SCHOOL COUNSELORS’ RESPONSES TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES TRANSITIONING TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

A Dissertation in
Counselor Education and Supervision

by

Charity Anne Kurz

© 2015 Charity Anne Kurz

Submitted Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015
The dissertation of Charity Anne Kurz was reviewed and approved* by the following:

JoLynn V. Carney  
Associate Professor of Education (Counselor Education)  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Jerry G. Trusty  
Professor of Education (Counselor Education)

Edgar Yoder  
Professor of Agricultural Extension Education  
Professor of Extension Education

James T. Herbert  
Professor of Education (Counselor Education and Rehabilitation and Human Services)

Richard J. Hazler  
Professor of Education (Counselor Education)

*Signatures on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

I examined through this dissertation the best practices in transitioning students with disabilities to post-secondary education. Analogue method was used to assess high school counselors’ responses to students with learning disabilities who are transitioning to post-secondary education. The researcher developed a rubric to assess participant responses to vignettes. Results indicated a significant relationship between attending professional conferences and use of career assessments. The researcher suggests training implications for counselor educators and future research.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES**...........................................................................................................vii
**LIST OF FIGURES** ........................................................................................................viii
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ...............................................................................................ix

**CHAPTER**

I. **INTRODUCTION**....................................................................................................1
   Background of the Study .................................................................1
   Statement of the Problem ..........................................................2
   Research Questions ........................................................................4
   Conceptual Model .................................................................4
   Significance of the Study ...........................................................5
   Limitations of the Study .............................................................6
   Definition of Terms .................................................................6

II. **LITERATURE REVIEW** .......................................................................................8
   Legislation ....................................................................................11
      Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (1973) ................12
      No Child Left Behind (2001) .................................................13
      Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
         Transition Statement .......................................................13
         Transition Plan ...................................................................14
      Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (2008) ....14
   Frameworks of Response to Legislation ....................................14
      School Counseling ....................................................................14
      Rehabilitation Counseling ...................................................20
      Special Education ...................................................................26
   Similarities of Response ............................................................27
      Career Assessments .............................................................27
      Career Planning .................................................................28
      Skills .....................................................................................29
      Resources ...............................................................................29
   Career Development Theory .......................................................30
      Self-Concept .........................................................................30
      Career Development Stages ..................................................31
         Growth ..............................................................................31
         Exploration .........................................................................31
      Career Assessments ............................................................32
         Vocational Assessments ....................................................33
         Transition Assessments ....................................................33
      Career Plans ...........................................................................34
   Employment Challenges for Individuals With Disabilities ........34
   Potential Barriers to Employment for Individuals With Disabilities ...35
      Discrimination and Stigma ....................................................35
      Self-Disclosure and Accommodations ....................................36
Job Limitations and Connections ............................ 38
Barriers for School Counselors .................................... 38
Distribution of Time and Caseloads .......................... 39
Self-efficacy and Disability Training .......................... 40
Evaluation of Research ........................................ 45

III. METHODOLOGY ........................................ 46

Design of the Study ............................................. 46
Research Questions ............................................. 46
Research Design/Framework .................................... 47
Study Participants ............................................. 49

Demographics ................................................. 50
School Building Demographics ............................... 51

Instrumentation ................................................. 51
Demographic Questionnaire .................................. 51
Vignettes ......................................................... 52
Development of Rubrics ........................................ 52
Validity .......................................................... 55
Reliability ....................................................... 55

Data Collection Process ....................................... 56
Independent Variables ........................................ 56
Gender ............................................................ 56
Type of Program ................................................ 57
Years of Experience ........................................... 58
Professional Development ..................................... 58

Data Analysis Plan ............................................. 59
Limitations ...................................................... 60

IV. RESULTS ................................................ 61

Preliminary Analysis ........................................... 61
Data Coding ...................................................... 61
Descriptive Statistics .......................................... 61

Descriptive Data 1 .............................................. 62
School Building ................................................. 62
Table 2 .......................................................... 64
Descriptive Data 2 .............................................. 65
School Building ................................................. 65
Table 3 .......................................................... 66

Inter-rater Reliability ........................................... 67
Rater 1 and Rater 2 .............................................. 67
Rater 1 and Rater 3 .............................................. 67
Rater 2 and Rater 3 .............................................. 67
Table 4 .......................................................... 68

Research Question 1 ............................................ 68
Group 1 .......................................................... 68
Table 5 .......................................................... 72
Group 2 .......................................................... 74
Table 6 .......................................................... 77
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1
Proposed Data Analysis Plan.................................................................59

TABLE 2
Descriptive Table: Group 1.................................................................62

TABLE 3
Descriptive Table: Group 2.................................................................65

TABLE 4
Inter-Rater Reliability (Kappa Scores)..................................................68

TABLE 5
Transition Task Statements and Personnel: Group 1............................72

TABLE 6
Transition Task Statements and Personnel: Group 2............................77

TABLE 7
Correlations Between Independent Variables and Subscales..................82
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model........................................................................................................4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Jesus Christ for His guidance, direction, and wisdom. I am so thankful for His death and resurrection, His unending love, forgiveness, and mercies. Never in a million years did I believe that I would be finishing a PhD program at Penn State. It reminds me of the scripture verse Jeremiah 29:11, which says “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Thank you Jesus.

Tom. Words could never describe my love and admiration for you. Thank you for your constant support through this crazy adventure. So grateful to be on this life adventure with you! Thank you for every word of encouragement and for taking on extra responsibility to support God’s call on my life. Thank you for being my soul mate and teammate. I love you and thankful that God gave me you.

Zechariah. You are such a blessing from the Lord; you are a reminder that He hears our prayers and answers them. I admire your heart to help and love others. I pray that you will always push through hardships and remember that God has a plan for you. He created you for a purpose and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. I love you, Zechariah. Thank you for being on this crazy journey with me.

Jeremiah. You bring such joy to my life. Your love and laughter reminds me to laugh regularly. God also has a plan for your life! God protected you in the womb when the doctors thought you were not forming correctly. But God knew what He was doing! I love you, Jeremiah. Thank you for being on this crazy journey with me.

JoLynn. I have learned so much from you. I am grateful for your wisdom and guidance. Your ability to work with all people collaboratively and lovingly is admirable. Thank you for believing in me when I didn’t believe that I could do this. Thank you for helping to foster my spiritual growth and reminding me that I could love Jesus and serve Him through my work. I thank you for always seeing through different lenses and helping me to put different perspectives on situations. It is a skill that I have learned from you and will continue to use throughout my life.

My Committee. Dr. Carney, Dr. Trusty, Dr. Yoder, and Dr. Herbert, what a journey this has been for me. Thank you for every investment you have made in me. Dr. Herbert, thank you for taking time to talk research and shoot the breeze, and for teaching me how to use the word ‘bailiwick.’ Dr. Trusty, thank you for allowing me to teach alongside you; it’s always great to laugh and learn with you. Dr. Yoder, your courage and sacrifice continue to amaze me; thank you for being part of this team.

Family and Friends. A special thank you to Tom and Benita Kurz for their support during this process. Friends, your prayers have meant so much. It reminds me of the verse, Hebrews 10:24-25, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Thank
you for spurring me forward! Thank you to Cathie and Rachel Wightman for supporting me as well. Pam Heggins, thank you for your constant encouragement and your friendship; there were many times through this process when I wished you were sitting in class with me! Special thank you to Uncle Thomas and Aunt Dennise McKinney for your continual love, support, and encouragement.

Grandview Heights City Schools. Thank you to the staff and students who have supported my dissertation process over the last two years. It was an honor and a blessing to serve as your school counselor. Bob, thank you for all the times that you prayed with me and reminded me that God was with us. It was truly a blessing to work with you. I pray blessings over you and your retirement. Shelley, thank you for believing in me and offering words of encouragement.

Advisory Team and Reviewers. Special thanks to Dr. Julie Bates-Maves, Dr. Michael Hannon, Bryan Stork, Debbie Reed, and Rick Smrek for your help on the Advisory Team. Special thanks to Lauren Van Tuyl, Cara Boettner, and Kara Kralick for serving as reviewers. Also, a special thanks to the University of Dayton, Counselor Education and Human Services Department for your support.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2013), school counselors are required and expected to work with all students, regardless of disability, in the areas of academic, personal/social, and career development. Additionally, ASCA (2013) created and revised the Professional School Counselor and Students with Disabilities position statement, which provides a list of roles and tasks for school counselors, to aid them in supporting students with disabilities. From a high school perspective, school counselors work with students who will be transitioning to post-secondary education or vocational options.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Improvement Act (IDEAIA, 2004) provides support for students with disabilities in secondary education. This legislation requires school personnel to create a transition plan for students with disabilities, beginning at the age of 14, that focuses on helping them develop skills for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. In response to the legislation, the disciplines of school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education have provided frameworks for meetings the needs of students with disabilities who are in transition to post-secondary options.

The researcher will discuss the problem within the current transition literature and provide a foundation for the proposed study. Additionally, the conceptual model will be highlighted and the research questions will be discussed.
Statement of the Problem

Transition literature exists in the disciplines of special education and rehabilitation counseling, as well as in school counseling. Each discipline has its own approach to working with students with disabilities who are in transition. For example, special education uses Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Planning (Kohler, 1996) to inform transition practices, whereas vocational rehabilitation counseling uses Kohler’s model and adds rehabilitation counseling competencies to its framework.

The discipline of school counseling encourages the use of the ASCA National Standards (ASCA, 2005) and the ASCA position statement for working with students with disabilities. Although school counseling literature exists to assess types of tasks school counselors engage in when working with students with disabilities, the methodology of the studies is limited to self-report surveys (Milsom, 2002; Milsom, 2007). Conceptual pieces exist that focus on meeting the needs of students with disabilities (e.g. Tarver-Behring, Spagna, & Sullivan, 1998; Tarver-Behring & Spagna, 2004; Owens, Thomas, & Strong, 2011). Additionally, conceptual pieces have also been written to support school counselor involvement in transition planning for students with disabilities (Gillis, 2006; Naugle, Campbell, & Gray, 2010). A qualitative study has been published that examines the roles of school counselors in elementary, middle, and high school when working with students with disabilities (Deck, Scarborough, Sferrazza, & Estill, 1999). Deck et al. examined the perspectives of an elementary counselor, middle school counselor, and a high school transition counselor regarding working with students with disabilities. It is important to note that the study simply listed the school counselors’
written perspectives verbatim and paraphrased; no analysis was used to evaluate the responses.

It is important to note the limitations of quantitative studies using self-report data. Heppner et al. (2008) remind readers that the self-report method relies on participants to “respond honestly and accurately” (p. 333) Although gathering self-report data in schools may be easier than using other methods, the data may be biased and is based solely on participants’ perceptions (Heppner et al., 2008). To date, no studies exist that focus on examining school counselor behavioral responses in working with students with disabilities.

Additionally, rehabilitation-counseling studies exist that examine the tasks of rehabilitation counselors who work with high school students with disabilities. The discipline of rehabilitation counseling relies on Kohler’s Taxonomy of Transition Programming (1996) to base their work with students with disabilities. For example, Test, Fowler, Richter, White, Mazzotti, Walker, Kohler, and Kortering (2009) conducted a literature review of all transition related evidence-based practices. The researchers organized the evidence-based practices using Kohler’s model because of its acceptance as a transition framework (Test et al., 2009). Kohler’s model is research-based and has been studied through the years to address changing times (Kohler, 1996; Kohler & Field, 2006).

Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming (1996) is a transition framework grounded in the discipline of special education. Transition-related studies that are published in special education literature focus on Kohler’s Taxonomy (1996) because of its origination as a research-based framework in special education (Kohler & Field,
2006). It is important to note that this model was created through a literature review (Kohler, 1993) and a review of evidence-based practices (Kohler, DeStefano, Wermuth, Grayson, & McGinty, 1994), as well as through a review of project outcome research (Rusch, Kohler, & Hughes, 1992).

**Research Questions**

In response to IDEIA (2004), the disciplines of school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education have designed unique approaches to meeting the needs of students with disabilities who are in transition. These approaches will be discussed in length chapter two. It is important to note that this research study will aim to identify appropriate transition practices outlined in the literature and apply these practices to school counseling.

The following research questions will be explored in this study:

1. What specific transition-related tasks do high school counselors who serve students with disabilities report performing?

2. Is there some relation between response of school counselors relative to the following:
   a. Gender
   b. Graduation from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program
   c. Years of experience as a high school counselor
   d. Participation in professional development and coursework

**Conceptual Model**

The following (Figure 1) is the model in which this research will be based. It addresses the commonalities of transition best practices as identified by the disciplines of
school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education. It also addresses the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). Super’s Life-Space, Life-Span Career Development Theory (1990) will also be used as the lens of career development for individuals with disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Super's Life-Space, Life-Span Career Development Theory (1990)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Planning and Experiential Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislative Initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Rehabilitation Act, 1973; No Child Left Behind, 2001; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, 2008)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Conceptual Model.

**Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this analogue study is to examine school counselors’ behavioral responses to working with high school students with disabilities in transition. Additionally, this study will explore current research, as well as use a quasi-experimental research method to explore school counselors’ responses to working with diverse students. Milsom (2007) suggests that future research, regarding school counselors and students with disabilities in transition, should focus on assessing school counselors’ competencies in working with this diverse population. This is the first study in the school counseling literature that will explore school counselors’ specific behaviors in working with high school students with disabilities.
Limitations of the Study

Similar to other research methods, there are advantages and disadvantages to using analogue method. Heppner et al. (2008) suggest the analogue method allows for control of the experimental situation and the elimination of extraneous variables, which are advantages. It has also been said that analogue research is the most similar to experimental research. One of the major disadvantages of analogue research is the lack of generalizability and issues with external validity.

It is important to note that the researcher will construct the questionnaire that will be used to gather demographic information. Additionally, the researcher will present a draft framework of the rubrics for the advisory panel to provide feedback.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

- **Students with Disabilities:** While there is a broad definition of students with disabilities, this term refers to high school students who have been diagnosed with a specific learning disability in reading, math, or written expression.

- **Transition:** A set of activities orchestrated by the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team that will help students move towards postsecondary options, including college, vocational training, workshops, while focusing on independent living and involvement in the surrounding community. IDEIA (2004) mandates transition services for students with disabilities beginning at 14 years of age.

- **‘Appropriateness of Response:’** This term refers to the type of response of school counselors to students with disabilities who are in transition. This term is
based on the implementation of transition best practices as outlined in the literature.

- **Vignettes:** These will be used instead of actual students so that school counselor behaviors can be assessed. The four case studies will include fictional students who meet the following criteria: a) at least 14 years of age; b) have been diagnosed with a learning disability; and 3) plan to attend post-secondary education after high school graduation.

- **Performance Criteria Rubrics:** These are the assessment tools that will be used to assess counselors’ responses to case studies of students with disabilities who are in the transition process. Arter and McTighe (2001, p. 4) define performance criteria as the “guideline, rules, or principles by which student responses, products, or performances are judged.” The performance criteria for each rubric will be discussed in chapter three.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this chapter is on identifying the critical issues for students with specific learning disabilities who are in transition. Without addressing the ecological context of transition, this research regarding transition would be incomplete. Legislation and transition frameworks from school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education will be discussed. Additionally, the school counselor barriers to working with students with specific learning disabilities will be examined. Finally, a rationale for this study will be presented.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012), 2,431 students, aged 3 to 21 years of age, during academic year 2009-2010, received special education services because of a specific learning disability diagnosis. Although this does not appear as a highly significant number when compared to the overall population of students aged 3 to 21 years of age, it is imperative to consider that many of the students diagnosed with specific learning disabilities may plan to attend postsecondary education (Daviso, Denney, Baer, & Flexer, 2011). It is also important to consider the new criteria for diagnosing a specific learning disability. The DSM-V (APA, 2013) defines specific learning disability as a significant impairment in academic achievement appropriate to age and intelligence level.

According to the DSM V (2013; p. 66-68), learning disabilities are now called specific learning disorders and are classified as Neurodevelopmental Disorders. The following criteria must be met in order for a student to be diagnosed with a Specific Learning Disorder:
A. “Difficulties learning and using academic skills, as indicated by the presence of at least one of the following symptoms that have persisted for at least 6 months, despite the provision of interventions that target those difficulties.

1. Inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading (e.g. reads single words aloud incorrectly or slowly and hesitantly, frequently guesses words, has difficulty sounding out words).

2. Difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read (e.g., may read text accurately but not understand the sequence, relationships, inferences, or deeper meanings of what is read).

3. Difficulties with spelling (e.g., may add, omit, or substitute vowels or consonants).

4. Difficulties with written expression (e.g., makes multiple grammatical or punctuation errors within sentences; employs poor paragraph organization; written expression of ideas or lacks clarity).

5. Difficulties mastering number sense, number facts, or calculation (e.g., has poor understanding of numbers, their magnitude, and relationships; counts on fingers to assess single-digit numbers instead of recalling the math fact as peers do; gets lost in the midst of arithmetic computation and may switch procedures).

6. Difficulties with mathematical reasoning (e.g., has severed difficulty applying mathematical concepts, facts, or procedures to solve quantitative problems).

B. The affected academic skills are substantially and quantifiably below those expected for the individual’s chronological age, and cause significant interference with academic or occupational performance, or with activities of daily living, as
confirmed by individually administered standardized achievement measures and comprehensive clinical assessment. For individuals age 17 years and older, a documented history or impairing learning difficulties may be substituted for the standardized assessment.

C. The learning difficulties begin during school-age years but may not become fully manifest until the demands for those affected academic skills exceed the individuals’ limited capacities (e.g., as in timed tests, reading or writing lengthy complex reports for a tight deadline, excessively heavy academic loads).

D. The learning difficulties are not better accounted for by intellectual disabilities, uncorrected visual or auditory acuity, other mental or neurological disorders, psychosocial adversity, lack of proficiency in the language of academic instruction, or inadequate educational instruction.”

The DSM V also advises, “The four diagnostic criteria are to be met based on clinical synthesis of the individual’s history (developmental, medical, family, educational), school reports, and psycho-educational assessment.” Additionally, the DSM V includes the specifiers for impairments in reading, written expression, and mathematics, as well as identification of severity (e.g., mild, moderate, and severe). This broader criterion for a specific learning disability diagnosis is intended to prevent students from going undiagnosed and receiving services. Additionally, the broader criterion may allow for an increase in students identified with specific learning disabilities.

School counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education have developed theoretical frameworks as a response to legislation and to meeting the transition needs of students with disabilities. Although frameworks for transition services
and career development for students with disabilities are present in the literature, review of articles yields little in terms of ‘appropriateness of response’ to students with disabilities who are in transition and the effectiveness of interventions.

Research has continued to support increased enrollment in postsecondary educations by students with specific learning disabilities (Hitchings, Retish, & Horvath, 2005). In a survey study conducted by Daviso et al. (2011), researchers found that approximately sixty-two of the participants, who were diagnosed with a learning disability, (n=259.2; N=419) planned to attend 2-year or 4-year colleges. With the change in the definition of functional limitation by Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2009), postsecondary options providing accommodations may become more accessible to students with specific learning disabilities (Shaw, Keenan, Madaus, & Banerjee, 2010). Because of increased postsecondary enrollment of students with disabilities and the more general definition of disability provided by ADAAAA (2009), it is imperative that more research be conducted on effective transition services to postsecondary education for students with specific learning disabilities (Shaw & Dukes, 2013).

**Legislation**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (1973) mandates that all schools provide special education services to all students with disabilities. Additionally, IDEIA (2004) mandates transition services for students with disabilities at 14 years of age. Transition services are defined as the following:
“…coordinated set of activities that is designed within a results-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.”

(IDEIA, 2004’ 34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)) [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)].

Furthermore, IDEIA (2004) identifies transition services as planning that include daily living skills instruction, work and community experiences, as well as any other educational, employment, and independent living opportunities that are tailored for individual student needs. It is evident that transition planning, in part, is connected to career development (Szymanski, 1994).

**Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504.** The Rehabilitation of Act of 1973, Section 504 (Retrieved July 1, 2013), otherwise known as Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), gives all students, regardless of disability, access to educational services within public school setting. Additionally, this mandate provides students with disabilities the right to be educated with peers without disabilities. Evaluation procedures were also supported by this mandate that require schools to assess the appropriateness of services, education, and placement for students with disabilities. Appropriate education can be defined as individualized education to meet the needs of individual students. For families, this mandate provided due process, which allows parents and/or guardians to appeal decisions made by the school regarding the education of students with disabilities.
**No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001).** No Child Left Behind, section 1418 (NCLB, 2001) is the first legislative initiative that guarantees support services for all students to have the opportunity for post-secondary education and/or employment. These services include job placement, support counseling (i.e. career counseling), and any service that aids students to pursue post-secondary education.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004).** IDEIA (2004) states that students with disabilities must have a transition plan in place by the age of sixteen and a transition statement by the age of fourteen. This plan is intended to help students with disabilities gain the necessary skills for transition to postsecondary or work options. A transition plan is developed by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team, which should consist of the student with a disability, parent(s) or guardian(s), a special education teacher, a general education teacher, an administrator, a school counselor, other school personnel (i.e. school psychologist or speech/language therapist), and community resource personnel (i.e. vocational rehabilitation counselor). IDEIA and the development and use of transition plans is required to be implemented in all schools, including private, public, or charter schools that serve students with disabilities (IDEIA, 2004).

**Transition statement.** IDEIA (2004) requires that a transition statement be created for students with disabilities by 14 years of age. The statement may include general information about placement after graduation. For example, a student who plans to go college may have a transition statement that addresses exploration of post-secondary options.
**Transition plan.** IDEIA (2004) mandates that a transition plan be designed and implemented for students with disabilities by 16 years of age. The plan is based on measurable goals and objectives that encompass the following areas: education/employment, independent living, and community participation. Transition services, such as coursework, community opportunities, and work experiences are included in the plan.

**Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2008).** This amendment to the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) supports services for students with disabilities who are attending post-secondary education or are employed. This act allows for individuals with disabilities with “functional limitations” to receive services and accommodations in the post-secondary education classroom or place of employment. From a post-secondary perspective, these accommodations may include classroom accommodations, whether physical or academic, and psycho-education (e.g. time management, study skills, social skills training). ADAAA (2008) allows a more generalized definition of “functional limitations,” thus allowing for more students to receive support services (Shaw & Dukes, 2013).

**Frameworks of Responses to Legislation**

To meet the needs of secondary students with disabilities and to uphold legislation, the disciplines of school counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education have developed frameworks for working with students with disabilities who are in transition to postsecondary educational environments.

**School counseling.** The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2005) has responded to meeting the needs of all students, regardless of disability, through the
development of standards and indicators that support academic, personal/social, and
career development services. ASCA (2005) reinforces the responsibility of the school
counselors as meeting the needs of all students by utilizing a delivery system that consists
of guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system
support. School counselors can support students in constructing successful transition
plans from secondary to post-secondary or work options (ASCA, 2005). Additionally,
ASCA’s Professional School Counselor and Students with Disabilities revised position
statement (2013) provides a list of roles and tasks school counselors are responsible for
when working with students with disabilities, which includes the use of career plans.

The ASCA National Standards (2005) support school counselor involvement in
the development of career plans for every student. Competency A.1.7 states that school
counselors should help students to understand the significance of career planning.
Additionally, competency C.B1.3 states that students should be aware of the career
planning process. School counselors have the responsibility to assist in the development
of career plans for students by working collaboratively with families, other school
personnel, and community agencies.

It is important to note that the literature base regarding school counselors’ roles in
working with students with disabilities who are in transition is sparse and relies on self-
report data. Through an extensive literature review using the Journal of School
Counseling, Journal of Counseling and Development, Career Development for
Exceptional Individuals, Professional School Counseling, and various other scholarly
databases, as well as the Social Sciences Citation Index, it is evident that Milsom (2002;
2007) is the lead researcher in transition in the discipline of school counseling. None of
the literature examined, however, assesses the specific behaviors and ‘appropriateness of response’ of school counselors working with students with disabilities.

As a response to ASCA’s position, Milsom (2002) designed the initial School Counselors Preparation Survey to examine school counselors’ involvement in working with students with disabilities. A random sample design of 200 school counselors affiliated with a state school counseling association was used in piloting the initial School Counselors Preparation Survey. Adjustments were made to the survey after the pilot study, which led to the creation of the School Counselors Preparation Survey-Revised (SCPS-R), which focuses on identifying specific activities completed with students with disabilities and the school counselors and feelings of preparedness to engage in these activities. The author reported that the specific activities included in SCPS-R were chosen based on the ASCA position statements regarding working with students with disabilities and ADHD as well as the pilot study of the SCPS survey (Milsom, 2002).

In the 2002 study, Milsom used a random sample of 400 employed school counselors in either elementary, middle, or high schools who were members of the American Counseling Association. A total of 400 surveys were mailed with a 57% return rate. Based on the selection criteria of completing graduate work between 1994 and 2000, only 100 of the returned surveys were usable for this student. It is important to note that the author wanted to include participants who completed their school counseling training after the first passage of IDEA (1990) to allow for integration of IDEA into school counselor training programs.
Participants reported feelings of preparation through a preparation rating scale, created by the author, (1=Completely Unprepared, 6=Completely Prepared) for the 11 identified activities:

- Provide Individual/Group Counseling
- Provide Feedback for Multidisciplinary Team
- Provide Self-Esteem Activities
- Make Referrals
- Provide Social Skills Training
- Advocate for Students
- Serve on Multidisciplinary Team
- Counsel Parents and Families
- Assist with Behavior Modification Plans
- Serve as a Consultant to Parents/Staff
- Assist With Transition Plans

Participants reported that they felt “most prepared” to Provide Individual/Group Counseling (eighty-two point eight percent) to students with disabilities but felt “least prepared” to Assist with Transition Plans (forty point four percent). All of other preparation percentage ratings fell between the percentages of those two activities. It is important to note that the highest percentage of reported preparation level did rise above eighty-three percent. The researcher also found a relationship between feelings of preparation and the number of courses completed that focus on working with students with disabilities, which may indicate a need for more specialized coursework for school counselors in training (Milsom, 2002).

The researcher discussed that the low preparation percentage rate for Assist with Transition Plans may be due to the fact that school counselors K-12 participated in this study. As reported previously, transition plans are not required for students with disabilities less than 16 years of age. However, the researcher indicated that 32% of the participants, who did work in high schools, reported that they did not assist students with transition plans (Milsom, 2002). It is evident that more research needs to be conducted
on specific behavioral practice of high school counselors and their work with students with disabilities who are in transition.

Milsom (2007) furthered her investigation by identifying school counseling interventions for working with students with disabilities who are in transition. The researcher created the Postsecondary Transition Questionnaire to gather self-report data regarding specific transition planning tasks completed by school counselors, as well as the frequency of these tasks. The instrument was piloted before its use in this study with ten school counselors, a school counselor educator, and five school counseling graduate students (Milsom, 2007). Participants (n=126) were asked to identify the descriptive category (always, usually, sometime, rarely, never) for each intervention listed: *attend IEP meetings; provide input for transition plan; plan and schedule courses; assess interest; assess disabilities; explore careers; arrange job shadowing; teach job search skills; teach resume/interviewing skills; explore colleges; arrange college visits; arrange special college testing; discuss college disability services; teach self-advocacy skills; and discuss disability legislation.* Results indicated that fifty-percent or more of the participants completed most of the interventions *always or usually* for those with mild disabilities (i.e. learning disabilities). Interventions completed less than fifty-percent in the always or usually category for those with mild disabilities included: arrange job shadowing (seventeen percent); teach job search skills (twenty percent); teach resume/interviewing skills (seventeen percent); arrange college visits (thirty-three percent); discuss college disability services (forty-five percent); and discuss disability legislation (sixteen percent). Even though the literature supports the interventions listed, it is apparent that not every school counselor is utilizing these interventions.
Also, within the school counseling literature, Naugle, Campbell, and Gray (2010) proposed a post-secondary transition model for students with disabilities. The model focuses on four areas in which school counselors can better serve students with disabilities. The areas include: Knowledge of Disability Legislation; Importance of Promoting Student Self Advocacy; Use of Community and National Resources and Programs; and Collaboration with Parents, Peers, and Professionals.

Knowledge of Disability Legislation refers to the school counselor’s ability to discuss Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (2008), No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and IDEIA (2004). It is suggested that school counselors familiarize themselves with the legislation that impacts students with disabilities at the post-secondary level and help these students navigate obtaining services (Naugle et al., 2010; Milsom, 2007; Milsom & Akos, 2005).

Importance of Promoting Student Self Advocacy refers to aiding students in understanding their disabilities and how they are impacted by these disabilities, as well as advocating for students’ needs. ASCA (2005) also supports the school counselor’s role in helping students to learn self-advocacy skills in the secondary environment. Additionally, Naugle et al. (2010) suggests that school counselors also help parents to understands students’ disabilities.

Use of Community and National Resources and Programs refers to the school counselor’s knowledge and understanding of resources available to students with disabilities. This includes programs and services available through the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), which is a government-supported service.
Rehabilitation counselors are charged with helping individuals with disabilities attain employment. Naugle et al. (2010) also mention the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), which is also financially supported by the federal government. WRP works with career services offices and offices for disability services on college campuses to aid students with disabilities in attaining internships in the federal government.

Collaboration with Parents, Peers, and Professionals refers to school counselors collaborating with families, other school personnel, and community resources in order to provide support in transition planning and career planning for students with disabilities. It is important to note that collaboration is a key characteristic of an effective school counselor, as identified by the ASCA National Model (2005). Naugle et al. (2010) identify collaboration with parents as instrumental in the transition planning process, which mirrors Kohler’s Taxonomy (1996).

Rehabilitation counseling. Similarly, rehabilitation counseling has also responded to legislation to support students with disabilities who are in transition. The primary purpose of rehabilitation counselors is to help individuals with disabilities, including high school students with disabilities, obtain employment. In response to legislation and identified roles of rehabilitation counselors, Plotner, Trach, & Strauser (2012) conducted a survey study to examine rehabilitation counselors’ perceptions of transition services, frequency of transition-related tasks, and feelings of preparedness to work with students with disabilities. Through a literature review of transition-related studies and instruments found in rehabilitation counseling and special education, the researchers identified 106 transition task statements and then reviewed these statements to exclude duplicated items. Content reviewers offered feedback on the items based on
several criteria, which included clarity, specificity, redundancy of items, and inclusion or exclusion of items (Alreck & Settle, 1985). Incorporating the feedback, Plotner et al. (2012) created a pilot study to determine content validity of the survey.

Using a factor analysis of the pilot study data, the researchers created the Vocational Rehabilitation-Transition Practices Inventory (VR-TPI; Plotner et al., 2012) which consists of 59 transition tasks that encompass the following domains: (a) Provide Career Planning and Counseling; (b) Provide Career Preparation Experiences; (c) Promoting Access and Opportunity for Student Success; (d) Conduct Program Improvement Activities; (e) Facilitate Nonprofessional Support and Relationships; (f) Facilitate Allocation of Resources; and (g) Develop and Maintain Collaborative Relationships. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for these domains were considered high.

Plotner et al. (2012) used the VR-TPI to assess competencies, perceived importance, frequency of tasks, and preparedness of rehabilitation counselors who reported serving transition-aged students, fourteen to twenty-two. Participants were gathered using the directories of all rehabilitation counselors in the three states (e.g. Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin) involved in the study.

The researchers reported that rehabilitation counselors perceive Provide Career Planning and Counseling, Provide Career Preparation Experiences, and Facilitate Allocation of Resources as highly important, but also frequently engage in these activities with clients. Additionally, rehabilitation counselors also reported feeling most prepared to Provide Career Planning and Counseling, Facilitate Allocation of Resources, Provide Career Preparation Experiences.
Test, Fowler, Richter, White, Mazzotti, Walker, Kohler, and Kortering (2009) conducted a literature review of all existing transition literature in the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) database to determine evidence-based transition practices. The researchers used quality indicator checklists to evaluate the studies. The following criteria were used to identify studies: studies had to be published between 1984 and March of 2008; studies had to include at least one student participant who met the legislative criteria for having a disability and received services in a local education agency; and the studies must have included variables that were connected to the areas of Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming (1996).

Once the studies were evaluated, the researchers placed them under the categories (e.g. Student-Focused Planning, Student Development, Family Involvement, Program Structures, and Interagency Collaboration) identified by Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming (1996). The researchers reported using Kohler’s Taxonomy due to its validity in secondary transition practices and it is often used as a frame for transition practices within the discipline of rehabilitation counseling (Test et al., 2009; Test & Cease-Cook, 2012).

Results for Student-Focused Planning indicated the following as moderate level best practices: Involving students in the IEP meetings; Self-Advocacy Strategy; and Self-Directed IEP. For Student Development, researchers identified that following as strong level best practices: Teaching life skills and Teaching purchasing skills. The following were listed as moderate level best practices for Student Development: Teaching banking skills; Teaching completing a job application; Teaching cooking skills; Teaching employment skills using community-based instruction; Teaching food preparation skills;
Teaching functional math skills; Teaching functional reading skills; Teaching grocery shopping skills; Teaching home maintenance skills; Teaching leisure skills; Teaching life skills using community-based instruction; Teaching life skills using computer-assisted instruction; Teaching life skills using self-management; Teaching job-specific employment skills using computer-assisted instruction; teaching purchasing using the “one more than” strategy; Teaching restaurant purchasing skills; Teaching safety skills; Teaching self-advocacy skills; Teaching self-determination skills; Teaching self-management for employment skills; Social skills training; and Teaching job-related social communication skills. Results for Family Involvement indicated Teaching parents and families about transition as a moderate level best practice. Results for Program Structure indicated Provide community-based instruction and Structure program to extend services beyond secondary school as moderate level transition best practices.

Additionally, researchers (Test et al., 2009; Test & Cease-Cook, 2012) identified the following as in-school predictors of post-school success for students with disabilities transitioning to post-secondary education: Career Awareness (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997), Inclusion in General Education (Baer, Flexer, Beck, Amstutz, Hoffman, Brothers, Zechman, 2003), Independent Living Skills (Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson, 1990), Interagency Collaboration (Bullis, Davis, Bull, & Johnson, 1995), Occupational Courses (Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Heal & Rusch, 1995), Paid Employment/Work Experience (Benz et al., 1997; Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovenoff, 2000), Self-Determination (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997), Social Skills (Roessler et al., 1990), Student Support (Halpern et al., 1995), Transition Program (Halpern et al., 1995; Benz et
al., 2000), and Vocational Education (Harvey, 2002). Below are the definitions of the predictors as reported by Test and Cease-Cook (2012):

**Career awareness.** This term refers to employment skills that students develop through work career education.

**Inclusion in general education.** This phrase refers to the time that students with disabilities remain in the content-focused general education classroom in secondary education.

**Independent living skills.** According to Test and Cease-Cook (2012), these skills include but “not limited to: (a) leisure skills, (b) social skills, (c) self-care skills, and (d) other adaptive behavior skills” (p. 34).

**Interagency collaboration.** This term is refers to students developing and fostering collaborative relationships with school personnel, family members, as well as counselors and outside agencies.

**Occupational courses.** The authors used this term to define education that focuses on skill development for work and independent living.

**Paid employment/work experience.** This term refers to work experiences that students maintain in high school.

**Self-determination.** This term was used to explain the development of resiliency skills, including learning how to self-advocate and set goals.

**Social skills.** The authors use this term to describe skills necessary for interaction in the school or work environment.

**Student support.** This term refers to a network of individuals that provide support for a student with a disability.
**Transition program.** This can be defined as a “comprehensive set of instruction and services” with the intention to help students with disabilities accomplish goals established on their individual transition plans (Test & Cease-Cook, 2012, p. 35). These goals are focused on education, employment, and independent living. The transition plan requirements established by IDEIA (2004) also focus on education, employment, and independent living.

**Vocational education.** This type of education refers to skills necessary for obtaining employment or college admissions. It includes resume writing, interview skills, filling out applications, and so forth.

Kurz and Kline (2014) proposed a collaborative conceptual model for transition planning that focuses on identifying the characteristics (i.e. predetermined, not predetermined, secondary institutional, professional, and community characteristics) impacting student choice (i.e. work, college, vocational training). The authors urge collaboration between rehabilitation counselors and local education agencies. They propose that collaboration between rehabilitation counselors, special educators, and school counselors is necessary to ensure that students are receiving appropriate transition services.

Similarly to the lack of school counseling research in transition competencies and activities, rehabilitation counseling lacks studies that examine specific behaviors of counselors working with high school students with disabilities who are in transition. The quantitative studies found in the literature are survey-based, outcome-based data, or conceptual.
**Special education.** Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Kohler, 1996) is a transition framework from special education that focuses specifically on services as best practices for transition planning for students with disabilities. There are five categories of services in this model: Student Focused Planning, Student Development, Interagency Collaborating, Family Involvement, and Program Structures and Policies. These categories are based on identifying and enhancing student strengths. For example, Kohler (1996) suggests student planning that focuses on helping students with disabilities identify strengths and learning styles, while encouraging student involvement in the IEP process. Another component of the framework, student development, focuses on the five following subcategories: life skills instruction, employment skills instruction, career/vocational curriculum, support services, assessments, and structured work experiences. The purpose of these subcategories is to help provide students with psycho educational training to allow for successful transition to life after high school. The focus on skill development impacts future work and career experiences. Development of career awareness is also part of this category.

Additionally, interagency collaboration supports collaborative service delivery and a collaborative framework, such as the development of a strategic plan with community agencies. This category aims to reduce barriers to services, both educational and community-based, for students with disabilities and their families. Kohler (1996) also maintains that family involvement in transition planning is pertinent to student success. This tier of Kohler’s model supports the involvement of the family in IEP planning. It also promotes training for families as a way of empowerment.
Kohler (1996) also advocates for developing and evaluating program structure and policies aimed at providing services to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities. Advocating can include providing training for school personnel to learn the nature of the transition process in efforts to increase positive transition outcomes. Additionally, this piece focuses on the use and allocation of resources for programming and services for students with disabilities. Collaborative strategic planning is also emphasized in this category and may include networking with services within the school and in the community.

**Similarities of Response**

School counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education have responded to the legislation and demands of working with students with disabilities who are in transition to postsecondary education. The responses are similar and have yielded common themes of utilization of career assessments, career planning, identifying resources, and skill development. Addressing these commonalties is vitally important given the interdisciplinary efforts necessary to support students through the transition process. To provide a foundation, this next section contains content on these common themes that cross disciplines especially because at first glance they may seem as though the fall under the purview of only career counseling.

**Career Assessments**

School counseling, rehabilitation counseling, and special education supports the use of career assessments to help students identify personal strengths and interests. According to ASCA (2005, p.104; C:A1.3), school counselors are responsible for helping students to “Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests and motivations.”
Career assessments, such as interest inventories, can be used with students to help identify career interest areas. Rehabilitation counseling also supports the use of career assessments in the transition competencies outlined by Plotner et al. (2012): *Provide Career Planning and Counseling* and *Provide Career Preparation Experiences*.

Additionally, Kohler’s Taxonomy (1996) advocates for use of career assessments under the student development section of the model.

**Career Planning**

The transition plan, supported by IDEIA (2008), is similar to a career plan by providing an outline of proposed tasks to help students meet their postsecondary transition goals. All three of the frameworks support the use of career plans with students with disabilities. For example, school counselors should provide opportunities for students to “Understand the importance of planning” as it relates to career development (ASCA, 2005, p. 104; C:A1.7). Additionally, school counselors are charged with helping students to “Apply decision-making skills to career planning, course selection and career transition” (ASCA, 2005, p. 104; C:B1.1) as well as, help students to “Demonstrate knowledge of the career-planning process” (ASCA, 2005, p. 104; C:B1.3). School counselors also have the responsibility to helps students “ Maintain a career-planning portfolio” (ASCA, 2005, p. 105; C:B2.5).

Rehabilitation counseling also supports career planning. Plotner et al. (2012) identified career planning as one of the transition competencies for the discipline of rehabilitation counseling. Similarly, Kohler (1996) supports the career planning in the student planning section of the model. According to Kohler (1996), student-planning focuses on helping students to gain intrapersonal knowledge and to aid in creating the
transition plan during the IEP meeting. Career planning could consist of the use of experiential activities, such as job shadowing, which affords students the opportunity to explore possible career paths (Kohler, 1996; Milsom, 2007).

**Skills**

Additionally, all three frameworks support the development of appropriate transition-related skills, such as academic and study skills, independent living skills, and social skills, as well as self-determination skills. Kohler (1996) advocates for the teaching of these skills by special educators, whereas Plotner et al. (2012) and ASCA (2005) advocates for psycho-education of these skills delivered by their respective disciplines, rehabilitation counseling and school counseling. A psychoeducational training approach could include interventions such as role-playing, modeling, behavioral rehearsal techniques, feedback, and various other techniques (Herr, 1990). The role of the professional, in this context, is teacher (Herr, 1990).

**Resources**

The three frameworks also support the use of resources when planning for transition. ASCA (2005, p.104; C:B1.5) encourages school counselors to teach students how to be able to “Use research and information resources to obtain career information.” Additionally, school counselors should connect students with disabilities to the Office for Disability Services on the college campus so that students can receive necessary services while attending postsecondary education (Milsom & Akos, 2007). Rehabilitation counseling is connected to Office for Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), which focuses on postsecondary education or job placement for individuals with disabilities. As part of this process, rehabilitation counselors are charged with directing the allocation of financial
resources for students (Plotner et al., 2012). Resources, such as a student’s family or outside services, also need to be considered and utilized in the transition planning process (Kohler, 1996; Milsom, 2002; Kohler and Field, 2003; Milsom, 2007; Naugle, Campbell & Gray, 2010; Plotner et al, 2012).

**Career Development Theory**

The themes discussed in the above section are identified as transition best practices but are also supported by the life-span, life-space career theory (Super, 1990). This career theory is developmental in nature and encompasses the life-span. It is based on identifying an individual’s strengths and skills, through the use of career assessments, which aid in career planning. Super (1990) supports the use of identification of available resources to aid in career planning. Super’s career theory is comprised of 14 assumptions, which reflect the idea that individuals are unique and vary based on interests, abilities, aptitude, skill development, career maturity, and self-concept. Super also ascribes to the belief that a person’s environment and personal experiences shape his or her views of self and how one’s self fits into the world of work. This belief is called self-concept.

**Self concept.** Super defines self-concept as a snapshot of one’s self. In other words, it is how a person sees his or her own interests, strengths, aptitudes, values, and needs and how one’s environment impacts view of self. Further, Super believes that self-concept intertwined with one’s environment impacts one’s career decision making. The construct of self-concept is developed over time and impacts the stages of career development.
Career development stages. Life-span, life-space theory (Super, 1990) suggests that students with disabilities in transition reside in either the Growth stage or the Exploration stage of the development model. The Growth stage is said to include children between the ages of 4 and 13 years of age, whereas the Exploration stage encompasses students between the ages of 14 to 24 years of age. Children progress through these stages by learning more about their environments and using their own curiously to explore interests and abilities.

Growth. During the Growth stage, children begin to learn about self and the world of the work through three sub stages: fantasy, interest, and capacity. Students gain self-confidence in decision-making skills, as they begin to gain a sense of self. Super suggests that students in this stage gain a better understanding of goal setting and future planning. This stage also allows students to begin exploring future career options.

Exploration. During the Exploration stage, students begin to integrate information gathered about self and occupations with information about the future. It is fitting that this stage in Super’s theory be cross walked with IDEIA (2004) because of the mandate that transition statements are to be written for students that will be 14 years of age, during the course of the IEP. Additionally, this stage also supports the extension of the mandate to include a full transition plan, at the age of 16, which encompasses education/training, employment/independent living, and community participation. Super maintains that the Exploration stage is a time for students to make decisions regarding careers and occupations. In order to make informed decisions, students need to have opportunities to explore interests, values, and needs.
**Career assessments.** Similarly to the frameworks of response to IDEIA (2004), Super (1990) also suggested that career assessments allow students to see a picture of self, which helps students to make informed decisions about career. Rojewski (2002) maintained Super’s theory and created a generic framework for how career assessments compliment the transition planning process for students with disabilities. He suggests that transition planning and the use of career assessments should begin at the age of 12, two years prior to mandates provided through IDEIA (2004) which requires a transition statement at the age of fourteen (Rojewski, 2002). Career assessments allow students to gain self-awareness of strengths and abilities, while also assessing knowledge regarding the “world of work”. Career assessments are comprised of vocational assessments and transition assessments (Rojewski, 2002).

Herbert, Trusty, and Lorenz (2010) conducted a survey study to determine specific career assessment practices and perceptions of career services for students with disabilities. Participants (n=433) were special education teachers, high school counselors, high school teachers, high school principals, rehabilitation counselors, transition counselors, and other personnel. The survey was created by the researchers and asked participants to report on the types of career assessments used with high school students with disabilities. Types of career assessments included: *Career Interests, Aptitudes, Achievement, Career-Decision Making Skills, Work values, Personality*, and *World of Work*. Results indicated that career interests assessments were the most common career assessment used; it was reported that world of work assessments were used the least among the participants.
Participants reported that their educational training and experiences allowed for a “moderately clear” or “very clear” perception of the career needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, the majority of the participants reported that career services were “somewhat” useful or “very useful;” the majority of participants also reported that they viewed careers services as having a “moderate” or “significant” impact on students with disabilities (Herbert et al., 2010, p. 21).

**Vocational assessments.** Rojewski (2002) defines vocational assessments as producing data that describe students’ strengths and weakness, cognitive functioning, as well as students’ interests. Vocational assessments may include standardized testing scores and other formal assessments. The purpose of these assessments is to allow students to be thinking about vocational options.

**Transition assessments.** These assessments tend to focus on specific skills related to transition, such as independent living skills and community integration. These assessments also focus on the personal/social developmental needs of students with disabilities rather than possible vocations (Rojewski, 2002). These assessments coupled with vocational assessments constitute a large portion of the career assessment process.

Norming procedures for career assessments appropriate in the school counseling setting should be carefully examined before use. There are few standardized, career interest inventories normed for individuals with disabilities (Dipeolu, 2007), so counselors should consider reliability and validity of career assessments used with students with disabilities (Dipeolu, 2007; Levinson et al., 1998). Results of career interest inventories, work samples, and career-style interviews should be viewed as a whole to increase validity (Dipeolu, 2007). The literature suggests that career
assessments be used in the career development process but should not be the sole basis for career decision making (Dipeolu, 2007; Rojewski, 2002).

**Career plans.** Super (1990) also advocates for the use of a career plan as individuals prepare for the world of work. As mentioned previously, the use of career plans is also supported by the transition frameworks presented by special education, rehabilitation counseling, and school counseling. It is also important to note that Rojewski (2002) and Super (1990) advocate for an adjustment of career and transition plans as students’ needs change.

**Employment Challenges for Individuals With Disabilities**

According to Taylor (1998), 29% of people with disabilities in the United States were employed full or part time. Additionally, 79% of people without disabilities were employed full or part time. These statistics show a 50% employment gap for people with and without disabilities. Explanation for this gap may be grounded in concern for the cost of hiring individuals with disabilities. For instance, legislation (ADAAA, 2008) mandates that individuals with disabilities are to receive ‘reasonable accommodations’ in the workplace, which may cause businesses or organization to incur higher costs for employing individuals with disabilities. Additionally, stigma may be associated with hiring individuals with disabilities, which may contribute to a belief that this group of individuals may not be as productive as individuals without disabilities (Roessler, Hennessey, Hogan, & Savickas, 2009).

According to Scheid (2005), lack of financial means may also contribute to a lack of recruitment of individuals with disabilities. In a study consisting of 190 business organizations in a Southern metropolitan area with a 3.5% unemployment rate, she found
that 41% of the businesses recruited individuals with physical disabilities and 33.3% recruited individuals with mental disabilities (Scheid, 2005). Additionally, 63% of the companies reported that they were doing what was necessary to hire individuals with mental disabilities while 23% reported that they could do more for these individuals.

**Potential Barriers to Employment for Individuals with Disabilities**

There are many barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities. This section will solely focus on discrimination and stigma, self-disclosure and accommodations, and the job and connection limitations for individuals with disabilities. It is important to note that more barriers are represented empirically in the literature.

**Discrimination and Stigma**

Scheid (2005) found that 83.3% of the employers were uncomfortable with inconsistent work histories of potential employees with disabilities while 34.4% of the employers reported being uncomfortable with a lack of work history. This uncomfortable feeling may be rooted in stigma and discrimination, which could result in lower employment for individuals with disabilities. Scheid (2005) also found that 22.2% of the participants perceived mental disabilities as impairing cognition. Approximately 25% of the employers who participated in this study also reported that they would not give dangerous jobs to individuals with mental disabilities (Scheid, 2005). This reiterates the stigma that can be attached to a psychiatric disability. Additionally, Dalgin and Belinni (2008) reported that employers tend to have negative perceptions of people with psychiatric disabilities.

This same stigma could negatively impact the relationships that people with disabilities develop in the workplace. According to Freedman and Fesko (1996), people
with disabilities report the need for socialization in the workplace. In a qualitative study conducted by Freedman and Fesko (1996), parents and spouses reported a concern for isolation of their loved in the workplace due to stigma. One of the participants in this study reported that he did not have “real friends” in his work environment. Socialization has been identified as a key factor in job satisfaction (Moseley, 1998). Discrimination and stigma are the most frequent workplace barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities (Freedman & Fesko, 1996).

**Self-Disclosure and Accommodations**

In a study conducted by Dalgin and Bellini (2008), employers rated potential employees with physical disabilities as more employable than those with psychiatric disabilities. However, employers reported that self-disclosure and the amount of self-disclosure did not impact the level of employability of candidates. It was reported that potential employees with psychiatric disabilities experienced less favor with potential employers. Ultimately, this study found that the type of disability was the primary factor to impact employment decisions (Dalgin & Bellini, 2008).

Although Dalgin and Bellini (2008) did not find a significant relationship between self-disclosure and the amount of self-disclosure as it relates to employability, previous studies have supported the notion that people with disabilities believe that they should not disclose during the interview process (Price et al., 2003). Self-disclosure may be linked to the need for accommodations, which may cause businesses or organizations to incur costs for accommodations for individuals with disabilities (Scheid, 2005).

According to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990; ADA Amendments Act, 2008), a reasonable accommodation is any adjustment made to the
physical environment or work/school environment that will allow the student or employee with a disability the opportunity to do the required tasks for the class or job. There are businesses that work to provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities. In a study conducted by Solovieva, Wallsh, Hendricks, and Dowler (2010), participants (N=45) who had accessed the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) requested 70 total accommodations in their workplaces. At the time of the follow-up survey, participants reported that 24 of the accommodation requests had been applied and 46 of the accommodations were in process of implementation. In the study conducted by Scheid (2005), approximately 80% of the participating employers reported that the accommodations requested were inexpensive.

Although there are businesses and organizations who may provide accommodations for individuals with disabilities, it has been reported that people with learning disabilities may choose not to self-disclose for fear of appearing incompetent and for lack of information regarding their disabilities (Price et al., 2003). In a study conducted by Madaus, Foley, McGuire, and Ruban (2002), 30.3% percent of the participants (N=209 college graduates who were previously diagnosed with a learning disability) reported self-disclosing in their places of employment. The majority of the participants that self-disclosed reported accessing accommodations as the rationale for disclosing (Madaus et al., 2002).

The timing of the disclosure is also an important issue for people with disabilities seeking employment. Roberts and Macan (2006) reported that future employers were not concerned with disability disclosure but that these future employers valued early disclosure as compared to late disclosure. In this study, 69 undergraduate students
(future employers) in business and psychology courses participated in viewing prerecorded interview videos of people with disabilities.

Early disclosers were viewed as being more honest and more personable than late disclosers. Even though the research presented here shows positive support for self-disclosure, individuals with disabilities still report a fear of termination and loss of job prospects upon disclosure (Price, Gerber, Mulligan, 2003).

**Job Limitations and Connections**

Individuals with disabilities may also experience difficulty in connecting with people who can provide possible employment. In a study conducted by Fabian, Beveridge, and Ethridge (2009), participants (N=99) reported perceptions of barriers in the workplace for individuals with disabilities. More than half of the sample size reported that “Not knowing the right people” was the largest perceived barrier to employment. Similarly, in a study conducted by Price, Gerber, and Mulligan (2003), the majority of the participants (N=25) reported using their friends and family members as resources for job searching.

A lack of skills or training may also be a factor hindering people with disabilities in the workplace. According to Fabian et al. (2009), “Lacking work skills,” “Being limited in job choices due to my disability,” and “Lacking work experience” were rated highly as perceived barriers to employment.

**Barriers for School Counselors**

Although it evident through the research and statistics presented previously that individuals with disabilities need transition and career development support, barriers exist for school counselors in providing these supports. Frameworks for transition and career
development theory support recommended best practices discussed previously, however school counselors, unlike special education teachers and rehabilitation counselors face unique various barriers in working effectively with students with disabilities who are in transition to postsecondary education. This section will focus on the specific barriers for school counselors, which is related directly to my current study. Some of the barriers for school counselors include inadequate distribution of school counselor time, high caseload numbers, lack of clarity of roles, and lack of training/professional development.

**Distribution of time and caseloads.** The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2012) recommends that school counselors spend 80% or more of their time delivering direct and indirect services. Additionally, ASCA (2005) also recommends a 250 to 1 caseload for school counselors. In 2006, ASCA reported that the average school counselor caseload was 355 to 1, which is significantly higher than the ASCA recommendation. In a study conducted by Scarborough and Culbreth (2008), the researchers examined actual versus perceived roles of school counselors. Researchers used the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) to determine the frequency of activities and discrepancies between actual versus preferred activities. Participants (n=361) were elementary, middle school, and high school counselors who were asked to identify the actual frequency and personal preference of engaging in 48 various tasks related to counseling, consultation, curriculum, coordination, and other various activities.

There were significant differences between actual and preferred activities which indicates that school counselors prefer to engage in activities related to counseling, consultation, curriculum, and coordination. According to Scarborough and Culbreth
(2008), organizational culture, support from school personnel, and self-efficacy were predictor variables, which contributed to the discrepancy between actual and preferred roles. Organizational culture may have included the administrators’ perceptions of school counselor roles.

**Self-efficacy and disability training.** Perceptions of self-efficacy contribute to discrepancies between actual and preferred roles of school counselors (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's view of self, regarding one's capability to perform certain tasks or behaviors and how those tasks and behaviors lead to desired outcomes (Bandura, 1989). A person's "motivation, perseverance, and resiliency" are directly related to one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995; Owens et al., 2010). Based on the results of various studies (e.g. Owens et al., 2010; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), if school counselors do not believe that they are capable of working with students with disabilities, then they may not participate in activities that might benefit this population.

Higher levels of self-efficacy and preparation in working with students with disabilities has also been linked to the amount of disability coursework and professional development offered to school counselors (Milsom, 2002). Disability awareness is a multicultural issue and is typically covered in multicultural coursework required by CACREP (2013). Multicultural self-efficacy is defined by researchers, Owens et al. (2010, p. 5), as the "counselors' perceptions that their multicultural competence will lead to positive counseling outcomes." Owens et al. (2010) conducted a study that examined the relationship between multicultural self-efficacy and the specific predictors of gender, number of years working as a school counselor, age, and identified work setting. The researchers assessed school counselors' perceptions of multicultural self-efficacy using
the School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE; Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005) and the Multicultural CCTS-R (Holcomb-McCoy & Day Vines, 2004). Analysis of findings indicated that a number of years as a school counselor was a strong predicator of perceived multicultural competence. It was important to note that the researchers did not include training or professional development as a variable in this study.

Milsom and Akos (2003) completed a study of 137 school counselor education programs to assess coursework offered in the programs. The study utilized The School Counselor Education Questionnaire, which contained five questions related to programming (Milsom & Akos, 2003). It is important to note that 50% of the participating schools were CACREP accredited (Milsom & Akos, 2003). Researchers found that 43% of the school counseling programs surveyed require disability coursework. Seventy-nine percent of the courses offered were graduate level courses and were taught through various departments, such as counselor education, special education, and educational psychology (Milsom & Akos, 2003). Class size for the majority of the courses was between 20 and 40 students (Milsom & Akos, 2003). The authors also found that 135 of 137 programs incorporated information about disabilities into the required courses (Milsom & Akos, 2003). It is important to note that the type of disability information provided in counseling courses was not assessed.

The lack of training and education in disabilities impacts the ways in which school counselors interact with students with disabilities who are in transition to postsecondary education. As previously mentioned, Milsom (2007) assessed high school counselors’ involvement in the transition planning process for students with mild (i.e. ADHD or learning disabilities) and moderate disabilities. Identified interventions include
the following: *attend IEP meetings; provide input for transition plan; plan and schedule courses; assess interest; assess disabilities; explore careers; arrange job shadowing; teach job search schools; teach resume/interviewing skills; explore colleges; arrange college visits; arrange special college testing; discuss college disability services; teach self-advocacy skills; and discuss disability legislation.* For responses of ‘never,’ participants were asked to identify provided rationale for not engaging in the intervention. The provide rationale included the following: (A) *to indicate that someone else implements the intervention;* (B) *if they did not feel competent to implement the intervention;* (C) *to indicate that they did not have time to implement the intervention;* (D) *if they did not believe the intervention is necessary/helpful;* and (E) *for any other reasons.* The researcher seems to have assumed a positive relationship between feelings of competency and engagement in the identified interventions.

The results indicated that school counselors tend to be less knowledgeable about disability law and changes in the law as students with disabilities transition to post-secondary education or work. It is important to address the law changes, from IDEIA (2004) to the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2009), that impact use of accommodations. IDEIA (2004) affords accommodations to students with disabilities regardless of functional limitations, whereas ADAAA (2009) is used in post-secondary environments and workplace to grant accommodations strictly on functional limitations. In other words, accommodations and services that a student with a disability received in secondary education may not be the same accommodations and services that he/she may receive after graduation.
It is imperative that school counselors not only know disability law and its changes, but they are also able to interpret potential accommodation changes for students with disabilities (Milsom, 2007; Milson & Akos, 2007). Although it is important to recognize that the results of this study are not considered to be generalizable because of the survey methodology and low number of participants, it is important for school counselors to be equipped to prepare students with disabilities to meet the changes in services by advocating for the development of student self-efficacy and self-concept.

Additionally, results indicated that only 57% (n=35) of the participants reported attending IEP meetings. Since the transition plan is created within the IEP, it is concerning that this percentage is not higher, however 60% of participants did report offering input to inform transition planning. Also, participants reported that they felt competent to be involvement in IEP meetings and transition planning.

The lack of training and professional development opportunities for school counselors also impacts the type of career interventions that are used with students with disabilities who are in transition. Adkison-Bradley, Kohler, Bradshaw, Applegate, Cai, and Steele (2007) conducted a survey study to examine specific career interventions that school counselors use when working with students with and without disabilities. The survey was created using career interventions that have been identified in the research literature as well as the school counseling competencies outlined by ASCA. Additionally, the researchers used information gathered from the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) to create the survey. Interventions included in the survey are as follows:
administer career assessment(s); provide information regarding results of career assessment(s); assist students to identify career goals; provide information about career areas and/or options; provide information about career requirements; provide assistance to develop or modify an educational program plan aligned with career goals; provide information about secondary career and technical education programs; provide information about post-secondary career and technical education programs; provide information about post-secondary educational institutions; and teach career and/or employability skills (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2007, p. 12-13).

The participants (n=884), elementary, middle, and high school counselors in Illinois, reported that they meet more frequently with students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities. Although it was reported that students with disabilities receive career development services, this study found that school counseling practices (i.e. career assessments) for career development tend to favor students without disabilities. It is also interesting that seventy six to one hundred percent of the participants working in middle schools reported providing information about post-secondary educational institutions, such as colleges and universities, to only twenty six point nine percent of the students with disabilities, which was the lowest percentage of interventions assessed. The next highest percentage (twenty eight point thirty six percent) for middle school counselors was attributed to provide assistance to develop or modify and educational program plan aligned with career goals. This means that seventy six to one hundred percent of the middle school counselors in this study reported
developing and evaluating educational plans and career goals with less than one-third of students with disabilities.

The high school counselors (seventy six to one hundred percent) in this study reported, on average, that they teach career and/or employability skills to twenty nine point twenty eight percent of students with disabilities. This percentage is concerning in that it employability skills is an identified section on the transition plan created by IDEIA (2004) mandate. Additionally, high school counselors reported that the average caseload of was 355 to 1, which is significantly lower than the average caseload of 488 to 1, which was reported in 2006 by ASCA. The researchers suggested that this might have allowed for more school counselor involvement with students with and without disabilities.

**Evaluation of the Research**

The quantitative research conducted in the past regarding high school counselors and their involvement in transition planning and career development for high school students with disabilities has been self-reported data through the use of surveys. Because these are self-report data, it is difficult to account for “socially desirable” responses of participants (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008, p. 334).

It is important to note that none of the recent studies reflect behaviors of school counselors working with high school students with disabilities in the area of transition and career development. Milsom (2007) suggested that more research be conducted on the competency of school counselors in the area of disabilities. With this study, I intend to observe school counselor competency through the use of case studies and rubrics for analysis.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The focus of this chapter is on the methodology of this analog, exploratory study. Among other things, the research design, participants, instruments, independent and dependent variables, data collection procedures, and proposed data analyses are specifically addressed.

Design of the Study

Milsom (2007) suggests that future research, regarding school counselors and students with disabilities in transition, should focus on assessing school counselors’ competencies in working with students with disabilities. Current research assessing school counselors’ work with students with disabilities uses surveys (Milsom, 2002; Milsom, 2007) or qualitative methods (Deck, Scarborough, Sferrazza, & Estill, 1999). The current study will be undertaken using an analogue study design. The purpose of this analogue study is to examine school counselors’ behavioral responses to working with high school students with disabilities in transition. An additional study aim is to increase the current literature base of survey method to quasi-experimental research examining school counselors’ responses to working with diverse populations.

Research Questions

1. What specific transition-related tasks do high school counselors who serve students with disabilities report performing?
2. Is there some relation between response of school counselors relative to the following:
   a. Gender
   b. Graduation from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program
c. Years of experience as a high school counselor

d. Participation in professional development and coursework in disabilities

**Research Design/Framework**

An analogue method was used to evaluate high school counselors’ behaviors in working with students with disabilities. Heppner et al., (2008, p. 405) define the analogue method as “…research that is conducted under conditions that resemble or approximate the therapeutic situation.” In this study, school counselors were given one of three vignettes that focus on the following career and transition related topics: skills, resources, career assessments, and career planning. Participants were asked to write a response to the vignettes and a rubric was used to assess the responses.

It is important to note that analogue method has been used in previous counseling research. For example, Asay (2006) used an analogue method and a similar process to evaluate counseling strategies used with individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Vignettes were used to simulate a counseling session and participants were asked to rate the counselor’s response to a lesbian, gay, or bisexual client (Asay, 2006). Additionally, Hutchinson (2009) assessed school counselors’ responses to students of lower socio-economic statuses using analogue method.

Similar to other research methods, there are advantages and disadvantages to using analogue method. Heppner et al. (2008) suggest the analogue method allows for control of the experimental situation and the elimination of extraneous variables, which are advantages. Heppner et al. (2008) state that analogue research is the most similar to experimental research. One of the major disadvantages of analogue research is the lack of generalizability and issues with external validity.
**Pilot study.** The researcher conducted a pilot study using the vignettes and the demographic survey to provide feedback on the structure of the study. Beatty and Willis (2014) suggest that cognitive interviewing is becoming a more common practice for analyzing potential issues with survey questions. The intention of this method is for the researcher to find flaws and discrepancies within the survey construction, while allowing for the issues to be remedied before final survey distribution. For this study, the Emergent Probes (non-standardized construction with reactive administration) was utilized in order to identify potential problems (Beatty & Willis, 2014). According to Beatty & Willis (2014), this means that probes were “flexible, unscripted, and reactive.” The researcher creates probed based on what the interviewee was saying.

The format for this study used four cognitive interviews, which were completed face to face or via phone with practicing school counselors in Ohio. The researcher asked the interviewees to read the study questions aloud and say what they were thinking as they were answering the questions. A common theme included difficulty identifying the exact number of professional development hours that participants completed in the last year. The word “approximately” was added to the question. Two out of the four interviewees suggested asking for percentages as opposed to the exact number of students on IEPs. The survey was amended to ask for percentages. Another common theme included noting the difference between the number of years as a high school counselor versus the number of years as a school counselor. The terminology “high school counselor” was added to the survey. Regarding the vignettes, the following was added to help potential participants understand the task:
Create a plan for working with the student over the next two years of high school. Be sure to include specific tasks that you would complete with the student. You may want to consider the following: What activities would you have the student complete? What assessments would you assign the student? How would you include the student’s family in this process? What resources would you refer the student to use?

**Study Participants**

High school counselors were the sole focus of this study because of the legislation (IDEIA, 2004) mandating transition planning for students with disabilities who are at least 14 years of age. Participants for this study included practicing high school counselors identified through the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA), the New Jersey School Counselor Association (NJSCA), and the Pennsylvania School Counselor Association (PSCA). Additionally, the Missouri Guidance Department also sent the invitation to participate via newsletter to its school counselors in January 2015. OSCA emailed the invitation to participate to all members that are high school counselors in the state of Ohio. The invitation was sent twice, once in December 2014, and again in January 2015. NJSCA sent the invitation through Twitter and in their weekly newsletter. When the researcher asked for the survey to be resent, she was informed that the organization had changed its research request policy and that they would be unable to send the survey again since the researcher was not a NJSCA member. PSCA reported that they would send the invitation to participate in an email newsletter in January 2014.

The researcher also sent emails to practicing counselor educators who may have contact with high school counselors. The invitation to participate was sent to these counselor educators and asked to share it with potential participants. Additionally, the
researcher used the ASCA website to pull secondary/high school counselors’ email addresses. An invitation to participate email was sent on April 27, 2015 to approximately 275 public high school counselors that were registered as ASCA members. It is important to note that convenience sampling was used in this study.

**Demographics.** Participants (N=94; n=78) reported an age range of 25 years of age to 71 years of age. N refers to the total number of individuals that completed the consent form at the beginning of the study and n refers to the number of participants who gave consent and answered the demographic questions and the task statements. In regards to gender, 70 participants reported identifying as women and 9 participants reported identifying as men. Participants reported the following for race/ethnicity: African American, n=2, White/Caucasian, n=74, White/Native American, n=1, Middle Eastern, n=1, and Chamorro/Pacific Islander, n=1.

The highest levels of education reported are as follows: master’s degree, n=70, and advanced graduate degree, n=9. Sixty-six participants (84%) reported graduating from CACREP-accredited school counseling programs and thirteen participants (16%) reported graduating from programs that were not accredited. Participants also reported on the hours of professional development in the following categories: Graduate Credit Hours (mean=5.3 hours), Professional Conferences (mean=23.14), and Professional Development provided through the local school or other agencies, not listed above (mean=20.63). The range for years working as a high school counselor was 1-40 years.

Participants worked with students in grades 7-12. Sixteen percent of the participants (n=12) reported working with grade 7, and 19% (n=14) reported working with grade 8. In regards to the high school grade levels, 85% (n=64) of the participants
reported working with ninth graders, 87% (n=65) reported working with tenth graders, 91% (n=68) reported working with eleventh graders, and 92% (n=69) reported working with twelfth graders.

**School building demographics.** Participants reported working in schools with 100-16,000 students. Twenty-four percent (n=24) of the participants reported working in rural schools, whereas 23% (n=17) reported working in urban settings. Additionally, 45% (n=34) reported working in suburban school districts. Data available to the school counselors are as follows: state test scores (100%; n=75), RtI data (48%; n=36), Discipline (behavioral) data (93%; n=70), Attendance (99%; n=74), Course History (courses/classes taken; 97%; n=73), PSAT/SAT/ACT scores (97%; n=73), and Other (12%; n=9). Other data were reported as HSTW assessments, career technical assessments, transcripts, IEP meeting notes officially, PLAN, Lexile scores, and Advanced Placement test scores. Participants also reported the percentage of students in their respective buildings that qualify for special education services: 10% or less (n=19; 25%); 11-20% (n=37; 49%); 21-30% (n=12; 16%); 31-40% (n=3; 4%), 41-50% (n=2; 3%); 51-60% (n=2, 3%), and More than 60% (n=0; 0%).

**Instrumentation**

The following section will describe in detail the instruments used in this study. Qualtics (www.qualtrics.com) was used to post the demographic questionnaire and the vignettes for this study.

**Demographic questionnaire.** The demographic questionnaire (*Appendix A*), developed by the researcher, was intended to gather data about the participants, as well as be used to examine relationships between variables. The questionnaire consisted of basic
demographics (e.g. age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational level, type of graduate program, years of experience as a high school counselor). Additionally, a section of the questionnaire assesses school and personnel demographics, including type of school (e.g. urban, suburban, or rural), percentage of students serviced with an IEP, who provides transition services, and what specific services are provided. The demographic data was used to examine relationships and differences between variables, as well as provide a description of the participants.

**Vignettes.** Three vignettes were created for this study to address each diagnosis of specific learning disability, reading, written expression, and mathematics (*Appendix B*). The vignettes were the same except for the type of specific learning disability. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three vignettes. Each vignette focused on a factious incoming 11th grade student with a specific learning disability, in reading, written expression, or mathematics, who would be transitioning to postsecondary education upon graduation. Participants were asked to develop a 2-year plan for working with this student. Additionally, participants were asked to identify interventions (responses) for working with each student. Intervention areas, identified in the literature as best practices, were used in the development of a rubric for the vignettes. These intervention areas were identified through the literature review and were presented as the theoretical framework for this study. Intervention areas included career planning, career assessments, skills, and resources. The researcher created the three vignettes for this study. After the development of these instruments, two school counselor educators reviewed the vignettes before using in a pilot study.

**Development of rubrics.** Participants were asked to respond to the vignettes by
creating a treatment plan for working with the student with a disability. Because this was an analogue study, the use of three vignettes and a scoring rubric were used to assess school counselors’ responses. Typically, the use of rubrics has been associated with education and assessment of classroom learning. According to Arter and McTighe (2001), rubrics can be useful in assessing performance, because they provide a framework for homogenous scoring. Wolf and Stevens (2007) suggest that rubrics contain measureable and observable behaviors. In this study, behaviors were defined as responses.

Similar studies have also used rubrics to assess responses and have used a varying number of participants. In a study about the validation of rubrics, the authors used 24 participants (Allen & Knight, 2009). In another study, 21 participants, college students, used scoring rubrics to self assess literacy skills (van Helvoort, 2012).

For this study, an advisory team consisting of three practicing high school counselors and two practicing counselor educators, one school counselor educator and one community mental health counseling educator. The advisory team reviewed the draft rubric for the vignettes. Each school counselor included on this team met the following study criteria: (a) had a minimum of 3 years of school counseling experience; (b) had taken a special education course or related course in school counseling degree program; (c) had graduated from a CACREP accredited program; (d) had practical experiences working with students in transition; (e) have a broad knowledge of student development and career development. Additionally, the school counselors had training and experience working with students in transition. These counselors had been trained in working with diverse populations and completed a multicultural course in their school
counseling training programs. The practicing school counselors represented at least one small school district (rural and suburban) and one large district (suburban).

The advisory team was charged with identifying appropriate performance criteria for the 4 subscales (Career Assessments, Career Planning, Skills, and Resources) that would be assessed by the rubric. The researcher drafted a rubric, using a 1 to 4 interval rating scale, using the review of literature and personal experience to create realistic and concrete rubrics. A score of 4 on the rubric for each subscale is the most appropriate response for each vignette. The advisory team was provided with the draft rubric and a table (Appendix C) that outlined the similarities of transition models found in school counseling, special education, and rehabilitation counseling literature.

Feedback provided by the advisory team was integrated into the final rubric. One of the advisory team members suggested adding a component about interdisciplinary collaboration. *Counselor suggests specific ways in which to collaborate with the intervention specialist/special education teacher or transition coordinator* was added to level 4 on the Career Planning, Skills, and Resources subscales. Additionally, *Counselor suggests working collaboratively with the intervention specialist/special education or transition coordinator* was added to level 3 of Career Planning, Skills, and Resources. The researcher decided not to add it to career assessments because intervention specialists/special education teachers are not trained in career development or in the delivery of career assessments. Another one of the advisory team members suggested the need to mention considering cultural values of the student and family when working through transition. The following was added in the Resources subscale under level 4: *Counselor suggests actively involving the student and family in the transition*
process. Counselor suggests a face-to-face meeting and is specific about how s/he will work with the family and student. Counselor mentions considering the cultural values of the student and family.

**Validity.** The literature review of best practices for transition determined that career assessments, career planning, skills, and resources were the common themes among transition models. Each vignette response in this study was evaluated by a rubric that corresponds to one of the four common themes listed above. Construct validity for rubrics is the basic level of validity and is associated with the “academic and professional standards” used to create the rubrics (Allen & Knight, 2009, p. 7). The researcher created the draft rubric using the four common themes (e.g. career assessments, career planning, skills, and resources) as the basis for construct validity. The performance criteria for the rubrics was drafted by the researcher and reviewed by an advisory team that helped solidify the analytical traits and dimensions of the rubric (Allen & Knight, 2009; Arter & McTighe, 2001).

**Reliability.** Cognitive interviewing was used to refine the demographic questionnaire and the vignettes. A review team was assigned to review and rate the vignette responses gathered in data collection. The review team consisted of three school counselors in training who have attended or are attending a private institution in central Ohio. Two of the students had just graduated from the school counseling program; the other student was completing the first year of the program.

Inter-rater reliability was an important measure for this study due to the rubric assessments. The researcher was looking for a .90 interrater reliability. A 6-hour training session was developed by the researcher to train the review team on how to
review each vignette response using the rubric and to ensure that the raters were scoring responses similarly. The intention of the training was to help increase internal consistency and reduce rater bias. Each student reviewed all 32-vignette responses.

Because the rubric is not an instrument with various questions, reliability of the rubric itself was difficult to measure. However, the advisory team that reviewed the draft rubric and the school counselor educators reviewing the vignettes should have allowed for more internal consistency.

**Data Collection Process**

Data were collected via Qualtrics, an online resource. Although few analogue counseling studies have used online resources for data collection, online data collection is convenient and becoming more popular (Asay, 2006; Hutchinson, 2009). An email template (*Appendix D*) was designed to inform possible participants of the study. Additionally, an informed consent letter was created to define confidentiality and voluntary participation. The demographic questionnaire and the randomized counseling vignettes followed with space to type behavioral responses.

**Independent Variables**

The independent variables for this study are listed and discussed below.

**Gender.** It is important to address whether there are differences among gender. Lam, Tracz, and Lucey (2013) completed a study on the age, gender, and ethnicity as it relates to self-efficacy of counselors in training. The researchers found that there was little variance in response between males and females. It is important to note the gender total of the participants in this study: females (N=188) and males (N=45).
Type of program. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is the accreditation body for counseling programs. CACREP (2009) has established standards and 8 “core curricular areas” for counseling programs. These areas include: Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Helping Relationships, Group Work, Assessment, and Research and Program Evaluation.

McGlothlin and Davis (2004) found that mental health counselors, school counselors, and counselor educators, as a whole, viewed the CACREP core curricular as beneficial. The study identified differences of perception within-groups, specifically between mental health counselors and school counselors regarding the career development requirement. School counselors perceived the career development standards as more beneficial than the mental health counselors. The researchers suggest that this could be due to the age of the clients that school counselors service (McGlothlin & Davis, 2004). Additionally to the 8 core curricular areas, there are standards that guide school counselor training.

The CACREP website (2015; www.cacrep.org) describes the benefits of counseling programs that are accredited. They focus on the concept of self and peer assessment leading to positive changes within a counseling program. Additionally, the website (CACREP, 2015) included info for students on the benefits of attending CACREP-accredited programs, which includes attending a program that meets professional standards and is “stable, professionally and financially.” Because CACREP (2009) is focused on meeting professional standards, the researcher will examine the ‘appropriateness of response’ from CACREP accredited and non-CACREP accredited graduates.
Years of experience. Tumova (2012) completed a study to assess the effects of age and years of professional experience of teachers and their perceptions of educational reforms. She found that age was not statistically significant but that teachers’ lengths of experience impacted their perceptions. Specifically, teachers who taught more than 5 years but less than 10 years viewed the educational reform more negatively than those who worked less than 5 years or more than 10 years.

From a school counseling perspective, the first year as a school counselor has a large learning curve. In their qualitative study, Milsom & Kayler (2008) examined first year school counselors and the need for mentoring and support. First year school counselors reported that benefits of consulting with experts in their school building. It is important that school counselors have mentoring and support through the first year to help them gain knowledge of the school district, its culture, and community. Additionally, school counselors need to have the support to from colleagues during the first year to help with acclimation to the school environment (Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Mentoring programs within school districts could provide beneficial support to first year school counselors (Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

Professional development. The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA; 2014) supports professional develop from an ethical standpoint. C.2.b (ACA, 2014) states that counselors do not practice in new specialty areas without “appropriate education, training, and supervised experience.” Additionally, C.2.f (ACA, 2014) supports the need for continuing education. E.1.d of the American School Counselor Association Ethical Standards (ASCA, 2010) requires school counselors to learn of new trends in the profession and “maintain professional competence.” E.1.e (ASCA, 2010)
also supports school counselors’ involvement in delivery and participation in professional development.

**Data Analysis Plan**

Initial analysis of data included descriptive statistics and a distribution test. See Table 1 for a detailed proposed data analysis plan. The research questions and their corresponding analysis methods are listed below.

1. What specific transition-related tasks do high school counselors who serve students with disabilities report performing? A descriptive (t-test) will be used to describe the tasks completed by the high school counselors.

2. Is there some relation between response of school counselors relative to the following:
   a. Gender
   b. Graduation from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program
   c. Years of experience as a high school counselor
   d. Participation in professional development and coursework in disabilities

For descriptive variables (gender, graduation, years, and participation), a Spearman rho analysis (correlation test) was used to examine the relationships between the descriptive data (independent variables) and the appropriateness of response (dependent variable).

Table 1

*Proposed Data Analyses Plan*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Key Variables</th>
<th>Scale of Measurement</th>
<th>Source from Survey</th>
<th>Proposed Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>Transition tasks</td>
<td>Nominal</td>
<td>*Q13</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R2.a  IV: Gender  Dichotomous  Q2; sum of rubric scores  Spearman
  DV: Appropriateness of Response  Ordinal

R2.b  IV: CACREP-accredited  Nominal  Q5; sum of rubric scores  Spearman
  DV: Appropriateness of Response  Ordinal

R2.c  IV: Years of experience  Ordinal  Q7, Q8; sum of rubric scores  Spearman
  DV: Appropriateness of response  Ordinal

R2.d  IV: Professional Development  Ratio  Q6; sum of rubric scores  Spearman
  DV: Appropriateness of response  Ordinal

*Q’s in the chart represent questions from the demographic questionnaire.

Limitations

Analogue studies tend to lack external validity because of low generalizability (Taylor & Asmundson, 2008). It is important to note that the results from this study may not be generalizable, due to the research method and low sample size. However, the results do provide a snapshot of the behaviors of high school counselors working with students with disabilities.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The content of this chapter will focus on the results for this study. It is important to mention that descriptive data are presented twice, once for those who completed through the last statements (n=69/70) and once for those who completed the vignette response (n=32).

Preliminary Analysis

Survey data was collected and gathered from the www.qualtrics.com website. A total of 94 individuals accessed the survey through electronic invitations. One of the 94 individuals did not consent to the study. It is important to note that 70 individuals completed the survey through the task statements (through Q23). Thirty-six individuals completed a vignette response. Four of the responses were blank or included a letter as a placeholder. Thirty-two individuals completed the vignettes. It is important to note there was one participant who completed the vignette but did not complete the first part of the survey through question 14. This person was excluded from the first analysis of descriptive data but was included in the second set of descriptive data.

Data Coding

The number of years as a school counselor is rounded to include the current school year (i.e. 1.5 was rounded to 2 and .5 was rounded to 1). Additionally, words were removed from the age data (i.e. years).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were run in two separate sets, once for the participants who finished through the task statements (Group 1) and once for the subset that finished through the vignettes (Group 2). Additionally, Table 2 includes the min, max, mean,
standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for the first group of data. Table 3 includes the min, max, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis for the second group of data.

**Descriptive Data 1**

The following descriptive data represent the group of participants that completed the demographic survey and the task statements. Frequency tables revealed 63 (90%) women and 7 (10%) men participated, for a total of 70 participants in the first section of the study. Additionally, participants reported the following for race/ethnicity: African-American (2), White/Caucasian (63), White-Non-Hispanic (1), Caucasian-Italian/Irish American (1), Chamorro/Pacific Islander (1), Middle Eastern (1), and White/Native American (1). In regards to level of education, participants reported the following: Master’s Degree (64) and Advanced Graduate Degree (6). Additionally, 59 participants reported graduating from a CACREP-accredited program.

**School building.** When asked about what grade levels each of the counselors reported working with, 11 reported working with 7th grade; 13 reported working with 8th grade; 60 reported working with 9th grade; 61 reported working with 10th grade; 64 reported working with 11th grade; and 65 reported working with 12th grade. When asked to classify schools, participants reported the following: rural (22), urban (17), and suburban (31).

Participants were also asked to report the types of data available in their respective schools; State test scores (70); RtI screener results (33); discipline/behavioral data (65); attendance data (69); course history (68); and PSAT/ACT/SAT (69). An additional nine participants reported other data as ACT/OGT/PARCC, AP test scores,
HSTW assessments and career technical assessments, OGT/Lexile, PLAN, RtI data, transcripts, and IEP meeting notes. It is probable that a participant reported RtI separately from the stem because it could be other RtI data collected in the school that is not collected with a screener. Participants were also asked to report the approximate percentage of students in their respective buildings that qualified for special education services. The following frequencies were reported: 10% or less (16); 11-20% (36); 21-30% (12); 31-40% (2); 41-50% (2); and 51-60% (2).
### Table 2

**Descriptive Table**

**GROUP 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>42.10</td>
<td>41.00</td>
<td>11.01</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>-.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrs. of PD:</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>13.27</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>9.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Confers.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>23.73</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>20.19</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Local/Scl</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>19.74</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>-.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs. as a SC</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of Students</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>1078.13</td>
<td>800.00</td>
<td>1306.25</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>33.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive Data

The following descriptive data represent the group of participants that completed the survey and vignette.

Frequency tables revealed 29 (90.6%) women participants and 3 (9.4%) men participants, for a total of 32 participants that completed the survey and vignette. Additionally, participants reported the following for race/ethnicity: African-American (1), White/Caucasian (28), White-Non-Hispanic (1), Caucasian-Italian/Irish American (1), and Middle Eastern (1). In regards to level of education, participants reported the following: Master’s Degree (30) and Advanced Graduate Degree (2). Additionally, 26 (81.3%) participants reported graduating from a CACREP-accredited program.

School building. When asked about what grade levels each of the counselors reported working with, 5 reported working with 7th grade; 5 reported working with 8th grade; 26 reported working with 9th grade; 28 reported working with 10th grade; 30 reported working with 11th grade; and 29 reported working with 12th grade. When asked to classify schools, participants reported the following: rural (7), urban (10), and suburban (15). Participants were also asked to report the types of data available in their respective schools; State test scores (32); RtI screener results (15); discipline/behavioral data (29); attendance data (32); course history (31); and PSAT/ACT/SAT (31). An additional three participants reported other data as AP test scores and HSTW assessments and career technical assessments. Participants were also asked to report the approximate percentage of students in their respective buildings that qualified for special education services. The following frequencies were reported: 10% or less (7); 11-20% (15); 21-30% (5); 31-40% (2); 41-50% (2); and 51-60% (1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>41.61</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>-.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrs. of PD:</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>11.23</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>10.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Confers.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>23.34</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD:Local/Scl</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20.21</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>14.18</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yrs. as a SC</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.56</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>1182.45</td>
<td>800.00</td>
<td>1727.47</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>24.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Inter-rater Reliability**

Inter-rater reliability was assessed using SPSS for the Career Assessment and Career Planning subscales. The following are the Kappa scores for each combination of raters:

**Rater 1 and Rater 2**

Career assessments. The Kappa score for rater 1 and rater 2 was .707 with p<.000.

Career Planning. The Kappa score for rater 1 and 2 was .636 with p<.000.

Skills and Resources: The Kappa scores for raters 1 and 2 were 1 with p<.000.

Kappa scores for Career Assessments and Career Planning are considered substantial.

Kappa scores for Skills and Resources are considered outstanding (Landis & Koch, 1977).

**Rater 1 and Rater 3**

Career assessments. The Kappa score for rater 1 and rater 3 was .756 with p<.000.

Career Planning. The Kappa score for rater 1 and 3 was .636 with p<.000.

Skills and Resources: The Kappa scores for raters 1 and 3 were 1 with p<.000.

Kappa scores for Career Assessments and Career Planning are considered substantial.

Kappa scores for Skills and Resources are considered outstanding (Landis & Koch, 1977).

**Rater 2 and Rater 3**

Career assessments. The Kappa score for rater 2 and rater 3 was .604 with p<.000.

Career Planning. The Kappa score for rater 2 and 3 was .840 with p<.000.

Skills and Resources: The Kappa scores for raters 2 and 3 were 1 with p<.000.
The Kappa score for Career Assessments is considered substantial. Kappa scores for Career Planning, Skills, and Resources are considered outstanding (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 4

**Inter-Rater Reliability (Kappa Scores)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raters</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raters 1 and 2</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raters 1 and 3</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raters 2 and 3</td>
<td>.604</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question One**

What specific transition-related tasks do high school counselors who serve students with disabilities report performing?

**Group 1**

**Transition Statements**

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (61), transition coordinator (35), rehabilitation counselor (5), school psychologist (44), building administrator (14), and other (10); including assistant principal, case manager, general education teachers, vocational education teachers, social workers, and the special education coordinator) connect students with disabilities with rehabilitation counselors. Three participants reported *I don’t know*.

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals provide career counseling and planning in their school buildings: special education teachers (50), transition coordinator (34), rehabilitation counselor (6), school
psychologist (13), building administrator (1), and other (6; including college and career counselor/specialist/coordinator, job trainer and special education coordinator). One participant marked Other and wrote “no one.” This response was added to the one response of I don’t know, for a total of two for this category.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (59), transition coordinator (37), rehabilitation counselor (6), school psychologist (28), building administrator (13), and other (5; including case manager, social workers, and special education coordinators) coordinates or assists with transition plans. One participant marked Other and wrote “no one.” This response was added to I don’t know which totaled two.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (45), transition coordinator (31), rehabilitation counselor (1), school psychologist (7), building administrator (11), and other (17; including career services, career tech instructors, career tech teacher, college and career counselor, case manager, community and career resource coordinator, director of student affairs, internship coordinator, job trainer, school to work coordinator, secretaries, special coordinator, special education coordinator, teacher, vocational education teachers, and regular educators for class requirements) coordinates job shadowing or other experiential career activities. One participant reported I don’t know.

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals connect students with the Office for Disability Services in their prospective colleges: special education teachers (43), transition coordinator (30), rehabilitation counselor (4), school psychologist (11), building administrator (6), and other (5; including case
manager, parents, special education coordinator, student’s family). Four participants reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (61), transition coordinator (33), rehabilitation counselor (3), school psychologist (16), building administrator (7), and other (6; including case manager, parents, principal, general education teachers, social worker, special education coordinator) discusses how student disability will impact future education and career. Two participants reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (57), transition coordinator (15), rehabilitation counselor (4), school psychologist (30), building administrator (11), and other (13; including classroom teacher, MRDD agencies and services, regular education teachers, community resources, social workers, special school district social worker, speech and language pathologist, teacher, therapist on staff with special education co-op, and work study coordinator) provides social skills training. Two participants marked *Other* and wrote “Nobody.” These responses were added to *I don’t know* (7).

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals provide study skills training: special education teachers (62), transition coordinator (12), rehabilitation counselor (1), school psychologist (8), building administrator (3), and other (10; including classroom teachers, regular education teachers, special school district social worker, and teachers). Two participants marked *Other* and wrote “Nobody.” These responses were added to *I don’t know* (3).
Participants reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals discuss special education law at the secondary and post-secondary level with students with disabilities and their parents: special education teachers (43), transition coordinator (21), rehabilitation counselor (1), school psychologist (34), building administrator (19), and other (7; including case manager, director of pupil services, director of special education services, district case manager, special education coordinator, special school district area coordinator, special services director and special services office personnel). Seven participants reported I don’t know.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (65), transition coordinator (29), rehabilitation counselor (7), school psychologist (46), building administrator (33), and other (12; including classroom instructor, contracted mental health counselors, parent(s), regular education teachers, social workers, special education coordinator, director of special education services, special school district area coordinator and social worker) advocate for the personal/social needs of students with disabilities. Two participants marked I don’t know.
### Table 5

*Transition Task Statements and Personnel*

**GROUP 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Special Education Teacher</th>
<th>Transition Coordinator</th>
<th>Rehabilitation Counselor</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>Building Administrator</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with disabilities with rehabilitation counselors? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else provides career counseling and planning? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates or assists with transition plans? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates job shadowing or other experiential career activities? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with the Office for Disability Services in</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their prospective colleges? Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>33</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else discusses how student disability will impact future education and career? Check all that apply.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else provides social skills training? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else provides study skills training? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else discusses special education law at the secondary and post-secondary level with students with disabilities and their parents? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else advocates for the personal/social needs of students with disabilities? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group 2

This group includes the participants that completed the vignette response (n=32).

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (27), transition coordinator (16), rehabilitation counselor (4), school psychologist (17), building administrator (6), and other (6; including case manager, intervention specialists, regular education teachers, vocational education teachers, special education coordinator, and special school district social worker) connect students with disabilities with rehabilitation counselors. Two participants reported *I don’t know*.

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals provide career counseling and planning in their school buildings: special education teachers (26), transition coordinator (17), rehabilitation counselor (3), school psychologist (6), and building administrator (2), other (3; college and career counselor, job trainer, and special education coordinator) None of the participants reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (26), transition coordinator (17), rehabilitation counselor (4), school psychologist (12), building administrator (5), and other (3; including case manager and social worker) coordinates or assists with transition plans. None of the participants reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (22), transition coordinator (14), rehabilitation counselor (1), school psychologist (2), building administrator (5), and other (9; including career services, career tech instructors, career tech teacher, college and career counselor, case manager, director of student
affairs, job trainer, special coordinator, special education coordinator, vocational education teachers, and regular educators for class requirements) coordinates job shadowing or other experiential career activities. None of the participants reported *I don’t know*.

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals connect students with the Office for Disability Services in their prospective colleges: special education teachers (21), transition coordinator (14), rehabilitation counselor (2), school psychologist (3), building administrator (2), and other (2; including case manager and special education coordinator). Two participants reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (27), transition coordinator (16), rehabilitation counselor (3), school psychologist (12), building administrator (5), and other (3; including case manager and special education coordinator) discusses how student disability will impact future education and career. One participant reported *I don’t know*.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (26), transition coordinator (6), rehabilitation counselor (0), school psychologist (6), building administrator (4), and other (4; including regular education teachers, social worker, special school district social worker, and speech and language pathologist) provides social skills training. One participant marked *Other* and wrote “Nobody.” This response was added to *I don’t know* (3).

Participants also reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals provide study skills training: special education teachers (28), transition coordinator (3), rehabilitation counselor (0), school psychologist (2), building administrator (1), and other
(6; including classroom teachers, regular education teachers, and special school district social worker). One participant marked Other and wrote “Nobody.” This response was added to I don’t know (2).

Participants reported, besides the school counselor, the following individuals discuss special education law at the secondary and post-secondary level with students with disabilities and their parents: special education teachers (19), transition coordinator (10), rehabilitation counselor (1), school psychologist (15), building administrator (12), and other (5; including director of pupil services, director of special education services, special education coordinator, special school district area coordinator, special services director and special services office personnel). Three participants reported I don’t know.

Besides the school counselor, participants reported special education teachers (29), transition coordinator (13), rehabilitation counselor (4), school psychologist (19), building administrator (14), and other (10; including classroom instructor, contracted mental health counselors, parent(s), regular education teachers, social worker, special education coordinator, director of special education services, special school district area coordinator and social worker) advocate for the personal/social needs of students with disabilities. One participant marked I don’t know.
Table 6  

Transition Task Statements and Personnel  

GROUP 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Special Education Teacher</th>
<th>Transition Coordinator</th>
<th>Rehabilitation Counselor</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>Building Administrator</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with disabilities with rehabilitation counselors? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else provides career counseling and planning? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates or assists with transition plans? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates job shadowing or other experiential career activities? Check all that apply.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with the Office for Disability Services in</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their prospective colleges? Check all that apply.

Besides the school counselor, who else discusses how student disability will impact future education and career? Check all that apply.

Besides the school counselor, who else provides social skills training? Check all that apply.

Besides the school counselor, who else provides study skills training? Check all that apply.

Besides the school counselor, who else discusses special education law at the secondary and post-secondary level with students with disabilities and their parents? Check all that apply.

Besides the school counselor, who else advocates for the personal/social needs of students with disabilities? Check all that apply.
Research Question Two

The following section answers RQ2 (below) for the subscales of Career Assessments, Career Planning, Skills, and Resources for group two. Because of low sample size, Spearman rho correlations were run to answer research question number 2 for the subscales.

Is there some relation between responses of school counselors relative to the following:

a. Gender

b. Graduation from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program

c. Years of experience as a high school counselor

d. Participation in professional development and coursework

Career Assessments

Age. Even though this was not a proposed variable for this study, it was necessary to assess. The correlation between career assessments and age was negative and not statistically significant ($r = -0.207, p = .264$).

Gender. The correlation between career assessment and gender was negative, moderately strong, and statistically significant ($r = -0.442, p = .011$). The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .195$) revealed that 19% of the variance in career assessment scores was explained by gender. Men scored higher than women on the career assessment subscale. It is important to note that there were fewer men in this study than women. Caution should be used when interpreting this data because chance variation could play a role in the results.
CACREP-graduation. The correlation between career assessments and graduating from a CACREP-accredited program was positive and not statistically significant \((r = .232, p = .201)\).

Years of experience. The correlation between career assessments and years of experience as a high school counselor was negative and not statistically significant \((r = -.016, p = .930)\).

Professional development (graduate credit). The correlation between career assessments and professional development (graduate credit hours) was positive and not statistically significant \((r = .039, p = .832)\).

Professional development (professional conferences). The correlation between career assessments and professional development (professional conferences) was positive, moderately strong, and statistically significant \((r = .384, p = .468)\). The coefficient of determination \((r^2 = .147)\) revealed that almost 15\% of the variance in career assessment scores was professional development (professional conferences).

Professional development (local school or agencies). The correlation between career assessments and professional development (local school or agencies) was negative, and not statistically significant \((r = -.132, p = .473)\).

Career Planning

The following section answers RQ2 for the subscale of Career Planning.

Age. Even though this was not a proposed variable for this study, it was necessary to assess. The correlation between career planning and age was positive and not statistically significant \((r = .044, p = .816)\).
**Gender.** The correlation between career planning and gender was negative and not statistically significant \((r = -0.192, p = 0.292)\).

**CACREP-graduation.** The correlation between career planning and graduating from a CACREP-accredited program was positive and not statistically significant \((r = 0.053, p = 0.774)\).

**Years of experience.** The correlation between career planning and years of experience as a high school counselor was positive and not statistically significant \((r = 0.246, p = 0.175)\).

**Professional development (graduate credit).** The correlation between career planning and professional development (graduate credit hours) was negative and not statistically significant \((r = -0.299, p = 0.097)\). The coefficient of determination \((r^2 = 0.089)\) revealed that 8.9% of the variance in career planning scores was explained by professional development (graduate credit hours). Even though there is not a significant correlation between career planning scores and professional development (graduate credit), it is important to mention that this independent variable was \(p=0.097\), which is not much higher than the expected \(p\) value of 0.05.

**Professional development (professional conferences).** The correlation between career assessments and professional development (professional conferences) was positive and not statistically significant \((r = 0.133, p = 0.468)\).

**Professional development (local school or agencies).** The correlation between career planning and professional development (local school or agencies) was positive and not statistically significant \((r = 0.099, p = 0.588)\).
Skills and Resources

Because there was a lack of variance in scores for Skills and Resources, correlations could not be determined for these two subscales.

Table 7

Correlations Between Independent Variables and Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Career Assessments</th>
<th>Career Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.44</td>
<td>-.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Program</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Experience</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Graduate Credit</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Prof. Conferences</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD: Local/Agencies</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The content within this chapter will focus on the data presented in Chapter 4 and makes connections between the data and literature. It is important to note that the participant number for this study as well as the analogue method used make it difficult to make generalizations about high school counselors responses to students with disabilities who are in transition. More significant findings may have been discovered if there were a larger number of participants. A larger sample size would have allowed the researcher to more clearly and effectively assess the research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question was: What specific transition-related tasks do high school counselors who serve students with disabilities report performing? Group 1 and 2 are combined because the data for both groups elicits the same discussion.

In the school buildings represented in this study, the special education teacher is the leading school personnel, besides the school counselor, to provide transition services to students. As previously discussed, special education law, IDEIA (2004), mandates transition services for students with disabilities. The data collected for research question 1 are congruent with legislation.

It is also important to note that rehabilitation counselors were the lowest scoring personnel on all of the transition tasks. It appears that rehabilitation counselors may be under utilized in these school settings. Although this study did not ask participants to report if the school had a relationship with a rehabilitation counselor, it would interesting to know if schools had access to rehabilitation counselors.
Another important observation to mention is building administrator involvement level in the transition process for students with disabilities. Legislation mandates that building administrators are part of the team who creates transition plans for students with disabilities (IDEIA, 2004). After reviewing the data, at least one building administrator was reported to complete every transition task.

**Research Question 2**

This section will discuss research question 2: Is there some relation between responses of school counselors relative to the following:

a. Gender
b. Graduation from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program
c. Years of experience as a high school counselor
d. Participation in professional development and coursework

**Career Assessments**

The use and interpretation of career assessments was identified as a similarity between school counseling, special education, and rehabilitation counseling transition models. The data did not show any statistical significance between ‘appropriateness of response’ and graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, as well as between ‘appropriateness of response’ and years of experience as a high school counselor.

**Gender.** The data reported in chapter 4 indicate a significantly stronger correlation between gender and ‘appropriateness of response’ on the career assessments subscale. Particularly, men scored higher level of ‘appropriateness of response’ than women on this subscale. Potentially, with a larger sample size, this correlation may have remained a significant correlation. There have been studies in the literature that did not
find gender differences among counselors. For example, Tracz and Lucey (2010) did not find gender differences when examining the self-efficacy of counselors in training. Because the sample size used in this study was low, generalizations about gender and appropriateness of response cannot be made.

**Professional development (conferences).** Statistic analysis found a significantly stronger correlation between hours of professional development (professional conferences) and ‘appropriate response’ on the career assessments subscale. It is interesting that there was not a stronger correlation between professional development (conferences) and career planning. This may be attributed to the type of content presented at the conferences. It must be noted that the content of the professional development at the conferences was not assessed in this study.

More research should be done in this area to determine a correlation between attending professional conferences and use of best practices as a school counselor. Again, because of the low sample size, generalizations cannot be made regarding ‘appropriate response’ and professional development (conferences). Significant relationships between professional development (conferences) and career planning may not have been found due to the low sample size of this study.

**Career Planning**

Career planning was identified as another similarity between school counseling, special education, and rehabilitation counseling transition models. ASCA’s Professional School Counselor and Students with Disabilities revised position statement (2013) suggests that school counselors are responsible for creating and maintaining career plans for students with disabilities. Although the current study did not find a significant
correlation between ‘appropriateness of response’ on this subscale and gender, graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, years of experience as a high school counselor, and participation in professional development, it is important to mention that it is an area of competency supported by the ASCA National Model (2012). Again, a significant relationship between career planning and ‘appropriateness of response’ may not have been identified in this study due to its low sample size.

Skills

Although no significant correlations exist between skills and gender, graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, years of experience as a high school counselor, and participation in professional development, it is important to mention the discrepancies between best practices and what is actually being done with students. According to the data presented in Chapter 4, the school counselors did not include skills training in the plan for the student in the vignette. This is a strong concern because of the support of skills training in the literature. Some of the in-school predictors of post-secondary success for students with disabilities are development of skills. Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson (1990) identified independent living skills as a predictor. Test and Cease-Cook (2012; p. 34) defined independent living skills as “leisure skills, social skills, self-care skills, and other adaptive behavior skills.” Additionally, Roessler et al. (1990) also identified social skills as a predictor of post-secondary success. Test and Cease-Cook (2012) defined social skills as any skills needed to interact at school or work. The literature is clear that development of skills is necessary for students with disabilities to be successful in post-secondary education.
ASCA (2012) supports and encourages school counselors to provide psycho-education in academic, personal/social, and career development. The data presented for the current study shows that none of the participants were providing comprehensive skills based education to students with disabilities who are in transition. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, Milsom (2007) conducted a study to examine the interventions school counselors were using with transitioning students with disabilities. She found that 20% of the participants (school counselors) reported teaching job skills and 17% of the participants reported teaching resume/interviewing skills. It is important to note that the current study accessed behavioral responses (e.g. counselors were asked to report what they would actually do with a student with disabilities), whereas the Milsom (2007) study asked school counselors to self-report on a list of tasks. This study was different from the Milsom (2007) study because this study used the analogue method by asking high school counselors to create a plan for working with a mock student with a disability. Milsom (2007) used self-report to determine which transition tasks school counselors were completing with students with disabilities. Although the results for the current study are not congruent with the Milsom (2007) study, it is important to consider the different approaches.

Resources

Again no significant correlations exist between resources and gender, graduation from a CACREP-accredited program, years of experience as a high school counselor, and participation in professional development, it is important to mention the discrepancies between best practices and what is actually being done with students. Bullis, Davis, Bull, & Johnson (1995) identified interagency collaboration as an in-school predictor of
transition to post-secondary education success for students with disabilities. In the data presented in Chapter 4, there was no variability with scores on the Resources subscale of the rubric. Each of the participants earned an average of 1 on this subscale, which indicated that participants had a limited understand of resources available to the student. Additionally, participants did not mention involving the parent(s) in the transition process, discussing disability law, recommending a connection with disability services on the prospective campus, and connecting students with OVR or a related agency. In a study previously mentioned conducted by Milsom (2007), 45% of the participants (school counselors) reported discussing college disability services with students with disabilities. Again, it is important to mention that Milson’s study (2007) was perception based, whereas this study was behavioral based.

**Interagency/interdisciplinary collaboration.** According to the vignette data, the interaction and collaboration between service providers mentioned in this study is low. Although the sample size was small, the lack of collaboration presented by the data is congruent with previous studies. The literature has urged collaborative efforts among transition personnel. Kurz and Kline (2014) proposed a transition model of collaboration for rehabilitation counselors, special educators, and school counselors. They identify the characteristics that affect student choice upon graduation and importance of rehabilitation counselors and school personnel involvement. Additionally, Test and Cease-Cook (2012) defined *Interagency Collaboration* as a predictor of post-secondary success for students with disabilities.

Cobb and Alwell (2007) reported that primary transition efforts, interdisciplinary planning (within schools) and interagency planning (outside of schools), were between
special education teachers, rehabilitation counselors, and general education teachers.

Additionally, Cobb and Alwell (2007) stated other forms of interagency planning, as well as multi-agency collaborative efforts were becoming more prominent in the literature.

Bronstein (2003) developed a model of interprofessional collaboration for social workers. Interprofessional collaboration is defined as “teamwork” among different professionals (Mu & Brasic Royeen, 2004; Mellin, Bronstein, Anderson-Butcher, Amrose, Ball, & Green, 2010). This collaboration model proposed by Bronstein (2003) contains five elements: Interdependence, Newly Created Professional Activities, Flexibility, Collective Ownership of Goals, and Reflection on Process. Bronstein (2002) developed The Index of Interdisciplinary Collaboration (IIC) to measure these five elements among social workers.

Mellin et al. (2010) developed The Index of Interdisciplinary Collaboration-Expanded School Mental Health (IIC-ESMH) using the IIC (Bronstein, 2002) and a literature review to measure perceptions of collaboration between interprofessional team members in school settings. A factor analysis was conducted on the IIC-ESMH (Mellin et al., 2010) to determine validity of instrument use among interprofessional teams in schools. This instrument could be used in future research to assess collaboration within schools and be a spring board for developing better collaborative strategies for working with students.

**Limitations**

The limitations to this study make it difficult to make any generalizations about the data presented in Chapter 4. Below are limitations and discussion.
Participant Number

The number of participants was a large limitation in this study. The researcher revised the initial proposal to include more states and added methods for gaining participants. This was discussed in chapter three. Although, in a study conducted by Allen and Knight (2009), 24 participants were used in validation or rubrics. Additionally, as previously reported, van Helvoort (2012) completed a study using 21 college students to assess literacy skills using a rubric. With low participation numbers, it is important to remember that the data are not generalizable (Heppner et al., 2008). The original proposal for this study included 20 participants. Additionally, as previously stated, stronger correlations between the independent and dependent variables may be present in a larger sample size.

Method

Because this was an analogue study, it is important to consider the limitations of this research method. Heppner et al. (2008) state that major disadvantages for this method include the lack of generalizability and potential issues with external validity. These two issues are interrelated; low generalizability equals lack of external validity (Taylor & Asmundson, 2008). However, this study did provide a general framework for future studies.

Rubric

After the study was completed, it was apparent the assessment tool needed to be refined. Based on participants’ average scores on the subscales, there was little variability on the career planning subscale and no variability on the skills and resources subscales. The expectations at level 1 for skills and resources may have been too high to
produce any variance. Additionally, skills could have been split into 3 categories: academic skills, personal/social skills, and career skills. Responses could have been scored on each category of skills. The researcher was expecting 5 criteria to be met on the resources subscale: resources available to student, recommendation to the Office for Disability Services, discussion of post-secondary law, connection to OVR or related agency, and involvement of parents and families in the transition process. If the response recommended or suggested those 5 criteria, the score would have been 2 for the subscale. None of the participants scored above a 1 for both the skills and resources subscales.

**Implications for the Profession**

**School Counselor Training**

It is important to note that higher levels of school counselor self-efficacy and perceived preparedness for working with students with disabilities have been positively correlated with participation in disability coursework and professional development related to working with students with disabilities (Milsom, 2002). In a study conducted by Milsom (2007), school counselors reported that they did not engage in specific transition interventions with students with disabilities because of a lack of competence in employing the intervention.

It is evident that the impact of training and preparing school counselors to work with students with disabilities is imperative and necessary. Milsom and Akos (2003) reported that 135 of 137 counselor educator programs in school counseling integrated disability information into courses. Although these numbers are high, consideration must be given to the depth and specificity of content that was provided to school counselors in training. Milsom and Akos (2003) did not assess the type of content.
**Legislation.** Past research suggests that school counselors familiarize themselves with legislation that impacts students with disabilities in post-secondary education as well as aiding in acquiring services (Naugle et al., 2010; Milsom, 2007; Milson & Akos, 2005). The researcher for this study proposes that learning about disability legislation and resources is not just suggested, rather intentionally integrated into school counselor training coursework. This could be done through the multicultural coursework required by CACREP (2009) or through a school counseling programming course. Placing this content into a school counseling training course would allow for counseling students to see how students with disabilities fit into a comprehensive school-counseling program.

**Career assessments and career planning.** School counselors who graduate from CACREP-accredited programs are trained to administer and interpret career assessments. This usually occurs in career development courses that are required for accreditation. However, career planning is a much more vague intervention and is tailored to individual needs. Career planning could be said to be a more abstract process. ASCA (2012) supports the development and use of career plans among school counselors and all students. The question remains as to what extent are school counselors being trained to develop career plans for students with and without disabilities. Since career plans are similar to transition plans, school counselors need to be trained how to effectively develop and implement career plans. The researcher suggests that school counselors are taught these skills specifically in school counseling coursework. Similar to integrating disability law into multicultural coursework, development and implementation of career plans could be integrated into program development courses for school counselors.
**Skills.** Based on the previous literature and the results from research question 2, the researcher is advocating for school counselors to provide social skills and independent living skills training to students with disabilities. If the school counselors do not do this directly, they are encouraged to work in collaboration with school personnel who provide these services. Research is clear that development of these skills in the school environment can predict positive outcomes (i.e. post-school success) in post-secondary education (Test et al., 2009; Test & Cease-Cook, 2012).

**Resources.** Based on the literature review and the current study data, the research is suggesting that training be available in identifying resources available to families within and outside of the school community. Griffin and Farris (2010) propose that school counselors work with a multidisciplinary team to create a community map that identifies available resources and assets of those resources. Griffin and Farris (2010) suggest a 4-step process: (1) Create a multidisciplinary team; (2) Examine and assess current list of resources, services, and programs, and identify new ones; (3) Contact individual and community resources; and (4) Develop and maintain a community resource guide, and map the assets. This can be taught in a comprehensive school counseling program course. It supports the collaboration component of the ASCA National Model (2012).

**Caseload Size**

Although no data were collected specifically about barriers for school counselors in implementation of a comprehensive school-counseling program for all students, it can be inferred that caseload might contribute to less time spent with students with disabilities. In this study, participants within data set/group 2 reported between 114 and
10,000 students in their respective school buildings. Although we do not know the number of school counselors in their buildings, we do know that ASCA (2012) recommends no more than 250 students on a caseload. The average number of students per building was 1182.45, which may have been skewed due to the max of 10,000. ASCA (2006) reported the average caseload size to be 355 to 1, which is greater the recommended ratio. Caseload size may be impacting the work school counselors do with and for children.

**Rehabilitation Counseling in Schools**

Plotner et al. (2012) reported that rehabilitation counselors frequently Provide Career Planning and Counseling, Provide Career Preparation Experiences, and Facilitate Allocation of Resources and perceive these tasks as highly important. Additionally, Kurz and Kline (2014) proposed the need for collaboration between rehabilitation counselors, special educators, and school counselors. However, according to the data presented in chapter 4, rehabilitation counselors were least involved in completing the transition tasks. It is evident that rehabilitation counselors are trained in these areas and more research could be conducted to identify rationale for minimal involvement in schools.

**Future Research**

Future research regarding this topic could go multiple directions. More specific data on disability training and number hours working with students with disabilities could be collected. There may be correlations between the amount of training, number of hours working with students with disabilities, and self-efficacy of school counselors. Milsom (2002) found a correlation between self-efficacy and disability training. Other self-efficacy studies with school counselors can be found in the literature (Owens et al., 2010;
Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) but looking at specific levels of disability training, self-efficacy, and number of hours per week working with students with disabilities, to the researcher’s knowledge, has not been published.

The researcher proposes that the rubric for this study be refined. A pilot study could be completed just using the rubric to assess responses, similar to what was used in the current study. Baryla, Shelley, and Trainor (2012) suggest using a factor analysis to assess levels of rubrics and to collapse unnecessary criteria. It is important to note that participant size will matter in conducting a factor analysis. Urdan (2010) recommends that there are “30 cases for the first observed variable and then 10 cases for each additional observed variable in a factor analysis.” To conduct a factor analysis on the rubric presented in this study, 60 participants would be needed.
References


Pennsylvania State University Library Catalog. (500699412)


Kohler, P. D. (1993). Best practices in transition: Substantiated or implied?

*Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 16*, 107-121.


Education and Disability, 22, 142–150.


Appendix A

Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University
Title of Project: School Counselors’ Responses to High School Students with Learning Disabilities Transitioning to Postsecondary Education

Principle Investigator: Charity Anne Kurz (cak325@psu.edu)
Advisor: Dr. JoLynn Carney (jvc15@psu.edu)

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to examine school counselors’ behavioral responses to working with high school students with disabilities in transition.

2. Procedures: As a participant, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and respond to one vignette. It will take approximately 15-25 minutes to complete this survey. Your responses will be kept anonymous.

3. Anonymity/Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is anonymous. Your responses are confidential. The collected data will be used for statistical analysis and no participant will be identified from the pooled data. This study is conducted for research purpose. The information collected from this study may be used in the future research and publications; however, no personally identifiable information will be revealed.

4. Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, so you can decide whether you would like to take this survey or not. Also, you have the right to stop your participation and withdraw from the study at any time and/or any place without any penalties or consequences. In addition, you may choose to not answer specific questions by clicking “I choose to not answer this question.”

5. Compensation/Cost/Benefits: There is not a monetary cost for taking part in this study. Your responses will help contribute to the field of counseling and counselor education, specifically in the area of working with K12 students with disabilities.

6. Risks: There are no known risks or discomfort associated with participation in this study.

7. Right to Ask Questions: If you have any questions or comments about this research, please contact Charity Anne Kurz at cak325@psu.edu. Questions or concerns about research participants’ rights may be directed to the Office for Research Protections at Penn State University.

Please click "yes" to start to take this survey. By clicking "yes", it indicates that you have read the informed consent, understand the informed consent and this study, and agree to participate in this study.

Yes
No
Appendix B

IRB Approval

Date: July 07, 2014

From: The Office for Research Protections - FWA#: FWA00001534
      Philip C. Frum, Compliance Coordinator

To: Charity A. Kurz

Re: Determination of Exemption

IRB Protocol ID: 45842

Follow-up Date: July 6, 2019

Title of Protocol: School Counselors’ Responses to High School Students with Learning Disabilities Transitioning to Postsecondary Education

The Office for Research Protections (ORP) has received and reviewed the above referenced eSubmission application. It has been determined that your research is exempt from IRB initial and ongoing review, as currently described in the application. You may begin your research. The category within the federal regulations under which your research is exempt is:

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) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

PSU Exempt Category (7) Research in which participant interaction is limited to providing a response to a non-physically invasive stimulus (e.g., reading/writing tasks, computer tasks, video games, viewing media, internet searches, etc.) (i) if the research is social science based and falls under the purview of the PSU IRB, (ii) poses no more than minimal risk to participants, and (iii) does not include any of the following: federal funding or federal training grants, FDA regulated components, procedures that would fall under the purview of the Biomedical IRB, Sponsor or other contractual restrictions, clinical interventions (including clinical behavioral interventions), Prisoners as subjects, children as subjects, the use of deception, receipt of an NIH issued Certificate of Confidentiality to protect identifiable research data NOTE: This category does not exist in the federal regulations under Title 45 Part 46 Subpart A 46.101(b) and is used solely by The Pennsylvania State University as per the terms of its Federal wide Assurance with the government.

Given that the IRB is not involved in the initial and ongoing review of this research, it is the
investigator’s responsibility to review IRB Policy III “Exempt Review Process and Determination” which outlines:

- What it means to be exempt and how determinations are made
- What changes to the research protocol are and are not required to be reported to the ORP
- Ongoing actions post-exemption determination including addressing problems and complaints, reporting closed research to the ORP and research audits
- What occurs at the time of follow-up

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office for Research Protections (ORP) if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting human participants in research.

This correspondence should be maintained with your research records.
Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Informed Consent

2. What is your age?

3. What is your gender identity?
   - Male
   - Female

4. What is your race/ethnicity?

5. What is your highest level of education?
   - Bachelor’s Degree
   - Master’s Degree
   - Advanced Graduate Degree (i.e., Ph.D. or D.Ed.)

6. Did you graduate from a CACREP-accredited program school-counseling program?
   - Yes
   - No

7. Approximately, how many hours did you participate in the following professional development opportunities in the last school year?
   - Graduate Credit Hours
   - Professional Conferences
   - Professional development provided through the local school or other agencies, not listed above

8. How many years have you worked as a high school counselor?

School Building Demographics

9. What grade levels do you work with? (Check all that apply.)
   - 7
   - 8
   - 9
   - 10
   - 11
   - 12

10. Approximately, what is the total number of students enrolled in your high school?
11. How would you classify your school?
   - Rural
   - Urban
   - Suburban

12. What data do you have available in your school?
   - State Test Scores
   - RtI (Response to Intervention) Screener Results (e.g. MAP testing)
   - Discipline (behavioral) data
   - Attendance Data
   - Course History (courses/classes taken)
   - PSAT/SAT/ACT scores
   - Other

13. Approximately, what percentage of students in your building qualify for special education services and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?
   - 10% or less
   - 11-20%
   - 21-30%
   - 31-40%
   - 41-50%
   - 51-60%
   - More than 60%

Task Statements

14. Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with disabilities with rehabilitation counselors? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

15. Besides the school counselor, who else provides career counseling and planning? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other
16. Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates or assists with transition plans? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

17. Besides the school counselor, who else coordinates job shadowing or other experiential career activities? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

18. Besides the school counselor, who else connects students with the Office for Disability Services in their prospective colleges? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

19. Besides the school counselor, who else discusses how student disability will impact future education and career? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

20. Besides the school counselor, who else provides social skills training? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
21. Besides the school counselor, who else provides study skills training? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

22. Besides the school counselor, who else discusses special education law at the secondary and post-secondary level with students with disabilities and their parents? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other

23. Besides the school counselor, who else advocates for the personal/social needs of students with disabilities? Check all that apply.
   - Special Education Teacher
   - Transition Coordinator
   - Rehabilitation Counselor
   - School Psychologist
   - Building Administrator
   - I don’t know
   - Other
Appendix D

Vignettes

Vignette 1
The student is a 17-year old, junior at your high school. The student earns A's and B's and is involved in many school activities such as National Honor Society and serves as a mentor in the school’s mentoring program. The student is also active in the school choir. The student reports that friends are very important and asserts the belief that social relationships encourage success. Free time is spent playing video games, hanging out with friends, roller blading, and mountain biking. The student reports valuing family who provide significant support and look forward to success after graduation.

The student is the oldest child. Mom reports that her child has experienced learning difficulties since the first grade. Based on an educational evaluation completed during that time, her child was identified as a student with a learning disability in mathematics. Currently, the student receives special education services in the inclusion math class and attends other general education classes without support.

The student plans to graduate from high school in June 2016 and wants to attend college. The student is unsure about what to study at the college-level. Currently, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team has asked you (the school counselor) to help the student determine a specific major based on interests and skills and help prepare the student for transition to post-secondary education.

Create a plan for working with the student over the next two years of high school. Be sure to include specific tasks that you would complete with the student. You may want to consider the following: What activities would you have the student complete? What assessments would you assign the student? How would you include the student's family in this process? What resources would you refer the student to use?

Vignette 2
The student is a 17-year old, junior at your high school. The student earns A's and B's and is involved in many school activities such as National Honor Society and serves as a mentor in the school’s mentoring program. The student is also active in the school choir. The student reports that friends are very important and asserts the belief that social relationships encourage success. Free time is spent playing video games, hanging out with friends, roller blading, and mountain biking. The student reports valuing family who provide significant support and look forward to success after graduation.

The student is the oldest child. Mom reports that her child has experienced learning difficulties since the first grade. Based on an educational evaluation completed during that time, her child was identified as a student with a learning disability in reading. Currently, the student receives special education services in the inclusion math class and attends other general education classes without support.

The student plans to graduate from high school in June 2016 and wants to attend
college. The student is unsure about what to study at the college-level. Currently, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team has asked you (the school counselor) to help the student determine a specific major based on interests and skills and help prepare the student for transition to post-secondary education.

Create a plan for working with the student over the next two years of high school. Be sure to include specific tasks that you would complete with the student. You may want to consider the following: What activities would you have the student complete? What assessments would you assign the student? How would you include the student's family in this process? What resources would you refer the student to use?

Vignette 3
The student is a 17-year old, junior at your high school. The student earns A's and B's and is involved in many school activities such as National Honor Society and serves as a mentor in the school’s mentoring program. The student is also active in the school choir. The student reports that friends are very important and asserts the belief that social relationships encourage success. Free time is spent playing video games, hanging out with friends, roller blading, and mountain biking. The student reports valuing family who provide significant support and look forward to success after graduation.

The student is the oldest child. Mom reports that her child has experienced learning difficulties since the first grade. Based on an educational evaluation completed during that time, her child was identified as a student with a learning disability in written expression. Currently, the student receives special education services in the inclusion math class and attends other general education classes without support.

The student plans to graduate from high school in June 2016 and wants to attend college. The student is unsure about what to study at the college-level. Currently, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team has asked you (the school counselor) to help the student determine a specific major based on interests and skills and help prepare the student for transition to post-secondary education.

Create a plan for working with the student over the next two years of high school. Be sure to include specific tasks that you would complete with the student. You may want to consider the following: What activities would you have the student complete? What assessments would you assign the student? How would you include the student's family in this process? What resources would you refer the student to use?
## Appendix E

### Similarities of Response: Transition Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Career Assessments</th>
<th>Career Planning</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Counseling</td>
<td>ASCA (2012) standards focus on developing an awareness of self.</td>
<td>ASCA (2012) standards suggest that SCs provide opportunities for understanding of and creating and maintaining a career plan and for learning how to use decision-making skills in career planning and transition to postsecondary options. Milsom (2007) suggests using experiential activities with students to help students explore options.</td>
<td>Teaching of academic and study skills, independent living skills, social skills, and self-determination skills by school counselors (ASCA 2012)</td>
<td>ASCA (2012; 2005) encourages teaching students how to research and use resources to gather career information. SCs should connect students with disabilities to the Office for Disability Services on prospective campuses (Milsom &amp; Akos, 2007). Family Involvement (Milsom, 2002; Milsom, 2007; Naugle, Campbell, &amp; Gray, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Kohler (1996) identifies the use of career assessments under the Student Development section of the model.</td>
<td>Career planning is supported by Kohler’s model (1996) in the Student Planning section of the model. Kohler (1996) suggest that students are able to gain</td>
<td>Kohler (1996) identifies these as transition-related skills: academic and study skills, independent living skills, social skills, and self-determination skills. Teaching of these skills by special educators</td>
<td>Family Involvement (Kohler, 1996; Kohler &amp; Field, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation Counseling</td>
<td>Plotner et al. (2012) identifies the use of career assessments as a transition competency.</td>
<td>Career planning is identified as a transition competency of rehabilitation counselors (Plotner et al., 2012).</td>
<td>Teaching of academic and study skills, independent living skills, social skills, and self-determination skills by rehabilitation counselors (Plotner et al., 2012)</td>
<td>Rehab counselors help direct financial resources for students with disabilities who are planning to attend college (Plotner et al., 2012). Family Involvement (Plotner et al., 2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kurz, 2014)
### Appendix F

#### Vignette Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best Practices</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Assessments</strong></td>
<td>Counselor suggests using more than two career assessments including career interviews, interest assessments, personality assessments, and/or values inventory/card sort</td>
<td>Counselor suggests using at least two career assessments including career interviews, interest assessments, personality assessments, and/or values inventory/card sort</td>
<td>Counselor suggests using at least one career assessment including career interviews, interest assessments, personality assessments, and/or values inventory/card sort</td>
<td>Counselor does not suggest using career assessments which include career interviews, interest assessments, personality assessments, and/or values inventory/card sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Planning</strong></td>
<td>Counselor suggests that student keeps a career portfolio and gives ideas of what items would be included (e.g. career assessments, interviews, reflections from experiential activities)</td>
<td>Counselor suggests that student keeps a career portfolio and helps the student coordinate more than one experiential activity (e.g. job shadowing).</td>
<td>Counselor suggests that student creates a high school course of study plan.</td>
<td>Counselor does not suggest using experiential activities (e.g. job shadowing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor suggests specific ways in which to collaborate with the intervention specialist/special education teacher or transition coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests using specific psychoeducation approaches (e.g. role-playing, modeling, behavioral rehearsal techniques, feedback) to teach academic and study skills. Counselor suggests <strong>specific</strong> guidance lessons, groups, and individual counseling sessions to teach academic and study skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests <strong>specific</strong> guidance lessons, groups, and individual counseling sessions to teach academic and study skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests guidance lessons, group counseling, and individual counseling to teach academic and study skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not suggest guidance lessons, group counseling, or individual counseling to teach academic and study skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests using specific psychoeducation approaches (e.g. role-playing, modeling, behavioral rehearsal techniques, feedback) to teach social skills. Counselor suggests <strong>specific</strong> guidance lessons, groups, and individual counseling sessions to teach social skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests <strong>specific</strong> guidance lessons, groups, and individual counseling sessions to teach independent living and/or self-determination skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests guidance lessons, group counseling, or individual counseling to teach social skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not suggest guidance lessons, group counseling, or individual counseling to teach social skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests using specific psychoeducation approaches (e.g. role-playing, modeling, behavioral rehearsal techniques, feedback) to teach independent living and/or self-determination skills. Counselor suggests <strong>specific</strong> guidance lessons, groups, and individual counseling sessions to teach independent living and/or self-determination skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests a specific assessment to assess student skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests guidance lessons, group counseling, or individual counseling to teach independent living and/or self-determination skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not suggest guidance lessons, group counseling, or individual counseling to teach independent living and/or self-determination skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests assessing student skills more than once through the 2 years. Counselor also suggests a specific assessment(s) to assess student skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests working collaboratively with the intervention specialist/special education teacher or transition coordinator</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests assessing student skills.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not suggest assessing student skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practices</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor has a thorough understanding of resources available to the student.</td>
<td>• Counselor has an above-average understanding of resources available to the student.</td>
<td>• Counselor has a basic understanding of resources available to student.</td>
<td>• Counselor has a limited understanding of resources available to student.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor initiates connection between the student and the Office for Disability Services on the prospective college/university.</td>
<td>• Counselor recommends that the student connects with the Office for Disability Services on the prospective college/university.</td>
<td>• Counselor recommends that the student connects with the Office for Disability Services on the prospective college/university.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not recommend that student connect with the Office for Disability Services on the prospective college/university.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor gives student and parent(s) resources (e.g. handouts or websites) regarding special education law and disability law in secondary and post-secondary educational environments. Counselor suggests speaking with student and student’s parents about the differences in secondary and post-secondary educational law.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests giving the student resources regarding special education law and disability law in secondary and post-secondary educational environments. Counselor suggests speaking with student about the differences in secondary and post-secondary educational law.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests speaking with the student about the differences in secondary and post-secondary educational law.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not suggest speaking with student or parent(s) about the differences in secondary and post-secondary educational law.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor initiates connection between student and the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling (OVR) or a related agency.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests student connect with the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling (OVR) or a related agency. Counselor gives contact information for the agency to the student.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests student connects with the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling (OVR) or a related agency.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not recommend that the student connect with the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling (OVR) or a related agency.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests actively involving the student and family in the transition process. Counselor suggests a face to face meeting and is specific about how s/he will work with the family and student. Counselor mentions considering the cultural values of the student and family.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests talking with parent/family about transition.</td>
<td>• Counselor suggests talking with parent/family about transition.</td>
<td>• Counselor does not involve the parent/family in the transition process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselor suggests specific ways in which to collaborate with the intervention specialist/special education teacher or transition coordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charity Anne Kurz, M.Ed., LPC, LSC, NCC  
cak325@psu.edu

**Education**

**Doctorate of Philosophy (Counselor Education and Supervision)**  
**August 2011-present (Graduation-August 2015)**  
Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education  
The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA (CACREP-accredited)  
Dissertation study: *School counselors’ responses to high school students with learning disabilities transition to postsecondary education*

**Master's of Science in Education-Counseling**  
**August 2011**  
Youngstown State University (CACREP-accredited)  
Youngstown, OH  
Program Track: School Counseling

**Bachelor of Science in Education**  
**December 2005**  
Youngstown State University  
Youngstown, OH  
Major: Intervention Specialist Mild/Moderate

**Non-Refereed Publications**


**Peer-Reviewed Publications**
