 2002). A study
done by Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) revealed that of all the sources of postsecondary aspiration and information, counselors and teachers were the most informative.

*High school counselors.* A primary function of high school counselors and guidance programs is to assist students in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education and careers (Feller, 2003). Traditionally, high school guidance counselors have been the designated individuals responsible for helping students make intelligent decisions about their postsecondary plans (Lee & Ekstrom, 1987). Students sometimes receive exposure to postsecondary education and careers through personal meetings, classroom visits, evening financial aid programs, counselor arranged visits from college representatives, and campus visits (Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Bell, Anderson, & Li, 2008). Studies, however, have revealed that postsecondary advisement is not done very well in schools where counselors have many obligations. In many schools because of financial pressures, counselors’ roles have shifted from advisement to administration (Kinzie et al., 2004; Perna, et al., 2008). Counselors are often responsible for counseling, testing, appraising students, preparing schedules, and in many cases counselors act as administrators (Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Perna, et al., 2008; Schmidli, 2003). Counselors may want to conduct postsecondary education advisement with students, however, time available for advisement is often reduced because of the previously mention responsibilities coupled with absurdly high student-to-counselor ratios (Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Perna et al., 2008; Vargas, 2004; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005). There are not enough counselors to handle students’ needs (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997); and because of budgetary restrictions, many schools can not afford to hire more counselors (Perna, et al., 2008). Students must often seek out counselors for advisement instead of advisement being a normal part of the secondary education guidance experience (Perna et al., 2008; Vargas, 2004). For this
reason students often ask teachers questions about postsecondary education and careers. Teachers become informal advisors for students (Ellis, 1990, Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003; Chait & Venezia, 2009).

**Teacher Support**

The job of a teacher is to help others learn (Phillips & Soltis, 1998). Teachers’ responsibilities include promoting learning and motivating student to learn, modifying instruction to accommodate learners with different learning styles, making instructional content decisions, maintaining discipline, and socializing students so they become productive members of society (Phillips & Soltis, 1998). Teachers are information brokers and role models. They are instructors, facilitators, coaches, and student guides. Teachers also celebrate students’ accomplishments as they occur. To many students, teachers are considered family (Peters, 2008) because teachers “not only provide instructional support for academic content and skills,” they “also serve as confidants and internal support for students” (Peters, 2008, p. 11, 12). When teachers are students’ mentors, those students have a tendency to have better success educationally (Erickson et al., 2009). Croninger and Lee (2001) point out that students benefit greatly from teacher support, especially those students who have had academic problems and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers are instrumental in providing students the support and encouragement they need to aspire to and complete higher education and escape the grasp of poverty. Although not often recognized as significant influencers on students’ lives, for poor students, teachers are an important structural support for their upward mobility. Teachers frequently are students’ sole source of postsecondary information (Ellis & Lane, 1963). Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio’s (2003) study revealed that more students spoke with teachers than counselors about college admission policies. When students attend a high school where teachers
prepare and support students’ postsecondary aspirations, those students tend to end up attending colleges that are better matches for their needs (Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, Moeller, Roddie, Gilliam, & Patton, 2008).

This notion of teachers being important agents in students’ postsecondary planning is not new. In 1963, Ellis and Lane examined “the social mechanisms that lead lower-class youth to make use of college as a mobility channel” (p. 743). Just as it often is today, Ellis and Lane noted that for lower-class youth, going to college was not the norm. Negative environments made it difficult for these youth to break away and seek college as a mobility channel. Because of this they required “substitute channels” for receiving information about college. These substitute channels included familial and nonfamilial individuals. Families provided the initial thrust for students to aspire to attend college; but after that, nonfamilial individuals provided the support students needed to guide their college plans. Nonfamilial individuals mentioned by students in the study were high school teachers, other adults (e.g., ministers, friends of the family, employers, family doctors, etc.), and peers. Eighty-five percent of the lower-class students reported that of all the nonfamilial individuals, the high school teacher influenced their college plans the most. This result was interpreted to be due to the parents’ inability to provide effective direction for their children’s aspirations. When compared to higher-classed youth in the study, youth from the lower-classes relied much more heavily upon their high school teachers for help with making college decisions. Also for these students, “teachers are twice as likely as parents to have an important role in influencing the students’ choice of major, while in the general population, parents reportedly, exercise as much influence as the teachers” (p. 754). Ellis and Lane concluded that teachers were students’ “chief source of outside support” (p. 755). Students from the study credited their public schools for bringing them “into close friendly contact with
individual teachers with whom they could discuss their plans for the future and gain incentives and encouragement needed to sustain their motivation for higher education” (p. 756). These teachers encouraged student’s upward mobility aspirations and provided the educational system information they needed to accomplish this goal (Ellis & Lane, 1963).

Teachers are readily accessible to students, considered academic role modes, and are familiar with the college search and choice process, yet they are seldom mentioned as individuals who have a significant influence on students’ postsecondary aspirations and plans (MacAllum et al., 2007). Relational trust is developed between students and teachers when teachers place a high priority on students’ academic and social well-being (Schneider, 2007). Teachers’ relationships with students are better developed than those between students and guidance counselors because teachers spend more time getting to know students than do counselors (Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001). Teachers interact with their students daily (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). This puts teachers in a unique position to assist students with the steps necessary to prepare for postsecondary education (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). In the classroom teachers explain how their classes connect to the real world. Teachers also make course recommendations to students (Wimberly & Noeth, 2005). They provide students with information about education and careers related to their subject area. They are familiar with the skills and training required for jobs in their fields in the world of work. This makes teachers an excellent source for information in addition to counselors because counselors have information about education and careers that is more general (Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001). Schneider (2007) reported that for students who needed help with the college search and application process the expectations and involvement of teachers made the biggest difference in shaping students’ opportunities. Considering the influence teachers have on students and the time they spend with them, Paa and McWhirter
suggest that school counselors strengthen guidance programs by collaborating with teachers and providing them with the information they need to advise students properly on available education and career options. Venezia, Krist, and Antonio (2003) discovered that although teachers try to help counselors with advising, they do not always feel comfortable doing so because they usually have not been trained or do not have the accurate and up-to-date materials they need to provide to students. It is also important to note that personal experiences with postsecondary education can influence teachers’ perceptions and a lack of awareness about public postsecondary education options can cause teachers to have a negative perception of these options (Mitkos & Bragg, 2008). To avoid the sharing of incorrect information, teachers need to be provided with all of the information students need to help them make intelligent college choices. They need proper college knowledge. Chait and Venezia (2009) advocate that “teacher preparation needs to better address the skills and knowledge teachers need to prepare all students for postsecondary education” (p. 8).

**College Knowledge**

College knowledge is the knowledge of postsecondary education and career information needed to help students make career and college choice decisions. College knowledge information covers basic three areas: postsecondary education information, financial aid information, and career information (Pathways to College Network, 2007). It is important that college knowledge be shared with students early and often so they comprehend the benefits of obtaining a postsecondary credential (MacAllum et al., 2007). College knowledge needed by students, their families, and their teachers includes knowing what secondary courses to take for college preparation, making connections between career goals and academic requirements, completing postsecondary institution admissions requirements and applications, knowing how to
finance a postsecondary education, and selecting postsecondary educational options and institutions (Vargas, 2004; Venezia, Kirst, & Antonio, 2003). Other factors that students consider when researching potential colleges to attend are college rankings, graduation rates, programs of study, reputation, location, affordability, and campus safety (Radford, Tasoff, & Weko, 2009). MacAllum et al. (2007) also pointed out that students also need to know about institution type and size, class sizes, academic support programs, student body and faculty diversity, housing options, and cost.

The lack of this college knowledge is a barrier to college access, attendance, and completion (Akerhielm, Berger, Hooker, & Wise, 1998). Students aspiring to attend college need appropriate counseling to guide them with the college planning and decision-making process. Students from low-income, first-generation, and minority backgrounds especially need college knowledge and counseling because they often lack the parental guidance most middle-income students possess due to their parents’ not having gone to college or not having college connections (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002; Vargas, 2004). For economic and professional mobility to occur, it is critical that students from these underserved and underrepresented populations be provided with essential information and guidance to promote college access (Vargas, 2004). Research suggests that knowing about college and receiving college preparatory guidance are keys to developing college-going aspirations, and planning and preparing for college (Hossler, Schmitt, & Vesper, 1999; King, 1996; Vargas, 2004; MacAllum et al., 2007; Radford, Tasoff, & Weko, 2009).

**College Knowledge Sources.** There are many sources from which one may obtain college knowledge information. The United States government has made strides to make information available through the Internet. There are two main government provided resources
from which individuals may obtain information necessary to learn about postsecondary
education and careers. The first college knowledge resource is students.gov
(http://www.students.gov/STUGOVWebApp/Public). This web site is a student portal to the U.S.
government. The mission of the web site is to provide all the information and resources available
to students from the government in one place. The web site has information that helps
individuals learn about how to plan and pay for their education, develop their careers, take
advantage of government resources (students.gov, 2010). Another college knowledge resource
from the government is CareerOneStop
(http://www.careeronestop.org/studentsandcareeradvisors/studentsandcareeradvisors.aspx). The
CareerOneStop web site is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. It provides “career
resources and workforce information to job seekers, students, businesses, and workforce
professionals to foster talent development in a global economy” (CareerOneStop, 2010, para. 2).
Resources on the website enable individuals to find information to help them identify their
interests, explore careers, get work experience, and find education options. Both students.gov
and CareerOneStop offer a wealth of information to be used to research, explore, and identify
postsecondary education and career paths. In addition to these national resources, there are state
resources that may be used to improve college knowledge.

As evidenced by a College Access Month proclamation signed by Governor Sonny Purdue in October of 2009, the state of Georgia has recognized the need to improve college access (State of Georgia, 2009). In order to improve the state’s economic development, Georgia has made lots of college knowledge information available on the Internet to help facilitate individuals’ workforce development. There are resources provided by the state’s two college systems, a local university, a state education funding agency, and the state department of
education. Both the University System of Georgia (University System of Georgia [USG], 2010a) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG, 2010a) host web sites that have information for prospective students that provide information about their colleges/universities, majors, and degrees offered. Information about application, the admission process, and how to pay for college is also offered by the web sites. The USG site for prospective students is http://www.usg.edu/users/prospective_students/. The TCSG site for prospective students is http://www.tcsg.edu/prospective_students.php. The Georgia Career Information Center at Georgia State University sponsors the Georgia Career information System (GCIS; http://www.gcic.peachnet.edu/default.htm). Georgians have access to GCIS through public libraries, elementary and secondary schools, technical colleges, colleges and universities, and agency offices (e.g., Department of Labor, Department of Family and Children Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Rehabilitation Services). GCIS “contains assessments, explorations, and search strategies as well as the most comprehensive and accurate state and national occupational and educational information” (Georgia Career Information Center [GCIC], 2010a, para. 1). The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC, 2010b) sponsors GAcollege411 (https://secure.gacollege411.org/Home/_default.aspx). GAcollege411 provides information to help students with career, high school, college, and financial aid planning. The web site is designed for middle and high school students, college students, adult learners, and parents of students. There are also resources for middle and high school educators, college administrators, and volunteers (GSFC, 2010b).

The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) also has created college knowledge resources to help its students become career ready. The GDOE’s Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) department has produced a guide, Career Concentrations, to
assist students with their education and career planning. The guide contains overviews of the ten CTAE program concentrations and career student organizations, personal career surveys for each concentration, and lists of sample careers and related occupations with education level, average salary, and employment trend information for each occupation. In addition to providing students with an education and planning checklist, it also provides information referring students to professional organizations and additional education and training resources (GDOE, 2009a). The GDOE’s Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education department website also provides links to its high school programs of study known as “Peach State Pathways” (GDOE, 2010e). The Peach State Pathways: Education and Career Planning Tools provide students with the information they need to make sure they enroll in the correct high school courses so they are able to meet the academic and entrance requirements of the postsecondary institution of their choice (GDOE, 2009a). Peach State Pathways have been written for Agriculture; Architecture, Construction, Communications and Transportation Arts and Humanities; Business and Computer Science; Culinary Arts; Education; Engineering and Technology; Family and Consumer Sciences; Government and Public Safety; Healthcare Science; and Marketing, Sales and Service (GDOE, 2010e).

**College Knowledge Curriculum Infusion.** Academic preparation is a critical component of college and career readiness. Because many careers require specialized training and licensure, it is essential that students are familiar with the academic path they need to take to achieve their aspirations. Students also need to know how their performance in school now influences their potential opportunities (Vargas, 2004). Teachers are able to influence students’ college potential by incorporating college-going activities into the curriculum (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). A review of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for all curriculum areas
and courses for grades 9-12 (GDOE, 2010a) indicated very little focus or exposure of students to college knowledge and information needed to make educated decisions about their postsecondary paths in college core classes, the courses required for entry into University System of Georgia (USG) institutions (BOR, 2009b). According USG entrance requirements, students graduating from high school in 2012 or later must complete 4 units each of English, mathematics, and science. Three units of social science and two units of foreign language are also required (BOR, 2009b).

A search of the GPS revealed that there is no exposure to college knowledge information in English Language Arts or Mathematics (GDOE, 2009g, 2010c). In Science there is very limited exposure. The only course in the required Science course list that has exposure to careers is Earth Systems (GDOE, 2006b). For this and other advanced Science courses (i.e., Ecology, Forensic Science, and Anatomy and Physiology of Human Body), an introduction to the standards mentions that “whenever possible” information related to careers in those areas should be emphasized (GDOE, 2006a, 2006c, 2009c, 2009d). The Microbiology standards introduction requires that related careers be highlighted during the entire course (GDOE, 2009h). In Social Studies, Psychology and Sociology are the only courses with standards that call for students to identify and describe occupations and careers where course-related knowledge is important (GDOE, 2008c, 2008d). In the GPS for the Modern Languages (foreign language) including American Sign Language, students are required to identify and discuss situations where the language would be used for occupational purposes; however, there is no mention of this type of standard or a related one mentioned in the Classical Language-Latin GPS (GDOE, 2010d).

The Health Education Georgia Performance Standards for grades 9-12 do not include any reference to exploration or exposure to health-related postsecondary education and career options.
Postsecondary education and careers are also not part of the high school Georgia Performance Standards for Physical Education (GDOE, 2008b). According to the GPS, students enrolled in Fine Arts get a wealth of exposure to postsecondary education and career information. Students enrolled in courses in Dance, Music, Theatre Arts, and Visual Arts Education are required to explore, identify, investigate, and discuss careers in those fields and related fields and the postsecondary education required to enter those fields (GDOE, 2009b, 2009i, 2009j, 2009k). Special/Exceptional Education students are exposed to grade-level appropriate Georgia Performance Standards for each subject area. Those standards are used to develop students’ Individualized Education Programs. Instruction is designed based on Universal Design for Learning Principles (GDOE, 2006d). Students also receive instruction associated with life skills and their future transition from high school into the world of work (GDOE, 2006d).

Considering the title, it is not surprising to discover that exposure to careers and postsecondary options is infused throughout the GPS for Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE). Those who teach CTAE are responsible for the career guidance of their students (Smith & Edmunds, 1999). Two of the 11 CTAE Foundational Skills written into the GPS for all CTAE program areas require that students “achieve technical content skills necessary to pursue the full range of careers for all pathways in the program concentration standard...[and] plan and manage academic-career plans and employment relations” (GDOE, 2007, p. 11). A perusal of the GPS standards for Architecture, Construction, Communications and Transportation; Business and Computer Science; Culinary Arts; Education; Engineering and Technology; Family and Consumer Sciences; Government and Public Safety; Healthcare Science; and Marketing, Sales, and Service display exposure to a variety of activities that prepare students to make educated decisions about their lives after high school (GDOE, 2010b). Some of
these activities include the identification and exploration of occupations and career pathways, identification of postsecondary credentials and college majors, and the identification of professional and career technical organizations available in the fields (GDOE, 2007, 2008a, 2009e).

All high school curriculum areas and courses share the Reading Across the Curriculum standard. This standard calls for students to develop their personal and academic interests, understandings, and expertise in various subject areas (GDOE, 2010a). According to the review of the GPS, coverage of postsecondary education and careers information related to courses taught in Georgia’s curriculum is only written into the Georgia Performance Standards of advanced level courses, Modern Language (foreign language), and elective courses in Fine Arts and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education.
CHAPTER 3

Method

This chapter begins by restating the purpose of the study and research objective and questions. The remainder of the chapter describes the methods to be used in this study and is organized into the following sections: (a) design, (b) participants, (c) instrumentation, (d) procedures, and (e) data analysis.

Purpose of Study

The number of Georgians living their lives in cyclical poverty is enormous, yet the projected need for new employees to be highly skilled suggests an opportunity to address the problem through education and training. Many students attending schools in high poverty counties never consider further education and those who do are often discouraged due to perceptions about entrance standards and costs (Engle et al., 2006). Education, especially postsecondary education, could be the key to breaking these cycles of poverty and putting Georgia’s youth on track to build the wealth they need to get out of persistent poverty—and stay out. Our nation’s economic security depends on this happening. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), “no single factor will determine the future quality of life for all residents in your state more than whether enough adults earn college degrees and technical certificates” (Lord et al., p. 1). SREB president Mark Musick poignantly submitted that

If students from minority and low-income families don’t graduate in larger numbers from high school and college, we will face a situation that America has never experienced before. The new generation will actually be less educated than today’s—and even less
prepared to contribute to an economy that by 2020 will depend even more on education. (Lord et al., 2005, p. i)

Many outreach activities have been designed by educational institutions, state and federal governments, and communities to support underrepresented students in getting on the path to college. These college preparation programs have been developed to enhance and supplement schools’ standard activities to help those students who might not normally be able to go to college (Martinez & Klopott, 2005). It has been suggested that these programs are helpful, but may not be as effective as intended to improve college access for those students who need assistance, primarily low-income and minority students because these students are still underrepresented on college campuses across the U. S. (Corwin et al., 2005). Students who do not have the knowledge to navigate the path to college often rely on their high schools to provide that information to them; however, several studies have noted inequities in college guidance available in public schools serving more low-income and minority students. These inequities include less time dedicated to college counseling, high student-to-counselor ratios, an infrequency of student-to-counselor contacts, and fewer visits from college recruiters (Galassi & Gulledge, 1997; Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Vargas, 2004; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

Teachers in Georgia’s persistent poverty counties are in a unique position to affect change in the lives of the students they teach by encouraging them to pursue some form of education beyond high school (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). Becoming highly skilled and acquiring education beyond high school are the two factors thought to determine income more than any other (Schaffner & Van Horn, 2003). Therefore, the purposes of this survey study were to examine the perceptions high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties in
Georgia had about their college knowledge and to discover how often these teachers shared this college knowledge with the students they taught.

**Research Questions**

Six research questions guided this study. They were:

1. What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?
2. What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?
3. What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?
4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area?
6. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area?

**Design**

The design chosen for this study was survey research. Survey research is a type of non-experimental quantitative research design that is popular in the social sciences due to its flexibility (Muijs, 2004). In survey research, data is collected about the characteristics, experiences, knowledge, or opinions of a sample or population through the use of questionnaires
or interviews (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). When administered correctly, surveys are an important
source of basic scientific knowledge (Creswell, 2003). Survey research is well suited to
descriptive studies or studies where researchers want to investigate relationships between
variables occurring in real-life contexts (Muijs, 2004). Data collected in survey research is
analyzed and used to generalize findings to the population of interest (Creswell, 2003). Surveys
allow researchers to describe, compare, or explain individuals’ or society’s knowledge, feelings,
values, preferences, and behavior (Fink, 2006). To this end, surveys are used for administrative,
commercial, and scientific purposes (Scheuren, 2004).

The survey research design was chosen for this study because it is efficient. Survey
research allows researchers to study a wide range of research questions or objectives and collect
large amounts of data at a reasonably low cost and effort in comparison to other methods such as
observation (Muijs, 2004). In survey research, data collection times are reduced as compared to
interviews or observations (Gall et al., 2007). The survey for this study will be administered by
the researcher on the site of each school participating in the study. Details are provided in the
procedures section of this chapter.

Participants

In research studies, the whole group that the researcher wants to learn about is called the
population (Gall et al., 2007). This group of individuals shares common characteristics. For this
study, the population was all teachers who teach in public high schools in persistent poverty
counties in Georgia’s Regional Educational Service Areas (RESAs), approximately 5,130
teachers (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement [GOSA], 2009). However, because this
population is large and spread all over Georgia, it would be very costly and time consuming to
study the entire population. To save time and to reduce costs, a smaller portion of the desired
population was studied. This smaller group is known as a sample (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). The sample for this study was selected using a convenience sampling method called criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is employed when the researcher desires to use specific criteria to select the sample (Gall et al., 2007). The criteria for the sample examined in this study were (a) teacher employed in a county high school in the accessible Georgia RESA districts of Oconee, Northeast Georgia, and Central Savannah River Area, (b) county in the Georgia RESA is identified as persistently poor, (c) county in the Georgia RESA has at least one “stand alone” high school (not combined with other grades), (d) county high school in Georgia RESA is not involved in any programs that might bias the findings, and (e) county’s superintendent and principal must agree to participate in the study. Using this criteria, participation from qualifying schools was solicited through the counties’ school superintendents. From this group, five superintendents gave permission for their high schools’ teachers to participate in the study. Study participants were high school teachers from five persistent poverty county high schools in the Georgia RESA districts of Oconee, Northeast Georgia, and Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). From those RESA districts, approximately 257 teachers were available to survey (GOSA, 2009). In an effort to reduce nonresponse error and obtain at least a 50% response rate, surveys were administered to whole groups in school faculty meetings (Dillman, 2007; Krueger, 2001). To determine the sample size required for hypothesis testing, Olejnik (1984) advises using a formula that takes into account “criterion for statistical significance, level of statistical power, statistical analysis strategy, and the size of an effect judged to be meaningful” (p. 41). Using this formula and Olejnik’s table for determining minimal sample size, for correlation analysis, with a significance (alpha) level of .05 and a medium effect size (.7), a minimum sample size of 66 is needed. When the statistical analysis is analysis of variance with two groups,
a significance (alpha) level of .05, and a medium effect size (.7), 100 is the minimum sample size needed (Olejnik, 1984).

**Instrumentation**

Studies with constructs focused on high school teachers as postsecondary advisors were nonexistent. Studies were not available that sought out information concerning teachers’ college knowledge—knowledge of postsecondary education information, financial aid information, and career information (Pathways to College Network, 2007). This knowledge is necessary to provide appropriate advice to students so they can make wise college choice decisions. This may have been because the high school counselor is considered the most important professional who influences college enrollment (McDonough, 2006). Several studies have been conducted to identify the role and influence of counselors on students’ postsecondary plans (Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001; Linnehan, Weer, & Stonely, 2006; McDonough, 2005; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Bell, Anderson, & Li, 2008). Two studies investigated counselors’ perceptions of postsecondary vocational and technical education (Hyde, 1968; Ocker, 2000). The study by Ocker (2000) most closely paralleled the current study. Ocker (2000) assessed counselors and counselors in-training about the attitudes and perceptions they held about the technical college system of Wisconsin and its value as a viable postsecondary option for high school students. It was used as a guide for constructing this study. The goals of the current study were similar to the Ocker’s study. However, instead of seeking to discover counselors’ perceptions about technical college and its value as a postsecondary option for high school students, this study sought to discover teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge about all of Georgia’s public postsecondary education options and opportunities.
**Instrument Development.** Since a pre-existing instrument was not found that elicited information from teachers regarding their college knowledge, a survey instrument to compile this information was developed. Individuals’ perceptions of their knowledge can be different from their knowledge. What one thinks he or she knows, does not necessarily translate into actual knowledge. The instrument developed evaluated teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge, what they believed they knew. It was not a test of knowledge, but an assessment of perceptions of knowledge. This instrument also collected regarding the frequency with which teachers shared this knowledge with students. A review of literature revealed the college knowledge information that students needed to know in order to make sound college choice decisions (MacAllum et al., 2007; Radford, Tasoff, & Weko, 2009; and Vargas, 2004). Survey items on the instrument asked about teachers’ college knowledge which included knowledge of high school graduation requirements, opportunities for students to enter college early through joint or dual enrollment programs, postsecondary education institution locations, entrance requirements, programs of study, and certificates, diplomas, and degree options. Teachers were also questioned about their knowledge of financial aid, postsecondary education credit transferability, and other postsecondary related information necessary for individuals to make informed postsecondary education and career decisions. Items on the teachers’ level of college knowledge were rated on a Likert-type scale with a range potential from 1 to 4 with 1 = No Knowledge, 2 = Very Little Knowledge, 3 = Some Knowledge, and 4 = A Lot of Knowledge. The total for the responses from these items was calculated to create a *College Knowledge* score. A high score on the level of college knowledge scale (maximum score=84) indicated the teacher believed she or he possessed a lot of knowledge about the public postsecondary education opportunities in Georgia. Teachers also indicated their frequency of college knowledge sharing using a 3-point Likert-type
scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Frequently. The total for the responses from these items was calculated to create a *Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing* score. A high score on the frequency of college knowledge sharing scale (maximum = 63) indicated that the teacher believed she or he shared her or his knowledge about postsecondary education frequently with the students she or he taught. In addition to the college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing, demographic information was solicited from the teachers regarding their personal and educational characteristics. Personal characteristics included gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Educational characteristics included the highest degree teachers obtained, teaching area, years of teaching experience, and teacher certification status. These variables are often used to explore concepts in educational studies (Malewski & Phillion, 2009; Moore, 2008; Salvano-Pardieu, Fontaine, Bouazzaoui, Florer, 2009; Skerrett, 2006). The teaching area item responses (alternatives or choices) were the college core (English, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign language), health/physical education, fine arts, Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education, and other (GDOE, 2010a). The item responses for gender, race/ethnicity, degree, and experience were obtained from the 2008-2009 State of Georgia K-12 Report Card (GOSA, 2009). The source for the age groups used to categorize respondents’ ages was the 2007 Georgia Educator Workforce report (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2008). Response choices for each of the aforementioned items may be viewed in Table 2.
Table 2

*Data Analysis Coding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>Level of knowledge</td>
<td>1 = No Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Very Little Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Some Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = A Lot of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>Frequency of sharing</td>
<td>1 = Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Role - Postsecondary guidance</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Sources of postsecondary information</td>
<td>Enter what respondent wrote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>1 = Associate’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Bachelor’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Master’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = Specialist’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 = Doctoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Teaching area</td>
<td>1 = English/Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Health/Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = Career, Technical and Agricultural Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = Special/Exceptional Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 = Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>1 = &lt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = 1-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 = 11-20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 = 21-30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 = &gt;30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27a</td>
<td>Certification status</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27b</td>
<td>College and career guidance in teacher</td>
<td>0 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>preparation program</td>
<td>1 = Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1 = Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 = Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The instrument was developed using strategies from Dillman’s (2007) Tailored Design. Tailored Design is a survey development method structured to create trust with respondents and the perception of greater rewards and fewer costs for responding. The overall goal of the features of this method was to reduce error, specifically sampling, coverage, measurement, and nonresponse errors. Sampling error occurs when some, not all, of the units in a population are surveyed. When all units are not given an equal chance to be included in the sample, coverage error occurs. When surveys are constructed poorly and items are poorly worded, respondents may answer inaccurately or imprecisely. When this occurs their responses can not be compared to other respondents’ answers. This is called measurement error. The final type of error Tailored Design strives to reduce is nonresponse error. Nonresponse error occurs when the people who respond to the survey have different characteristics from those who did not respond to the survey and those characteristics are vital to the research study (Dillman, 2007).

Tailored Design (Dillman, 2007) also recommends strategies to elicit trust, create perceptions of reward, and reduced costs. These strategies included showing positive regard, saying thank you, supporting group values, making the survey instrument interesting and easy to
complete, giving social validation, avoiding subordinating language, making the survey appear short and easy to complete, minimizing requests for personal information, using sponsorship by a legitimate authority, and making the task appear important. All of these strategies were employed in the development of the instrument, its cover letter, and the instrument administration protocol (See Appendices F-H). In order to test the instrument for its reliability and validity, Dillman’s (2007) four stages of pretesting were used: (a) review by knowledgeable analysts, (b) retrospective interviews, (c) pilot study, and (d) final check.

**Instrument Pretesting.** Employing Stage 1 of Dillman’s (2007) pretesting suggestions, the instrument was reviewed by content experts and knowledgeable colleagues with diverse expertise. These individuals were high school counselors, teachers, administrators, and postsecondary workforce educators. Stage 1 of pretesting helped establish content validity. The task of the panel of content experts and knowledgeable colleagues was to review the instrument for representativeness of appropriate content based on the construct being studied. They also examined the instrument to evaluate whether it was appropriate for the target audience and if it was properly formatted. Feedback was received about the clarity of items, elimination of unnecessary items, and measurement scale clarity. Afterward, the instrument was modified according to feedback received by removing several items and rewording others. The modified instrument was redistributed to the same group with the same goal in mind, to determine if the instrument was corrected and to acquire further suggestions for improvement in order to verify construct validity. A new draft of the instrument was produced for Stage 2 of the pretesting process.

Stage 2 of pretesting involved retrospectively interviewing respondents in order to evaluate the cognitive and motivational qualities of the instrument (Dillman, 2007). Respondents
were asked to complete the instrument while I watched, noting if the respondents answered items with hesitation, exhibited confused expressions, changed answers multiple times, or behaved in any other way that suggested item comprehension problems. After the instrument was completed, I individually questioned each respondent about their behaviors in order to discover potential problems with the instrument that needed correcting. I also asked the respondents questions recommended by Dillman about the motivating features of the instrument, for example: Was the instrument appealing to the eye? Was the instrument interesting? At any time did you want to stop completing the instrument? Were you offended by any of the questions on the instrument? And, would this instrument be one you would complete willingly without any incentive? Interviewing respondents retrospectively is a preferred technique for evaluating instruments and making instrument improvement decisions (Dillman, 2007). Based on the responses received, measurement scales were clarified. After a final review by the expert panel, the instrument was determined to have face and content validity.

Stage 3 of Dillman’s pretesting suggestions required conducting a small pilot study. The pilot study procedures should be as similar to the procedures of the actual study as possible. The goals of the pilot study were to identify possible problems with data collection procedures, issues with response rates, item nonresponse, and variable distributions; and to obtain an internal consistency reliability estimate (Brown, 2001; Dillman, 2007). Data from the pilot study was tested for validity and reliability in order to ensure that an unsound instrument was not administered (Krueger, 2001). The instrument used for the pilot study was a self-administered, paper-based survey. Survey administration was conducted with a group of teachers from a school with similar characteristics as the target population. The school and its teachers met all of the sample selection criteria. Pilot testing was conducted during a school faculty meeting.
Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, instructions were given for completion, and the instruments were distributed, completed, and returned. After data collection was completed, the data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 17.0 for analysis. Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine an internal consistency reliability estimate since it can be used with responses that are coded dichotomously or on a Likert scale (Huck, 2004). Cronbach’s alpha for the High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Their College Knowledge instrument was $\alpha = 0.964$. Cronbach alpha for the College Knowledge scale yielded $\alpha = 0.919$ reliability estimate and the Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scale yielded $\alpha = 0.947$ reliability estimate. These findings suggested that instrument items were internally consistent. The instrument was further revised according to information learned from the pilot test, such as further rewording of directions for Part 2 and the rewording of Item 27. A final copy of the instrument is available in Appendix H.

Before conducting the actual study, a final check of the instrument, Stage 4 of pretesting, was conducted (Dillman, 2007). Stage 4 of pretesting requires instrument completion by individuals who have had no prior participation in the instrument development process. Dillman suggests that people with no prior experience with the instrument be used because those with prior experience sometimes become desensitized to the work and are not be able to identify problems with it. The goal of this pretest was to make sure there were no issues with the instrument that had been overlooked. From this pretest two problems were identified. On Item 24 an “s” and an apostrophe had to be added at the end of the word “Associate.” On Item 25 the word “Education” had to be added after “Health/Physical.” These items were corrected and the final version of the instrument was reviewed one last time before being printed for administration.
Procedure

Once the University of Georgia’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was approved, contacts were made with superintendents from the selected schools to seek participation in the research study. Fourteen superintendents were sent formal letters via the United States Postal Service (USPS) and e-mail introducing the study and seeking permission to survey their high schools’ teachers. Enclosed with each letter was a brief summary handout about the study, the survey instrument, the survey information cover letter that needed to be distributed to teachers before the survey was administered, and a letter of authorization to be signed by the superintendent and the principal granting permission to conduct the study along with a stamped addressed envelope for return. From these mailings, five superintendents responded positively and agreed to allow their faculties to be surveyed. After permission was received, follow-up contacts were made with the responding superintendents to thank them for their cooperation and with principals to schedule survey administrations. Surveys were administered from July 15 through September 10, 2009.

Before surveys were administered, teachers received a letter about the study that described the purpose and goals of the study, participation details, and information about consent and anonymity. Surveys were group administered at school faculty meetings in order to save costs and reduce nonresponse (Dillman, 2007). Administration protocol included briefing teachers on the purpose and goals of the study and instructions for completing and returning the survey. Survey instruments were distributed and teachers were allowed approximately 10 minutes for completion. After surveys were collected, they were reviewed for completeness, and data was input into SPSS. Following survey administration, superintendents and principals were sent thank you notes via the USPS that expressed appreciation for their participation in the study.
According to the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (2009), the combined teacher populations of the five school faculties surveyed was approximately 257. This is the desired sample. Some of this sample was not reached due to issues related to non-attendance at faculty meetings because of teacher absences and teacher participation in after-school activities. From the five survey administrations, 238 surveys were completed; thus 92.6% of the sample participated in the study. Of the surveys returned, 200 were useable instruments; therefore, the survey response rate was 77.8%. Thirty-eight of the surveys were not used due to unnecessary completion by individuals who were not teachers and incomplete responses on the college knowledge or frequency of college knowledge sharing scale items.

Data Analysis

Data collected from surveys was analyzed based on the research questions. In order to prepare for data analysis, each survey was checked for completeness and useable surveys were coded. See Table 2 for a summary of the survey’s data analysis coding. For analysis, data from the useable surveys was input into SPSS. As summarized in Table 3, statistical analyses were performed to yield descriptive statistics for research questions one, two, and three. The statistical technique performed to answer research question four was Pearson product moment correlation. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to answer research questions five and six. Demographic data collected included teachers’ education level, teaching area, amount of teaching experience, teacher certification status, gender, age, and race. Variables measured to assess teachers’ perceptions of their own college knowledge were the teachers’ level of knowledge about postsecondary education and postsecondary education opportunities in Georgia, and their perceptions of how often they share that knowledge.
### Table 3

**Data Analysis Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Items on survey</th>
<th>Variable(s)</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia? | 24-30           | -Education level  
-Teaching area  
-Amt of teaching experience  
-Teacher certification status  
-Gender  
-Age  
-Race | Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviation) |
| 2. What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia? | 1-21 College knowledge | -College knowledge score | Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviation) |
| 3. What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia? | 1-21 College knowledge sharing | -College knowledge sharing score | Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages, standard deviation) |
| 4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing? | 1-21 College knowledge & College knowledge sharing | -College knowledge score  
-College knowledge sharing score | Pearson Product Moment Correlation |
| 5. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area? | 1-21 College knowledge & College knowledge sharing | -College knowledge score  
-Teaching area | One-Way ANOVA |
| 6. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area? | 1-21 College knowledge & College knowledge sharing | -College knowledge sharing score  
-Teaching area | One-Way ANOVA |
Descriptive statistics selected to describe the sample for this study were frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (Rosenthal, 2001). These statistics were used to describe variables of education level, teaching area, amount of teaching experience, teacher certification status, gender, age, and race for the teachers surveyed. They were also used to describe teachers’ college knowledge scores and frequency of sharing college knowledge scores. (Please refer to Table 3 for further details.)

Frequencies summarize categorical data by indicating the total number of objects, individuals, or events in a category. This statistic is made more useful when converted into percentages (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). “A percentage is the proportion of responses standardized on the basis of one hundred” (Nardi, 2003, p. 117). Percentages are more familiar to audiences with limited statistical knowledge (Rosenthal, 2001). A frequency table was used to present the frequencies and percentages of the responses for each category of variables (Rea & Parker, 1997). Data from a frequency table can be summarized even further by using measures of central tendency. These statistics provide a summary of numbers that illustrate what is average or typical for that data (Rea & Parker, 1997). The three measures of central tendency are the mode, median, and mean. Of these three, the mean is most commonly used (Rosenthal, 2001).

The mathematical center of the data is known as the mean (Rea & Parker, 1997). It was calculated by summing all case values, then dividing by the number of cases (Rosenthal, 2001). The mean is a preferred statistic that is considered stable and appears in many statistical formulas (Gall et al., 2007; Rea & Parker, 1997; Rosenthal, 2001). Even though the mean is considered stable, it can be greatly affected by extreme outliers that have the potential to make the mean a misleading description of data (Rea & Parker, 1997; Rosenthal, 2001). Because of this, measures
of central tendency should be presented with accompanying information about the dispersion of the data in order to provide a more accurate description of the data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

The information described by measures of dispersion or variability express the “degree of clustering of the scores about the mean” (Sirkin, 2006, p. 128). The statistic used to measure the dispersion (variability) was the standard deviation. The standard deviation is a single number that represents the average distance from each variable value to the mean (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Nardi, 2003; Rea & Parker, 1997). A primary measure of variability, the standard deviation is considered a powerful, stable, and useful statistic (Gall et al., 2007; Nardi, 2003; Rosenthal, 2001) because “rather than eliminating values, the standard deviation weights all values of the variable by their frequency of occurrence, thereby including extreme values but tempering their mathematical importance” (Rea & Parker, 1997, p. 225). The standard deviation is also sound because its value is rarely influenced by the size of the sample (Rosenthal, 2001). Alone the standard deviation offers little information about the variability of a set of scores, but when paired with the mean, a good description of how the sample scored on a measure is provided (Gall et al., 2007).

In order to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between teachers’ level of college knowledge and their frequency of college knowledge sharing, correlation was employed. Correlation statistics allow the comparison of two or more quantitative variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). A statistic known as a correlation coefficient is calculated to determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between two variables (Gall et al., 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Nardi, 2003; Sirkin, 2006). The value of the correlation coefficient determines the magnitude or degree of the relationship and may range from +1.00 to -1.00 (Green & Salkind, 2005; Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003; Huck, 2004). The sign of the
coefficient (positive or negative) determines the direction of the relationship (Hinkle et al., 2003). Positive relationships are indicated by high (or low) scores on both variables. Negative relationships are indicated when high scores on one variable have a tendency to go with low scores on the other variable. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

The correlation coefficient selected for this study is the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson’s r) (Green & Salkind, 2005). This coefficient is the most frequently used and most stable correlation statistic used in the social sciences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Gall et al., 2007; Nardi, 2003). Pearson’s r measures the magnitude of the linear relationship between two interval/ratio level variables (Rosenthal, 2001). Because the level of college knowledge and the frequency of college knowledge sharing scores were both expressed quantitatively, Pearson’s r was the appropriate correlation coefficient to use for this study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Rosenthal, 2001; Sirkin, 2006). To determine if the relationship discovered was statistically significant (did not occur by chance), Pearson’s r was tested using a probability criterion of .05. If the probability discovered was equal to or less than .05, the relationship between the variables was declared statistically significant (Huck, 2004; Nardi, 2003). It is important to note that identification of a relationship between variables does not imply causation (Gall et al., 2007, Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if statistically significant differences existed between the college knowledge of teachers based on teaching area and the frequency of college knowledge shared based on teaching area. ANOVA is the appropriate statistic to use when testing for differences between mean scores of two or more groups and when the sample is tested only once (Salkind, 2000). ANOVA is employed to determine if a dependent variable’s means differ significantly among groups (Green & Salkind, 2006). It is
particularly helpful because it notifies the researcher about the possibility of variability between sample means being solely due to sampling error or true differences between population means and sampling error (Rosenthal, 2001). When determining statistical significance, usually, a null hypothesis of no difference is tested (Moore, 2003). The P-value is test statistic that is computed that determines whether the null hypothesis is rejected or if we fail to reject is. The smaller the computed P-value, the greater the evidence against the null hypothesis (Moore, 2003, Royall, 1986). Generally a significance (alpha) level is selected that provides the guide for determining significance. If as in the case of this study, a significance (alpha) level of .05 is selected that means the probability rejection of the null hypothesis occurs no more than five percent of the time when it is unjustified (Type I error) (Moore, 2003, Gall et. al., 2007). In order to be deemed significant, the P-value must be as small or smaller than the .05 significance level. Larger P-values do not provide evidence against the null hypothesis (Moore, 2003).

The one-way ANOVA method was chosen for this study because it is appropriate when there is one independent variable and one dependent variable (Sirkin, 2006). In a one-way ANOVA, each respondent must have scores on two variables: a factor and a dependent variable. The factor divides respondents into two or more groups or levels (teaching area), and the dependent variable differentiates individuals on some quantitative measure (level of college knowledge/frequency of college knowledge sharing). The ANOVA F test evaluates whether the group means on the dependent variable differ significantly from each other” (Green & Salkind, 2005, p. 176). The F value computed from the ANOVA F test is the ratio of between-groups variance to within-groups variance (Gall et al., 2007). If the F value is high enough (statistically significant), it means that the independent variable or factor has had an effect on the dependent variable (Nardi, 2003). When only two groups are compared, the F test is enough to tell the
researcher whether significant differences exist. However, when there are more than two groups being evaluated and significance is noted, the $F$ test alone will not tell us which means are different (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Further analysis must be conducted. Follow-up tests are conducted to compare pairs of means. This comparison of multiple means to determine where differences exist is known as post hoc analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, Gall et al., 2007; Green & Salkind, 2005). The multiple comparison process adjusts the Type I error risk so that it affects the whole series of comparisons instead of each individual one. This process reduces the chance that significance will be reached due to chance (Rosenthal, 2001). If, as in the case of this study, the ANOVA yields an $F$ value that is not significant, post hoc analyses are not conducted (Gall et al., 2007).
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter describes the findings obtained from the survey instrument completed by the respondents. Findings are organized by research objective and questions. The purposes of this survey study were to examine the perceptions high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties in Georgia had about their college knowledge and to discover how often these teachers shared this college knowledge with the students they taught.

Research Questions

1. What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

2. What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

3. What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area?
6. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area?

**Findings for Research Questions**

*Research Question 1*

*What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in select persistent poverty counties of Georgia?*

*Personal characteristics.* Females made up 66.5% of the sample and males comprised 33.5% of the sample. Ages of the respondents ranged from 23 to 65. The mean age of the respondents was 40.49. Racial composition of the sample was 17.0% Black, 81.5% White, and 1.5% multiracial (see Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
<th>Respondents’ Personal Characteristics (N = 200)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 and above</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 200.$
Educational characteristics. As noted in Table 5, teachers surveyed reported a variety of educational levels. Over 50% of the respondents held Master’s degrees, but only 2.0% held a doctoral degree. The majority of the respondents (53.0%) taught college core classes (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, or Foreign Language). Teaching experience of the respondents ranged from less than 1 year to more than 30 years, and almost all of the respondents (95%) were certified to teach.

Table 5
Respondents’ Educational Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College core*</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/PE/Fine Arts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTAE</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special/Exceptional Education</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1 Yr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 Yrs</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 Yrs</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 Yrs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 Yrs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher certification status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>95.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Perceived Role in helping students make postsecondary education/career decisions.

Respondents were asked if they believed that one of their roles as a high school teacher was to assist students in making informed decisions about postsecondary education and careers. Almost
all, 195 out of 200, of the teachers surveyed responded with “yes” (97.5%). Only five teachers (2.5%) said they did not believe one of their roles as a high school teacher was to assist students in making informed postsecondary education and career decisions.

Sources of postsecondary education information. Respondents were asked to identify the one major source they used to get information about public postsecondary education in their state. Responses were tallied and revealed that the most frequently cited source of postsecondary education information was the Internet and the least cited source was word of mouth (see Table 6). A few of the other sources mentioned, but not as frequently cited were personal experience, school guidance counselors, college representatives, and relatives.

Table 6
Most Frequently Cited Sources of Postsecondary Education Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet (including GaCollege411.org and Georgia Career Information System)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School guidance counselors</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College representatives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College publications</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2

What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

Teachers were asked to identify the level of college knowledge they believed they had about information necessary to help students make informed postsecondary decisions (i.e., postsecondary education, financial aid, and career information). For each item, teachers were
asked to respond to a Likert-type level of *College Knowledge* scale with a range from 1 = No Knowledge to 4 = A Lot of Knowledge. The sum of the responses created a *College Knowledge* score for each respondent. There were a total of 21 college knowledge survey items. Total *College Knowledge* scores of 21 and below signified that the respondent perceived they had *no* college knowledge. Total scores between 22 and 42 indicated that the respondents perceived they had *very little* college knowledge. Respondents scoring between 43 and 63 perceived they have *some* college knowledge. Those scoring between 64 and 84 perceived they had *a lot* of college knowledge. The minimum *College Knowledge* score was 32, the maximum score was 84, and the mean score was 65.48. All of the teachers reported having college knowledge, the amount of knowledge, however, varied. Only 1.5% of the respondents reported having very little college knowledge while 64.0% believed they had a lot of knowledge about college. Table 7 summarizes data related to respondents’ total *College Knowledge* scores.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Level of knowledge</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>No knowledge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-42</td>
<td>Very little knowledge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-63</td>
<td>Some knowledge</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64-84</td>
<td>A lot of knowledge</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 200.*

Individual item analyses revealed *College Knowledge* scale item mean scores that ranged from 2.67 to 3.64. Mean scores for respondents were lowest on the scale item about opportunities available for students to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs (M = 2.67) and highest on the scale items about the state’s high school graduation requirements (M = 3.64).
They also had very little knowledge about issues related to both technical and two-year college.

Details of item analyses are provided in Table 8.

Table 8

*Respondents’ Level of College Knowledge—Item Analyses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>VL</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>AL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Your state’s high school graduation requirements?</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>.540</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Opportunities for students to enter college through dual or joint enrollment?</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Occupations and careers associated with your subject area?</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.643</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Internet resources available to provide students with information about postsecondary and career opportunities?</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.724</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Technical college entrance requirements?</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Types of programs of study available at technical colleges?</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.758</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a technical college?</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Two-year college entrance requirements?</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Types of programs of study available at two-year colleges?</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a two-year college?</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Four-year college or university entrance requirements?</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Types of programs of study available at four-year colleges or universities?</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a four-year college or university?</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Locations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Academic reputations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Frequency (Percent)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Potential of postsecondary institutions in your state to prepare students for a competitive, global workforce?</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.0)</td>
<td>(20.5)</td>
<td>(53.0)</td>
<td>(22.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Affordability of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.749</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(22.5)</td>
<td>(51.5)</td>
<td>(23.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Financial aid available for students to attend the postsecondary education programs in your state?</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.679</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.5)</td>
<td>(18.0)</td>
<td>(55.0)</td>
<td>(26.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Free assistance available to help students prepare to meet postsecondary entrance requirements?</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>(30.0)</td>
<td>(47.5)</td>
<td>(16.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Opportunities for students to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs in your state?</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>(33.5)</td>
<td>(48.5)</td>
<td>(12.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Salaries available to students who earn postsecondary degrees?</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.657</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>37</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.0)</td>
<td>(12.5)</td>
<td>(66.0)</td>
<td>(18.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Research Question 3

What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

In addition to responding to the level of college knowledge items, teachers were also asked to divulge the frequency with which they share that knowledge with their students. Teachers responded using a 3-point Likert-type Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scale with responses from 1 = Never to 3 = Frequently. There was a total of 21 college knowledge sharing survey items. Totaling the responses rendered a Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score for each respondent. Table 9 summarizes data related to respondents’ total Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scores. Total scores of 21 and below showed that the respondent perceived they never shared this college knowledge. Total scores between 22 and 42 indicated that the respondents perceived shared their college knowledge sometimes. Respondents
scoring between 43 and 63 perceived they share their college knowledge frequently. The minimum *Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score* was 21, the maximum score was 63, and the mean score was 43.29. Fifty-two percent of the respondents reported sharing their college knowledge with their students sometimes. These findings are presented in Table 9.

Table 9
*Frequencies for Respondents’ Total College Knowledge Sharing Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency of sharing</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-42</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43-63</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 200.*

As noted in the item analyses in Table 10, means of each item on the *Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing* scale ranged from a low of 1.74 to a high of 2.43. Respondents most often shared their knowledge about high school graduation requirements and occupations and careers related to their teaching areas. The information least often shared was related to opportunities available to transfer postsecondary credits across education programs.

Table 10
*Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing—Item Analyses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Your state’s high school graduation requirements?</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>90 (45.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Opportunities for students to enter college through dual or joint enrollment?</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>(18.5)</td>
<td>127 (63.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Occupations and careers associated with your subject area?</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>94 (47.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Internet resources available to provide students with information about postsecondary and career opportunities?</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(12.0)</td>
<td>124 (62.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Frequency (Percent)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Technical college entrance requirements?</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.614</td>
<td>N 45 (22.5) S 124 (62.0) F 31 (15.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Types of programs of study available at technical colleges?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>N 43 (21.5) S 125 (62.5) F 32 (16.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a technical college?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>N 42 (21.0) S 126 (63.0) F 32 (16.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Two-year college entrance requirements?</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>N 43 (21.5) S 128 (64.0) F 29 (14.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Types of programs of study available at two-year colleges?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>N 37 (18.5) S 136 (68.0) F 27 (13.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a two-year college?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td>N 41 (20.5) S 129 (64.5) F 30 (15.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Four-year college or university entrance requirements?</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>N 16 (8.0) S 114 (57.0) F 70 (35.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Types of programs of study available at four-year colleges or universities?</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.605</td>
<td>N 17 (8.5) S 113 (56.5) F 70 (35.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a four-year college or university?</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.587</td>
<td>N 16 (8.0) S 120 (60.0) F 64 (32.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Locations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>N 19 (9.5) S 115 (57.5) F 66 (33.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Academic reputations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.613</td>
<td>N 35 (17.5) S 125 (62.5) F 40 (20.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Potential of postsecondary institutions in your state to prepare students for a competitive, global workforce?</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>N 57 (28.5) S 109 (54.5) F 34 (17.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Affordability of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>N 49 (24.5) S 112 (56.0) F 39 (19.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Financial aid available for students to attend the postsecondary education programs in your state?</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>N 27 (13.5) S 129 (64.5) F 44 (22.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Free assistance available to help students prepare to meet postsecondary entrance requirements?</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>.650</td>
<td>N 53 (26.5) S 114 (57.0) F 33 (16.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Opportunities for students to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs in your state?</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>N 72 (36.0) S 109 (54.5) F 19 (9.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Salaries available to students who earn postsecondary degrees?</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>N 27 (13.5) S 133 (66.5) F 40 (20.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 4

Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing?

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed between teachers’ College Knowledge score and their Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score. Interpretation of the correlation coefficient suggested by Hinkle et al. (2003) uses the following indices as guidelines to describe relationships. If the correlation coefficient is from .90 to 1.00 (-.90 to -1.00), it can be said that there is a very high positive (negative) correlation. These correlations show strong relationships. If the coefficient is from .70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90) there is high positive (negative) correlation. Moderate positive (negative) correlations fall from .50 to .70 (-.50 to -.70). When correlations are .65 or higher “reasonably accurate predictions can be made” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 367). “Correlations between .40 and .60 may have theoretical and/or practical value depending on the context” (p. 367). Low positive (negative) correlations are between .30 and .50 (-.30 and -.50). When coefficients are between .00 and .30 (.00 and -.30) there is little if any correlation between the variables (Hinkle et al., 2003). Analysis findings indicated that there is a statistically significant high positive relationship between the teachers’ College Knowledge scores and their Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scores at alpha=0.05 ($r = .764$, $p < .05$, $N = 200$). With a fairly high positive correlation like this one, if an individual’s college knowledge score is known, a fairly accurate prediction of her or his college knowledge sharing score can be made (Gall et al., 2007). Although not attempting to imply causation, college knowledge explains 58.3% of the variance in frequency of college knowledge sharing.
Figure 1. Scatterplot of College Knowledge and Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing. CK = College Knowledge. FCKS = Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing.

Research Question 5

Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area?

In each of the teaching area categories there were respondents who scored in the “Very Little Knowledge” range and the “A Lot of Knowledge” range. Respondents’ mean scores for all teaching areas ranged from 32 to 84 (see Table 11). The lowest mean score came from those who taught Health/Physical Education and Fine Arts courses. The highest mean score came from those who taught Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) courses.
Table 11

Respondents’ College Knowledge Based on Teaching Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% CI Lower Bound</th>
<th>95% CI Upper Bound</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College core</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>65.90</td>
<td>9.223</td>
<td>.896</td>
<td>64.12</td>
<td>67.67</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/PE/Fine Arts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62.33</td>
<td>10.356</td>
<td>2.674</td>
<td>56.60</td>
<td>68.07</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTAE</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>65.92</td>
<td>9.776</td>
<td>1.629</td>
<td>62.61</td>
<td>69.22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special/Exceptional Ed.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65.31</td>
<td>8.814</td>
<td>1.411</td>
<td>62.45</td>
<td>68.16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>63.48</td>
<td>10.243</td>
<td>5.121</td>
<td>47.45</td>
<td>80.05</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>65.48</td>
<td>9.306</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>64.18</td>
<td>66.77</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=200.

To determine if a statistically significant difference in teachers’ college knowledge existed based on teaching area, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. For this analysis, the Health/Physical Education, Fine Arts, Special/Exceptional Education, and Other teaching area categories were eliminated in order to analyze the college core and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education teaching areas. The college core consists of the courses required for entrance into University System of Georgia colleges and universities (BOR, 2009b). The Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education courses have as one of their purposes to prepare students for postsecondary education, training, and careers (Smith & Edmunds, 1999). Based on the ANOVA findings in Tables 12, there is no statistically significant mean difference between the two teaching groups ($F = 0.000, P = 0.991$).
Table 12

One-Way ANOVA of Respondents’ College Knowledge Based on Teaching Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>12276.608</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>87.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12276.620</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=200.

Research Question 6

Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area?

The Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing ranged from “Never” to “Frequently.” The teaching area with the highest mean score for Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing mean score was Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) at 44.72 (see Table 13). The Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing mean scores of all the teaching areas were within 3.32 points of each other.

Table 13

Respondents’ Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing Based on Teaching Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% CI Lower Bound</th>
<th>95% CI Upper Bound</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College core</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>43.17</td>
<td>8.791</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>41.48</td>
<td>44.86</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/PE/Fine Arts</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.40</td>
<td>9.905</td>
<td>2.558</td>
<td>35.91</td>
<td>46.89</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTAE</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44.72</td>
<td>9.558</td>
<td>1.593</td>
<td>41.49</td>
<td>47.96</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special/Exceptional Ed.</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42.54</td>
<td>8.623</td>
<td>1.381</td>
<td>39.74</td>
<td>45.33</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48.25</td>
<td>6.185</td>
<td>3.092</td>
<td>38.41</td>
<td>58.09</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>43.30</td>
<td>8.932</td>
<td>.632</td>
<td>42.05</td>
<td>44.54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=200.
To determine if a statistically significant difference in teachers’ college knowledge sharing existed based on teaching area, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. As in Research Question 5, analysis was conducted only on the two teaching area groups identified that are synonymous with postsecondary attendance, the college core and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education. According to the ANOVA findings presented in Table 14, there is no statistically significant mean difference between the two teaching area groups ($F=0.802, P=0.372$).

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>64.764</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64.764</td>
<td>0.802</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>11312.166</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>80.801</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11376.930</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N=200.*

Open ended response item

Item 27 was an open-ended, two-part request for information. The first part asked respondents to identify their certification status. The second part of Item 27 asked the respondents who identified themselves as certified to specify if college and career guidance topics had been incorporated into their teacher preparation programs. Of the 191 certified teachers, only 79 (41.4%) acknowledged that college and career guidance topics had been incorporated into their teacher preparation program.
CHAPTER 5

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

This chapter begins by briefly restating the purpose of the study and research objective and questions. It then summarizes the method of the study including information about study design, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis. Then findings and implications from the study are discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research are shared.

Summary of the Study

A large number of Georgians live their lives in cyclical poverty (CVIOG, 2003). These poverty cycles could be broken if postsecondary education and training is pursued and completed. The projected need for new employees to be highly skilled suggests an opportunity to address the problem of poverty through postsecondary education and training (Engle, Bermeo, & O’Brien, 2006). Completion of postsecondary education could be the key to breaking poverty cycles and putting Georgia’s youth on track to build the wealth they needed get out of and remain out of poverty. Teachers are strong structural supports for students from low-income backgrounds (Ellis & Lane, 1963). By virtue of their position, teachers are information brokers and role models (Peters, 2008). Teachers in Georgia’s persistent poverty counties are in a unique position to affect change in the lives of the students they teach by encouraging them to pursue some form of education beyond high school (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000). Becoming highly skilled and acquiring education beyond high school are the two factors thought to determine income more than any other (Schaffer & Van Horn, 2003). Therefore, the purposes
of this survey study were to examine the perceptions high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties in Georgia had about their college knowledge and to discover how often these teachers shared this college knowledge with the students they taught.

Six research questions guided this study. They were:

1. What are high school teachers’ personal and educational characteristics, perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, and major sources of public postsecondary education information available in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

2. What is the perceived level of college knowledge held by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

3. What is the perceived frequency of college knowledge sharing by high school teachers in selected persistent poverty counties of Georgia?

4. Is there a statistically significant relationship between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing?

5. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area?

6. Is there a statistically significant difference between these high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area?

The survey research design was selected for this study because it allows the researcher to collect large amounts of descriptive information from respondents that can be used to describe, compare, or explain individuals’ knowledge, preferences, and behavior (Fink, 2006). Survey research is also less time consuming and more cost effective than other methods of other data collection (Mujis, 2004). Individuals’ perceptions of their knowledge can be different from their
knowledge. In an effort to evaluate teachers’ perceptions of their knowledge (what they believed they knew). The instrument developed measured perceptions of knowledge, not actual knowledge. The survey instrument elicited information from the respondents about their college knowledge—knowledge about postsecondary education information required for students to make informed college-choice decisions. Survey items asked about teachers’ knowledge of information such as high school graduation requirements, opportunities for students to enter college early through dual or joint enrollment, financial aid availability, public postsecondary institution locations, entrance requirements, programs of study, and credentials conferred. The total score for the responses to these items created a College Knowledge score. The survey instrument also required respondents to share the frequency with which they share this knowledge with the students they teach. The total score for the responses to these items created the Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score. Respondent demographics were also collected. The survey instrument was administered to whole-groups at faculty meetings of five high school faculties in persistent poverty counties in Georgia.

The survey instrument for this study was designed by the researcher using Dillman’s (2007) Tailored Design that utilizes specific strategies to reduce sampling, coverage, measurement, and nonresponse errors. Before the instrument was administered, it was pretested using Dillman’s four stages of pretesting: (a) review by knowledgeable analysts, (b) retrospective interviews, (c) pilot study, and (d) final check. Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (2009) data revealed that these school faculties had approximately 257 teachers. Two hundred thirty-eight (238) respondents from the sample completed surveys. Of those 238 surveys, only 200 were useable; thus there was a response rate of 77.8%.
Review of Findings

Respondents completed the *High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Their College Knowledge* survey instrument that was designed to identify respondents’ perceptions of their level of college knowledge about items related to public postsecondary education in their state. The survey also required teachers to identify the frequency with which they share that information with the students they teach. Information related to respondents’ personal and educational characteristics, role beliefs, and postsecondary education information sources was also collected. Survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). A review of findings from the data analysis is described below by research objective and research question.

Findings from Research Question 1 describe the personal and educational characteristics of the respondents. They also describe the major sources of information respondents have about available public postsecondary education in their state. The final part of the research question was developed to obtain information related to respondents’ perceptions about their perceived role in helping students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers.

Sixty-six point five percent of the sample was female and 33.5% was male. Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 65. The mean age was 40.49. The largest majority of the respondents fell into the 31 to 40 age category. Seventeen percent of the sample was Black, 81.5% White, and 1.5% Multiracial. Fifty-three point five percent of the respondents held Master’s degrees, followed by 27.5% with a Bachelor’s, 15.5% with a Specialist, 1.5% with an Associate’s, and 2.0% with a doctoral degree. The majority of the teachers (53.0%) taught college core classes. Special needs teachers made up 19.5% of the population. Eighteen percent of the population was Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education teachers; and 7.5% taught Health/Physical
Education and Fine Arts. Teaching experience of the respondents ranged from less than 1 year to more than 30 years. Over half (51.5%) of the teachers responding had taught from 1 to 10 years. Twenty-two point five percent had from 11 to 20 years of teaching experience. Sixteen point five percent had taught from 21 to 30 years and 6.5% had over 30 years of teaching experience. Only three percent of the population had less than one year of teaching experience. Ninety-five point five percent of the respondents were certified to teach and 4.5 % were not certified. Ninety-seven point five percent of the sample participants believed that one of their roles as high school teachers was to assist students in making informed decisions about postsecondary education and careers. However, college and career guidance topics were incorporated into the teacher preparation programs of only 41.4% of the sample. Respondents identified major sources of information about public postsecondary education available in their state. The primary five responses in order by rank were (a) the Internet, (b) personal experience, (c) school guidance counselors, (d) college representatives, and (e) college publications.

Research Question 2 asked respondents to identify their perceived level of college knowledge. The first part of the *High School Teachers’ Perceptions of their College Knowledge* survey instrument asked respondents to indicate their perceived level of college knowledge about items related to postsecondary education. The *College Knowledge* scale responses available were 1 = No Knowledge, 2 = Very Little Knowledge, 3 = Some Knowledge, and 4 = A Lot of Knowledge. The sum of all item responses yielded the *College Knowledge* score. The *College Knowledge* mean score was 65.48 with a minimum score of 32 and the maximum score of 84. The higher the score, the more college knowledge the respondent believed she or he possessed. Respondents’ knowledge about college varied. Sixty-four percent of the sample believed they had *a lot* of knowledge about college; 34.5% thought they had *some* knowledge; and only 1.5%
of the sample admitted to having very little college knowledge. Teachers believed they knew the most about their state’s high school graduation requirements and the least about opportunities for students to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs in the state.

Research Question 3 asked respondents to identify their perceived level of frequency of college knowledge sharing. The second part of the High School Teachers’ Perceptions of their College Knowledge survey instrument solicited this information. Response choices on the Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scale were 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, and 3 = Frequently. The Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score was computed by totaling respondents’ answers on the Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing scale items. The mean score for the scale was 43.29. The minimum Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing score was 21 and the maximum score was 63. Higher scores indicated a belief that the respondent shared their knowledge frequently with their students. Forty-seven percent believed they share their college knowledge frequently. Fifty-two percent of the respondents sometimes shared their college knowledge with their students. Only one percent of the sample never shared their college knowledge. Respondents most frequently shared information with their students about high school graduation requirements and least frequently shared information about opportunities for students to transfer credits across postsecondary education programs.

Research Question 4 sought to discover if a statistically significant relationship existed between high school teachers’ level of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing. Pearson product-moment correlation findings determined that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between respondents’ level of college knowledge and their frequency of college knowledge sharing ($r = .764, p < .05, N = 200$). College knowledge explained 58.3% of the variance in frequency of college knowledge sharing.
The goal of Research Question 5 was to verify if there was a statistically significant difference between high school teachers’ level of college knowledge based on teaching area. To do this College Knowledge mean scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). According to the findings, respondents with the most college knowledge taught Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (M = 65.92). No statistically significant difference among teaching areas was discovered by the ANOVA ($F (3, 192) = .668, P = .572$).

Using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA, Research Question 6 investigated the question: Is there a statistically significant difference between high school teachers’ frequency of college knowledge sharing based on teaching area? Descriptive statistics illustrated that those who taught Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education obtained the highest Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing mean score (M = 44.72). ANOVA findings revealed no statistically significant difference among the Frequency of College Knowledge Sharing mean scores based on teaching area ($F (3, 192) = .615, P = .606$).

**Discussion**

For students who are disadvantaged socially and economically, the teacher is an instrumental source of information, support, and encouragement in the postsecondary education and career exploration and search process (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Ellis & Lane, 1963). Although teachers are with students more often than guidance counselors and are information sources for students, they are seldom discussed in the literature as significant individuals in students’ college search process (MacAllum et al., 2007). This situation is interesting considering that this study found that 97.5% of the teachers surveyed believed that one of their roles as a high school teacher was to assist students in making informed decisions about
postsecondary education and careers. Moreover, when asked about their preparation to do so, findings revealed that college and career guidance was incorporated into only 41.4% of the teachers’ teacher preparation programs. This finding perhaps signifies an underutilization of teacher preparation programs to prepare teachers to be a resource for students’ postsecondary planning.

Study findings also indicated that teachers’ top source for information about postsecondary education available in their state was the Internet. Internet sources mentioned specifically were GAcollege411 and the Georgia Career Information System. GAcollege411 is the state’s free online postsecondary education information portal sponsored by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC, 2010a). The Georgia Career Information System, referred to by teachers as GCIS, also provides vital postsecondary education and career information for Georgia’s adolescent and adult learners (GCIC, 2010b). Considering that the school guidance counselor is usually a school’s leader in helping students transition from postsecondary education and careers (Feller, 2003), it is surprising that these teachers did not cite counselors as their major source for information. This circumstance suggests a greater need for school guidance counselors to share their knowledge with teachers.

Findings from this study revealed a high positive correlation between teachers’ college knowledge and their frequency of college knowledge sharing. Teachers who knew more shared more, and they shared more frequently the information of which they believed they had more knowledge. Teachers surveyed revealed that they believed they had the most college knowledge related to the state’s high school graduation requirements, occupations and careers related to their teaching areas, and four-year college and university entrance requirements, programs of study, and credentials (certificates, diplomas, and degrees) that can be earned at four-year
colleges and universities. Likewise, these teachers believed they shared these types of information with their students most frequently. It is likely that teachers have the most knowledge about high school graduation requirements because one of their responsibilities is to promote learning and motivate students to learn the things they need to know in order to complete their secondary education and move on to become productive members of society (Phillips & Soltis, 1998). It is probable that teachers have more knowledge about four-year colleges and universities because of their experience attending these types of institutions and often build continuous relationships. Consequently, the second most frequently cited response for teachers’ major source of information about postsecondary education and careers was personal experience.

Teachers lacked college knowledge and less frequently shared information related to opportunities for students to transfer credits across postsecondary education programs in the state, the potential of Georgia’s postsecondary institutions to prepare students for a global workforce, and free assistance available to help students prepare to meet postsecondary education entrance requirements. They also lacked college knowledge and did not frequently share information about technical and two-year college entrance requirements, programs of study, and available credentials. Perhaps teachers’ lack of knowledge about the aforementioned items is due to a lack of information sharing about these opportunities and a lack of personal experience with these options.

Teachers need information about systems in place to transfer credits across postsecondary education programs in the state. Credit transfer information for both of the public postsecondary education systems in the state are located on their websites and on the websites of individual institutions (TCSG, 2010a, USG, 2010b). It was extremely unexpected that teachers lacked
knowledge about the potential of Georgia’s postsecondary institutions to prepare students for a competitive, global workforce. This is especially disconcerting, considering the mission and vision of both the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia include references to preparing students for a “global, technical society” (USG, 2009, para. 1) and a “more globally competitive workforce” (TCSG, 2009b, para. 1). As recorded in these study findings, it appears that teachers also need more college knowledge about the free help available for students preparing to meet postsecondary education entrance requirements. The Georgia Department of Education (GDOE, 2010f) has made strides toward disseminating this information by posting information and links for Georgia High School Graduation Test study guides for students and a free online SAT preparation course. The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG, 2010b) and the University System of Georgia (USG, 2010a) also have links to information about their colleges, entrance requirements, available programs of study, and available credentials on their respective websites. However, with all of the demands placed on teachers, it is very rare that they have time to sit and search websites for information. The issue of getting more knowledge about technical and two-year colleges may be as simple as having a representative from the region’s colleges speak to faculties about their programs which prepare a globally competitive workforce, credentials available, entrance requirements, and options to transfer credits across postsecondary education programs. It is important that teachers get this college knowledge so they can share it with their students because it is a common misconception that all well-paying jobs require a four-year degree (Rosenbaum, 2004). According to the Georgia Department of Labor (2006), some of the highest paying, fastest growing jobs require postsecondary education and training, but not necessarily a four-year college degree.
Teachers need accurate, up-to-date college knowledge information to share with the students they teach. Findings from this study suggest that more effort needs to be made to make teachers aware of information they need to help students make educated postsecondary decisions. Since, as shown in this study, teachers share most what they know most, it is likely that once teachers learn more about the topics they currently lack college knowledge of, they will more frequently share this information with their students.

Study analyses determined that there is no statistically significant difference in teachers’ college knowledge and their frequency of sharing that knowledge based on teaching area. This finding was unanticipated considering the fact that postsecondary education and career exploration and planning related Georgia Performance Standards do not exist for some college core curriculum areas (i.e., English, Math) and are only present in advanced level courses in other areas (i.e., Science, Social Studies) (GDOE, 2010a). Foreign language (Modern Language) Georgia Performance Standards make reference to students identifying and discussing situations where the language is used for occupational purposes (GDOE, 2010d). Standards that require students to explore, identify, investigate, and discuss careers and related careers in Dance, Music, Theatre Arts, and Visual Arts are infused throughout the Fine Arts curriculum (GDOE, 2009b, 2009i, 2009j, 2009k). As the name of the curriculum area implies, students who enroll in Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education courses are exposed to postsecondary education and career exploration and planning through the majority of their Georgia Performance Standards. They are also taught foundational career skills that will help them plan and manage their postsecondary education and career plans and prepare them to pursue a range of careers in their chosen program pathway (GDOE, 2007). However, Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education teachers’ role is to prepare students for careers (Smith & Edmunds, 1999) and
standards to do this are in place, it is not surprising that when observing mean scores, these teachers had the most college knowledge and shared their knowledge more frequently with their students.

Students’ postsecondary enrollment and completion is important to the economic well being of Georgia (Bishop, 2005). “Academic preparation is an essential part of career and college planning. Since many professions require specific training and credentials, students need to know what educational pathways will lead to their desired goals and how current performance affects future options” (Vargas, 2004, p. 8). For this reason, it is plausible to suggest that standards relating to postsecondary education and careers be added to and implemented in all curriculum areas, especially the ones in which this information is not currently represented. Perhaps exposing students to this information will give them more motivation to learn what is being taught. It is likely that if students understand the connection between their courses and careers, they will be more likely to take their courses seriously and really learn—in turn improving their course performance and performance on high-stakes tests (i.e., End-of-Course Tests, Georgia High School Graduation Tests, SAT, ACT, ASVAB, ASSET). This exposure will definitely open students’ minds to the course-related career possibilities available for their futures. Even though Georgia has done an outstanding job providing postsecondary and career information on the Internet, they must remember that not every student has access to the Internet after school hours (MacAllum et al., 2007) and students have to be interested in a topic to research it (CommunicationWorks, 2002). Therefore, students who never considered pursuing postsecondary education would especially benefit from direct exposure to postsecondary education and career knowledge provided by teachers through their lessons.
Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings from this survey study, the following are recommendations for practice:

1. Teachers need accurate, up-to-date college knowledge information to share with the students they teach. They need information about technical and two-year college entrance requirements, programs of study, credentials offered, and systems in place to transfer credits across postsecondary education programs in the state. This and other college and career guidance information should be a part of teacher preparation program curriculum, teacher professional development workshops and conferences, passed on to teachers by counselors, and its importance stressed by local and state educational leadership.

2. Teachers need more college knowledge about the free help available for students to prepare to meet postsecondary education entrance requirements. A lot of this information is posted in various places on the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) web site. However, one must search intensively to find it. For example, information and study guides for End of Course Tests and the Georgia High School Graduation Tests are found under Assessment. Yet, information about the PSAT, SAT, and ACT is found under Innovative Academic Programs. Students must pass or make certain scores on these tests to pass their classes, graduate, and become college-ready; so, information pertaining to them should be documented on the same web page. The GDOE should design a college and career readiness web page that purposely makes this information easily accessible for teachers, students, and their parents.

3. Teachers who are not required by Georgia Performance Standards to teach about postsecondary education and careers need more college knowledge. It is suggested that a guide written specifically for their curriculum area that showcases information about
careers related to their field and the postsecondary education institutions in the state that provide programs of study leading to degrees for these careers be made available. An excellent example of this type of document has been published by the Southwest Georgia Area Health Education Center (Reynolds & Stapleton; 2010) entitled *2010-2012 Health Careers in Georgia*. Ease of access to information in this form could possibly improve teachers’ college knowledge and increase their students’ exposure to the information they need to aspire to, pursue, and obtain rewarding careers that pay well enough for them to become self-sufficient and avoid poverty situations (Sokatch, 2006).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings from this survey study the following are recommendations for further research:

1. Replicate this study in non-persistent poverty counties. Compare the results from the new study with results from this study of teachers in persistent poverty counties to determine if there are any similarities or differences. If there are differences, determine where they exist and explore what they mean.

2. Survey findings revealed that there was no difference in teachers’ college knowledge based on teaching area. Conducting a similar study where the analysis of survey results is performed based on individual teaching area, instead of clustering all of the teaching areas together, may produce interesting and useful alternate findings. Levels of college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing should also be better defined.

3. Conduct a study to determine teachers’ college knowledge and sharing and students’ college knowledge as well as how often their teachers share their college knowledge with students. A comparison of these results should render useful findings.
4. Conduct a study to determine the level of college knowledge, sharing of college knowledge, and postsecondary advising collaboration of teachers and counselors on behalf of students.

5. Conduct a survey study of teachers to determine if they believe their school has what is widely known as a college-going culture. Doing so will provide valuable information necessary to improve and foster students’ postsecondary aspirations and increase postsecondary enrollment and completion.

Conclusion

Teachers make a difference in the success of students (Barr & Parrett, 2007). Teachers’ knowledge is important because that knowledge guides how teachers advise students (Mitkos & Bragg, 2008). Personal experiences with postsecondary education can influence teachers’ perceptions, and a lack of awareness and knowledge about public postsecondary education options can cause teachers to have a negative perception of these options (Mitkos & Bragg, 2008). Teachers have an influence on students’ postsecondary aspirations and often advise students about postsecondary education and careers. These circumstances suggested a need to examine teachers’ College Knowledge, the knowledge they have about public postsecondary education options and opportunities available in Georgia. It was especially important to examine the college knowledge of teachers in persistent poverty counties. In these counties there are students whose families have been in cyclical poverty for 30 or more years (CVIOG, 2003). These students need information and guidance about postsecondary education and training because completion of this type of education could possibly provide them with a pathway out of poverty (Vargas, 2004). As noted by Rojewski (1999), educators can help address the chronic problem of persistent poverty by taking an active role in advancing the economic growth of all
citizens by promoting students’ academic achievement and encouraging their postsecondary aspirations.

The purpose of the survey study was twofold, first to determine the level of college knowledge of high school teachers in select persistent poverty counties of Georgia, and second to discover how often these teachers share their college knowledge with the students they teach. Findings from this study revealed that the majority (97.5%) of high school teachers surveyed believed one of their roles was to help students make decisions about postsecondary education and careers, even though less than half (41.4%) of them had received formal training to do so through their teacher preparation programs. The teachers’ most frequently cited source for information about public postsecondary education in their state was the Internet. There was a high positive correlation between teachers’ college knowledge and the frequency of their college knowledge sharing. Teachers had the most college knowledge about their state’s high school graduation requirements and most frequently shared this information. Teachers reported having the least college knowledge related to students’ opportunities to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs in their state and they shared this information least frequently. Teachers’ college knowledge and frequency of college knowledge sharing was not based on their teaching area; however, those who taught Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education courses reported having the most college knowledge.

Many people believe that schools have an economic purpose—to prepare students with the knowledge and skills required to complete college and obtain a job (Ryan & Cooper, 2004). High school is often considered a “launch pad for college and career success” (Sagawa & Schramm, 2008, p. i). But, all too often in low-income communities, students drop out of high school and never finish or finish high school and do not pursue further education (Sagawa &
Schramm, 2008). For this reason great numbers of low-income and minority students do not have the academic and occupational skills needed to become effective functioning members of society (Ryan & Cooper, 2004). Many children who are born into poor or minority-group families face severe disadvantages in their attempts to live decent lives and to climb the ladder to success.

Schooling is intended to help individuals prepare to reach the ladder to success (Ryan & Cooper, 2004). Exposure to postsecondary education and career options and opportunities could be the key to their economic prosperity. Teachers hold the keys that unlock doors of opportunity for the students they teach (Peters, 2008). Just as President Obama stated in his 2010 State of the Union Address,

> We need to invest in the skills and education of our people…In the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education. And in this country, the success of our children can not depend more on where they live than on their potential. (Obama, 2010, para. 48, 49)

Teachers’ college knowledge shared with their students could be the spark that ignites students’ curiosities and desires to learn more and aspire to complete higher education.
REFERENCES


*Canadian Public Policy/Analyse de Politiques*, 26(2), 183-196.


secondary option for high school students (Unpublished master’s thesis). University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, WI.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Map: Georgia Persistent Poverty Counties
Georgia Persistent Poverty Counties

Appendix B

Map: Georgia Public Technical College System
Technical College System of Georgia

Appendix C

Map: Georgia Public University System
University System of Georgia

Appendix D

IRB Approvals
Pilot Test IRB Approval

**APPROVAL FORM**

**Date Proposal Received:** 2008-12-23

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<tr>
<td>Dr. Myra N. Womble</td>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Occupational Studies 207 Rivers Crossing +4809 706-542-4091</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:mwomble@uga.edu">mwomble@uga.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Alicia M. Finnell</td>
<td>CO</td>
<td>WELSF River's Crossing 4809 706-546-7540</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:afinnell@uga.edu">afinnell@uga.edu</a></td>
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**Project Number:** 2009-10471-0

**Title of Study:** High School Teachers' Perceptions of Public Postsecondary Education Opportunities

**45 CFR 46 Category:** Administrative 2

**Parameters:**
- Approved for Institutions with Authorization Letters on File:

**Approved:** 2009-01-22  
**Begin date:** 2009-01-22  
**Expiration date:** 2014-01-21

*NOTE: Any research conducted before the approval date or after the end data collection date shown above is not covered by IRB approval, and cannot be retroactively approved.*

**Change(s) Required for Approval:**
- None;

**NumberAssigned by Sponsored Programs:**

**Funding Agency:**

---

**Your human subjects study has been approved.**

*Please be aware that it is your responsibility to inform the IRB:*

... of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to the subjects or others within 24 to 72 hours;

... of any significant changes or additions to your study and obtain approval of them before they are put into effect;

... that you need to extend the approval period beyond the expiration date shown above;

... that you have completed your data collection as approved, within the approval period shown above, so that your file may be closed.

*For additional information regarding your responsibilities as an investigator refer to the IRB Guidelines.*

*Use the attached Researcher Request Form for requesting renewals, changes, or closures.*

*Keep this original approval form for your records.*

---

Chairperson or Designee,  
Institutional Review Board
Dear Dr. Womble,

The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your above-titled proposal through the exempt (administrative) review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, /unless:/ (i). the information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; /and/(ii). any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You may now begin your study. Your approval packet will be sent by mail.

Please remember that no change in this research proposal can be initiated without prior review. Any adverse events or unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB immediately. The principal investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of approved protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Human Subjects Office if your study is completed or terminated.

Good luck with your study, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Thank you,
Kim Fowler
Human Subjects Office
606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-7411
https://www.ovpr.uga.edu/compliance/hs0/
Appendix E

Letter of Request to Superintendents

Letter of Authorization to Administer Survey
June 25, 2009

Address of Superintendent

Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to follow up with you about my dissertation study which I introduced at the February district Oconee RESA meeting and to seek your assistance toward completing the study. The dissertation study, entitled *High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Knowledge of Public Postsecondary Education*, is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Myra N. Womble at the University of Georgia in the Program of Workforce Education. It is the goal of the study to describe perceptions high school teachers hold about public postsecondary education in Georgia. More specifically, the study seeks to contribute to existing literature by examining teachers’ perceptions regarding their knowledge of public postsecondary education in their state and describing how often these teachers share their college knowledge with the students they teach. Findings from this study will inform teacher educators of curriculum development needs for teacher preparation programs, high school administrators and teachers about professional development needs, and guidance counselors working collaboratively with teachers to better address the postsecondary education and career advisement needs of their secondary students.

Would it be possible for me to survey your high school’s teachers toward this objective? I would prefer to administer the survey whole-group at a faculty meeting in July or August. The survey is anonymous and there are no known risks or discomforts associated with the research (copy of survey attached). A few days before the administration of the survey I would need to distribute a letter describing the study to the teachers (attached). On the day of the survey administration, I would only need to give a brief introduction of the survey, distribute it, give teachers the opportunity to complete it, and then collect it. Survey completion would take approximately ten minutes. Since involvement in the study is voluntary, teachers may choose not to participate or may stop at any time. If you have any questions about the study, I will be glad to answer them. Please feel free to call me at 706-546-7540 or send an e-mail to afinnell@uga.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Womble, at 706-542-4091 or mwomble@uga.edu if you have questions or concerns. I will contact you next week to discuss a date to possibly conduct the study. If you agree to allow me to conduct the study with your high school’s teachers, please sign and forward the attached letter of authorization to the school’s principal to complete, sign, and return by mail using the attached addressed, stamped envelope by June 25.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alicia Finnell
Graduate Student

Myra N. Womble, Ed.D.
Associate Professor

Attachments
Letter of Authorization

The <county name> County School District agrees to allow Alicia Finnell, a doctoral student in the Program of Workforce Education at the University of Georgia, under the direction of Dr. Myra N. Womble, to survey teachers at <school name> High School for the dissertation study entitled, “High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Knowledge of Public Postsecondary Education.” We understand that the survey is anonymous, there are no known risks or discomforts associated with the research, and involvement in the study is voluntary; therefore, teachers may choose not to participate or may stop at any time. A date to conduct the survey will be scheduled for ________________ (July/August/September).

________________________________ ________________________________
Superintendent Name (Please Print) Principal Name (Please Print)

________________________________ ________________________________
Superintendent Signature Principal Signature

________________________________ ________________________________
Date Date
Appendix F

Survey Administration Protocol
SURVEY PROTOCOL

Distribute survey information cover letter and survey. Then review the research goal, significance, and directions for completing the survey.

Research Goal:
The goal of this research study is to describe perceptions high school teachers hold about public postsecondary education in Georgia. More specifically, the study seeks to contribute to existing literature by examining teachers’ perceptions regarding their knowledge of public postsecondary education in their state and describing how often these teachers share their college knowledge with the students they teach.

Significance of the Study:
Findings from this study will inform teacher educators of curriculum development needs for teacher preparation programs, high school administrators and teachers about professional development needs, and guidance counselors working collaboratively with teachers to better address the postsecondary education and career advisement needs of their secondary students.

Survey Introduction:
This survey is designed to identify your perceptions of the level of knowledge you have about public postsecondary education in your state and how often you share this information with your students.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and your responses will be considered in anonymity. Survey completion will take approximately 10 minutes. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

*As you read the survey, please respond to each item on both pages as truthfully and thoughtfully as possible.

Part 1 Directions ➔ College Knowledge
1. Using the scale to the right, please indicate your level of knowledge about each of the items below related to postsecondary education. For example, circle N if you have no knowledge, VL if you have very little knowledge, S if you have some knowledge, and AL if you have a lot of knowledge.

2. Also, please indicate how often you share this knowledge (information) with the students you teach by circling N for never, S for sometimes, or F for frequently in the boxes to the right of the knowledge scale.

Part 2 Directions ➔ General Information & Demographics (on the back)
1. For each item, please circle the answer that best applies to you and/or answer each item by filling in the blank.

2. After you have completed the survey, please review it to make sure you have answered each item, and then return it to the survey administrator. Thank you for your time and information!
Appendix G

Survey Cover Letter
July 22, 2009

Greetings fellow educator:

I am a graduate student working toward a doctoral degree under the direction of Dr. Myra N. Womble in the Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations at The University of Georgia in the program of Workforce Education. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled, “High School Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Knowledge of Public Postsecondary Education.” The purpose of this study is to examine high school teachers’ perceptions about the level of knowledge they have about public postsecondary education opportunities in Georgia.

Your participation will involve completing a survey that I will administer when I visit your campus in a few weeks. At that time, I will provide detailed instructions for completing the survey. The survey should take only about ten minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary; therefore, you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no place on the survey for you to enter your name; your responses to the survey will be considered in anonymity.

The findings from this study are expected to provide information on postsecondary education and career advisement for high school students and related professional development for secondary and postsecondary educators. Completing the survey indicates your voluntary consent to participate in the above described research project. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research study prior to my visit to your campus, please feel free to call me at (706) 546-7540 or send an e-mail to affinell@uga.edu. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Womble, at (706) 542-4091 or mwomble@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

Thank you for your consideration and participation!

Sincerely,

Alicia Finnell
Graduate Student
Appendix H

Survey Instrument
HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

This survey is designed to identify your perceptions of the level of knowledge you have about public postsecondary education in your state. Your participation is voluntary and your responses are considered in anonymity. As you read the survey, please respond to each item as **truthfully** and **thoughtfully** as possible.

**PART I: College Knowledge**

**DIRECTIONS**: Using the scale to the right, please indicate your **level of knowledge** about each of the items below related to postsecondary education. For example, circle ☐ if you have **no knowledge**, ☐VL if you have **very little knowledge**, ☐S if you have **some knowledge**, and ☐AL if you have **a lot of knowledge**. Also, please indicate how often you share this knowledge (information) with the students you teach by circling ☐N for **never**, ☐S for **sometimes**, or ☐F for **frequently** in the boxes to the right of the knowledge scale.

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<th>What is your level of knowledge about:</th>
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<th>AL = A Lot of Knowledge</th>
<th>Frequency of sharing:</th>
<th>N = Never</th>
<th>S = Sometimes</th>
<th>F = Frequently</th>
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<td>Opportunities for students to enter college through dual or joint enrollment?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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<td>Occupations and careers associated with your teaching area?</td>
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<td>Internet resources available to provide students with information about postsecondary and career opportunities?</td>
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<td>Types of programs of study available at technical colleges?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a technical college?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-year college entrance requirements?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Types of programs of study available at two-year colleges?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a two-year college?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four-year college or university entrance requirements?</td>
<td>☐N   ☐VL  ☐S  ☐AL  ☐N  ☐S  ☐F</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What is your level of knowledge about:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>VL</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>Frequency of sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of programs of study available at four-year colleges or universities?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of certificates, diplomas, and degrees that can be earned by attending a four-year college or university?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic reputations of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential of postsecondary institutions in your state to prepare students for a competitive, global workforce?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordability of postsecondary institutions in your state?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid available for students to attend the postsecondary education institutions in your state?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free assistance available to help students prepare to meet postsecondary entrance requirements?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for students to transfer credit across postsecondary education programs in your state?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries available to students who earn postsecondary degrees?</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>VL</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART II: General Information and Demographics

**Directions:** For each of the following, please circle the answer that best applies to you and/or answer each item by filling in the blank.

22. Do you believe one of your roles as a high school teacher is to assist students in making informed decisions about postsecondary education and careers?  
   - No  
   - Yes

23. What has been your one major source of information about public postsecondary education available in your state?

___________________________________________________________________________
24. What is your highest degree obtained?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associate’s</th>
<th>Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Master’s</th>
<th>Specialist’s</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

25. What subject area do you teach?

- English/Language Arts
- Fine Arts
- Math
- Foreign Language
- Science
- Career, Technical and Agricultural Education
- Social Studies
- Special/Exceptional Education
- Health/Physical Education
- Other (Please Specify)

26. How many years of experience do you have teaching at the high school level?

- < 1 year
- 1-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21-30 years
- >30 Years

27. Are you certified? No Yes → If yes, was college and career guidance incorporated into your teacher preparation program? No Yes

28. What is your gender? Female Male

29. What is your age? ______

30. What is your race/ethnicity? ___________________________

Please make sure you have responded to all of the survey items.

Thank you for your time!

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me: Alicia Finnell, UGA Program of Workforce Education, 850 College Station Rd., 207 River’s Crossing, Athens, GA 30602; afinnell@uga.edu; (706) 546-7540. Thanks again for your time and information!