

Practitioners' Perceptions of the
Academic Preparation of Funeral Directors and Embalmers
in the Context of Changing Death Care Preferences in the United States

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For this research, 240 funeral directors and embalmers took the time out of their busy schedules to complete a lengthy survey about their perceptions of funeral service education. Clearly these men and women care very much about the academic preparation of the next generation of funeral directors and embalmers. If ever one of you read this dissertation, know that the results presented herein would not have been possible without your participation in this study. I will always be grateful to you for taking the time to help me with this research. It is my sincere hope that the results will be used in meaningful ways to improve the quality of funeral service education at programs accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education.

My friend and colleague Donna Spannaus-Martin, a scientist by training, taught me to pay very close attention to details, and she continually cheered (she prefers I use the word "nagged") me on to "get that dissertation done!" Donna was my cheerleader at work, and her frequent (i.e. "surprise") visits to my office "just to see how things are coming along" helped to keep me moving forward: I did not want there to be a day when she came by and I had nothing new to show her. Her bright smile and frequent words of encouragement helped me to get things done.

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My passion for learning began at an early age. I am fortunate to have been raised by parents who value education. When I was a child, each night at bed-time either my mother or my father would read to my brother and me. My parents bought

us books, took us to the library, and encouraged our exploration of subjects that interested us – which for me included the rather unconventional professional occupation of funeral service. As an elementary school student, I remember my father attending night classes so that he could finish his college degree, the completion of which had been put on hold years earlier by the birth of my brother and me. By his example I learned that with persistence and honest, hard work, you can achieve your goals. And from my mother I also learned that having a sense of humor can get you through even the most difficult of times. Thank you, mom and dad, (Annette and Donald) for helping to lay a solid foundation for adulthood.

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DEDICATION

Show me the manner in which a nation or a community cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of the people, their respect for the law of the land, and their loyalties to high morals.

-Attributed to British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone

This dissertation is dedicated to those men and women of funeral service who, through their vocation of care-giving to both the living and the dead, endeavor always to serve grieving families in a manner that is empathic, dignified, and proficient.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated practitioners' perceptions of the a) importance, b) academic preparation related to, and c) adequacy of, funeral service education at academic programs accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. Participants in this research ($n = 240$) were funeral directors and/or embalmers sampled from across the United States who a) had completed a funeral service education program accredited by the ABFSE, b) during the past 12 months were employed by, and/or derived income from work for/at a funeral establishment in the United States that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and services to the public, and c) held a license to practice funeral directing and/or embalming.

Using a theoretical framework based upon a European approach to evaluation in higher education known as "tuning," practitioners' perceptions of the extent to which the ABFSE funeral service education curriculum is properly "tuned" to contemporary workforce needs were measured. An on-line survey instrument was developed for this study, and participants were asked to evaluate the importance of approximately one-third of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives for professional practice. For these same objectives, participants were also asked to evaluate a) the extent to which they believe they were adequately prepared by their funeral service education program to master each learning objective and b) their perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content

area, for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Perceptions of academic preparation for both the National Board Examination (NBE) and entry-level work-related responsibilities were also measured. Finally, participants were asked to recommend ways of improving funeral service education at ABFSE-accredited programs.

The results of this study indicated that the majority of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives ($n = 158$) were perceived to be at least (*important*) to the contemporary practice of funeral service. Of the 19 curriculum content areas, three (Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, and Small Business Management) were perceived as having an inadequate number of learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Concerning the perception of academic preparation for the purpose of mastering the learning objectives, the perception of either (*no preparation*) or (*minimal preparation*) was observed for 63 learning objectives within the curriculum content areas of Accounting, Business Law, Communication Skills, Funeral Directing, Funeral Service Management, Funeral Service Merchandising, Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, History of Funeral Directing and Embalming, Small Business Management, and Sociology.

With respect to workforce preparation, practitioners generally perceived themselves to have been well prepared by the funeral service education program they had completed to take the National Board Examination (NBE) of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, but not well prepared for the work they were expected to perform as entry-level funeral directors and/or embalmers.

This study found evidence of a significant negative relationship between perceived preparation to take the NBE and perceived qualification to enter the workforce as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer. The results also indicated a disparity in annual income for work in funeral service between genders, with women earning significantly less money than men employed in similar positions. Practitioners recommended an expansion of work-related clinical experiences for students as part of their funeral service education, as well as increased efforts to prepare students for the kinds of work-related funeral directing activities they will experience following graduation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
DEDICATION	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF FIGURES	xviii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Evolution of Funeral Service as a Distinct Professional Occupation	2
Accreditation of Funeral Service Education Programs.....	3
Funeral Service Education: The ABFSE Curriculum.....	5
Higher Education and Professional Licensure	8
Higher Education, Accountability, and Examination for Funeral Director	
Licensure.....	12
The National Board Examination	14
Accreditation Policy and the National Board Examination	18
Overview of the Problem	19
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	25
Introduction.....	25
Historical Background: Caring for the Dead in America	25
Reform of Death-Care.....	27
	xi

Changes and Trends in the 1960s	29
Roman Catholics and Cremation	33
Hospice	35
Caring For Your Own Dead.....	36
Attitudes Toward Death and Funerals	37
Economics and Death-Care.....	42
Going Green.....	47
Diversity and Death-Care	50
Death-Care in the United States Today	58
Research Related to Mortuary Science Education.....	59
Summary.....	63
Research Questions.....	63
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	67
Introduction.....	67
Conceptual Framework.....	67
Survey Development Process	70
Assessing Perception of the Importance of the Learning Objectives	71
Assessing Perception of Academic Preparation	76
Assessing Perception of the Adequacy of the Learning Objectives	76
Population Identification.....	77
Pilot Testing.....	78
Sampling Procedures	82

Demographics of Survey Participants.....	83
Data Collection Protocols	90
Limitations and Delimitations.....	91
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS.....	94
Introduction.....	94
Preliminary Data Analyses	95
Presentation of the Results of the Research Questions.....	105
Question 1: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive that the AFBSE learning objectives are important to the contemporary practice of funeral service?	105
Question 2: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive the objectives for each of the 19 ABFSE discipline-specific curriculum content outlines as adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service?	109
Question 3: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared to master each of the ABFSE learning objectives by the funeral service education program they completed?	111
Question 4: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the importance and adequacy related to each set of learning objectives?	118
Question 5: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the importance and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?	119
Question 6: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?	122
Question 7: To what extent has the implementation of Accreditation Standard 11.5 affected instructional efforts to prepare students to take the National Board Examination?	123

Question 8: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to take the National Board Examination based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?	126
Question 9: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed to function as a competent, entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer?	128
Question 10: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?	132
Question 11: Does annual income from work in funeral service differ depending on the number of years of college education completed?	132
Question 12: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for managers and non-managers?	133
Question 13: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for men and women?	134
Question 14: Is there an interaction of managerial employment status on gender and annual income earned from work in funeral service?	135
Question 15: What suggestions do practitioners have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?	136
Summary	146
Chapter V: Discussion	148
Introduction.....	148
Summary of Findings.....	148
Discussion.....	153
Implications for Educational Policy.....	170
Implications for Professional Practice	175

Recommendations for Future Research	179
Epilogue	181
REFERENCES	186
APPENDIX A - Research Exemption from IRB Review Form.....	198
APPENDIX B - IRB Approval to Conduct Research.....	208
APPENDIX C - Request for Participation Disseminating Survey Instrument	210
APPENDIX D - Survey Instrument.....	212

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	ABFSE Curriculum Overview	6
Table 2	Item Distribution on the National Board Examination.....	17
Table 3	Identification of Curriculum Content Areas, Principal Variable Names, and Principal Variable Types.....	72
Table 4	Curriculum Content Area Assignments According to Survey Version	81
Table 5	Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: College Education, Race, and Ethnicity by Gender	85
Table 6	Primary State of Professional Practice During the Past 12 Months	87
Table 7	Number and Type of Licenses Held by Survey Participants	89
Table 8	Principal Variables Having Significant Differences in Value When Grouped According to Participant’s Program Completion Time Period.....	99
Table 9	Principal Variables Having Significant Differences in Value When Grouped According to Participant’s Primary State of Professional Practice – Minnesota or State other than Minnesota.....	103
Table 10	Perception of Importance: Learning Objectives with a Mean Score < 3	106
Table 11	Perception of Adequacy of the ABFSE Learning Objectives Grouped According to Curriculum Content Area.....	110
Table 12	Perception of Preparation: Learning Objectives with a Mean Score < 3	112
Table 13	Correlation Analysis of the Principal Independent and Dependent Variables Grouped According to Curriculum Content Area	120
Table 14	Perception of Agreement that Practitioner was Adequately Prepared by their Funeral Service Education Program to Take the National Board Examination	126

Table 15:	Perception of Agreement that Practitioner Possessed the Minimum Qualifications to Function as an Entry Level Funeral Director and/or Embalmer Following Completion of their Academic Program.....	129
Table 16	Practitioner Recommendations for Improving the Quality of Funeral Service Education Offered at ABFSE-Accredited Programs	137

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Typical pathway for licensure to become a funeral director and/or embalmer	9
Figure 2	Tuning process framework applied to the assessment of the ABFSE learning objectives.....	68
Figure 3	The funeral procession of Ana Grace Marquez-Greene.....	184

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a history of the development of funeral service as a distinct professional occupation in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Next is a discussion of the evolution of funeral service education programs during the 20th century, a time period when states increasingly began a) to regulate by statute, rule, and/or ordinance the disposition of dead bodies, and b) require the completion of specific academic requirements by an individual who aspired to practice as a funeral director and/or embalmer. This section is followed by an explanation of the process by which funeral service education programs have come to be accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education. Next is a discussion of the National Board Examination (NBE) of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB), and how the NBE is used a) by states to determine eligibility to practice as a funeral director and/or embalmer, and b) by the ABFSE to evaluate instructional effectiveness at the funeral service education programs it accredits. The chapter concludes with discussion of problems associated with practitioners' perceptions of the current academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers today, in the context of changing death care preferences.

Evolution of Funeral Service as a Distinct Professional Occupation

The evolution of funeral service as a distinct professional occupation in America began in the latter part of the 19th century (Habenstein & Lamers, 1995; Kopp & Kemp, 2007; Laderman, 1996; Troyer, 2006). The need to care for the dead of the Civil War created specific demands for professional work performed by providers of funeral-related services. Surviving family members of those killed on the battlefield wanted their beloved dead returned home for burial. The effects of decomposition, however, made it difficult to transport unpreserved, battle-injured bodies long distances over a period of several days. Although it had long been known that the injection of certain chemicals into dead bodies would retard decomposition, the practice of arterially embalming the dead was not common in America before the latter half of the 19th century. Technological advances in embalming practices, many of which occurred during the Civil War, made it practical to transport the dead back home to grieving family members (Habenstein & Lamers, 1995; Laderman, 2003, 1996; Salomone, 2003; Troyer, 2006).

Funeral service education evolved and matured during the 20th century (Habenstein & Lamers, 1995). As states began increasingly to mandate licensure for disposition of the dead following the Civil War, professional training for funeral directors started to occur at institutions of higher learning. To meet the demand for embalmers, chemical companies began to teach embalming procedures to aspiring practitioners, most of whom were men. By offering theoretical and clinical instruction, chemical companies built up product loyalty and created a demand for

embalming fluid and related sundry items. Following the Civil War, undertaking emerged as a professional occupation (Prothero, 2001). Many of the earliest funeral service education programs were started by embalming fluid manufacturing companies, some of which survive to this day. One example would be the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, offspring of what is now the Pierce Chemicals Royal-Bond Company of Dallas, Texas¹. One of the first public programs was a six-week course of study in embalming started in 1908 at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Over a period of several decades, course content evolved as knowledge expanded, and new courses were developed in response to the changing needs of practitioners and society. In the 1960s, for example, the study of grief psychology, a newly emerging field, was integrated into the curriculum. Today, all funeral service programs accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) must offer a program of at least 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours leading to a degree or diploma in funeral service education (ABFSE, 2008).

Accreditation of Funeral Service Education Programs

Prior to 1962, accreditation of funeral service programs was overseen by the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards of the United States. A separate organization known as the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education (Joint Committee) was established in 1946. The purpose of the Joint Committee was to “formulate and promulgate and enforce rules and regulations setting up standards

¹ Pierce-Chemicals Royal-Bond Company also owns Mid-America College and Gupton-Jones College, which, like the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, are private, single-purpose, proprietary institutions of funeral service education.

concerning the schools and colleges teaching funeral service” (ABFSE, 2008, p.1-1). In 1959 the Joint Committee on Mortuary Education changed its name to the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). A significant change in program oversight occurred in 1962, when authority for accreditation was transferred from the Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards to the ABFSE. Beginning in 1962, the ABFSE was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as the sole accrediting agency for funeral service programs in the United States, and since 1993, the ABFSE has also been recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (ABFSE, 2008, pp. 1.1-1.2.).

All states now regulate the disposition of the dead by means of law, rule, or ordinance. With the exception of Colorado and Hawaii, every state requires that any individual who disposes of the dead for profit² as a funeral director and/or embalmer³ hold a license to work as a funeral director and/or embalmer. Attainment of licensure to practice funeral directing and/or embalming typically requires the completion of some amount of college education, the amount of which varies among states. At the completion of her/his degree program, a student’s knowledge of facts and information related to the practice of funeral directing and embalming is tested on the National Board Examination (NBE) of the International Conference of Funeral Service

² As opposed to family members, members of certain religious societies, etc. who desire to care for their own dead, and for whom there is no monetary compensation. Also, it is possible to attain a “direct disposer’s” license in the state of Florida without pursuing a degree in funeral service.

³ Funeral directors in Hawaii who do not embalm are not required to be licensed, although embalmers are required to be licensed. Hawaii also requires a license for those funeral homes that perform embalmings, which are known as “mortuaries,” but the state does not license funeral homes which do not perform embalmings.

Examination Board (ICFSEB). A passing score on the NBE is required as a condition to practice funeral directing and/or embalming in most states. Additionally, most states require the completion of a one- or two-year internship at a funeral home, the purpose of which is to further develop professional skills in a clinical setting.

Funeral Service Education: The ABFSE Curriculum

Contemporary funeral service education in the United States has as its basis a common set of 170 learning objectives developed and promulgated by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)⁴. Every funeral service education program accredited by the ABFSE must, at a minimum, incorporate these same objectives into their curriculum. As an example, for the curriculum content area of accounting, the first learning objective stated in the ABFSE curriculum content outline is stated as follows: “*Understand the fundamental accounting equation.*” Accredited programs have the discretion to build individual courses around these learning objectives, and may include additional learning objectives which they believe are important to their degree requirements. Any program, however, that does not provide evidence for the inclusion of at least the 170 prescribed learning objectives mandated by the ABFSE in its curriculum risks the loss of its accreditation. The minimum curriculum requirements established by the ABFSE are presented in Table 1.

⁴ Each of the 170 standardized objectives is stated on the survey instrument in Appendix D.

Table 1

ABFSE Curriculum Overview

Curriculum Theme	Related Curriculum Content Area
Public Health and Technical At least 14 semester / 21 quarter credits.	Chemistry Microbiology & Public Health Anatomy Pathology Restorative Art Embalming
Business Management At least 8 semester / 12 quarter credits	Accounting Funeral Home Management and Merchandising Computer Applications Funeral Directing Small Business Management
Social Sciences / Humanities At least 8 semester / 12 quarter credits.	Dynamics of Grief Counseling Sociology of Funeral Service History of Funeral Service Communication Skills
Legal / Ethical / Regulatory At least 3 semester / 4 quarter credits	Funeral Home Law Business Law Ethics
General Education At least 25% of curriculum must be non-technical ⁵	Determined by individual institution

(ABFSE, 2008)

The ABFSE, through its prescribed curriculum, plays a critical role in determining what funeral service practitioners are required to learn in order to take the National Board Examination (NBE) of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB). Most states require that an aspirant for either a

⁵ For a 2-year degree program (e.g. AA degree) this would be approximately 15 semester / 23 quarter credits.

funeral director and/or embalmer license pass either the Funeral Service Arts and/or the Funeral Service Sciences section(s) of the NBE as a condition for licensure.

Of the 58 programs of funeral service that presently hold ABFSE-accreditation, two offer diplomas, 56 offer associate's degrees, and seven offer bachelor's degrees. With respect to bachelor's degrees, four programs offer the Bachelor of Science degree and three offer professional baccalaureate degrees such as the Bachelor of Mortuary Science and the Bachelor of Technology⁶. According to the 2013 ABFSE *Administration Report* (ABFSE, personal communication, March 6, 2013), in 2012, of the 1589 students who graduated from an ABFSE-accredited funeral service education program, prior to their enrollment [in their funeral service education program], 79% ($n = 1253$) had completed some college education, up to and/or including a master's degree. The number of years of previous college education is noted in the ABFSE *Administration Report* as follows: 23.5% ($n = 294$) of graduates had completed one year of college; 32.1% ($n = 402$) of graduates had completed two years of college, 13.1% ($n = 164$) of graduates had completed three years of college; 24.0% ($n = 301$) of graduates had completed a bachelor's degree; 2.6% ($n = 33$) of graduates had completed a master's degree, and 4.7% ($n = 59$) of graduates had completed a degree classified by the ABFSE as "other." Significantly, only 24% of funeral service education students held a bachelor's degree when they

⁶ As of March 8, 2013, there were 58 programs presently accredited by the ABFSE (ABFSE office, personal communication, March 8, 2013).

entered the workforce in 2012⁷, even though 55.4% ($n = 696$) had completed at least two years of college *in addition to* the year(s) they spent in college pursuing their funeral service education.

Higher Education and Professional Licensure

Each state, with the exception of Colorado⁸, through its statutes and rules, specifies the number of years of college education that a prospective funeral director must complete in order to become licensed to practice as a funeral director and/or embalmer. Figure 1 illustrates the typical pathway to become licensed as funeral director and/or embalmer. According to Harrington and Krynski (2002), “licensure requirements vary dramatically across the states, tending to be more extensive in the 24 states where funeral directors are required to be embalmers” (p. 203). In some states, such as New York, funeral directors hold a single license that enables them to both direct funerals and to embalm bodies (Laws of New York, 2009). In Minnesota, the term “mortician” is used in statute to define an individual licensed to conduct funerals and perform embalming. Minnesota, like New York, issues only one license

⁷ Assuming that the 2.6% ($n = 33$) of funeral service education program graduates holding a previous master’s degree *also* hold a previous bachelor’s degree, then 26% ($n = 334$) of funeral service education program graduates in 2012 held a bachelor’s degree *prior* to graduating from their funeral service education program.

⁸ Funeral directors in Hawaii who do not embalm are not required to be licensed, although embalmers are required to be licensed. Also in Hawaii, an embalmer is not required to be a graduate of an ABFSE-accredited mortuary science program.

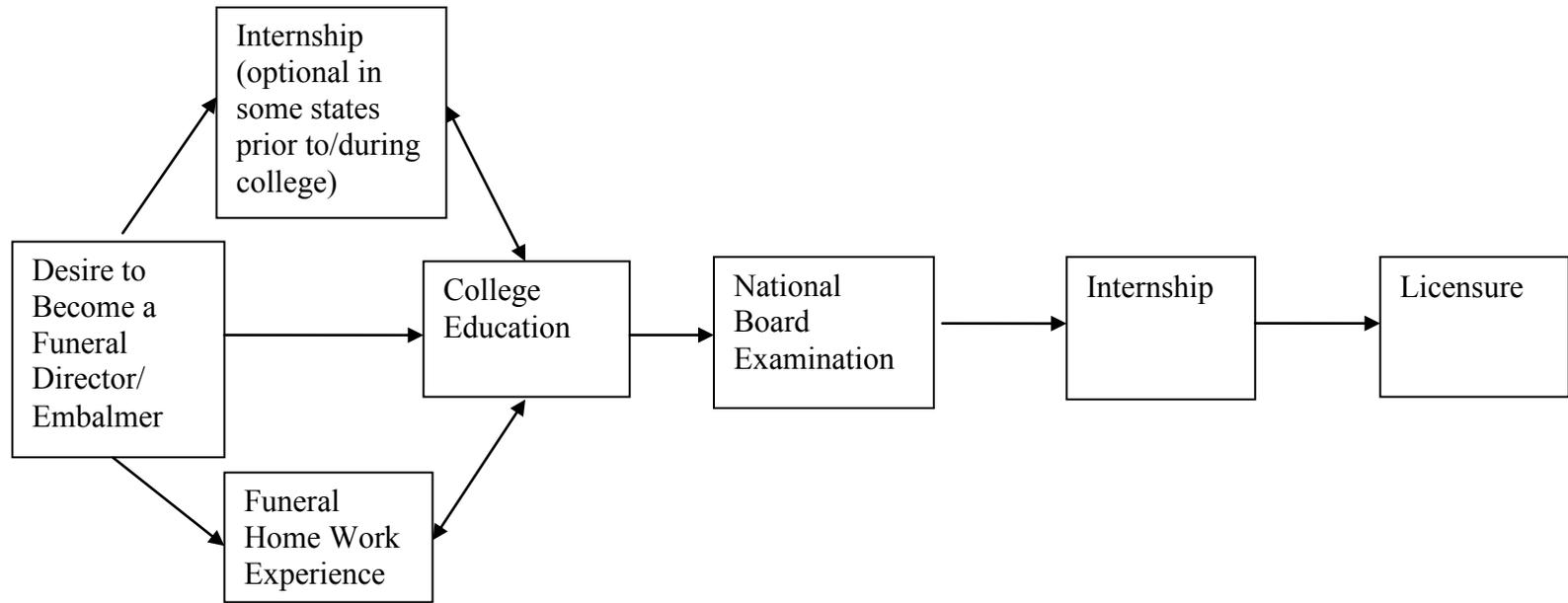


Figure 1. Typical pathway for licensure to become a funeral director and/or embalmer.

for the practice of funeral service, inclusive of funeral directing and embalming.

Other states, such as California and Texas, have separate licenses for funeral directors and embalmers. Most states require the completion of some amount of college-level education in order to gain licensure as either a funeral director and/or an embalmer.

The two states with the most rigorous academic requirements for licensure to practice funeral service are Minnesota and Ohio. In Minnesota, an aspirant for a mortician's license must not only complete a course of study at an ABFSE-accredited program of funeral service, but also hold either a baccalaureate degree, or have completed coursework that, in aggregate, is the "functional equivalent" of a baccalaureate degree (Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes, 2009). Ohio, unlike Minnesota, has separate funeral director and embalmer licenses. An aspirant for licensure as an embalmer in Ohio must complete a) a baccalaureate degree, b) a Board-approved funeral service education program, and c) 12 months of specialized training as an apprentice embalmer. An aspirant for licensure as a funeral director in Ohio must complete a baccalaureate degree, in addition to either a) a one-year apprenticeship, if the aspirant has completed a Board-approved funeral service education program, or b) a two-year apprenticeship, if the aspirant has not completed a Board-approved funeral service education program (Ohio Laws and Rules, 2013).

The majority of states, however, require fewer than four years of college to practice funeral service. Some states with separate funeral director and embalmer licenses require little, if any, college education for licensure as a funeral director. In Texas, an aspirant for a funeral director's license is required to graduate from an

accredited school or college of mortuary science. The Texas Occupations Code does not, however, specify a minimum number of college credits required for graduation, nor does it require that the curriculum for a funeral director's license be approved by the ABFSE (Texas Funeral Service Commission, 2009). In describing its funeral director's program curriculum track, the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service (2009) states that:

This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education since it does not include instruction in the following areas: embalming and related science courses and the general education courses. Students graduating from this program are not eligible to take the National Board Examination or any state board examination for which graduation from an ABFSE-accredited program is required (p. 19).

It is noted that this particular curriculum track requires the completion of 41 quarter (i.e. 28 semester) hours of coursework, which is fewer than half the 60 credit hours required of a typical associate of arts degree program. It is therefore possible to become a licensed funeral director in Texas having completed a) a non-accredited funeral service education program, and b) fewer than the 60 college credits typically required to earn an associate of arts degree. California is similar to Texas in that it, too, does not require an aspirant for a funeral director's license to complete an ABFSE-accredited funeral service education program. Unlike Texas, however, California does require an aspirant for a funeral director's license to possess at least

an “Associate in Arts or Associate in Science degree, or equivalent” in any academic major (California Department of Consumer Affairs, 2013). In contrast, Mississippi and Kentucky require only the completion of high school and an apprenticeship of two and three years, respectively, for a funeral director’s license, although the completion of an ABFSE-accredited funeral service education program is required by both these states to earn a license to practice embalming (National Funeral Directors Association, 2013).

The aforementioned examples demonstrate that licensing requirements pertaining to the practice of funeral service vary significantly from state to state. A review of state licensing requirements indicates the number of academic credit hours required to practice as either a funeral director and/or embalmer typically ranges from fewer than 30 to 120⁹. Funeral service programs vary in their curricular offerings, depending on the workforce needs and legal requirements of the state in which a graduate will work. As would be expected, in states with rigorous academic licensing requirements, such as Minnesota, funeral service education occurs at baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. In states with less-rigorous academic requirements for licensure, two year- and diploma-granting institutions are more common.

Higher Education, Accountability, and Examination for Funeral Director Licensure

In recent years, professional school accrediting agencies, which include the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), have been under increasing

⁹ Colorado is the exception: Because it does not require licensure to practice funeral service, the number of credit hours in Colorado is technically zero.

pressure by the federal government to measure learning outcomes as evidence of quality in higher education (Burke, 2005; Heller, 2001). As the cost of higher education continues to rise, policy makers have begun to demand that colleges and universities demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of the education they provide to students, especially when public money is used to support these institutions. Gone are the days when policy makers, legislators, and government leaders viewed colleges and universities as “sacred” societal entities, the criticism of which was once taboo. Now and into the future colleges and universities must demonstrate the effectiveness of their efforts to educate the students whom they serve (Burke, 2005; Heller, 2001).

With respect to funeral service education, greater emphasis is now being placed on the use of standardized testing for the purpose of evidencing accountability to stakeholders. These stakeholders include accrediting agencies, licensing boards, and prospective students. Effective January 1, 2004, a new policy related to accountability was implemented by the ABFSE. Accreditation Standard 11.5 states that “after January 1, 2004, each accredited program in funeral service education must require that each funeral service student take, but not pass, the National Board Examination (NBE) as a requirement for graduation” (ABFSE, 2008, 9.12). Students are now permitted to sit for the NBE within 45 days of the completion of their degree program. Students may not graduate until they have successfully completed a) all coursework requirements, and b) have taken both the Funeral Service Arts and Funeral Service Sciences sections of the NBE.

Prior to 2004, there were no ABFSE accreditation standards mandating the measurement of learning outcomes at funeral service programs, nor were there established uniform measurement procedures or policies for the purpose of making between-institution comparisons of student learning outcomes. Although funeral service education students were not required to take the NBE as a condition for graduation prior to 2004, it is likely many did, because for years - and in some cases, decades - most states have required a passing score on the NBE as a condition for licensure in funeral service. Because NBE pass rates were not made available to the public prior to 2004, however, the extent to which individual institutions were emphasizing preparation to take and pass the NBE before 2004 is not known.

The National Board Examination

Most states require that individuals seeking licensure as a funeral director (inclusive of licensure to also practice embalming) pass the National Board Examination (NBE) of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB). According to the ICFSEB website, the purpose of the NBE “is to provide official licensing agencies with a national evaluation of an applicant for licensure in the diverse areas of competency required for the field of funeral service” (International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, n.d.). The NBE consists of two separate examinations: the Funeral Service Arts examination (FSA), and Funeral Service Sciences (FSS) examination. Each of these two examinations contains 170 multiple choice items, 20 of which are being pre-tested for possible future examination use and do not count towards the test score. The examinations are

administered at a testing center where the student is seated at a computer; the cost to take the NBE is currently \$400. Students are allotted three hours to complete each of the two examinations, which may be taken either together on one day, or on different days. To take the NBE, the student must complete each examination with a scaled score of at least 75 percent. The term “scaled score” is defined the ICFSEB as follows:

Scaled scores are part of how we make sure the exam is a fair and valid measure of your professional knowledge....This ensures that repeat takers do not have an advantage over first-time takers. The exam questions are pulled from our item bank in accordance with accepted psychometric procedures. Since some questions are more difficult than others, one form of the exam might be slightly easier or harder than another. Scaled scores take into account the varying degree of difficulty of each question, so that regardless of which version of the test you take, the total score represents an equivalent level of knowledge. Using scaled scores in testing ensures that no candidate receives an unfair advantage by taking an easier form of the test or is unfairly evaluated by taking a more difficult form of the test. It is a complex, but much fairer, method of calculating scores.

(<http://www.theconferenceonline.org/documents/PrintedApplicationBrochure2010.pdf>)

It is stated in the National Board Examination Study Guide manual published by the ICFSEB that “the purpose of the International Conference’s National Board

Examination is to differentiate between candidates who possess the MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS [*sic*] to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer from those who do not” (ICFSEB, 2007, p. 3). The content of the NBE is based on a task analysis study developed using input from a geographically diverse group of funeral directors, embalmers, and individuals affiliated with funeral service regulating boards in various states in the United States. According to the ICFSEB:

In 1985, these tasks were assembled into a questionnaire, which was mailed to a national sample of 20,000 practicing funeral directors and embalmers. 3000 questionnaires were returned and analyzed....In 2004, a new task analysis was conducted, resulting in the current exam content (ICFSEB, 2007, p. 3).

With respect to item construction and review, the ICFSEB states that:

...either an educator from one of the funeral home schools or a practitioner has developed each item. After each item is written, it is reviewed by an examination committee that analyzes it for being up-to-date, accurate, unambiguous, and related to at least one task, and the probability of being answered correctly by a minimally qualified, entry level funeral service practitioner and/or embalmer (ICFSEB, 2007, p. 4).

The ICFSEB states that the NBE is a valid instrument for assessing entry-level job competence of funeral service graduates:

...the National Board Examination possesses substantial content validity and is highly representative of the content/knowledge domain that it intends to measure. This content validity approach (domain sampling and expert review

of the questions by practicing professionals and educators) resulting from the job analysis conducted by the International Conference is recommended by the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures and the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing

(<http://www.theconferenceonline.org/students-nbe.shtml>).

Table 2 shows the extent to which different subject areas of the ABFSE curriculum are tested on the NBE¹⁰. As evidenced by the ABFSE curriculum standards and the

Table 2

Item Distribution on the National Board Examination

Curriculum Content Area Tested:	<i>n</i>	%
Funeral Service Arts		
Funeral Directing	27	.09
Accounting and Computers	24	.08
Funeral Service Law	24	.08
Psychology	21	.07
Business Law	18	.06
Funeral Service Merchandising	18	.06
Sociology and Funeral Service History	18	.06
Funeral Service Sciences		
Embalming	42	.14
Restorative Art	42	.14
Pathology	24	.08
Anatomy	15	.05
Microbiology	15	.05
Chemistry	12	.04
Totals	300	1.00

Note. The item distributions by curriculum content area on the NBE changed on September 1, 2012, which is after the period when the data in this research were gathered. The most recent item distribution information is available at the ICFSEB website: www.theconferenceonline.org.

¹⁰ The layout of the NBE was revised effective September 1, 2012, nine months after the data in this research were gathered.

NBE examination blueprint, students are expected to know information related to both funeral service arts and sciences in comparable proportion. Questions on the Funeral Service Arts examination cover a variety of topics ranging from funeral service history to the psychology of grief. Questions on the Funeral Service Sciences examination relate primarily to applied knowledge pertaining to the handling, embalming and cosmetic restoration of human remains.

Accreditation Policy and the National Board Examination

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) uses first-time NBE pass rate data to assess the quality of the funeral service education programs it accredits. First-time program pass rates of all takers of the NBE for the most recent three-year time period are posted on the ABFSE Web site, where anyone can view them, and programs that do not maintain an annual first-time pass rate of at least 60 percent risk the loss of their ABFSE accreditation. The ABFSE does not require that a student pass the examination in order to graduate from their funeral service education program.

In 2004, the ABFSE began to enforce sanctions on funeral service education programs which have annual first-time pass-rates on the NBE fell below 60 percent. A program that does not demonstrate a first-time pass-rate on the NBE of at least 60 percent in any calendar year “will be advised at the Spring COA [*Committee on Accreditation*] meeting that it must increase the passage rate to at least 60 percent within twenty-four months or show good cause why it should not lose its accreditation” (ABFSE, 2008, p. 9.12). Because low first-time pass rate statistics can

now lead to the loss of accreditation, funeral service education programs are under increased pressure to insure that at least 60 percent of their graduates pass the NBE each year.

Overview of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to consider the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. An assumption made by educators, regulators, and state licensing boards is that the ABFSE curriculum is both appropriate and adequate for the purpose of preparing program graduates to enter a career in funeral service. This assumption is evidenced by public policy in most states requiring the completion of some amount of college education at a funeral service education program accredited by the ABFSE in order to be licensed as a funeral director and/or embalmer.

A review of death-care literature presented in Chapter 2, however, reveals no empirical evidence either to support or refute the long-standing assumption that the ABFSE's learning objectives are relevant to the contemporary practice of funeral service. As previously discussed, public policy regulating the disposition of the dead is predicated on the untested assumption that the ABFSE curriculum is the appropriate foundation for the education of funeral service practitioners today. And although college-level funeral service education is mandated by policy makers in most states as a requirement for workforce training, there are as yet no available data which evidence the quality of funeral service education at ABFSE-accredited programs.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, the ways by which Americans choose to dispose of their dead today are increasingly different and more diverse than in years past. Much of the present-day ABFSE curriculum was developed during the second half of the 20th century, a time when interment (i.e. earth burial) of the body was the norm for most people. Changes in how Americans dispose of their dead, beginning with a rise in the selection of cremation services in the 1960s, have had a strong impact on the practice of contemporary funeral service. A pressing need for research pertaining to contemporary funeral service education is evidenced in an e-mail message from Dr. Michael Smith, Executive Director of the ABFSE, to the directors of the 56 ABFSE-accredited funeral service education programs in the United States. With respect to the annual curriculum workshop held in May, 2010 (Anaheim, California) Dr. Smith wrote:

The workshop this year may indeed be historic. Instead of working on several course outlines, the group was asked to approach the curriculum globally (i.e., globally in the sense of determining just what should be taught to prepare individuals to function as funeral directors in the 21st century) rather than piecemeal (that is, on a outline by outline basis). The curriculum committee was making more information available as the date draws nearer (M. Smith, personal communication, February 24, 2010).

Following the May 2010 curriculum workshop, changes were made to some aspects of the curriculum, which included the elimination of separate curriculum content outlines for general psychology and computer applications. Curriculum

topics contained within these two content areas were either merged into other curriculum content outline (e.g. theories of general psychology were moved into the curriculum content area of funeral service psychology and counseling), or eliminated from the curriculum altogether, as recommended by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the membership of the ABFSE. Other curriculum changes included a significant revision of the curriculum content area for accounting.

Within the broader context of funeral service education is the question, posed by both advocates and critics of contemporary funeral service education, of how well programs are presently approaching the academic preparation of students to function as entry-level funeral directors and/or embalmers. A review of recent literature related to mortuary science education suggests that from the perspective of practitioners, the primary function of funeral service education programs today is to prepare students to take the NBE. In his monthly news column in *The Director* magazine, National Funeral Directors Association (Immediate Past) President Randall E. Earl (2012, April) wrote:

Students undergo a vigorous educational process in mortuary school and are trained to pass a very important exam in order to be licensed in many states. And not unlike many other professions, be it medicine, law or education, in funeral service, there exists a gap between the knowledge gained through higher education and that experience through real-world application of that knowledge. Suffice it to say that there is always something to be learned that a book cannot teach (p.6).

Earl's (2012) comments are significant in that the first thing he mentions about schools is the role they play in preparing students to take the NBE. With respect to preparation for work-related knowledge, Earl notes a gap in students' academic preparation to serve grieving families at the completion of their funeral service education program. Earl's remarks demonstrate his perception, as a practitioner, that the purpose of funeral service education is to prepare students to take the NBE. The "real world" application of knowledge related to professional practice, according to Earl, is experienced in the field once the graduate completes an academic program and enters the workforce.

Whereas Earl (2012) does not advocate for changes in the present system of academic preparation for funeral service education students, Isard (2010) calls for a complete reform, vehemently arguing for the need to discard the entire curriculum as it exists today:

It's time. In fact, it's beyond time. It's way overdue. For the health and longevity of the funeral service profession, we must reform the industry, and that can only begin with a complete overhaul of our education system. I'm not talking just a tune-up, mind you. It needs to be torn apart piece by piece and rebuilt to suit the long-term goals of the profession. À la Abbie Hoffman, we should begin by burning the current mortuary school curricula [sic] and creating from scratch a curriculum based on the goal of producing a new generation of über-funeral directors....In my opinion, the goal should be to provide future funeral directors with the best education to prepare them to best

serve families in the funeral home employing them. To that end, mortuary schools currently prepare students to pass the test for licensure, placing the emphasis on the wrong objective and therefore not preparing students to succeed in the real world (pp. 34-35).

Gould (2010) also observed that today schools are focusing their instructional efforts on preparing students to take the NBE. In a survey of funeral service practitioners, funeral service faculty, and administrators at accredited funeral service education programs, Gould (2010) found that:

[Funeral home] Owners and managers feel that mortuary school graduates are most knowledgeable in licensure requirements and weak in the practical work functions and objectives of a practicing funeral director. Mortuary school administrator's [*sic*] and instructor's [*sic*] comments during the visits to various schools indicate they believe their role is to prepare students for the licensure test, not to train funeral directors for work in funeral homes (pp. 20-22).

Flory (2008) expressed his concern that "...many colleges are skim-teaching the [curriculum] based on what they believe will be part of the National Board Examination" (p. 48) in a paper he delivered to members of the College and University Council of the ABFSE during their Annual Meeting held in April, 2007. Rather than wholly discard the present ABFSE curriculum in favor of one that is completely new, as recommended by Isard (2010), Flory (2008) instead advocated for a systematic review of the curriculum as it currently exists, calling for:

...a comprehensive review of the current ABFSE curriculum outlines to make them more applicable to funeral service....Materials need to be discarded....let's focus on making our specialized curriculum germane to today's world. I do not mean revise the outlines area by area by specialists who *increase* [*sic*] the size of those areas. I mean each area should be examined and weighted against all other areas so that there is reasonable balance. Let's involve some outside people who are specialists in curriculum development....It is hoped that a review of the mortuary science curriculum, for purposes of a national minimum requirement, would focus the scope of studies and adjust the level of study to entry level....If so, colleges can legitimately hold students responsible in a justifiable examination process established with the cooperation of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (pp. 50-51).

Flory's (2008) measured call for a comprehensive review of the ABFSE curriculum in the context of changing death care preferences served as the impetus for undertaking this research study, the approach to which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the history of the disposition of deceased persons in the United States. The chapter then explores the evolution of the “traditional” twentieth-century American funeral: a ritual process whereby academically-trained, licensed funeral directors and embalmers prepare and present the dead for public viewing and ceremony. Next is a discussion of reforms to the American way of death care, which began in earnest in the 1960s. The chapter continues with a discussion of changes in the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of students pursuing education to become funeral directors in the second half of the 20th century. This section of the chapter also includes a presentation of both racist and sexist attitudes which limited full inclusion of all persons in the practice of funeral service during the 20th century. The chapter continues with a discussion of recent scholarship conducted by funeral service educators related to the contemporary practice of funeral directing and embalming. At the conclusion of this chapter is a presentation of the research questions which serve as the basis for this study.

Historical Background: Caring for the Dead in America

When people die, survivors must get the dead where they need to go (Lynch, 1997). Whether by means of interment, cremation, entombment, or through new technologies such as chemically reducing a body to its basic elements by means of alkaline hydrolysis, the ways in which humankind disposes of her dead vary the world over, having changed and evolved over millennia (Habenstein & Lamers, 1974;

Metcalf & Huntington, 1991; Troyer, 2006). Looking back in history, there was a time when few rules, laws, or statutes governed how Americans could dispose of their dead (Salomone, 2003). For centuries, burial in the earth (interment) was the norm for most people in the United States. Until the 20th century, the physical act of caring for the dead was most often undertaken by members of the deceased's family (Habenstein & Lamers, 1995; Laderman, 1996). Typically, women bathed and clothed the newly dead in preparation for burial. Family members and friends of the deceased would often call on the immediate next-of-kin at the family home, where they would usually have the opportunity to view the deceased laid out in a coffin. The home parlor was a space reserved for formal gatherings which, in addition to special events and holiday reunions, included the occasional laying-out of the family dead. In early America, there were few business establishments that functioned solely for the purpose of providing funeral services to the general public. Bodies were most often cared for at family homes, not funeral homes. Following reviewal of the body, it was most often buried in a grave dug either by the church sexton or municipal cemetery worker (Habenstein & Lamers, 1995), depending on the location of the interment.

With the general exception of Jews and Muslims, who, for religious reasons, typically bury their dead without embalming on the same day of death whenever possible, the predominant model of American funeral customs throughout much of the 20th century typically involved the display of an embalmed body in an open casket (Habenstein & Lamers, 1974, 1995; Laderman, 2003; Salomone, 2003). Following

the viewing of the dead and visitation with surviving family members, a funeral service typically took place at either at the funeral home or a religious gathering space. The funeral service would conclude with a procession to a cemetery for interment or entombment. This entire process, often referred to as the “traditional” funeral, was almost always conducted under the supervision and leadership of a paid professional functionary, the funeral director (Hayslip, Sewell, & Riddle, 2003; Rather & Slater, 1974; Salomone, 2003).

Reform of Death-Care

Around 1960, American attitudes towards death care and the “traditional” funeral began to change. In 1959, Bowman wrote *The American funeral: A study in guilt, extravagance, and sublimity*. The American public, however, showed minimal interest in Bowman’s criticisms of prevailing funeral customs, and his work had little impact on the practice of funeral service at the time. It was not until the spring of 1963, when British-born writer Jessica Mitford published *The American way of death*, that the discussion of death care in the United States began in earnest. Unlike Bowman’s work, which was barely noticed by the American public, *The American way of death* was universally praised by the popular press. As presented in the preface of reprinted copies of *The American way of death*, the *New York Times* described the work as “savagely witty and well documented” (Mitford, 1963, “Critical Acclaim for a History-Marking Bestseller,” para. 1). Likewise, the *Chicago Tribune* praised Mitford for her effort, exclaiming that “at last someone has spoken out and shattered the sanctimonious silence which has been shielding America’s

multi-million dollar burial racketeers from public scrutiny” (Mitford, 1963, “At Last Someone Has Spoken Out,” para. 1). *The American way of death* quickly ascended to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list. As evidence of the popularity of Mitford’s ideas, less than one year later, *The American way of death* was being published in its eighth reprint edition.

Mitford’s book was a mordant critique of the “traditional” American funeral. She believed the way Americans disposed of their dead, with emphasis on the presentation and viewing of an embalmed body, was a waste of money. In a gesture of satire, the cover art of her book featured a funeral-style floral tribute arranged in the shape of a dollar sign. Mitford mocked the process of embalming, which she wryly described as the undertaker’s “major *raison d’être*” (Mitford, 1963, p. 68). In *The American way of death*, Mitford advocated cremation, anatomical donations, the use of memorial societies, and other approaches to disposition that were less expensive than the “traditional” kinds of services offered by most funeral directors at the time.

The American way of death revealed Mitford as an early advocate for consumer choice in death care. Curiously, nowhere in *The American way of death* did Mitford imply that people should not be able to choose one form of disposition over another. Although she is most remembered for having poked fun at how Americans conducted funeral rites and ceremonies, Mitford was ahead of her time in advocating for consumer choice related to the disposition of the dead. She was one of

the first people to warn the funeral profession that it ran the risk of becoming irrelevant to society if it did not begin to offer more options to the families it served:

If the funeral industry does not see the light soon and give this small portion of the American public the right to dispose of the dead in a manner of their choice, then the industry is on its way to self-destruction (Mitford, 1963, p. 226).

As a result of her work, many Americans began to openly question prevailing funeral customs and traditions. The seeds of reform were sown.

Changes and Trends in the 1960s

Owing in large part to Mitford's influence, trends in the funeral profession began steadily to change throughout the 1960s. Mitford's advocacy for disposition without embalming and viewing, including immediate cremation of the deceased without ceremony, gained greater social acceptance. Nevertheless, some individuals argued in defense of "traditional" funerals which included the viewing of the dead. Edgar Jackson, a Methodist pastor with academic training in theology and pastoral counseling, wrote several books about grief and loss in the 1950s and 1960s. In *For the living*, published the same year as *The American way of death*, Jackson (1963) argued that the "traditional" funeral had psychological value for survivors. Jackson based his ideas about the importance of the funeral, and especially the viewing of the dead, on the work of pioneering researcher and grief psychotherapist Erich Lindemann (Jackson, 1963, p. 40). According to Jackson:

It is far better to fix the image clearly in one's mind, perhaps by standing quietly besides the casket in the funeral home hour after hour, until the full emotional meaning of the death is grasped. Then, with the memory image clearly in mind, the work of reorganizing deep feelings can take place in an orderly manner. This clear image of the dead person becomes the working basis from which the reorganization of life takes place (Jackson, 1963, p. 41).

Jackson believed that the funeral process facilitated a healthy emotional response to grief. Forms of immediate disposition, such as cremation with no viewing of the deceased, or the foregoing of funeral rites with family members present, lacked elements that would aid survivors in their adjustment to life following the death of a loved one. Jackson went on to publish additional books on the subjects of death, loss, and grief, many of which explored the purpose and value of the funeral (Jackson, 1966).

Despite Jackson's defense of the "traditional" funeral, the American public gradually became more interested in alternative forms of disposition for the dead. Perhaps the most significant phenomenon to affect the practice of funeral service since the publication of *The American way of death* has been the steady increase in the popularity of cremation. Few Americans chose cremation as a way of preparing the dead for disposition prior to 1966, when, according to the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), the national cremation rate was only 3.94 percent (CANA, 2008). By 2007, however, the national cremation rate had risen to 34.89 percent (CANA, 2008). Today, cremation has become especially popular in certain

areas of the country. For example, the state with the highest percentage of cremations (72.2%) is Nevada. Conversely, the lowest rate of cremation for any state (13.8%) is in Mississippi. These data refer to cremations performed in 2010, the year for which the most recent between-state statistical information is available (CANA, 2011).

Within the literature, analysis exploring the reasons for differences in among-state cremation preference is sparse. One study by Wirthin International (2005), cited on the websites of the Cremation Association of North America and the National Funeral Directors Association, suggests that religious preference may influence the choice of cremation.

In 1968 Paul Irion wrote one of the first contemporary works to consider the pastoral implications of cremation. Irion, a Christian theologian, wrote about the psychological and religious implications of immediate disposition of the dead, especially in cases of cremation. Irion believed

the radical disposition of the body within the span of a few hours ... has some very real benefits, but also accentuates the sense of aloneness the mourner feels because it symbolizes total separation of the living and the dead. In the case of cremation immediately following death this is still more acute (Irion, 1968, p. 120).

Irion considered it important for the living to view the dead prior to final disposition, especially when cremation is chosen. Prior to publishing *Cremation*, Irion had written an apologia in defense of the “traditional” American funeral. In his

book *The funeral: Vestige or value?* (1966), Irion stated that the viewing of the dead facilitates a healthy process of mourning:

The particular advantages of the viewing lie in the direct interpersonal communication with the mourners....Many aspects of the mourning process are sanctioned and encouraged in the customs which surround viewings....In a very real sense the actual presence of the body is an important aid at this point. Without this focus the conversation might well become totally peripheral and the socializing utterly superficial. If such were the case, the usefulness of the viewing would be drastically reduced (Irion, 1963, pp. 202-203).

Jackson and Irion found value in “funerary practice which has its legitimate focus on the body of the deceased [which in turn testifies] to the value which is still apprehended in the person of the deceased” (Irion, 1968, p. 120). Healthy grieving, they argued, required that survivors see the deceased one final time prior to disposition. Without a body over which to mourn, they felt the grief process could be negatively affected.

Throughout the 30-year time period spanning c. 1970 to 2000, little has been written about the 20th century American custom of viewing the embalmed dead as part of funeral rites and customs. Recently, Manning (2001) observed that:

There is growing perception that the funeral is barbaric and plastic, and that funeral directors are charlatans preying on families when they are most vulnerable. The idea seems to be that since a person can be buried in a

cardboard box, anything more than that is a waste of money and a rip off...

There is a growing perception that sophisticated people are somehow above the need for a public expression of grief. It is considered “more civilized” to take care of things in a more private manner. The loved one is quietly “disposed” of with no fuss. Anything else is considered gauche and undignified (Manning, 2001, p. 11).

Manning, a proponent of viewing, asserted that “embalming is an art whose value cannot be measured” (p. 32). By providing examples of cases in which family members chose to view the body of a deceased loved one, Manning made the case, based on his personal experiences, that there is value in embalming as a means of preparing a body for viewing. Like Irion and Jackson, Manning had been trained as a Christian spiritual leader and counselor.

Significantly, a review of the literature discussing benefits of funerals and viewing evidences that the primarily authors have been individuals who possess an American, Western Christian view of how disposition of the dead should occur. Not until the end of the 20th century do writings from authors of more diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds begin to emerge, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Roman Catholics and Cremation

Having a body physically present for funeral rites and ceremonies is encouraged by some Christian faith traditions, even when cremation is to occur. For Roman Catholics, the 1886 ban against cremation was relaxed in 1963 as part of the

reforms of the Second Vatican Council (Prothero, 2001, p. 165). Although cremation is now permitted for (Roman) Catholics,

it does not enjoy the same value as burial of the body. The church clearly prefers and urges that the body of the deceased be present for the funeral rites, since the presence of the human body better expresses the values the church affirms in those rites (Order of Christian Funerals, 1998, p. 391).

The cremated remains of Catholics are to be treated with the same reverence as would be given to a deceased body. Catholics choosing cremation should, ideally, have the body cremated following a funeral Mass with the body physically present (Rutherford, 1995). Church doctrine forbids the scattering of cremated remains. The interment of the cremated remains, placed in a “worthy vessel,” should take place in a Catholic cemetery (Order of Christian Funerals, 1998, p. 392).

In the future, funeral directors serving Roman Catholic families will likely provide professional services that involve the body, or cremated remains, as a part of the burial rites. What is not known is the extent to which the services of funeral directors who serve families of other faith traditions will be needed when cremation is preferred. From a legal standpoint, as evidenced on death certificates, the place of final disposition for a cremated body is typically identified as the physical address of the crematory building. Following cremation, there are few laws that regulate the process by which cremated remains may be disposed. Those few rules that do exist are all but impossible to enforce. When a body is to be buried, however, many states require the supervision of a licensed funeral director during the interment process. As

cremation becomes more popular, the funeral director may play a less important role in the disposition of cremated remains.

Hospice

In the 1970s, the hospice movement took hold in the United States. According to Davidson (1985), the concept of hospice is described as “the greatest citizen-initiated change in health care delivery in North America ... [and the hospice] movement represents development of a variety of programs designed to better assist patients for whom aggressive, cure-oriented medical treatment is no longer deemed appropriate” (p. 1). Hospice patients, who by definition are terminally ill, commonly return home from hospitals to receive palliative care from family members, nurses, and other health care providers (Cohen, 1979; Kutscher et al., 1983; Schraff, 1984).

As family members and friends became empowered to care for the bodies of dying loved ones through hospice education and training, it was only natural to expect that some of these caregivers would also want to attend to the disposition of the person’s body once death had occurred. A principle of hospice education is to provide family members and other caregivers with information about the dying process. When death occurs, hospice nurses typically encourage caregivers to bathe and clothe the deceased. Hospice encourages loved ones to take a proactive role in caring for the dying.

Curiously, the subject of funeral-related care is not discussed in the comprehensive history of hospice by Kutscher et al. (1983). More recently, Ragow-O’Brien, Hayslip, and Guarnaccia (2002) studied the impact of hospice on attitudes

towards funerals and bereavement. Even by 2002, 17 years after the Kutcher et al. book on hospice was published, Ragow-O'Brien, Hayslip, and Guarnaccia (2002) reported that limited empirical research on the short-term and long-term benefits of hospice care has been conducted (p. 291). Ragow-O'Brien, Hayslip, and Guarnaccia (2002) found that people who used hospice care participated in more funeral rituals than those who did not. They observed that individuals who reported a loved one's death as physically painful said the funeral was more difficult to deal with than individuals who did not report the loved one's death as painful (p. 301). Significantly, they argued that hospice may offer a number of benefits for survivors in terms of bereavement adjustment and participation in the funeral (p. 303).

Caring For Your Own Dead

In the late 1980s, Lisa Carlson (1987) researched and published *Caring for your own dead*. Carlson wrote this book following the suicide of her husband. At the time of her husband's death, Carlson was concerned she would not have enough money to pay for his funeral expenses. She also wanted to play an active role in the process of caring for her husband's remains: "I wanted to be a part of John's death as I was in his life. If I had had money, I would have lost that, given that away, in a moment of grief and confusion" (Carlson, 1987, p. 13).

Carlson researched laws and rules regulating the disposition of the dead in every state. Her book was the first to provide consumers with information needed to care for the dead with as little assistance from licensed funeral directors as was legally permissible. A revised and updated edition of the book was published in

1998. Its expanded title: *Caring for the dead - Your final act of love: A complete guide for those making funeral arrangements with or without a funeral director*, demonstrates Carlson's belief that survivors benefit by participating actively in the process of handling the disposition of the body of a loved one.

Attitudes Toward Death and Funerals

A review of the literature indicates that few studies of people's attitudes towards death and funerals have been conducted. In 1982, Marks and Calder published a study that considered how consumers think and feel about death and funerals. The purpose of their research was to update a similar study done in 1974 by the Casket Manufacturers of America. According to Marks and Calder (1982):

This research seeks to increase understanding of how consumers think and feel about death and funerals. It explores peoples' attitudes towards attending funerals, preplanning, funeral services, funeral homes, caskets, disposition of the body, and pricing. The objective is to obtain an in-depth understanding of the nature and causes of these consumer attitudes (Marks & Calder, 1982, p. 13).

In their findings, Marks and Calder (1982) discussed several emerging trends in funeral service. They observed that although attendance at funerals was high, a decline was beginning to occur (p. 19). Grouping data by geographic area of the country, they found that certain forms of disposition, such as cremation, were more popular in some regions of the country than others. One section of their study focused on attitudes towards disposition of the body. They noted that there had been

a decrease in burial since 1974, and that 17.8 percent of respondents expressed an interest in cremation for either themselves or for others (p. 147). The researchers asked respondents how they went about selecting a funeral home. They found that ethnic or religious affiliation was ranked highest on a scale measuring the importance of factors used to determine the selection a funeral home (p. 93). The study did not, however, break down data by specific religion or denomination affiliation.

Marks and Calder (1982) also gathered data on death-care preferences by means of focus-group interviews. They reported verbatim narrative accounts of the factors respondents said influenced their decision to choose one form of disposition over another. No other disposition-related research study containing qualitative data was located as part of this literature review. These qualitative data are useful for comparing past attitudes about death care with those observed today. The researchers included their original survey instrument as an appendix to their book, making possible the replication of their study.

The Marks and Calder study (1982) explored differences in consumer preferences for selecting either cremation or burial as a means of disposition. A limitation of their study is the failure to report on situations in which a family may have chosen to view an embalmed, casketed body, followed by cremation and interment of the cremated remains, a sequence of events becoming increasingly popular today.

Attitudes towards death and funerals have changed over the 28 years following the Marks and Calder (1982) study. In 2007, AARP¹¹ undertook a study of funeral and burial planners (AARP, 2007). According to the executive summary statement, the purpose of the study was

to update findings from research that AARP conducted in 1995, 1998, and 1999. The survey was targeted towards individuals 50+, who have pre-planned or pre-paid for a funeral or burial in advance of the need for these services for themselves or someone else. Respondents answered questions based on their experiences with the death care industry..... In the survey, the term “funeral” was defined as a service honoring the recently deceased. The term “burial” was defined as placing a body underground with a headstone or other type of memorial, or placing a body above ground in a mausoleum, or disposition of cremains (p. 1).

Several important findings were discovered in this study. For example, AARP observed that:

a sizeable portion of the 50+ population (34 percent) has engaged in some preplanning, and just under a quarter of individuals ages 50+ (23 percent) have prepaid at least a portion of funeral or burial expenses for themselves or someone else (p. 1).

¹¹ The association formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons, and since 1999, known officially as AARP

Significantly, the AARP study demonstrated that today funeral directors are increasingly serving families before death occurs by providing pre-planning services. In contrast, Marks and Calder (1982) found that only 9.2 percent of their respondents had pre-arranged a funeral, observing that most of those who made pre-arrangements were 45 year of age or older (p. 37). Whereas Marks and Calder (1982) asked about attitudes towards pricing, they did not gather comprehensive data on pre-payment, which are reported in the AARP study. Clearly, pre-planning has become more important to the American public in recent years, with an almost 400 percent increase in its popularity since 1982. Another important finding of the AARP study is that “a substantial portion of individuals in this age group express an interest in environmentally-friendly alternatives to traditional funerals and burials” (p. 1).

An aspect of pre-need not explored in previous research studies is the respondents’ desire for “environmentally-friendly” disposition options. The AARP study is the first of its kind to quantify interest in “green” forms of disposition. The AARP study gathered data on what it classified as alternative funeral options. The alternative funeral options AARP considered are: cremation, burial not using a concrete vault, use of open casket without embalming, using a blanket or shroud instead of a coffin, and “green” burial (p. 14). While 96 percent of respondents said that they had heard about cremation, only 35 percent said they had heard of having an open casket without embalming. Perhaps more interesting is the observation that 80 percent of respondents had never heard of using a blanket or shroud instead of a coffin, and 86 percent had not heard of “green” burial.

A curious observation in the AARP study is how terms were defined by the researchers. As was the case in the Marks and Calder (1982) study, cremation was defined by AARP (2007) as an alternative form of disposition, not as a means of preparing a body for final disposition: “Almost all respondents (96 percent) were familiar with cremation as an alternative to a traditional funeral. However, among these respondents, only 54 percent said they would consider cremation as an alternative funeral option” (p. 14). A problem that results from asking the question this way is that the researchers are not able to identify the population of respondents who might have preferred a funeral with viewing and a service, followed by cremation, and concluding with interment or other disposition of the cremated remains.

The AARP study is perhaps the most comprehensive of its type to have been conducted in recent years. Its scope is not, however, without limitations. For example, 75 percent of respondents were white, and 41 percent had completed at least some college. Although Marks and Calder (1982) had gathered data about respondents’ religiousness, AARP did not consider the relationship between spiritual beliefs and reasons for preferring one form of disposition over another. Only 29 percent of respondents of the AARP study reported a gross annual income of less than \$30,000. Because the data were gathered by telephone survey, individuals without telephones, either by choice, or because they could not afford them, were not surveyed. The extent to which the results of the AARP study reflect the views and

beliefs of those who are poor, non-white, and/or without education beyond high school is therefore not yet known.

In January of 2005, a study of American attitudes towards ritualization and memorialization, known as the *Wirthlin Report*, was released under the Wirthlin Worldwide corporate publication name. Specializing in polls and their interpretation, Wirthlin Worldwide was a political and business consulting firm that provided research for non-profits and industry. The Wirthlin Worldwide company was sold and merged into Harris Interactive in September of 2004 (“Wirthlin,” 2009, para 1). This study was commissioned by the Funeral and Memorial Information Council (FAMIC), and is frequently quoted by death care organizations. For example, the Cremation Association of North America cites the *Wirthlin Report* when proclaiming that people’s interest in cremation continues to rise. Unlike the AARP study (2007), the *Wirthlin Report* (2005) asked respondents about their religious beliefs. Correlating religious beliefs with consumer preferences for death care, the *Wirthlin Report* found that “practicing Baptists, more than any other religion, are more likely to shun cremation because it ‘destroys the body’” (CANA, n.d.). Significantly, this suggests a relationship may exist between one’s religious beliefs and the selection of a particular method of disposition. The 2005 *Wirthlin Report* is the fourth to be commissioned by the FAMIC.

Economics and Death-Care

The effects of state funeral regulations on the selection of cremation have been studied in recent years by some economists in the academy. Harrington and

Krynski (2002) found evidence that in states where funeral homes are required to have embalming rooms at each establishment location the cremation rate is lower than in states that do not have this requirement. Harrington and Krynski (2002) identified this phenomenon as “demand inducement,” and considered it problematic in terms of public policy relating to death care. They observed that “embalming regulations reduce cremation by roughly 16 percent, which increased the amount spent on funerals by 2.6 percent [and that] funeral directors induce consumers to choose burial over cremation” (Harrington & Krynski, 2002, p. 199). Harrington (2003) further argued that “funeral directors may induce demand [for funerals] by steering consumers away from cremations” (p.17). Harrington believes that state funeral regulations impede competition and should therefore be reformed.

Harrington and Krynski (2002) hypothesized that “funeral directors react to income losses from declining death rates by persuading more consumers to choose traditional funerals over less-profitable cremations” (p. 214). Based on the results of a regression analysis of factors related to the selection of cremation, controlling for state fixed effects, Harrington and Krynski (2002) argue that

some funeral directors react to potential income losses by steering consumers more strenuously away from cremations. Since steering consumers away from cremations is only one of the ways funeral directors have been accused of inducing demand, our evidence raises the likelihood that funeral directors are inducing demand on other ways, as well (p. 222).

In the development of their theoretical model, Harrington and Krynsky (2002) make the assumption that the consumer desires either burial or cremation, as a means of disposing of the dead. It is assumed from the writings of Harrington and Krynsky (2002) that they define “cremation” to mean the immediate cremation of the body following death, without the selection of other funeral-related services and/or merchandise on the part of the consumer. A problem with defining the phenomenon of cremation in this way is that the researchers fail to identify the death care preferences of a growing population of consumers who increasingly desire what may be considered a hybrid approach to disposition of the dead, one in which survivors desire to select certain elements of “traditional” funerals, including embalming and interment of cremated remains, in addition to their choice that the body be cremated. This same problematic approach to defining what is meant by “cremation” was observed in both the Marks and Calder (1982) and AARP (2007) studies, as previously discussed.

In contrast, Banks (2003) stated that “in the vast majority of cases, however, families who purchase cremation services will also purchase pre-cremation services” (p. 607). Conversely, Harrington (2007) noted that “cremations are less lucrative for funeral directors because cremations are less likely to involve embalming, caskets, and other services such as visitation rooms, hearses and limousines” (p. 205). Because the researchers do not provide a comparative analysis of all goods and services selected in cases of both interment and cremation, the extent to which cremation services involve elements of “traditional” funeral services is not known.

Harrington and Krynski (2002) also stated that “consumers... feel that it is disrespectful to search for a low-cost provider” (p. 201). A limitation of their study is that they do not provide evidence in support of this assertion. An additional concern is the observation that Harrington and Krynski (2002) cite dated references (e.g. Federal Trade Commission, 1978; Mitford, 1963) in support of their argument that funeral consumers are less informed than consumers in a typical market. As evidence to the contrary, Kopp and Kemp (2007) recently observed that very few complaints are filed with state regulatory agencies which oversee the death care industry (p. 166).

In a separate analysis of the effects of casket sale restrictions on the cost of funerals, Chevalier and Morton (2008) found no significant decline in funeral home revenue in states with no restrictions limiting the sale of caskets to funeral homes compared to states that do have casket sale restrictions. Chevalier and Morton (2008) compared prices from funeral homes in six states, classifying them by whether they have restrictive laws related to casket sales. Chevalier and Morton (2008) found that state laws restricting the sale of funeral goods to licensed funeral homes appear to shift income from the sale of goods to the sale of services. Curiously, similar to the Harrington and Krynski (2002) study, Chevalier and Morton (2008) did not include data gathered from Colorado in their analysis. This is unfortunate, because Colorado could have served as a “control” state, since it is the only state that does not require funeral directors to be licensed. Furthermore, Chevalier and Morton (2008) erroneously reported that “all states have some form of occupational licensing for

funeral directors¹²” (p. 2). Another limitation of the Chevalier and Morton (2008) study is that data were taken from publicly-traded corporate funeral firms, which represent only about 10 percent of all funeral firms in the United States. In contrast, the vast majority of funeral homes, over 19,000, are privately owned (Kopp & Kemp, 2007; Salomone, 2003).

Much of the economics literature pertaining to contemporary funeral home practice focuses primarily on the analysis of funeral costs. This is not surprising, because economists tend to be interested in making recommendations about how things can be done in what they believe to be a more efficient manner. The economics literature evidences the fact that economists often perform multiple regression analyses to evaluate their research questions and hypotheses. With respect to death care, it is perhaps easier to analyze dollars spent on the disposition of the dead than it is to attempt to quantify the value of the perceived benefits, or lack thereof, that a population may assign to how the body of a loved one is disposed of.

Because most funeral homes are privately owned, quantitative data pertaining to death care purchasing decisions are difficult to acquire. A weakness of the aforementioned economics studies is their limited analysis of factors that influence purchasing decisions related to funeral goods and services. Important is the observation by Fan and Dick (2004) that the cost of final disposition of the dead can place an economic burden on survivors. Gentry, Kennedy, Paul, and Hill (1994) argued that public policy should protect those who are vulnerable as a result of their

¹² Colorado does not license funeral directors.

grief, which “may present a situation in which survivors cannot fulfill the active role traditionally expected on consumers in a market economy” (p. 128). Clearly, the economic impact of public policy related to the disposition of the dead is the subject of much discussion in the literature today. Absent from the literature, however, is any comprehensive study of the intangible values and benefits that affect and influence consumer choices related to the selection of death care disposition options.

Going Green

As previously noted, the environmental impact of how Americans dispose of their dead has been the focus of recent literature related to death care (AARP, 2007). Harris (2007) argues that modern approaches to burial, which include the use of embalming chemicals, and the placing of caskets and burial vaults into the earth, negatively affect the environment. He advocates instead what he calls “natural” burial. This includes alternatives such as cremation, home funerals, the use of “plain pine boxes,” and “natural cemeteries.” Funeral service trade publications are now beginning to explore the meaning of “green” disposition, and the ways by which funeral businesses can effectively market “green” burial alternatives to the families they serve (McCausland, 2008; Widener, 2009).

In Minnesota, some lawmakers are concerned about environmental pollution resulting from the vaporization of mercury-based dental fillings (also known as “amalgam” fillings) during the cremation process. Legislation requiring the abatement of mercury from dental fillings prior to cremation has been proposed numerous times over the past five years by Minnesota State Senator John Marty.

Senator Marty's most recent attempt to require the abatement of mercury from dead bodies prior to cremation was outlined in S.F. No. 3884, which was introduced in the 2007-2008 Legislative Session. The proposed bill states that:

A crematory may accept a dead human body on a funeral home cot, approved by the commissioner, for the purpose of performing mercury abatement as required under subdivision 7a. [Subdivision 7a states that] No dead human body may be cremated if it contains dental amalgam fillings. If a body is received by the crematory containing this material, it is the responsibility of the licensed mortician prior to cremation to remove the material using proper tools and in a dignified manner, and to dispose of the material in accordance with state and federal law. An unlicensed person may remove the material in accordance with this subdivision, under the supervision of a licensed mortician (State of Minnesota, Office of the Revisor, S.F. No. 3884).

Although S.F. No. 3884 did not move forward during the 2007-2008 legislative session, Senator Marty (personal communication, March 13, 2009) has said he plans to continue to reintroduce similar legislation in the future.

Considerable research into the environmental impact of mercury emissions from crematoria has been conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) and other European countries. The UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has prepared a working paper on the impacts of mercury emissions from crematoria. Although a publication date is not indicated on the document, it is reasonable to

assume it was created in early 2003, because it calls for feedback from stakeholders no later than August 7, 2003. A key finding of the paper is the projection that

the cost of abating mercury by gas cleaning crematoria exhausts in the U.K. is high by comparison of other abatement costs. However, past and current practice should not prevent changes in cost assessment, particularly when by 2020 crematoria will be by far the biggest single contributor to national mercury emissions unless steps are taken and due to its long range transport, mercury is of international concern and some European countries have introduced gas cleaning of mercury at some crematoria (DEFRA, n.d.).

In a separate paper posted on the Internet, DEFRA makes several conclusions about the environmental impacts of mercury emissions from crematoria. One important statement is that “a requirement to remove teeth prior to cremation is not acceptable” (DEFRA, n.d.). A major difference between the European and American abatement protocols centers on how dental mercury is to be recovered. The Europeans use “scrubber” technology incorporated into cremation machinery to abate mercury from gasses as the body is being incinerated. In the Minnesota proposal, mercury would be abated from bodies prior to cremation by means of mechanical extraction, performed by a funeral director, or by another person operating under supervision. An advantage of the latter alternative is that it is less expensive to abate mercury from human remains this way. According to an online BBC news article, “scrubber” technology can cost over £250,000 (\$358,379, based on the exchange rate posted March 31, 2009) to install in a crematory.

Interest in the environmental impacts of how Americans dispose of their dead is likely to continue in the future. Because cremation requires the use of non-renewable fossil fuels, the exploration of alternative forms of disposition that use fewer non-renewable resources is likely to occur. Certain U.S. organizations, such as the Green Burial Council, will continue to advocate changes in death care policies that they believe will benefit the environment. Changes in environmental policy related to the disposition of the dead, already observed in Europe and the UK, will likely be seen in the future in the United States.

Diversity and Death-Care

A review of the literature demonstrates that previous studies about death care in the United States have focused primarily on the “traditional” funeral process. This process has been considered principally from a white, male, Western, Christian perspective. Jackson and Irion, the two most prolific authors on funeral customs in the 1960s, were both Christian spiritual leaders, and both were white men. Only in recent years has scholarship into funeral home customs and rituals of non-white, non-Christian American citizens begun to emerge.

A broad study of ethnic variations in dying, death, and grief was done by Irish, Lundquist, and Nelsen (1993). The grief and funerary customs of select ethnic groups, including African-Americans, Hmong, Mexican Americans, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, and Native Americans were considered as part of their research. The work of Irish et al. (1993) was directed towards professionals working in the field of death and dying. Their book *Ethnic variations in death, dying, and grief*

explores the needs of diverse populations, especially those who have historically been under- or non-represented in previous research related to death care and funeral preferences. Significantly, Bryant (2003) oversaw the creation of the two-volume *Handbook of death and dying*. Over 1,000 pages long, this work contains a comprehensive collection of articles that consider death, dying, and funeral customs from a variety of different ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. Research into cultural competencies that surround end-of-life issues has also grown in recent years. Braun, Pietsch, and Blanchette (2001) examined how culture influences end-of-life decision-making. Braun et al. (2001) contended that “by understanding even a fraction of the histories, cultural assumptions, and languages of various cultural groups, practitioners can better serve the increasing diversity of America’s populations” (p. xi). Phenomenological research into cultural competencies within allied health care fields, such as occupational therapy, has also been observed in the literature (Martin, 2008).

With respect to its ethnic diversity, American society is rapidly changing. The American Psychological Association (APA) observed an increase in the number of American citizens who are of multi-ethnic and multi-racial heritages. To respond effectively to the needs of an increasingly diverse citizenry, the APA advises that employers, agencies, educational and professional institutions, and accrediting agencies must become more knowledgeable about the client populations they serve (APA, 2009).

Funeral directors, as a population, have historically been white and male. African-American men have, for years, pursued careers in funeral service, but in fewer numbers than did Caucasian men. No doubt racism kept many people of color from pursuing a funeral service education (Smith, 2010). The inculcation of racist attitudes as part of funeral service education is evidenced by the following legal advice presented by Street (1948) in his funeral law textbook *Mortuary jurisprudence: A treatise on the legal rights and liabilities involved in the operation of funeral establishments*. For the funeral director who might prefer to decline funeral services to families on the basis of their race, the following is advised:

Section 329. Funeral Director's Obligation to Serve Prospective Patrons. – Like members of other vocations who furnish services or sell supplies in a competitive market, the funeral director ordinarily is not bound to service anyone who seeks to engage him. He may refuse to serve all or any upon such terms that are satisfactory to him. However, before refusing to conduct a funeral on racial grounds, a funeral director should check the laws of his state to determine whether or not the refusal is lawful. At least one state – Illinois – has a statute providing that 'all persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of ...funeral hearses...and all other places of public accommodation.' (p. 193).

At a meeting on diversity in health care education at the University of Minnesota, a scholar of minority affairs related the story of how an African-American man was discouraged by a funeral service educator from pursuing a career as a

funeral director. Consequently, this man went on instead to become a police officer, but always carried the pain of being discouraged from pursuing a career in funeral service, which he believed was because of his race. According to this scholar, the man stated to her that “I wouldn’t send a black dog to that racist program [of funeral service]” (S. McKee, personal communication, 2001).

According to the ABFSE (personal communication, 2003), in 1971 enrollment by “non-Caucasian”¹³ students was 15% ($n = 281$) of the total population of all students enrolled in ABFSE-accredited funeral service education programs in the United States¹⁴. Non-white enrollment in ABFSE-accredited funeral service education programs has increased somewhat over the past 41 years. In 2012, African-Americans made up the largest population of minority students, followed by Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans (with percentages in parentheses): 671 (23.26%), 222 (7.69%), 22 (0.76%), 21 (0.73%), respectively. Whereas by 2012, Caucasians¹⁵ still made up the largest portion of funeral service education graduates (76.0%, $n = 1207$), the number (with percentages in parentheses) of African-American and Hispanic American graduates continues to remain significantly lower than is observed for Caucasians: 251 (15.8%), 87 (5.5%), respectively. Likewise, in 2012 the number of Native Americans, Asian Americans

¹³ The ABFSE enrollment and graduation data reports prepared in 2003 were not broken down into separate ethnic and racial categories – rather, data were presented only for “Caucasian” students, meaning that minority enrollments are calculated values.

¹⁴ Non-Caucasian graduation rates were not reported.

¹⁵ The ABFSE continues to use the term “Caucasian” to refer to the population of white students.

and graduates whose ethnicities are classified as “Other” by the ABFSE¹⁶ (with percentages in parentheses) also remain extremely low: 11 (0.69%), 12 (0.76%), 21 (1.32%), respectively (ABFSE, personal communication, March 8, 2013). Mortuary science students and program graduates continue to be largely white, and white students are typically more likely to graduate than non-white students.

With respect to gender, the ABFSE notes that women made up only 5% of students enrolled in funeral service education programs in 1971 were women (ABFSE, personal communication, 2003). Historically low female enrollments in funeral service education programs up until the end of the 20th century are likely to have been connected with prevailing sexist attitudes about the role of women in funeral service. For example, the booklet *Funeral service: A heritage, a challenge, and future*, published by the National Funeral Directors Association in 1971, contains (at the very end of the booklet) a section entitled *Funeral service, The opportunity for women*:

There is a definite place for women in funeral service. As a secretary or stenographer she does office work and usually receives telephone calls. As a receptionist or lady attendant, she meets with families to discuss clothing for women and children, hairdressing, cosmetics, and other details of preparation and funeral service. Her other duties may involve responsibility for floral arrangements and bookkeeping... Women do hold positions as embalmers and funeral directors. Although as yet the number is small (approximately 1% of

¹⁶ The ABFSE does not define what is meant by “Other.”

all licensees) they may qualify as employees and owners of funeral homes.

Their duties parallel those of male funeral directors, might well include all or part of the duties of a lady attendant.

In the booklet *Women in funeral service, a labor of love*, also published by the National Funeral Directors Association, George E. LaMore Jr. (1976) offers the following comments with respect to the history and place of women in funeral service:

Women in Funeral Service: - one is tempted to dub the topic, "A Virgin Territory for Study," for certainly not much thought has been given to it, even though women have been involved in funeral service from the beginning. Tossing caution to the wind, once might even refer to Women in Funeral Service as "The World's Oldest Profession," for as surely as the burial of the dead is the most enduring institution known to man, so too, there is archeological record that women have played a large role in this work since the dawn of time...Small wonder that it comes as a considerable surprise to meet a member of the 'fairer sex' in funeral service...Not long ago I gave the commencement address at a Midwestern school of funeral service education. In the graduating class was a lovely, long haired blonde with an appropriate first name of Ginger. Right off, I asked the dean where she was planning her internship because when I died I wanted to be there...We are living in an era of "woman's lib" (spelled with a "b", although there are times when a "p" might seem more appropriate). By and large I am for woman's lib, except

when they too fall into simpleminded stereotypes...To speak bluntly, woman is a creature whose sexual biology equips her to take things into herself, and I think that this carries over to her psychological nature as well...True, there are men with an eye for beauty, that is why they marry the women, but let them try to furnish an authentic funeral home or any other kind, for that matter and the difference will show. Women create an atmosphere...the absence of the feminine presence is inexcusable” (pp. 1-12).

Despite the overt sexism evident in the profession throughout much of the 20th century, the number of women pursuing funeral education increased steadily throughout the late 1900s. Over the next four decades the number of female funeral service education students rose steadily, and by 2012 women made up 53% ($n = 849$) of all funeral service education program graduates (ABFSE, personal communication, 2013).

To effectively serve the needs of society in the future, the funeral service profession will need to become more aware of the diverse needs of families it serves. The historically white, Western, Christian values that influenced the creation of funeral service as a distinct profession in the 20th century must be expanded to accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse American society. As an example, Brown (2009) recounts the funeral experience of member of the Lakota Nation:

My people of the Lakota tribe light the leaf of the sweet sage and bear root plants. Our ancestors believe in the spiritual smoke from these plants as the drifting path upward to join our family and friends who dwell with Wakan

Tanka, the god of our people. The ‘funeral man’ for my father did none of this for us....Why do some undertakers treat us like we are Norwegians seeking to buy a funeral for a Blackfoot brother? (Brown, 2009, p.21).

Brown’s recollection provides evidence that the “traditional” American funeral is not always relevant or appropriate to the needs of mourning survivors, especially those whose ethnic background is neither Western nor Christian.

A review of literature focusing on grief and funeral-customs studies conducted during the 1960s through the 1980s demonstrates that many of the participants studied by researchers were white. For example, Hayslip, Ragow-O’Brien, and Guarnaccia (1999) conducted a study on the relationship between cause of death and attitudes towards funerals and bereavement adjustment. The authors describe the sample as “heterogeneous” (p.299), yet ironically, only 17 percent of the participants are non-white. The researchers recruited their subjects from bereavement organizations, such as hospices, churches, and organizations such as Compassionate Friends. The extent to which prospective minority participants declined to participate in the research study, however, was not examined. A question this observation raises is the following: to what extent have minorities historically had access to certain bereavement care services, such as Hospice and Compassionate Friends? A lack of access to services might explain, in part, why few non-whites have participated in previous death care research studies.

An earlier study by Bolton and Camp (1987) on funeral rituals and the facilitation of grief work does not report the ethnicity of the participants. Similarly,

the respondents' ethnicity is not reported by Swanson and Bennett (1982) in their study of the impact of how closeness to the decedent affects the bereaved's attitudes towards select funeral practices. Curiously, Swanson and Bennett (1982) reported the respondents' mean age and marital status, as well as religious preference (Catholic, Protestant, or no preference). It is not known if ethnic data were not collected, or simply not reported. A review of the literature demonstrates that only in recent years have researchers begun to explore differences in bereavement and funeral customs between different ethnic and cultural groups. Further research is needed, because past studies are limited in their generalizability to an increasingly diverse American society.

Death-Care in the United States Today

In contemporary American society, the decision about what to do with a dead body is typically made by the decedent's surviving next-of-kin or a legally designated personal representative. As Kopp and Kemp (2007) observed, "nearly every person in the United States will purchase a funeral-related product for themselves or on behalf of someone else" (p. 150). When the decedent is unknown, unclaimed, or indigent, decisions are made by officials who have the legal obligation and authority to dispose of the dead.

Today, the right to control disposition is typically regulated by legal statute, and varies from state to state (Gilligan, 2003; Kubasak & Lamers, 2007). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), the residential population of the United States was 314,918,615 on December 1, 2012. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC), reported 2,513,171 resident deaths registered in the United States in 2011, the year for which the most recent statistical data are available. Death rates were observed to be at a historically low rate (CDC, 2012). Mortality projections based on year 2012 data indicate a life expectancy at birth of 78.7 years, which suggests that many Americans are now living longer than in years past. Although death rates have been declining in recent years, over the next two decades an increase is inevitable as Baby Boomers reach the end of their lives. Rybarski (2004) reported that by 2040, there will be approximately 4.1 million deaths per year, when significant numbers of Baby Boomers will begin to die. Care for the disposition of most of these bodies will most likely be performed by funeral directors.

As has been demonstrated by this literature review, those responsible for the disposition of the dead now have many options available to them as they consider what should be done with the bodies of deceased persons. As the population in America becomes more diverse into the future, so will the means by which disposition of the dead will occur. As Rybarski (2004) duly noted, “for Boomers and their parents, the ways to say goodbye will increase as they gain more knowledge about end-of-life issues and the power that goes with it” (p. 34).

Research Related to Mortuary Science Education

Scholarly literature pertaining to mortuary science education is sparse. In the late 1900s and early 2000s, the University Mortuary Science Education Association published the *Journal of Funeral Service Education* (JFSE). The stated purpose of the JFSE is “to serve the needs of educators by facilitating the dissemination of

original works of research as well as serving as a forum for commentary, submissions, debate, or other forms of academic exchange” (*Journal of Funeral Service Education*, 10(1), 2.). The last known issue of the JFSE was published in October, 2007. There is no known index of articles published in the JFSE, however, and a review of each edition of the JFSE published between 2004 and 2007 (found in hardcopy format in the library of the Program of Mortuary Science at the University of Minnesota) reveals no research into practitioners’ perceptions of academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers for professional practice.

An examination of doctoral dissertations referenced in *Dissertation Abstracts* shows a small number of research studies pertaining to funeral service education (Reinhard, 2010; Shaw, 2005; Taggart, 1989; Taylor 2011). Over two decades ago, Taggart (1989) surveyed funeral service education program graduates for the purpose of determining their perceptions of educational preparation relative to select personal variables. Taggart (1989) developed a questionnaire to survey a national sample of the 1509 mortuary science students who graduated from funeral service education programs in 1985. Taggart (1989) sent surveys to the 1,487 graduates residing in the United States for whom he had a mailing address. The population of prospective students represented 39 funeral service education programs. A total of 469 surveys were returned, yielding a 32% participation rate. Perceptions of preparation were assessed for the following mortuary science-related tasks: a) removing the deceased, b) preparing the body for embalming, c) injecting fluids, d) the embalming process, e) preparing the body for viewing, f) arranging for the funeral, g) conducting the funeral,

h) fulfilling administrative services [category 1], i) carrying out business administration, and j) fulfilling administrative services [category 2]. Taggart (1989) correlated the results of the perception of preparation with personal characteristics of participants' class rank, prior work experience, age, education level, and employment status. Taggart (1989) discovered that graduates' perceptions of educational preparation were highly influenced by the personal characteristics of job status, class rank, and age.

In 2005, Shaw investigated the occupational personality of a group of 124 funeral service students attending three different types of academic programs: a community college ($n = 35$), a university ($n = 31$) and a private technical institution ($n = 58$). Using Holland's *The Self Directed Search (SDS)* as an analytical framework, Shaw (2005) found that the occupational personality of participants in his research fell within the categories of Social, Enterprising, and Conventional, which is in contrast to Holland's originally identified typology of Enterprising, Social, and Realistic (ESR). Shaw's work advanced knowledge about personality traits of individuals who pursue work in mortuary science.

More recently, Reinhard (2010) gathered the perceptions of the ABFSE accreditation process from the perspective of individuals who serve on external site visit teams. Reinhard used a mixed design methodology based on the Participation Reasons Scale (Grotelueschen, 1985) and the Information Preference Scale (Bauer, 1986) to examine the characteristics of individuals who serve on ABFSE accreditation teams, the reasons for their involvement in accreditation, resources that

are perceived as being important for the accreditation process, and perceptions of training to serve as a team member (Reinhard, 2010). In her research, the results of which were derived from a sample of 39 external mortuary science evaluators, Reinhard (2010) found that training is both limited and inconsistent for site team members who participate in accreditation-related activities. Reinhard (2010) argues for more definitive and effective training for current and prospective site team members, as well as the need to return information about accreditation process to institutions and programs with which site team members might have a professional affiliation.

A dissertation by Taylor (2011) explored issues surrounding the professional identity of funeral directors in the context of changes in funeral practice during the second half of the 20th century. Using the analytical framework of history process research, Taylor (2011) found that funeral directors demonstrate ambiguity in their identity as professionals within the context of the practice of mortuary science. Taylor (2011) questioned whether or not mortuary science can truly be considered a profession when most states today still require only two years of college education to become licensed as a funeral director and / or an embalmer. Whereas lawyers and physicians worked with success to advance the academic requirements for professional practice to a post-baccalaureate level in the 20th century, Taylor (2011) found that mortuary science practitioners have tended to avoid adaptive work necessary to gain the type of cultural authority seen in professions such as law and medicine. Within the context of adaptive work, Taylor found that over the past half-

century, funeral service practitioners in most states have generally resisted the movement towards higher academic requirements for professional practice. Taylor (2011) advocates for a national discussion on the minimum education requirements for professional practice as a funeral director, questioning whether mortuary science can truly be considered a profession when the minimum academic requirement for licensure is typically two years of college education.

Summary

The literature review presented in this chapter has provided evidence that as American society has become more diverse in recent decades, so have the death care preferences of the survivors for whom funeral directors provide their professional services. The majority of grieving citizens will, into the foreseeable future, likely turn to funeral directors for assistance and guidance about how to care for the disposition of their dead loved ones. The population of funeral service practitioners is also becoming increasingly diverse: Not only are more students of color studying to become funeral directors, but for over a decade now more women than men have enrolled in funeral service education programs. Into the future, funeral directors will increasingly be female and persons of color, in contrast to the present day population of funeral home owners and managers, who are typically male and white.

Research Questions

Because funeral service practitioners are typically required to pursue college education as part of their professional training, it is critical that funeral service educational programs adequately prepare their graduates with the skills and

knowledge to effectively serve grieving families in a caring, dignified, and proficient manner. In consideration of the educational, licensing, and professional practice-related issues discussed both in this chapter and in Chapter 1, the following research questions will serve as the basis for this study:

- 1) To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive that the AFBSE learning objectives are important to the contemporary practice of funeral service?
- 2) To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive the objectives for each of the 19 ABFSE discipline-specific curriculum content outline as adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service?
- 3) To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared to master each of the ABFSE learning objectives by the funeral service education program they completed?
- 4) Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the importance and adequacy related to each set of learning objectives?
- 5) Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the importance and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?

- 6) Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?
- 7) To what extent has the implementation of Accreditation Standard 11.5 affected instructional efforts to prepare students to take the National Board Examination?
- 8) Is there a difference in perceived preparation to take the National Board Examination based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?
- 9) To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed to function as a competent, entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer?
- 10) Is there a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?
- 11) Does annual income from work in funeral service differ depending on the number of years of college education completed?

- 12) Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for managers and non-managers?
- 13) Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for men and women?
- 14) Is there an interaction of managerial employment status on gender and annual income earned from work in funeral service?
- 15) What suggestions do practitioners have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of the conceptual framework used to guide the research process for this study. Next is presented the process by which a survey instrument was developed to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions posed at the conclusion of Chapter 2. The chapter continues with the identification of the population of interest, followed by a presentation of select demographic characteristics of the participants who participated in this research. Next is a presentation of the limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the procedures that were followed to insure that the data used in this study were gathered, analyzed, and stored in compliance with research protocols established by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota.

Conceptual Framework

As is illustrated in Figure 2, the research questions posed in this study are based upon an evaluation process developed in Europe over the past decade known as *tuning*. According to Gaston (2010), *tuning* is defined as a process whereby “faculty members and others...define learning outcomes for specific disciplines” [and that] the primary object [of *tuning*] is to “secure agreement on those terms...” (p. 154). Gaston (2010) further states that “*tuning*...has engaged members of the academic community in discussion of educational structures and content [and is concerned with] the comparability of curricula in terms of structures, programmes and

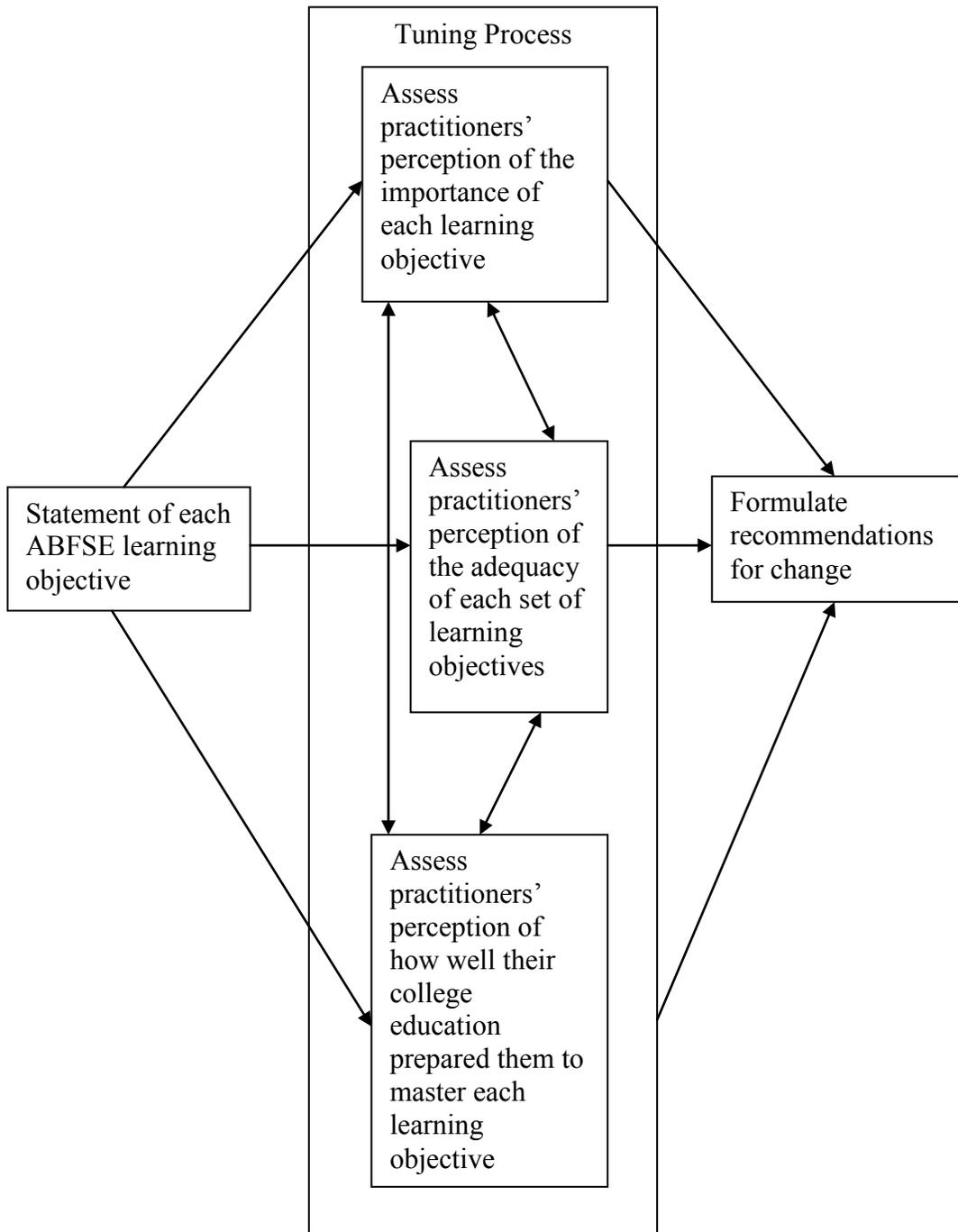


Figure 2. Tuning process framework applied to the assessment of the ABFSE learning objectives.

actual teaching” (p. 154). A goal of *tuning* in European colleges and universities has been to improve the quality of higher education. In 1999, 29 European countries signed on to what is known as the Bologna Declaration. The clearly defined common purpose of the Bologna Declaration is “to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education” (<http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna.pdf>). The Bologna Declaration aims, in part, to reform the European system of higher education for the purpose of promoting the employability of European citizens.

Europeans, like Americans, are increasingly looking towards their institutions of higher learning to prepare citizens with skills and competencies necessary to enter a rapidly changing and evolving workforce. The Bologna Declaration represents a concerted effort to redefine the role of higher education and its impacts on contemporary society. The concept of *tuning* is relevant to this research study because *tuning* can be used to improve the quality of funeral service education.

According to Gaston (2010), the prominence of workforce development is a principal motivation of the 1999 [Bologna] declaration for European higher education (p. 88). Broadly speaking, this study sought to evaluate the extent to which the present ABFSE learning objectives are appropriately *tuned* to align with current death-care preferences in the United States.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Bologna Declaration, the perspectives of practitioners engaged in the active practice of funeral service served as the basis for this dissertation.

Survey Development Process

In keeping with the tuning approach, and in the context of the ABFSE funeral service education curriculum, a survey was designed to measure practitioners' perceptions of:

- a) the importance of each learning objective;
- b) their own experience of academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each learning objective; and
- c) the adequacy of each set of objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, for professional practice.

The initial version of the survey instrument was completed in February of 2011. On February 25, 2011, an application was filed with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Minnesota requesting that this research be exempt from IRB committee review, as described under the classification *Category 2 Exemptions: Surveys/Interviews, Standard Education Tests & Observations of Public Behavior*¹⁷. On March 3, 2011, The IRB granted approval to conduct this study as exempt research¹⁸.

¹⁷ See Appendix A

¹⁸ See Appendix B

Assessing Perception of the Importance of the Learning Objectives

To measure practitioners' perception of the importance of each of the 170 learning objectives, a set of 19 forced-choice scales was constructed, one for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. The principal variables of interest in this research, grouped according to curriculum content area, are presented in Table 3.

Contained within the 19 sets of forced-choice scales was each learning objective associated with that particular curriculum content area¹⁹. For example, there are 11 learning objectives associated with the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing. The forced-choice scale for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing therefore measured a total of 11 values of perceived importance, one value for each of the 11 learning objectives. Participants' perception of the importance of each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*somewhat important*), 3 (*important*), 4 (*very important*), and 5 (*extremely important*). Data values ranging from 1 to 5 were averaged to compute a participant's mean score for the perception of importance for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. Additionally, a sixth choice of (*no opinion*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*no opinion*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

¹⁹ Please refer to Appendix D, pp. 189-217, to observe how the forced-scales were formatted on the survey instrument.

*Table 3
Identification of Curriculum Content Areas, Principal Variable Names, and Principal Variable Types*

Curriculum Content Area	Principal Variable Name	Principal Variable Type
Accounting	Accounting – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Accounting – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Accounting – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Business Law	Business law – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Business law – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Business law – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Chemistry	Chemistry – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Chemistry – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Chemistry – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Communication Skills	Communication Skills – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Communication Skills – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Communication Skills – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Embalming	Embalming – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Embalming – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Embalming – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent

-- Table 3 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Principal Variable Name	Principal Variable Type
Ethics	Ethics – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Ethics – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Ethics – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Federal Trade Commission	Federal Trade Commission – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Federal Trade Commission – Mean Score preparation	Dependent
	Federal Trade Commission – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Funeral Directing	Funeral Directing – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Funeral Directing – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Funeral Directing – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Funeral Merchandising	Funeral Merchandising – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Funeral Merchandising – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Funeral Merchandising – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Funeral Service Law	Funeral Service Law – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Funeral Service Law – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Funeral Service Law – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent

-- Table 3 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Principal Variable Name	Principal Variable Type
Funeral Service Management	Funeral Service Management – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Funeral Service Management – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Funeral Service Management – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
History of Funeral Directing and Embalming	History of Funeral Directing and Embalming – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	History of Funeral Directing and Embalming – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	History of Funeral Directing and Embalming – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Human Anatomy	Human Anatomy – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Human Anatomy – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Human Anatomy – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent

-- Table 3 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Principal Variable Name	Principal Variable Type
Microbiology	Microbiology – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Microbiology – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Microbiology– Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Pathology	Pathology – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Pathology – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Pathology – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Restorative Art	Restorative Art – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Restorative Art – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Restorative Art – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Small Business Management	Small Business Management – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Small Business Management – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Small Business Management – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent
Sociology	Sociology – Mean Score Importance	Independent
	Sociology – Mean Score Preparation	Dependent
	Sociology – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Dependent

Assessing Perception of Academic Preparation

A second set of 19 forced-choice scales was constructed to measure practitioners' perception of their own academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives. Perception of academic preparation was also measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*no preparation*), 2 (*minimal preparation*), 3 (*good preparation*), 4 (*very good preparation*) and 5 (*excellent preparation*). Data values were averaged to compute a participant's mean score for the perception of preparation for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. Additionally, a sixth choice of (*can't remember/unable to answer*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*can't remember/unable to answer*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

Assessing Perception of the Adequacy of the Learning Objectives

A third set of 19 forced-choice scales was constructed to measure practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that each set of objectives was adequate for professional practice. Perception of adequacy was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Additionally, a sixth choice of (*no opinion*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*no opinion*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

Population Identification

In this research, the population of interest consisted of funeral service practitioners who:

- (a) had completed a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE);
- (b) held a valid United States state-issued license to practice funeral directing and/or embalming²⁰; and
- (c) had actively worked in funeral service in the United States in some capacity during the past 12 months prior to taking the survey.

The term *practitioner* is used to define the population of persons licensed to practice a) funeral directing and/or b) embalming. It is important to note that in some states (e.g., New York), a funeral director's license authorizes an individual to legally practice both funeral directing and embalming, and in other states (e.g., California) separate funeral director and embalmer licenses are required for an individual to practice either funeral directing and/or embalming. In contrast, the term *mortician* is used by some states (e.g., Minnesota) to identify an individual licensed to practice both funeral directing and embalming.

According to the National Funeral Directors Association's (NFDA) website (www.nfda.org), there are approximately 20,000 funeral homes in the United States. Based on a review of statistical data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, NFDA

²⁰ Unlicensed individuals who practice funeral directing and/or embalming in Colorado, the one state with no statutory provision for the licensing of funeral directors and/or embalmers, were allowed to participate in the survey.

reported that in 2008 there were 25,680 individuals employed as funeral directors, and 8,200 individuals employed as embalmers (<http://www.nfda.org/about-funeral-service/trends-and-statistics.html>). As has been previously discussed, Colorado does not require funeral directors to be licensed, and only in recent years have the majority of states begun to require that an aspirant for licensure as a funeral service practitioner take and pass the National Board Examination (NBE). It is unlikely, then, that every person who is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as being either a funeral director and/or an embalmer will hold a related license (e.g., Colorado practitioners) and/or have taken the National Board Examination. The size of the population of funeral service practitioners in the United States that meet the parameters of this study is therefore estimated to range from approximately 20,000 to 33,880 persons.

Pilot Testing

Initial pilot-testing of the survey instrument was conducted in April, 2011, and consisted of a convenience sample of 24 persons, including funeral service practitioners, funeral service educators, educators from non-funeral service disciplines, and a consumer advocate, all of whom reside in different regions of the United States. Participants were asked to report their perceptions of importance and academic preparation for each of the 170 learning objectives, and also answer questions about their perceptions of the adequacy of the curriculum, their academic preparation in general, and personal demographic information. Participants were also asked to report their overall impression of the survey instrument, and to suggest ways

of improving its design. The primary concern raised by participants during the piloting process was that the survey, which contained over 350 questions, took too long to complete. Whereas 23 pilot participants viewed the first page of the survey, only 5 pilot participants continued in the survey to page 42, which was the exit page.

An analysis of survey completion time data indicated that participants began to drop out of the survey after about 15 minutes. The goal of the survey revision process, therefore, was to create a survey instrument that could be completed in approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The process of creating a revised survey instrument with fewer questions posed design challenges because Inquisite software, which was used to create the survey, had programming limitations. It was not possible, for example, to randomly assign a specific number of learning objectives to each participant. Instead, it was necessary to create three different versions of the survey, each of which was contained approximately one-third of the 170 learning objectives.

Each of the three versions of the revised survey was identical *except* for the sets of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, which each participant was asked to evaluate. A random numbers generator was initially used to assign each of the 19 curriculum content areas and its related objectives to one of the three versions of the survey. Unfortunately, due to chance one version of the survey was found to have considerably more than one-third of the learning objectives, and another version of the survey, considerably fewer. This problem came up because the number of learning objectives appearing in each curriculum content area, something which is determined by the members serving on the ABFSE Curriculum Committee,

varies from 4 (Communication Skills, Ethics, Federal Trade Commission, and Pathology) to 20 (Small Business Management). In order to create three versions of the survey with approximately the same number of objectives in each version (i.e. $n \approx 57$), it was necessary to re-assign two of the 19 sets of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, to survey versions different from those initially determined by chance. A random numbers generator was then used to a) determine the order in which each set of learning objectives would appear on each version of the survey, and b) assign each version of the survey to one calendar month of the year. Participants were directed into one of the three different versions of the survey based on their reported month of birth. The curriculum content areas appearing in each version of the survey are presented in Table 4.

By creating three shorter versions of the survey, each of which contained approximately one-third of the learning objectives, the completion time of the re-designed survey was estimated to be approximately 15 to 20 minutes, based on a review of survey completion time data gathered from the first round of pilot testing. Following the redesign of the survey instrument, a second round of pilot testing occurred. A convenience sample of four individuals was asked to review the revised survey. Based on the reviewers' feedback, minor changes were made to the presentation of some survey questions, which were perceived to be either unclear or ambiguously worded. No other changes were made to the survey following the revisions suggested by the participants involved with the second round

Table 4

Curriculum Content Area Assignments According to Survey Version

Survey Version	Curriculum Content Area	Number of Objectives
1	Human Anatomy	15
1	Communication Skills	4
1	Embalming	18
1	Business Law	9
1	Funeral Directing	11
		Total 57
2	Funeral Service Psychology	13
2	Restorative Art	12
2	Microbiology	6
2	Sociology	6
2	Funeral Service Management	7
2	Accounting	13
		Total 57
3	Pathology	4
3	Chemistry	7
3	Small Business Management	20
3	Funeral Service Law	5
3	Ethics	4
3	Federal Trade Commission	4
3	Funeral Service Merchandising	7
3	History of Funeral Directing and Embalming	5
		Total 56

of pilot testing. The final edition of the survey, which consisted of three versions as discussed above, was completed in November of 2011, and appears in Appendix D.

Sampling Procedures

In order to insure a broad sampling of funeral service practitioners from across the United States, assistance in the distribution of the survey instrument was solicited from the following funeral service professional organizations, regulatory agencies and industry publications:

- All funeral service regulatory boards in the United States ($n = 50$)
- All state professional funeral service associations in the United States ($n = 51$ ²¹)
- Cremation Association of North America (CANA)
- Editor of ConnectingDirectors.com²²
- Editor of the *Memorial Business Journal*
- Editor of *Mortuary Management* magazine
- International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association (ICCFA)
- Jewish Funeral Directors of America (JFDA)
- National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA)
- National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association (NFDMA)
- Selected Independent Funeral Homes (SIFH)

Each of the aforementioned funeral service professional organizations, regulatory agencies, and trade publications was a potential gateway for accessing

²¹ Washington, D.C. has its own professional association.

²² ConnectingDirectors.com is an online daily funeral industry publication that is distributed to a population of approximately 15,000 funeral professionals world-wide.

funeral service practitioners who meet the selection criteria for participation in this study. On December 1, 2011, e-mail messages were sent to contact persons associated with each of these professional organizations, regulatory agencies, and trade publications listed above requesting that they forward information about this research study to individuals in their e-mail databases. A copy of the e-mail message sent to these contact persons appears in Appendix C. Representatives from each of these professional organizations, regulatory agencies, and trade publications were also asked to post information about this research on their website, if a) a website existed and b) the posting of the message was permissible under their operational policies. The survey was opened on December 1, 2011, and closed on January 2, 2012²³

Demographics of Survey Participants

Between December 1, 2011, and January 2, 2012, 889 prospective participants entered the screening portion of the survey, which posed questions to determine eligibility to participate in this research. Of these 889 prospective participants, 331 were eligible to complete the survey because they a) had completed a funeral service education program accredited by the ABFSE; b) during the 12 months prior to taking the survey they were employed by, and/or derived income from, work at a funeral establishment in the United States that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and services to the public; and c) at the time they took the survey, they held a valid United

²³ Because a) December 31, 2011 fell on a Sunday and b) Monday January 1, 2012 was a legal holiday, there was no one at the Office of Measurement Services available to close the survey until the morning of Tuesday, January 2, 2012.

States state-issued license to practice funeral directing and/or embalming. Of the 331 eligible participants who were directed into the survey²⁴, 240 answered either all, or almost all, of the questions. Only data from the 240 participants who answered either all, or almost all, of the survey questions were used for the analyses in this research. The overwhelming majority of participants had taken and passed both the Funeral Service Arts and Funeral Service Science sections of the National Board Examination of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards. Within the population of 240 practitioners who participated in this research, a) 93.3% ($n = 224$) had taken, and b) 90.0 % ($n = 216$) had passed, the Funeral Service Arts Section of the National Board Examination. Likewise, a) 92.5% ($n = 222$) had taken, and b) 88.3% ($n = 212$) had passed the Funeral Service Sciences section of the National Board Examination.

Select demographic characteristics of these 240 participants, grouped according to gender, are presented in Table 5.

²⁴ Ineligible individuals were directed out of the survey.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Participants: College Education, Race, and Ethnicity by Gender

	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	194	81.5	44	18.5
Years of college education completed				
One year	3	1.6	0	0.0
Two years	15	8.1	1	2.3
Three years	29	15.7	4	9.1
Four years	53	28.6	13	29.5
Five or more years	85	45.9	26	59.1
Type of institution where funeral service education was completed	194	81.5	44	18.5
Private, single-purpose	85	35.7	10	22.7
Private, offering multiple degree programs	11	5.7	2	4.5
Public	98	50.5	32	72.7
Ethnicity	191	81.6	43	18.4
Hispanic	0	0.0	2	4.7
Not Hispanic	191	100.0	41	95.3

-- Table 5 Continues --

	Gender			
	<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
	194	81.5	44	18.5
Race	192	81.4	44	18.6
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.5	1	2.3
Asian	0	0.0	0	0.0
Black or African American	0	0.0	2	4.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0	0	0.0
White	191	99.5	41	93.2

Note. Not all *n* values sum to 240 because some participants declined to answer all of the demographic questions.

To determine their geographic background, participants were asked to indicate the one state in which they had performed the majority of their work in funeral service during the past 12 months. As noted in Table 6, participants represented 38 states and the District of Columbia.

Table 6

Primary State of Professional Practice During the Past 12 Months

State	<i>N</i>	%
Arizona	3	1.3
Arkansas	1	0.4
California	6	2.5
Colorado	4	1.7
District of Columbia	1	0.4
Florida	10	4.2
Georgia	1	0.4
Idaho	9	3.8
Illinois	3	1.3
Indiana	4	1.7
Iowa	8	3.4
Kentucky	2	0.8
Maine	1	0.4
Massachusetts	4	1.7
Michigan	6	2.5
Minnesota	66	27.7
Mississippi	1	0.4
Missouri	1	0.4
Montana	1	0.4
Nebraska	2	0.8
Nevada	1	0.4
New Jersey	4	1.7
New Mexico	1	0.4
New York	7	2.9
North Carolina	2	0.8
North Dakota	11	4.6
Ohio	4	1.7
Oregon	19	8.0
Pennsylvania	7	2.9

--Table 6 Continues --

State	<i>n</i>	%
South Carolina	1	0.4
South Dakota	2	0.8
Tennessee	21	8.8
Texas	4	1.7
Utah	4	1.7
Virginia	5	2.1
Washington	4	1.7
West Virginia	1	0.4
Wisconsin	5	2.1
Wyoming	1	0.4
Total	238	100.0

Note. Two participants did not indicate the primary state in which they practice funeral service.

The demographic data also indicated that it was common for participants to hold more than one license to practice mortuary science. As previously discussed, some states have separate funeral director and embalmer licenses, whereas other states have a combined funeral director and embalmer license. Participants were asked to indicate the number of licenses they hold to practice a) both funeral directing and embalming (i.e. a “combined license”), b) only funeral directing, and c) only embalming. The number and percentage of licenses held by participants, grouped according to license type, is presented in Table 7.

The number of year(s) participants reported they had worked in funeral service ranged from one to 49. The most frequently observed number of years worked in funeral service were observed for the values of 7 years ($n = 12$), 35 years ($n = 11$), 15 years ($n = 10$). The average number of years worked in funeral service was 20.71 ($SD = 12.6$). With respect to management responsibilities, 130 participants

(54.2%) indicated that they managed a funeral establishment, while 110 (45.8%) indicated they did not.

Table 7

Number and Type of Licenses Held by Survey Participants (*Percentages in Parentheses*)

Number of Licenses	Type of License					
	Funeral Director-only		Embalmer-only		Combined Funeral Director and Embalmer	
0	185	(77.1)	195	(81.3)	34	(14.2)
1	48	(20.0)	42	(17.5)	135	(56.3)
2	6	(2.5)	3	(1.3)	53	(22.1)
3	1	(0.4)	0		13	(5.4)
4	0		0		3	(1.3)
5	0		0		2	(0.8)
Total	240	(100.0)	240	(100.0)	240	(100.0)

Out of concern that participants might be reluctant to state their age, participants were instead asked to report their year of birth. Birth years range from 1938 to 1998, with the largest percentage observed for the year 1958 ($n = 12$). Additionally, 50.9% of participants ($n = 119$) reported being born in the 24-year time span between 1938 and 1962. The remaining 49.1% of participants ($n = 115$) were born between 1963 and 1988. Participation in this research by birth year was greatest between the modal years of 1947 and 1982 ($n = 206$). Because some participants born in December might have had a birthday after they completed the survey, it was not possible to be certain that calculated age values for participants born in December

would be accurate. Descriptive statistics with respect to the age of participants were therefore not calculated.

Data Collection Protocols

The survey instrument used in this research was made available to participants only in an online format; no hardcopy versions were distributed. Participants were provided access to the survey by clicking on a hyperlink that directed them to the Internet website upon which the survey was uploaded. Participants were able to complete the survey in more than one sitting by “bookmarking” the survey link in their Internet web browser. Neither access codes nor passwords were required for participants to complete the survey, and no personally identifiable information (such as the participant’s name, e-mail address, IP address of the device on which the survey was completed, etc.) was collected in this research.

Survey design and data-gathering assistance was provided by the Office of Measurement Services (OMS) at the University of Minnesota. *Inquisite* brand software was used by OMS employees to design the survey instrument and collect data from participants. The Office of Measurement Services was responsible for setting up the Internet website upon which the survey instrument was uploaded during the process of data collection, and OMS also provided secure data collection and storage services for this research. Survey responses were downloaded by OMS staff to OMS computers, and saved in both Microsoft Excel and SPSS formats. The Excel and SPSS data files were then e-mailed by OMS staff to principal investigator (PI) Michael LuBrant, who conducted the analyses in this research. To safeguard the

security of the data gathered from the survey, a University of Minnesota x500 identification code, known only to the researcher, was required to gain access to the data files.

Access to the data gathered from this study was limited to the following persons and/or entities: The principal investigator (PI), who is doctoral candidate Michael LuBrant; research staff at the University of Minnesota's Office of Measurement services; and duly authorized University of Minnesota computer systems administrative personnel. Data gathered from this study were stored on an encrypted, password-protected computer owned by the University of Minnesota. Data files were also uploaded onto a secure, encrypted, password-protected computer server maintained by the University of Minnesota. Additionally, a copy of the data set was saved on a password-protected, encrypted flash drive, which is the personal property of the principal investigator. The data set will be kept indefinitely.

Limitations and Delimitations

According to Rudestam and Newton (2007) "delimitations imply limitations in the research design that you have imposed deliberately. These delimitations usually restrict the populations to which the results of the study can be generalized" (p. 105). Delimitations in this research study have been established for the purpose of gathering data from a specific population of funeral service practitioners. As was discussed earlier in Chapter 2, in this research the population of interest consisted of funeral service practitioners who:

- (a) have completed a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE);
- (b) hold a valid United States state-issued license to practice funeral directing and/or embalming; and
- (c) have actively worked in funeral service in the United States in some capacity during the past 12 months.

Prospective practitioners who did not meet these selection criteria were not eligible to participate in this study. Of note, the reason for the eligibility requirement that practitioners must have worked in funeral service in some capacity within the past 12 months was to insure that data gathered in this study would be based upon the perception of contemporary workforce requirements. It was assumed that participants who had worked in funeral service in some capacity within the past 12 months would be better able to provide meaningful responses to the survey questions than would participants who had not worked in funeral service in some capacity for more than a year.

This research also excluded individuals other than ABFSE-institution graduates who assist families in pre-planning funeral and memorial services. Often holding the title of “*pre-need counselors*,” these individuals typically are neither ABFSE-institution graduates nor licensed funeral directors. Pre-need counselors do, however, offer for sale to the general public funeral goods and services in advance of death. When the death of a pre-need client occurs, most state laws, however, require that the delivery of at-need funeral services be performed by a licensed funeral

director, which is why pre-need counselors were excluded from this research.

Additionally, cemeterians were excluded from this research for the same reasons as discussed with preneed counselors. Interestingly, there were cemeterians excluded from participation in the survey who requested the results once they are published.

Rudestam and Newton (2007) define limitations as “restrictions in the study over which you have no control” (p. 105). As previously discussed, professional organizations and state licensing agencies were contacted with the request that they forward information about this research, along with the link to open the survey, to individuals in the e-mail data bases. Whereas some licensing agencies were able to honor this request, many others were not – either because their e-mail usage policies prohibited them from doing so, or they simply did not respond to requests for assistance with this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of an investigation of practitioners' perceptions of the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. First is presented a discussion of the three preliminary analyses conducted to determine if differences in sample demographics pertaining to a) gender, b) year in which academic requirements were completed, and c) primary state of professional practice had a statistically significant effect on the 57 principal variables of interest. Next is a discussion of the perceived importance of the ABFSE learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Data measuring the perception of adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to the 19 curriculum content areas outlined in Chapter 2, are then presented. Descriptive statistics, including the number of cases, mean scores, and standard deviations are reported for a) the independent variables of perceived importance for each set of learning objectives, b) the dependent variables of perceived preparation for each set of learning objectives, and c) the dependent variables of perceived adequacy for each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, respectively.

The chapter continues with an analysis of correlation coefficients for the perception of importance and adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area. Presented next is an analysis of correlation coefficients for the perception of importance and preparation of the ABFSE learning

objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area. Results of the analysis of correlation coefficients for the perception of adequacy and academic preparation for mastering the learning objectives, likewise grouped according to curriculum content area, are then presented. The chapter continues with the results of statistical tests assessing practitioners' perceptions of their preparation to take National Board Examination (NBE).

Next, the results of a one-way ANOVA test to determine the extent to which perceptions of preparation to take the NBE, compared across institutional types, are discussed. An analysis of data assessing the extent to which practitioners perceive they possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer at the completion of the funeral service education program is then presented. The chapter continues with an analysis of reported annual income from work in funeral service, across gender and employment status as either a funeral home manager, or non-manager. The chapter concludes with a presentation of qualitative data gathered from an opened-ended question regarding practitioners' perception of ways to improve funeral service education offered at education programs accredited by the ABFSE.

Preliminary Data Analyses

As previously noted in Table 5, male participants constituted a significantly larger percentage of the sample population participating in this research than did females: 81.5% versus 18.5%, respectively. Prior to conducting the statistical tests required to address the 15 research questions presented at the end of Chapter 2, a

series of 57 independent samples t-tests (2-tailed) were conducted to compare the means of the 19 independent and 38 dependent variables, grouped according to gender. The purpose of conducting these 57 t-tests was to determine if there were statistically significant mean differences between male and female participants with respect to a) their perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives, b) their perception of the academic preparation they experienced for the purpose of mastering each set of learning objectives, and c) their perception of adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, respectively, for the contemporary practice of funeral service.

The t-tests indicated no statistically significant mean differences for both a) the 19 independent variables which measured the perception importance of each set of learning objectives, and b) the 19 independent variables which measured the perception of adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, respectively, for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Of the 19 dependent variables related to the perception of academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, statistically significant mean differences were observed for two variables. For the dependent variable (Sociology – Mean Score Preparation), the mean score for males (with standard deviations in parentheses) was lower than for females: 2.86 (.846), 3.48 (1.053), respectively, where $t(63) = -2.136$, $p = .037$. For the dependent variable (Funeral Service Merchandising – Mean Score Preparation), the mean score for males (with standard deviations in parentheses) was

higher than for females: 2.94 (1.052), 2.46 (.566), respectively, where $t(74) = 2.169$, $p = .033$. Based on these results, when conducting the analyses related to the primary research questions, the decision was made not to reduce the sample size of male participants, even though male participants outnumbered female participants by a ratio of approximately 4:1.

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, in 2004 the ABFSE implemented a policy requiring all students at ABFSE-accredited programs take the NBE as a requirement for gradation. As will be discussed later this chapter, it was hypothesized that there might be difference in the perception of academic preparation depending on whether practitioners pursued their funeral service education before or after this policy was implemented in 2004. Descriptive statistics indicated that participants who completed their academic program between the years 1962 and 2003 constituted a significantly larger percentage of the sample population participating in this research than did participants who completed their academic program between the years 2004 and 2011: 78% ($n = 189$) versus 21% ($n = 50$), respectively²⁵.

A new grouping variable (Year Completed Funeral Service Education Program) was therefore created where a) level one identified participants who completed their funeral service education program between 1962 and 2003 and b) level two identified participants who completed their funeral service education between 2004 and 2011. A series of 57 independent samples t-tests (2-tailed) were conducted to compare the means of the 19 independent and 38 dependent variables to

²⁵ One participant did not indicate the year they completed their funeral service education program.

determine if there were statistically significant mean differences between the two groups of participants with respect to a) their perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, b) their perception of the academic preparation they received for the purpose of mastering each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, and c) their perception of adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, for the contemporary practice of funeral service.

The results of the t-tests showed mean differences for seven (12.3%) of the 57 variables, as noted in Table 8. Each of the means for the seven variables presented in Table 8 was significantly higher for participants who completed their funeral service education program between 2004 and 2011 than for participants completed their funeral service education program between 1962 and 2003. There were, however, no statistically significant mean differences for the remaining 50 principal variables evaluated in this study. Based on these results, when conducting the analyses related to the research questions presented later in this chapter, the decision was made not to reduce the sample size of the participants who completed their program between 1962 and 2003, even though participants who completed their academic program during the time period of 1962 to 2003 outnumbered participants who completed their

Table 8

Principal Variables Having Significant Differences in Value When Grouped According to Participant's Program Completion Time Period

Variable	Program Completion Time Period	<i>n</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Business Law – Mean Score preparation	1962-2003	78	3.10	1.03	-2.23	93	.03
	2004-2011	17	3.70	.91			
Funeral Service Management – Mean Score Preparation	1962-2003	52	2.60	.86	-2.20	64	.03
	2004-2011	14	3.15	.73			
Microbiology – Adequacy for Professional Practice	1962-2003	51	3.53	.95	-2.27	31	.03*
	2004-2011	13	4.00	.58			
Restorative Art – Adequacy for Professional Practice	1962-2003	51	3.35	.96	-3.93	33	<i>p</i> < .001*
	2004-2011	13	4.15	.56			

--Table 8 Continues --

Variable	Program Completion Time Period	<i>n</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Restorative Art Mean Score Preparation	1962-2003	52	3.38	.80	-2.60	63	.01
	2004-2011	13	4.00	.63			
Sociology – Adequacy for Professional Practice	1962-2003	49	3.14	.98	-2.51	61	.02
	2004-2011	14	3.86	.77			
Sociology – Mean Score Preparation	1962-2003	51	2.79	.85	-3.19	63	.00
	2004-2011	14	3.61	.85			

Note. * Equal variances not assumed.

academic program during the time period of 2003 to 2011 by a ratio of approximately 4:1.

As previously discussed in Chapter 3 and noted in Table 9, 66 (27.7%) of the 240 participants of the sample population participating in this research practice mortuary science primarily in Minnesota²⁶. The next highest rate of participation by state was observed for practitioners working primarily in the state of Tennessee (n = 21)²⁷. For the majority of states, however, participation rates were much lower, typically ranging from one to 10 practitioners. Before proceeding with the statistical tests used to address the 14 primary research questions presented in Chapter 2, a series of 57 independent samples t-tests (2-tailed) was conducted to compare the means of the 19 independent variables and 38 dependent variables, grouped according to whether the participant worked primarily in Minnesota, or a state other than Minnesota. The purpose of running these 57 t-tests was to determine if there were statistically significant mean differences between Minnesota and Non-Minnesota participants with respect to a) their perception of the importance of each set of learning objectives, b) their perception of the academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each set of learning objectives, and c) their perception of adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, respectively,

²⁶ It should be noted that the author of this dissertation serves as the director of the program of mortuary science at the University of Minnesota, personally knows many Minnesota morticians, and the majority of Minnesota morticians graduated from the program of mortuary science at the University of Minnesota.

²⁷ E-mail addresses of mortuary science practitioners in Tennessee are public data; as such, it was possible to e-mail survey information directly to practitioners, which might account for the high level of participation.

for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Of the 57 t-tests performed, statistically significant mean differences were observed for the following five variables, as noted in Table 9:

Table 9

Principal Variables Having Significant Differences in Value when Grouped According to Participant's Primary State of Professional Practice – Minnesota or State other than Minnesota

Variable	State	<i>n</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Communication Skills – Mean Score Importance	Minnesota	31	4.73	.44	2.05	79	.04*
	Not Minnesota	65	4.51	.62			
Ethics – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Minnesota	19	4.16	.96	2.23	42	.03*
	Not Minnesota	56	3.54	1.30			
Funeral Service Law – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Minnesota	19	4.21	.71	2.18	74	.032
	Not Minnesota	57	3.68	.97			
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling – Mean Score Preparation	Minnesota	16	3.14	.94	2.38	65	.02
	Not Minnesota	51	2.55	.85			

-- Table 9 Continues --

Variable	State	<i>n</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Human Anatomy – Adequacy for Professional Practice	Minnesota	31	3.65	1.11	-2.47	42	.02*
	Not Minnesota	65	4.19	.71			

Note. * Equal variances not assumed.

As noted in Table 9, statistically significant differences between Minnesota verses non-Minnesota participants were observed for only five of the 57 principal variables. Based on these results, when conducting the analyses related to the primary research questions presented later in this chapter, the decision was made not to reduce the sample size of non-Minnesota participants, even though Minnesota participants made up the majority of the population from a single state who participated in this research.

Presentation of the Results of the Research Questions

Research question 1: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive the ABFSE learning objectives are important to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

Practitioners' perception of the importance of each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*somewhat important*), 3 (*important*), 4 (*very important*), and 5 (*extremely important*). A mean score of perceived importance was computed for each of the 170 learning objectives. In order to clearly identify those learning objectives generally perceived by practitioners as being either (*not important*) or (*somewhat important*), only those learning objectives with a mean score of perceived importance of < 3 are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Perception of Importance: Learning Objectives with a Mean Score < 3

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Accounting	Understand the three basic depreciation methods	66	2.97	1.08
	Use the three basic inventory costing methods	66	2.95	1.09
Chemistry	Explain selected facts of general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, and embalming chemistry	77	2.99	1.06
	Define organic chemistry and describe the characteristics of organic compounds as they relate to embalming chemistry	76	2.93	1.26
	Compare and contrast the essential characteristics of carbohydrates, lipids, and proteins	77	2.64	1.29
Human Anatomy	Identify the major organs of the respiratory system and trace the flow of air during inhalation and exhalation. Differentiate between internal and external respiration	96	2.89	1.26
	Identify the location and function of selected endocrine structures	94	2.78	1.15
	Identify organs of the urinary system and trace the flow of urine through the system	95	2.66	1.26
	Discuss the major structures and subdivisions of the nervous system	95	2.60	1.20
	Identify the major organs of the male and female reproductive systems	95	2.39	1.22

-- Table 10 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Microbiology	Interpret host-parasite relationships and interactions, and the requirements of successful parasitism	64	2.97	1.18
Small Business Management	Identify the purpose of the Small Business Administration (SBA)	75	2.88	1.30

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 170 ABFSE learning objectives are distributed across 19 curriculum content areas. Table 10 is arranged so that the curriculum content areas appearing in the left column are presented in alphabetical order, respectively. Frequency statistics appearing in Table 10 show that five of the 19 curriculum content areas contained objectives with a mean score of perceived importance < 3 . In cases where a particular curriculum content area contained more than one objective with a mean score of perceived importance < 3 , the objectives are presented with the highest perceived mean score stated first, followed by the remaining objectives ordered by mean score, from highest to lowest, respectively.

As noted in Table 10, mean scores for the measurement of perceived importance < 3 were observed for 12 of the 170 learning objectives, identified within the five curriculum content areas of a) Accounting ($n = 2$), b) Chemistry ($n = 3$), c) Human Anatomy ($n = 5$), d) Microbiology ($n = 1$), and e) Small Business Management ($n = 1$). Within the curriculum content area of Microbiology, one objective had a mean score of 2.97; within the curriculum content area of Small Business Management, one objective had a mean score of 2.88.

The curriculum content area with the largest number of objectives having a mean score of perceived importance < 3 was Human Anatomy, where five objectives were observed to have mean scores ranging from 2.89 to 2.39. Within the curriculum content area of Chemistry, three objectives had a mean score of perceived importance < 3 , with scores ranging from 2.99 to 2.64. Within the curriculum content area of Accounting, two objectives had a mean score of perceived importance < 3 , with

scores ranging from 2.97 to 2.95. Significantly, 158 of the 170 learning objectives were measured to have a perceived mean score of importance ≥ 3 .

Research question 2: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive the objectives for each of the 19 ABFSE discipline-specific curriculum content outlines as adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service?

Following the presentation of the ABFSE learning objectives, participants were asked the following question: *Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of [name of subject area] presented on the previous page(s) of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe than a(n) [name of subject area] curriculum based on the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service"* The perception of adequacy was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). A mean score of agreement with the perception of adequacy for each of the 19 curriculum content areas appears in Table 11. The results in Table 11 are ordered from highest mean score (top) to lowest mean score (bottom), respectively. The highest mean score ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.90$) was observed for the learning objectives related to the Federal Trade Commission; the lowest mean score ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.05$) pertains to learning objectives for Funeral Directing.

Table 11

Perception of Adequacy of the ABFSE Learning Objectives Grouped According to Curriculum Content Area

Curriculum Content Area	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Federal Trade Commission	72	4.10	0.90
Human Anatomy	96	4.01	0.89
Embalming	95	3.92	0.85
Funeral Service Law	76	3.82	0.93
History of Funeral Directing and Embalming	75	3.77	0.91
Pathology	76	3.76	0.10
Ethics	75	3.69	1.24
Microbiology	65	3.62	0.90
Chemistry	76	3.61	0.83
Business Law	94	3.53	0.97
Restorative Art	65	3.51	0.94
Funeral Service Merchandising	75	3.33	1.04
Sociology	64	3.30	0.97
Communication	94	3.26	1.11
Funeral Service Management	66	3.08	0.92
Accounting	65	3.03	1.05
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	62	2.94	1.07
Small Business Management	74	2.81	1.25
Funeral Directing	95	2.42	1.05

As noted in Table 11, the measurement of perceived adequacy for 16 of the 19 sets of ABFSE learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, was ≥ 3 . The measurement of perceived adequacy < 3 was observed for the curriculum content areas of a) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, b) Small Business Management, and c) Funeral Directing, where the means (with standard deviations on parentheses) were 2.94 (1.07), 2.81 (1.25), and 2.42 (1.05), respectively. The lowest mean score of perceived adequacy was observed for the objectives contained within the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing.

Research question 3: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared to master each of the ABFSE learning objectives by the funeral service education program they completed?

Practitioners' perception of academic preparation was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*no preparation*), 2 (*minimal preparation*), 3 (*good preparation*), 4 (*very good preparation*) and 5 (*excellent preparation*). A mean score of perceived preparation was computed for each of the 170 learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area. In order to clearly identify those learning objectives for which practitioners generally perceived either (*no preparation*) or (*minimal preparation*), descriptive statistics are reported only for those learning objectives with a mean score of perceived preparation < 3, as noted in Table 12.

Table 12 is arranged so that the curriculum content areas presented in the left column appear in alphabetical order, respectively. As noted in Table 12, 10 of the 19 curriculum content areas contained objectives with a mean score of perceived preparation < 3. In cases where a particular curriculum content area contained more than one objective with a mean score of perceived perception < 3, the objective with the highest perceived mean score is presented first, followed the remaining objectives, ordered by mean score, from highest to lowest, respectively. In cases where two objectives within the same curriculum content area have the same mean score, the objectives are presented in alphabetical order.

Table 12

Perception of Preparation: Learning Objectives with a Mean Score < 3

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Accounting	Understand the fundamental accounting equation	67	2.84	0.90
	Understand the chart of accounts and its use	67	2.79	0.90
	Understand the difference between the cash and the accrual basis of accounting	67	2.71	0.91
	Reconcile a bank statement	66	2.70	0.98
	Recognize which accounts appear on each financial statement	65	2.69	0.90
	Compute simple interest calculations	63	2.65	1.03
	Understand the use of the financial statements	66	2.65	0.92
	Compute cash discounts	65	2.60	1.00
	Develop an understanding of payroll accounting concepts	66	2.55	0.96
	Use the three basic inventory costing methods	66	2.53	1.01
	Understand how accounting methods are used to write-off bad debts	64	2.47	1.01
	Develop an accounting proficiency in order to understand Financial statement analysis	65	2.46	0.97
	Understand the three basic depreciation methods	64	2.45	1.01

-- Table 12 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Business Law	Identify the characteristics related to bailments	89	2.88	1.18
Communication Skills	Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines	95	2.94	1.18
Funeral Directing	Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures	94	2.93	1.12
	Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains	95	2.91	1.27
	Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals	96	2.83	1.25
Funeral Service Management	Identify the goals and objectives of funeral service management	65	2.89	0.95
	Demonstrate knowledge of operational procedures specific to funeral service	67	2.85	0.91
	Describe management functions as they relate to funeral service	67	2.79	0.91
	Identify areas of management and discuss their significance	66	2.77	0.97
	Discuss concepts of funeral service management as related to client-families, community, personnel (staff), and professional associates	66	2.74	0.93
	Identify trends in funeral service	66	2.74	1.01
	Discuss procedures related to disaster management	65	2.23	0.93

-- Table 12 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Funeral Service Merchandising	Demonstrate knowledge of effective methods of merchandise display	77	2.87	1.07
	Demonstrate conceptual and practical knowledge of factors and strategies for determining the firm's product mix	77	2.83	1.11
	Differentiate between methods of price determination and price quotation	77	2.79	1.12
	Utilize techniques for the effective presentation of merchandise and services	77	2.77	1.10
	Discuss the importance of monitoring and evaluating sales	76	2.47	1.18
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	Explain how grief affects the functioning family	67	2.73	1.01
	Describe issues relating to children and death	66	2.65	1.14
	Recognize the difference between grief counseling and grief therapy and identify the limitations for the funeral director	66	2.53	1.07
	Recognize and understand their personal resources for coping with loss	66	2.52	1.04
	Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques and apply them to funeral service	66	2.41	1.05
	Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate Community resources	67	2.40	1.09
	Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling	66	2.33	1.00
	Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor	66	2.30	0.99

-- Table 12 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling (<i>con't</i>)	Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities in the community	66	2.21	1.02
History of Funeral Directing and Embalming	Understand the development of inter-professional relationships and responsibilities	77	2.97	1.17
Small Business Management	Define and discuss the role of small business in the economy	77	2.69	1.10
	Describe the composition of small business	75	2.55	1.08
	Discuss the future trends of small business	76	2.55	1.17
	Discuss the role of a small business as an economic contributor to society	75	2.47	1.20
	Understand the elements of sound business management	76	2.47	1.06
	Discuss the risks and problems involved with opening a small business	75	2.39	1.18
	Understand how federal legislation impacts small business	74	2.32	1.18
	Explain why management in a small business is more demanding than in a large firm	76	2.30	1.21
	Discuss the importance of inventory procurement and control	74	2.28	1.09
	Describe the human resource requirements needed for success in small business	73	2.27	1.10

-- Table 12 Continues --

Curriculum Content Area	Learning Objective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Small Business Management (<i>con't</i>)	Identify the purpose of the Small Business Administration (SBA)	75	2.25	1.20
	Identify ways in which the odds for survival among small business firms can be improved	76	2.25	1.12
	Discuss the importance of location in the success of a small business	76	2.24	1.12
	Explain how credit and collection programs are managed	75	2.23	1.13
	Explain the importance of managing capital assets	73	2.23	1.16
	Explain the factors involved in buying/selling an established business	75	2.20	1.04
	Identify potential computer uses and applications	76	2.18	1.14
	Discuss methods of estimating capital needs and types of financing available	75	2.11	1.10
	Explain how to reduce risk through insurance	74	2.09	1.13
	Explain the use of application software packages in the solving of funeral service business problems	77	1.99	1.14
	Sociology	Identify the family governing systems found in our society	64	2.91
Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure		64	2.86	0.89
Identify with the different types of family structures		65	2.86	0.97

As noted in Table 12, mean scores for the measurement of perceived preparation < 3 were observed for 63 of the 170 learning objectives. These 63 learning objectives were contained within the curriculum content areas of a) Accounting ($n = 13$), b) Business Law ($n = 1$), c) Communication Skills ($n = 1$), d) Funeral Directing ($n = 3$), e) Funeral Service Management ($n = 7$), f) Funeral Service Merchandising ($n = 5$), g) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling ($n = 9$), h) History of Funeral Directing and Embalming ($n = 1$), i) Small Business Management ($n = 20$), and j) Sociology ($n = 3$). There were three curriculum content areas which contained only one objective with a perceived mean preparation score < 3 ; they were a) Business Law, b) Communication Skills, and c) History of Funeral Directing and Embalming. The means of these three curriculum content areas (with standard deviations in parentheses) were 2.88 (1.18), 2.94 (1.18) and 2.97 (1.17), respectively. In contrast, every objective contained within the curriculum content areas of a) Accounting²⁸ and b) Small Business Management had a mean score for perceived preparation < 3 . The means (with standard deviations in parentheses) for the objectives in accounting ranged from 2.84 (0.90) to 2.45 (1.01); means (with standard deviations in parentheses) for the objectives in Small Business Management ranged from 2.69 (1.10) to 1.99 (1.14).

²⁸ The Accounting objectives presented on the survey were approved by the ABFSE in April, 2011. Prior to this time, there were different Accounting objectives, which might explain why the measurement of the perception of preparation is so low.

Research question 4: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the importance and adequacy related to each set of learning objectives?

Practitioners' perception of the importance of each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*somewhat important*), 3 (*important*), 4 (*very important*), and 5 (*extremely important*). Practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, was measured on a scale that considered the extent to which the practitioner agreed each group of learning objectives was adequate for professional practice. The scale of agreement ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). A new independent variable, (Mean Score Importance) was created by averaging each participant's perception of importance of each learning objective, grouped according to curriculum content area. It was hypothesized that the correlation between the 19 independent variables of (Mean Score Importance) and the 19 dependent variables of (Adequacy) would be positive. The new variables (Mean Score Importance) and (Adequacy) were used to conduct a series of 19 one-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation statistics. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

$H_0: \rho \leq 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of importance and adequacy is not positive)

$H_1: \rho > 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of importance and adequacy is positive)

As noted in Table 13, four of the 19 correlations tested were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed), and three were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed). The null hypotheses of no positive correlation between the 19 independent variables of (Mean Score Importance) and the 19 dependent variables of (Adequacy) were rejected for the six curriculum content areas of a) Chemistry, b) Ethics c) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, d) History of Funeral Directing and Embalming, e) Human anatomy, and f) Pathology. One statistically significant negative correlation was observed for the curriculum content area of Communication Skills, meaning that as the measurement of practitioners' perception of the importance of the ABFSE learning objectives related to Communication Skills increased, their perception of the adequacy of the Communication Skills objectives for professional practice decreased. Thirteen of the 19 of the correlations tested were not statistically significant.

Research question 5: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of importance and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?

Practitioners' perception of the importance of each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*somewhat important*), 3 (*important*), 4 (*very important*), and 5 (*extremely important*). The perception of academic preparation was measured on a

Table 13

Correlation Analysis of the Principal Independent and Dependent Variables Grouped According to Curriculum Content Area

Curriculum Content Area	Importance x Adequacy	Importance x Preparation	Adequacy x Preparation
Accounting	.011	.215*	.576**
Business Law	.139	.392**	.646**
Chemistry	.427**	.501**	.604**
Communication Skills	-.197*	.044	.696**
Embalming	.074	.485**	.550*
Ethics	.247*	.451**	.681**
Federal Trade Commission	.142	.233*	.593**
Funeral Directing	.052	.224*	-.636**
Funeral Service Law	.171	.187	.548**
Funeral Service Management	-.057	.049	.525**
Funeral Service Merchandising	.148	.244*	.595**
Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling	.301**	.314**	.694**
History of Funeral Directing and Embalming	.375**	.435**	.679**
Human Anatomy	.179*	.603**	.364**
Microbiology	-.011	.424**	.463**
Pathology	.261*	.606**	.548**
Restorative Art	.001	.354**	.370**
Small Business Management	.148	.284**	.559**
Sociology	.033	.284*	.681**

* $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed)** $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed)

scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*no preparation*), 2 (*minimal preparation*), 3 (*good preparation*), 4 (*very good preparation*) and 5 (*excellent preparation*). Two new variables, (Mean Score Importance) and (Mean Score Preparation) were created by averaging each participant's a) perception of the importance of each learning objective for professional practice and b) perception of their academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each learning objective, grouped according to curriculum content area, respectively. It was hypothesized that the correlation between the 19 independent variables of (Mean Score Importance) and the 19 dependent variables of (Mean Score Preparation) would be positive for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. The new variables (Mean Score Importance) and (Mean Score Preparation) were used to conduct a series of 19 one-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation statistics. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

$H_0: \rho \leq 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of importance and preparation is not positive)

$H_1: \rho > 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of importance and preparation is positive)

As the results in Table 13 indicate, five of the 19 correlations tested were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed), and 11 were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed), meaning that for the majority of the curriculum content areas there was a positive relationship between the independent variables for (Mean Score Importance) and the dependent variables for (Mean Score Preparation). No positive

correlation was observed for the curriculum content areas of a) Communication Skills, b) Funeral Service Law and c) Funeral Service Management.

Research question 6: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?

Practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, was measured on a scale that considered the extent to which the practitioner agreed each group of learning objectives was adequate for professional practice. The scale of agreement ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). The perception of academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*no preparation*), 2 (*minimal preparation*), 3 (*good preparation*), 4 (*very good preparation*) and 5 (*excellent preparation*). A new dependent variable, (Mean Score Preparation) was created by averaging each participant's perception of their academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each learning objective, grouped according to curriculum content area. It was hypothesized that the correlation between the 19 dependent variables of (Adequacy) and the 19 dependent variables of (Mean Score Preparation) would be positive for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. A one-tailed Pearson product-moment correlation statistic was computed for each of the 19 correlations

tested for this research question. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

$H_0: \rho \leq 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of adequacy and preparation for the learning objectives is not positive)

$H_1: \rho > 0$ (For each curriculum content area, the correlation between perception of adequacy and preparation for the learning objectives is positive)

As the results in Table 13 indicate, one of the 19 correlations tested was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ (1-tailed), and 18 were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$ (1-tailed). Whereas 18 of the 19 correlations were positive, the correlation for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing was negative, meaning that as the measurement of practitioners' perception of the importance of the ABFSE objectives related to Funeral Directing increased, their perceptions of the adequacy of the Funeral Directing objectives for professional practice decreased.

Research question 7: To what extent has the implementation of Accreditation Standard 11.5 affected instructional efforts to prepare students to take the National Board Examination?

ABFSE Accreditation Standard 11.5, implemented on January 1, 2004, requires that "each accredited program in funeral service education must require that each funeral service student take the National Board Examination (NBE) as a requirement for graduation" (<http://www.abfse.org/docs/standards.pdf>, p. 12). In order to determine whether or not a participant completed a funeral service education

program either prior to, or after, the implementation of this Standard in 2004, all participants were asked to indicate the year in which they completed their funeral service education programs, regardless of the version of the survey they were assigned to complete. Of the 239 participants who answered this question, 189 (79.1%) completed their funeral service education program between the years 1962 and 2003, and 50 (20.9%) completed their funeral service education program between the years 2004 and 2011.

A new variable (Year Program Completed) was created whereby “Group 1” was used to code participants who completed their funeral service education program between 1962 and 2003, and “Group 2” was used to code participants who completed their funeral service education program between 2004 and 2011. This coding was used to conduct an independent samples t-test for participants’ response to the following survey question: *“Thinking back to your funeral service education experience, how frequently were you told by your instructors that you needed to learn something specifically because it would be tested on the National Board Examination (NBE)?* The forced-response choices used in this analysis were 1 (*never*), 2 (*rarely*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*frequently*), and 5 (*almost always*). It was hypothesized that there would be a mean difference in results between the two groups because a) in 2004 the ABFSE implemented a policy requiring all students at accredited programs to take the NBE as a requirement for graduation, and b) in 2004 the ABFSE began to use first-time pass-rate scores on the NBE as a means of evaluating instructional effectiveness

at the programs they accredit. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in perception of having to learn something because it will be tested on the NBE ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} = \mu_{(\text{Group2})}$)

H_A : There is a difference in perception of having to learn something because it will be tested on the NBE ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group2})}$)

A higher mean score (with standard deviations in parentheses) was observed for practitioners completing their funeral service education program between 2004 and 2011 than was observed for practitioners who completed their funeral service education program between 1962 and 2003: 4.27 (.758), 3.87 (1.00), respectively. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if this mean difference was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. The result of the t-test was statistically significant, $t(233) = -2.60, p = .010$, indicating that it was more common for funeral service practitioners who completed their funeral service education program between the years 2004 and 2011 to be told they needed to learn something specifically because it would be tested in the NBE than it was for practitioners who completed their funeral service education program between the years 1963 and 2003. These results suggest that since 2004, funeral service education programs are placing greater emphasis on preparing students to take the NBE than was the case prior to 2004.

Research question 8: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to take the National Board Examination based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?

The perception of the adequacy of preparation to take the National Board Examination was measured by the following survey question: “To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: *I believe I was well prepared by my funeral service education program to take the National Board Examination (NBE)*” with scale choices ranging as follows: 0 (*no opinion/not applicable*), 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), 5 (*strongly agree*). Data gathered from this question were used to create the dependent variable (Preparation to Take the NBE), with frequency statistics appearing in Table 14.

Table 14

Perception of Agreement that Practitioner was Adequately Prepared by a Funeral Service Education Program to Take the National Board Examination

Perception of Agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	7	2.9
Disagree	3	1.3
Somewhat agree	30	12.5
Agree	85	35.4
Strongly agree	110	45.8
No opinion/Not applicable	4	1.7
Missing – system	1	0.4

Frequency statistics indicate that 81.2% of practitioners either (*strongly agree*) or (*agree*) with the statement “*I believe I was well prepared by my funeral service*

education program to take the National Board Examination (NBE)” Conversely, 4.2% of practitioners responded that they either (*strongly disagree*) or (*disagree*) with this statement.

Participants were also asked to specify the type of institution where they completed their funeral service education, where institution types were coded and defined as follows: Group 1 (*private institution offering only a funeral service program*), Group 2 (*private institution offering multiple academic programs, including funeral service*), and Group 3 (*public institutions*). All participants were asked to identify the type of institution where they completed their funeral service education, regardless of the version of the survey they were assigned to complete. Of the 239 (99.5%) participants who answered this question, a) 96 (40.2%) completed their funeral service education at a private institution offering only a funeral service program, b) 13 (5.4%) completed their funeral service education at a private institution offering multiple academic programs, including funeral service, and c) 130 (54.2%) completed their funeral service education at a public institution.

A one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in the mean score values for the dependent variable (Preparation to Take the NBE) among institution types.

The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in perceived preparation to take the NBE based on the type of institution where the practitioner studied mortuary science ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} = \mu_{(\text{Group2})} = \mu_{(\text{Group3})}$)

H_A : There is a difference in perceived preparation to take the NBE based on the type of institution where the practitioner studied mortuary science ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group2})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group3})}$)

The results of the ANOVA showed that the effect of institution type was significant $F(2, 231) = 3.27, p = .040$ when comparing the measurement of perceived preparation to take the NBE. Post hoc analyses using the Bonferroni post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the perception of preparation to take the NBE was higher for practitioners who completed their funeral service education at private, single-purpose institutions ($M = 4.40, SD = .84$) than it was for practitioners who completed their funeral service education at public institutions ($M = 4.09, SD = 1.00$). Comparisons between the other two groups (private, single purpose institutions compared with private institutions offering multiple degree programs; public institutions compared with private institutions offering multiple degree programs) were not statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Research question 9: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed to function as a competent, entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer?

The perception of preparation to function as a competent, entry level funeral director and/or embalmer was measured by the following survey question: *To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: Upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the*

minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer; with scale choices ranging as follows: 0 (*no opinion/not applicable*), 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). All participants were asked to answer this question, regardless of the version of the survey they were assigned to complete. Frequency statistics for this survey question indicated that 239 participants answered the question, and one participant did not. The data were used to create the dependent variable (Preparation to Function as an Entry Level Funeral Director/Embalmer). Frequency statistics are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Perception of Agreement that Practitioner Possessed the Minimum Qualifications to Function as an Entry Level Funeral Director and/or Embalmer Following Completion of their Academic Program

Perception of Agreement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	85	35.6
Disagree	81	33.9
Somewhat agree	49	20.5
Agree	15	6.3
Strongly agree	9	3.8
Missing – system	1	0.4

Frequency statistics indicate that 69.5% of practitioners either (*strongly disagree*) or (*disagree*) with the statement “*upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer.*” Conversely, 10.1% of practitioners responded that they either (*strongly agree*) or (*agree*) with this statement.

Because it is not uncommon for mortuary science students to gain work experience at funeral homes prior to and/or during their mortuary science college experience, it was hypothesized that practitioners who had gained funeral home work experience prior to completing a funeral service education program may have different perceptions of their academic preparation to function as entry level funeral directors and/or embalmers after completing their funeral service education programs than those practitioners who had no work experience in funeral service prior to completing their funeral service education programs.

Participants were therefore asked to indicate whether or not they had funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program, and the responses were used to create the independent variable (Work Experience Prior to Completing Funeral Service Education Program). Within this variable, participants were coded into one of two groups, a) Group 1 (*participants who had funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program*) and b) Group 2 (*participants who did not have funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program*).

A secondary analysis was then conducted to determine to what extent funeral home work experience affected participants' perception of their ability to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer upon completion of their academic program in mortuary science.

The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : Perception of academic preparation would be equal for practitioners regardless of whether they did, or did not, have funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} = \mu_{(\text{Group2})}$)

H_A : Perception of academic preparation would not be equal for practitioners regardless of whether they did, or did not, have funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group2})}$)

A higher mean score (with standard deviations in parentheses) was observed for practitioners with no funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program than for practitioners who did have funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program: 2.56 (1.16), 2.02 (1.04), respectively. An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if this mean difference was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. The result of this t-test showed that the difference in means between the two groups was statistically significant, $t(234) = -2.67, p = .008$.

Although counterintuitive, these results indicate that practitioners who had no work experience in funeral service prior to completing their funeral service education had a higher perception of their qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer upon completion of their funeral service education program than did practitioners who had previous funeral home work experience prior to completing their funeral service education program.

Research question 10: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?

A one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in the mean score of the dependent variable (Preparation to Function as an Entry-Level Funeral Director/Embalmer) among institution types. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director/embalmer based on the type of institution where the practitioner studied mortuary science ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} = \mu_{(\text{Group2})} = \mu_{(\text{Group3})}$)

H_A : There is a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director/embalmer based on the type of institution where the practitioner studied mortuary science ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group2})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group3})}$)

There were no statistically significant differences between group means as determined by one-way ANOVA $F(2, 236) = .502, p = .606$. The implication of this result is that the type of institution where participants chose to pursue their funeral service education did not have an effect on their perception of the extent to which that institution prepared them to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer.

Research question 11: Does annual income from work in funeral service differ depending on the number of years of college education completed?

A one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in the mean score of the dependent variable (Annual Income) by the independent variable (Years of College Completed). The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in annual income from work in funeral service based on the number of years of college the practitioner has completed

$$(\mu_{\text{Group1}} = \mu_{\text{Group2}} = \mu_{\text{Group3}} = \mu_{\text{Group4}} = \mu_{\text{Group5}})$$

H_A : There is a difference in annual income from work in funeral service based on the number of years of college the practitioner has completed ($\mu_{\text{Group1}} \neq \mu_{\text{Group2}} \neq \mu_{\text{Group3}} \neq \mu_{\text{Group4}} \neq \mu_{\text{Group5}}$)

with the five groups defined as follows: Group 1 (*1 year of college*), Group 2 (*2 years of college*), Group 3 (*3 years of college*), Group 4 (*4 years of college*), and Group 5 (*5+ years of college*). A one-way ANOVA found no statistically significant difference in group means $F(4, 219) = .816, p = .516$. This result provides evidence that annual income from work in funeral service was not dependent on the number of years of college completed by participants.

Research Question 12: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for managers and non-managers?

It was hypothesized that annual income for work in funeral service would be higher for practitioners who hold employment in a managerial position than for practitioners who do not hold a managerial position. An independent samples t-test was performed to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference in annual income from work in funeral service based on employment status as either a

manager, or a non-manger. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in annual income based on managerial employment status ($\mu_{(\text{annual income for managers})} = \mu_{(\text{annual income for non-managers})}$)

H_A : There is a difference in annual income based on managerial employment status ($\mu_{(\text{annual income for managers})} \neq \mu_{(\text{annual income for non-managers})}$)

The survey presented a series of 12 salary ranges to participants, coded from 1 to 12, where 1 (*At the present time, I do not earn any income from work in funeral service*), 2 (*less than \$10,000*), 3 (*\$10,000 – \$19,999*), 4 (*\$20,000 - \$29,999*)... 11(*\$90,000 - \$99,999*), 12 (*\$100,000 or more*). An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if this mean difference was statistically significant at an alpha level of .05. A higher mean score (with standard deviations in parentheses) was observed for managers than non-managers: 9.37 (2.37), 6.13 (2.74), respectively, where the value of 9.37 is captured within the survey salary range of \$70,000 - \$79,999 and the value 6.13 is captured within the salary range of \$40,000 - \$49,999. The result of this test demonstrated that the difference in means between the two groups was statistically significant $t(231) = 9.681, p = .000$, meaning that managers earned higher annual income from work in funeral service than did non-managers.

Research question 13: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for men and women?

The survey presented a series of 12 salary ranges to participants, coded from 1 to 12, where 1 (*At the present time, I do not earn any income from work in funeral*

service), 2 (less than \$10,000), 3 (\$10,000 – \$19,999), 4 (\$20,000 - \$29,999)...
11(\$90,000 - \$99,999), 12 (\$100,000 or more). An independent samples t-test was
conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant mean difference in
annual income based on gender. The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as
follows:

H_0 : There is no difference in annual income based on gender ($\mu_{(\text{annual income for men})} = \mu_{(\text{annual income for women})}$)

H_A : There is a difference in annual income based on gender ($\mu_{(\text{annual income for men})} \neq \mu_{(\text{annual income for women})}$)

The result of the t-test, with an alpha level set at .05, demonstrated that the
difference in the means of annual income for men and women was statistically
significant $t(231) = 6.686, p = .000$. A higher mean score (with standard deviations in
parentheses) was observed for men than women: 8.44 (2.82), 5.34 (2.52),
respectively, where the value of 8.44 is captured within the survey salary range of
\$60,000 - \$69,999 and the value 5.34 is captured within the salary range of \$30,000 -
\$39,999.

Research question 14: Is there an interaction of managerial employment status
on gender and annual income earned from work in funeral service?

Having determined that there were statistically significant mean differences in
annual income between a) managers and non-managers and b) women and men, a
two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of the interaction of the
independent variables (Gender) and (Managerial Status) on the dependent variable

(Annual Income From Work in Funeral Service). The null and alternative hypotheses were stated as follows:

H_0 : There is no interaction of managerial employment status and gender on annual income ($\mu_{(\text{annual income for male managers})} = \mu_{(\text{annual income female managers})}$)

H_A : There is an interaction of managerial employment status and gender on annual income ($\mu_{(\text{Group1})} \neq \mu_{(\text{Group2})}$)

Although the simple main effects t-tests discussed previously showed that a) managers earn more annual income than non-managers, and b) men earn more annual income than women, the interaction between the effects of gender and managerial employment status on annual income was not statistically significant $F(1, 229) = 1.551, p = .214$. This result indicates that there was no effect from the combination of gender and managerial employment status on annual income earned for work in funeral service.

Research question 15: What suggestions do practitioners have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

The last survey question was presented in open-ended format and stated as follows:

You have just completed a detailed survey about funeral service education in the United States, a significant portion of which focused on select learning objectives upon which the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum is based. In the space below, please share any

suggestions you may have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered through programs accredited by the ABFSE.

There were 125 participants who responded to this question. Immaterial comments such as “none” or “I have enjoyed taking your survey” ($n = 28$) were excluded from analysis because they did not pertain to the question. The remaining 97 responses were arranged into 14 themes, and are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

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

Theme	Frequency
Curriculum needs to be more relevant to death-care services families want today	28
Need to expand experiential learning activities prior to/during funeral service education program	23
Need to increase college educational requirements to become a funeral director	9
Too much emphasis is being placed on "teaching to" the National Board Examination	6
Need for better education of psychology of death/value of funeral to grief process	4
Concerns about salary/work schedule/workplace culture	4
Expand curriculum related to knowledge of business management skills/office procedures	4
Need for separate funeral director/embalmer licenses and/or a funeral director-only curriculum	4
Expand the curriculum related to cremation	3
Expand curriculum in the sciences/embalming skills	3
Require that all funeral service programs be accredited by the ABFSE	3
Need to increase/expand inter-professional relations between schools and practitioners	3
Concerns about the effectiveness of on-line education	2
Concerns about the National Board Examination	1

With respect to the theme *Curriculum needs to be more relevant to death-care services families want today*: A male manager, with 35 years of work experience in funeral service, commented that:

I do not believe the ABFSE has addressed the needs of the modern funeral service practitioner. The vast majority of students I interview for apprenticeships have not been adequately prepared. The ways we attract prospective students to the industry are not adequate, the schools appear to admit anyone who can pay the tuition without regard to their abilities, and the curriculum itself does not serve the profession well. Along with what has been presented in this survey, students need training in the soft skills of listening, feeling, guiding, and supporting. These are difficult areas to test, but valuable areas for a good quality funeral director.

A male manager, with 30 years of work experience in funeral service, offered a similar response:

Funeral Service is changing rapidly and the schools need to prepare the students for the coming trends. Personalized services, cremation, and exceeding the families' needs are all part of today's funeral service. When I went to school cremation was just a small part of what we do and now it is becoming more and more popular. The cost of doing business to keep a decent margin can push more families to cremation. I have noticed more people in the business that do not have a clue what they are doing. Most of them have come from the corporate side of the business where they push numbers instead

of service. I have a couple of them working for me now and I have had to spend a lot of time retraining them on what a family funeral home is about.

Students now want regular hours and do what they are told to do and not take any initiative to exceed expectations...

A male non-manager, with 9 years of work experience in funeral service,

added:

While I feel that the Funeral Service Education curriculum does prepare the student for the National Board Exam, I think it does a minimal if not poor job of preparing the student for the realities of funeral service. If there was more focus on the specifics of the industry and on the day to day dealings inside a funeral home, I feel the student would be better prepared upon graduation. I also feel like there should be more focus on the newer progress in the industry and less a regurgitation of facts for the Board Exam. More psychology. More interpersonal communication work. More comparative religion course offerings. Elective options versus exclusively strict class schedules...

A female non-manager, with seven years of work experience in funeral service, expressed her concerns this way:

The ABFSE curriculum is thoroughly antiquated and increasingly irrelevant to funeral service. I feel lucky that the program from which I graduated went far above and beyond the requirements of the ABFSE curriculum, as those were the elements which best prepared me for funeral service work. It is laughable to think that the ability to regurgitate the number of megabytes in a gigabyte

helps produce a well-rounded funeral director. The ability to think critically about contemporary issues in funeral service is imperative, and yet is completely lacking in the curriculum as outlined by the ABFSE. This curriculum, I believe, does more damage than good, as classroom time that could otherwise be spent on worthwhile current issues needs to be instead devoted to irrelevant, trifling information that has little to no bearing on producing quality, thoughtful directors who can adapt to the rapidly changing face of funeral service as an industry. If this curriculum and test can't adapt and change with the times, how can we expect funeral directors to? This test is a dinosaur, and it creates dinosaur directors.

The need for prospective and current mortuary science students to gain practical “hands on” learning experiences in funeral service both prior to, as well as during their funeral service education, was discussed by many participants. Comments classified under the theme *Need to expand experiential learning activities prior to/during FS education program* include the following from a male non-manager, with 19 years of work experience in funeral service, who said:

I feel as though states need to require some kind of internship/work experience to pre-mortuary science students so that they can become familiar with working in the prep room or in and around the funeral home. I come across many students who are enrolled in mortuary school who have never been in a funeral home or worked with human remains. I had the opportunity to work in a funeral home for 2 years before going to mortuary college and

feel as though it provided a foundation on which I was able to relate to certain classes while in school. It would also allow students time to change career paths if they decide funeral service is not right for them.

A non-manager female, with two years of work experience in funeral service, added:

More practical hand on experience. A test is great for knowledge, but you have to learn by experience. You can pass the test and be a terrible FD/Embalmer. You have apprentice time, but it should be of equal importance to the "head knowledge". Some aspects of the programs should be revised. Learning chemical formulas etc. are not necessary. That time could be better spent with more practical information and training.

A male non-manager, with 10 years of work experience in funeral service, stated:

I feel that more hands-on/shadowing time should have been a larger part of my education. The institution I attended did a fine job of preparing me to pass the necessary exams, but the interpersonal skills that are vital to becoming a good funeral director are better learned by working and observing work in a funeral home than in the classroom. The program I attended has since switched models and students now begin working in funeral homes throughout the program rather than just at the completion of the program. I believe this is a great change for graduated of this program.

Participants in this research study spoke of the importance of increasing educational requirements for professional practice to better prepare practitioners to meet the changing and increasing diverse needs of the client families they serve. The following comments were categorized under the theme *Need to increase the college education requirements to become a funeral director*: A male manager, with 39 years of work experience in funeral service, said:

Funeral Education needs to keep going up, not to lower the standards to get a license. The world has changed since I went to [redacted] College back in 1967. So many more important subjects are taught now that were not included at my time...

A male manager, with 14 years of work experience in funeral service, agreed, adding:

I believe that in general the curriculum is average enough to get a person into work at a funeral home at an entry level job. However, I do believe that the education level and requirements should be standard throughout every state and it should be at the Bachelor degree level. Dummying down the curriculum only hurts our profession. And Colorado, please, and they even have a mortuary science program there although I'm not sure why when you don't need anything to practice there. Our education level must increase.

Practitioners repeatedly discussed the need for funeral service education programs to place greater emphasis on teaching students about what it means to be a funeral director, rather than focusing so much on preparing them to pass the NBE.

The following responses were categories under the theme *Too much emphasis is being placed on “teaching to” the National Board Examination*: A male manager, with 33 years of work experience, said:

I feel that today's educational program(s) are teaching to the test if you will.

At [redacted] College in the late seventies we were never told that the course content was designed to prepare us for the test(s). Instead it was a given that if we were successful in our studies, we would have no problem with the National and/or state exams. The education was well rounded and interactive and we were prepared for and recruited for entry level positions because it was known industry wide that [redacted] College turned out excellent candidates. Having, over time, exposure to students from other institutes....I thank God daily that I had the educational experience that I did.

A male manager, with 43 years of work experience in funeral service, expressed his concern about the increased attention being given to the NBE at mortuary science programs this way:

I believe that any good funeral director may learn how the embalming process works on the job, too much education is applied to making employees, and not management or owners of a business. Education in mortuary school needs to teach how to handle people, how to complete regulatory compliance, how to establish and maintain a business. Some knowledge needs placed on the embalming sciences, and health regulations, but not enough education is on Business Quality. I have 2 children who have joined my business, both

graduated following college degrees from Mortuary School, education they received was poor for a business, great for passing a test.

Within the theme *Expand curriculum related to knowledge of business management skills/office procedures*, a male non-manager, with eight years of work experience stated that he believes:

[the] Business component is a joke as it is currently done. I have only worked in states with cremation rates at almost 70%. The business aspect is so important with a thinner profit margin. Little is taught on cremation, cremation laws and ethical issues associated with cremation and cremation processing.

A female manager, with nine years of work experience in funeral service, argues that a longer degree program would allow for more time to cover the ABFSE curriculum:

I believe it may be a good idea to consider making this a four year degree. There is a lot of curriculum shoved down your throat all at once, too much for a two year program. It can be very overwhelming and I think a lot of things probably don't even get discussed at all.

A male manager, with 24 years of work experience in funeral service, summarizes the themes identified to be of greatest concern to practitioners this way:

I believe that more education is needed by students coming to me today in areas of communication skills, people skills and the value of the funeral service experience. The schools today, in my opinion, are solely focused on

the pass rate of the National [Board Examination] instead of preparing students for the practical work of helping families.

As noted in Table 16, eight themes had four or fewer responses. One theme with fewer than four responses was *Expand the curriculum related to cremation*. Whereas it is observed that in 2011²⁹ the cremation rate in the United States was 42%; curiously, only three participants offered comments related to need for improved cremation education. A male manager, with seven years of work experience in funeral service, addressed the need for education about how crematories operate, stating:

Crematory Tech / we NEED to understand how and why the retort works.

Another male manager, with 14 years of work experience in funeral service, offered a similar comment:

More on the operation of a crematory, cremations laws, planning a funeral or memorial service...

A male manager, with 12 years of work experience, added:

My biggest concern is with the lack of training on Cremation and how to best help people in the arrangement process (by asking questions).”

The Cremation Association of North America (CANA) projects the national cremation rate will continue to rise steadily each year to 49.4% by 2016. Only three

²⁹ 2011 is the most recent year for which cremation data gathered by the Cremation Association of North America[CANA] are available.

of the 240 practitioners who participated in this research, however, expressed concern about academic preparation related to cremation.

Summary

This chapter has presented the results of an investigation of practitioners' perceptions of the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. Descriptive statistics, including the number of cases, mean scores, and standard deviations were reported for each of the mean scores of a) the independent variables of perceived importance for each of the 19 curriculum content areas, and b) the dependent variables of i) perceived preparation and ii) perceived adequacy, for each of the 19 curriculum content areas.

Correlation coefficients for a) the perception of importance and adequacy, b) the perception of importance and preparation, and c) the perception of adequacy and preparation, were then presented. The perception of academic preparation for the purpose of taking the National Board Examination was discussed, as was perception of academic preparation for the purpose of entering the workforce as a minimally qualified funeral director and/or embalmer.

Results of an analysis of annual income from work in funeral service, evaluated from the perspective of participants' gender and managerial employment status, were reported. Finally, the results of an open-ended question soliciting suggestions for improving mortuary science education at programs accredited by the

ABFSE were presented. The implications of the results for both educational policy and professional practice will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

To what extent do practitioners perceive that funeral service education programs accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) adequately prepare students to meet the changing death-care preferences of an increasingly diverse American public? This central question has served as the basis for this study, the purpose of which was to gather empirical data that could be used by educators to improve the relevance of instruction offered at ABFSE-accredited programs throughout the United States. This study was the first of its kind to sample a national population of funeral service practitioners for the purpose of assessing the present ABFSE curriculum in the context of changing death-care preferences. The implications of the data analyses conducted in this study serve as the basis for the discussion presented in this chapter.

Summary of Findings

A survey instrument was developed to assess practitioners' perceptions of the importance of the ABFSE learning objectives, the adequacy of the learning objectives for professional practice, and academic preparation for the purpose of mastering the learning objectives. This study employed a non-experimental design and analyzed data provided by a sample of 240 funeral service practitioners from across the United States.

Because of survey time completion concerns, approximately one-third of participants were presented with one-third of the ABFSE learning objectives, grouped

according to curriculum content area. The objectives each participant was asked to assess were assigned according to the participant's reported month of birth. The data used in this research were gathered during a one-month period starting on December 1, 2011 and ending on January 2, 2012.

The ABFSE learning objectives are categorized into 19 specific curriculum content areas. At the time this research was conducted, there were 170 learning objectives, as discussed in Chapter 2 and presented on the survey instrument appearing in Appendix D. Practitioners were first asked to assess their perception of the importance of a specific learning objective for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Participants' perception of the importance of each learning objective was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*not important*), 2 (*somewhat important*), 3 (*important*), 4 (*very important*), and 5 (*extremely important*). Data values ranging from 1 to 5 were averaged to compute a participant's mean score for the perception of importance for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. Additionally, a sixth choice of (*no opinion*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*no opinion*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

Next, practitioners were asked to assess their perception of the preparation they received from the funeral service education program they completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective. A second set of 19 forced-choice scales was constructed to measure practitioners' perception of their own academic preparation for the purpose of mastering each of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives.

Perception of academic preparation was also measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*no preparation*), 2 (*minimal preparation*), 3 (*good preparation*), 4 (*very good preparation*) and 5 (*excellent preparation*). Data values were averaged to compute a participant's mean score for the perception of preparation for each of the 19 curriculum content areas. Additionally, a sixth choice of (*can't remember/unable to answer*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*can't remember/unable to answer*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

Practitioners were then to assess their perception of adequacy for each set of learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service. A third set of 19 forced-choice scales was constructed to measure practitioners' perception of the adequacy of each set of objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that each set of objectives was adequate for professional practice. Perception of adequacy was measured on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5, with values assigned as follows: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*somewhat agree*), 4 (*agree*), and 5 (*strongly agree*). Additionally, a sixth choice of (*no opinion*) was included on the survey, but participants' selection of (*no opinion*) was not used in the analyses in this research.

This study identified curriculum content areas containing learning objectives that are perceived by funeral practitioners to be at least (*somewhat important*), or (*not at all important*) to the contemporary practice of funeral service. These curriculum content areas are a) Accounting, b) Chemistry, c) Human Anatomy, d) Microbiology,

and e) Small Business Management. Data measuring the perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives, group according to curriculum content area, indicate that practitioners at least (*disagree*), or (*strongly disagree*), that the learning objectives for the curriculum content areas of a) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, b) Small Business Management, and c) Funeral Directing are adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Frequency data analyses also identified the following ten curriculum content areas as containing objectives that practitioners perceive they received either (*minimal preparation*), or (*no preparation*), for the purpose of mastery at the funeral service education program they completed: a) Accounting, b) Business Law, c) Communication Skills, d) Funeral Directing, e) Funeral Service Management, f) Funeral Service Merchandising, g) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, h) History of Funeral Directing and Embalming, i) Small Business Management, and j) Sociology.

The analysis of correlation coefficients for the perceptions of importance and adequacy showed a) a statistically significant, positive correlation for the curriculum content areas of i) Chemistry, ii) Ethics, iii) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, iv) History of Funeral Directing and Embalming, and v) Human Anatomy, and b) a statistically significant negative correlation for the curriculum content area of Communication Skills. An analysis of correlation coefficients for the perceptions of importance and preparation showed a statistically significant positive correlation for each of the 19 curriculum content area except a) Communication Skills, b) Funeral Service Law, and c) Funeral Service Management. Finally, an

analysis of correlation coefficients for the perceptions of adequacy and preparation showed evidence of a statistically significant positive correlation for each of the 19 curriculum content areas except Funeral Directing, which exhibited a statistically significant negative correlation.

With respect to the perception of academic preparation to take National Board Examination (NBE), evidence was presented that since 2004, the year ABFSE implemented a new policy requiring that all students take the NBE as a requirement for graduation, funeral service education programs are now placing greater emphasis on preparing students to take the NBE than was the case prior to 2004. The results of this study also indicate that practitioners who attended private, single-purpose funeral service education institutions felt better prepared to take the NBE than did practitioners who completed their funeral service education program at a public institution. Whereas 81% of practitioners ($n = 195$) indicated that they either (*agree*) or (*strongly agree*) that they were well prepared by their funeral service education program to take the NBE, only 10% of practitioners ($n = 24$) either (*agree*) or (*strongly agree*) that they possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer at the completion of the funeral service education program. The results also indicate that 70% of practitioners ($n = 176$) either (*disagree*) or (*strongly disagree*) with the following statement: *Upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer.*

With respect to earnings from work in funeral service, an analysis of reported annual income found the lowest wages are paid to female non-managers. Male managers earned more annual income than female managers and both male and female non-managers. There was no statistically significant difference in annual income between female managers and male non-managers. Finally, concern that too much attention is now being given to passing the NBE at the expense of educating students for professional practice as entry level funeral service practitioners, was noted in the qualitative data responses to the last survey question, as presented in chapter 4.

Discussion

This section discusses the results of the 15 research questions presented in Chapter 2. Included in this section is an interpretation of the meaning of the results, the purpose of which is to provide information that may be used to improve the quality of mortuary science education offered at programs accredited by the ABFSE.

Research question 1: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive that the AFBSE learning objectives are important to the contemporary practice of funeral service?

As previously noted in Table 10, only 12 of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives were perceived to be either (*somewhat important*) or (*not important*) to the contemporary practice of mortuary science. Of these 12 objectives, 9 (75%) are associated with the Funeral Service Sciences curriculum and three (25%) are associated with the Funeral Service Arts curriculum. Significantly, all of the learning

objectives appearing in 14 of the 19 curriculum content areas were assessed by practitioners to be (*important*), (*very important*), or (*extremely important*) to the contemporary practice of funeral service. The implication of these results is that, overall, practitioners have a favorable perception of the importance of the ABFSE learning objectives. A review of the 12 objectives with a perceived mean score of importance of < 3 (*important*) showed that the minimum score was a 2.39. None of the 170 learning objectives had a mean score of importance of < 2, which refers to the category of (*not important*).

Whereas Slocum and Carlson (2011) argue:

Mortuary science education today seems a little like incest with unwilling partners, partners who have no idea how to talk to each other and both of whom seem stuck in practices and ideas that are 40 years out of date.

Mortuary schools have little choice but to teach the prescribed material, no matter how irrelevant it may be (p. 126),

the findings of this study show that, to the contrary, practitioners generally do not perceive that ABFSE curriculum is “out of date” in the context of their evaluation of the learning objectives. Likewise, Isard’s (2010) radical assertion that “À la Abbie Hoffman, we should begin by burning the current mortuary school curricula [sic] and creating from scratch a curriculum based on the goal of producing a new generation of uber-funeral directors...” is not shared by the practitioners who participated in this research. Twenty-eight practitioners did, however, express their concern about the need for some changes in the curriculum, as noted in their

responses to the final, open-ended survey question. The primary concerns relating to changes in the curriculum, which focus on the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing, will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Research question 2: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive the objectives for each of the 19 ABFSE discipline-specific curriculum outlines as adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service?

The perception of adequacy for each of the 19 sets of learning objectives, grouped according to curriculum content area, was presented in Table 11. The data show that at measured value of 2.42, the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing had the lowest score of perceived adequacy for professional practice, where 2 (*disagree*) and 3 (*somewhat agree*) represent the lowest value response choice options for the statement “I believe that a funeral directing curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service.” After the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing, the next lowest score of perceived adequacy for each set of learning objectives is for the curriculum content of a) Small Business Management, followed by b) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, c) Accounting, d) Funeral Service Management, e) Communication Skills, f) Sociology and g) Funeral Service Merchandising, respectively.

Curiously, each one of these eight aforementioned curriculum content areas contain *only* arts-related learning objectives, in contrast to the curriculum content areas containing science-related objectives, such as embalming, pathology, microbiology, etc. It is also noted that only four of the eight curriculum content areas

with the highest perceived score of adequacy contain arts-related objectives. The implication for mortuary science education is that the learning objectives for arts-related coursework are perceived as being less adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service than are the learning objectives for sciences-related coursework.

The results of this research show that of all the 19 curriculum content areas, the learning objectives for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing are perceived by practitioners as being the least adequate for professional practice. Statistics appearing in Table 11 indicate practitioners disagree that the learning objectives for the curriculum content areas of a) Funeral Directing, b) Small Business Management, and c) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling are adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Whereas learning objectives for science-related coursework are perceived to be adequate for professional practice, weakness is noted in the perception of adequacy for learning objectives relating to the general practice of funeral directing, especially business management and interpersonal communication skills.

Research question 3: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared to master each of the ABFSE learning objectives by the funeral service education program they completed?

As previously noted in Table 12, the data indicate that practitioners perceive they received either (*minimal preparation*), or (*no preparation*), for the purpose of mastering 63 (37%) of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives at the funeral service education program they completed. The five curriculum content areas with the

lowest mean score of perceived preparation, from lowest score to highest score, are a) Small Business Management, b) Accounting, c) Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling, d) Funeral Service Management, and e) Funeral Service Merchandising, respectively. In contrast, the curriculum content area with the highest mean score of perceived preparation is Embalming, followed by a) Human Anatomy, b) Federal Trade Commission, c) Pathology, and d) Restorative Art, respectively. The data show that perception of preparation was generally highest for the sciences-related learning objectives, and lowest for the arts-related learning objectives. Of the 19 curriculum content areas, the lowest nine scores of perceived preparation were for Funeral Service Arts-related learning objectives. Whereas funeral service education programs are perceived to be doing a good job in preparing students to master learning objectives related to science coursework, a weakness is observed in schools' efforts to prepare students to master learning objectives related to arts coursework, especially in those content areas that relate to business management and funeral practice.

The results for perception of preparation are supported by the findings of the last survey question, which asked practitioners to recommend ways of improving funeral service education at programs accredited by the ABFSE. A common sentiment mentioned by practitioners was the need for better academic preparation in the curriculum content areas of Communication Skills and Funeral Directing. These findings are consistent with previous research in funeral service (Kubasek, 1990;

Manning, 2010; Van Beck, 1999; Wolfelt, 2004) which demonstrate the importance of human relations in the service of grieving families.

Research question 4: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perceptions of the importance and adequacy related to each set of learning objectives?

As noted previously in Table 13, seven of the 19 correlations of importance by adequacy were statistically significant. It was hypothesized that practitioners' perception of importance and adequacy for each set of learning objectives would be positively correlated, the assumption being that the higher the perceived measure of importance, the higher the perceived measure of adequacy. Overall, the data suggest that the factors of importance and adequacy do not exhibit a strong correlation, even though six of the correlations were both positive and statistically significant. The strongest correlation of adequacy and importance was observed for the curriculum content area of Chemistry ($r = .43$), in which 18% of the variability of perceived adequacy could be explained by the variability in perceived importance. Curiously, a negative correlation was noted for the curriculum content area of Communication Skills ($r = -.20$), for which only 4% of the variability of perceived adequacy could be explained by perceived importance. This result suggests that the learning objectives for Communication Skills, of which there are four, may be inadequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service, a phenomenon also noted in the results of the first three research questions.

Research question 5: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perceptions of importance and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?

As previously noted in Table 13, six of the 19 correlations of importance by preparation were statistically significant. The hypothesis for this research question explored the extent to which practitioners' perceptions of importance and preparation for each set of learning objectives was positively correlated, the assumption being that the higher the perceived measure of importance, the higher the perceived measure of preparation. The data indicate that 16 of the 19 curriculum content areas exhibit a positive, statistically significant correlation. The two curriculum content areas which exhibited the strongest positive correlation were a) Pathology ($r = .61$) and b) Human Anatomy ($r = .60$). With respect to the curriculum content area of Pathology, 37% of the variability in perception of preparation can be explained by the variability in perception of importance. Likewise, for the curriculum content area of Human Anatomy, 36% of the variability in perception of preparation can be explained by the variability in perception of importance.

A review of the correlations of perception of importance by the perception of preparation shows that the strongest positive correlations are typically associated with the science-related curriculum content areas. In contrast, the arts-related curriculum content areas generally had the weakest correlations. For the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing ($r = .22$), for example 4% of the variability in importance could be explained by the variability in preparation. There were no statistically significant

correlations for the curriculum content areas of a) Communication Skills, b) Funeral Service Law, and c) Funeral Service Management, all of which are classified as Funeral Service Arts-related curriculum content areas. These results are similar to those observed for the first three research questions.

Research question 6: Does a positive correlation exist between funeral service practitioners' perceptions of the adequacy of the learning objectives and academic preparation related to each set of learning objectives?

As noted previously in Table 13, all of the 19 correlations of adequacy by preparation were statistically significant, and ranged from low value of ($r = .36$) for the curriculum content area of Human Anatomy to a high value of ($r = .70$) for the curriculum content area of Communication Skills. The hypothesis for this research question tested the extent to which practitioners' perceptions of adequacy and preparation for each set of learning objectives was positively correlated, the assumption being that the higher the perceived measure of adequacy, the higher the perceived measure of preparation. A curious observation is that 18 of the 19 correlations are positive. In contrast, the correlation coefficient for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing is negative ($r = -.64$). The data show that for the curriculum content area of funeral directing, 41% of the variability in perception of adequacy can be explained by the variability in perception of preparation. In other words, as the perception of adequacy increases, the perception of preparation decreases. A discussion of the possible reasons for this observation, seen only for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing, will occur later in this chapter. The

results of this research question are consistent with the results of the previous research questions, which identify weakness in the academic preparation of students for the curriculum content area of Funeral Directing.

Research question 7: Since the implementation of ABFSE Accreditation Standard 11.5³⁰ in 2004 has it become more common for students to be told by their instructors they must learn something specifically because it will be tested on the National Board Examination?

It was hypothesized that funeral service education programs have been placing greater emphasis on preparing students to take and pass the National Board Examination (NBE) since 2004, the year in which the ABFSE a) began requiring that all students take the NBE as a requirement for graduation, b) began using first-time pass rates on the NBE to assess learning outcomes at the programs it accredits, and c) began to post first-time NBE pass rates for the programs it accredits on the ABFSE website. The results of this research show practitioners perceive that greater emphasis is now being placed on preparing students to take the NBE than was the case prior to 2004. To the extent that programs are now being perceived as “teaching to the test,” (Earl, 2012; Flory, 2008; Gould, 2010; Isard, 2010) the data support this hypothesis. As was seen in the qualitative data presented in Chapter 4, there is concern among practitioners that too much attention is now being directed toward preparing students to take and pass the NBE, at the expense of teaching fundamental

³⁰ “After January 1, 2004, each accredited program in funeral service education must require that each funeral service student take the National Board Examination (NBE) as a requirement for graduation.” (See <http://www.abfse.org/docs/standards.pdf>, p. 12)

aspects of funeral practice. That contemporary mortuary science education may today be perceived as little more than an NBE preparation course should be of concern to funeral service educators and policy-makers within the ABFSE.

Research question 8: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to take the National Board Examination based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?

Mortuary science education programs exist within three different types of academic institutions: a) private, single-purpose institutions which offer only mortuary science education, b) private institutions that offer a number of different academic programs, including mortuary science, and c) public institutions, the majority of which are housed within community and technical colleges. This research question investigated the extent to which practitioners, grouped according to the type of institution where they pursued their mortuary science education, perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared to take the NBE.

The results show that practitioners who attended private, single-purpose institutions perceive themselves as having been better prepared to take the NBE than were practitioners who attended public institutions. Although this mean difference in perception is statistically significant, it is very small. As discussed earlier, a value of “4” means that the participant agreed that he or she was (*well prepared*) by his or her funeral service education program to take the NBE, and a value of “5” means that the participant (*strongly agreed*) that he or she was well prepared by their funeral service education program to take the NBE. The lowest score was recorded for participants

who attended public institutions (4.09), followed by private, multiple-purpose institutions (4.38), and private, single-purpose institutions (4.40), respectively. The measurement of the perception of preparation to take the NBE, across institution types, was fairly consistent. The implication of this finding is that, overall, practitioners perceive funeral service education programs do a good job preparing students to take the NBE, with some variability in reported scores between institution types.

Research question 9: To what extent do funeral service practitioners perceive themselves to have been adequately prepared by the funeral service education program they completed to function as a competent, entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer?

As noted previously in Table 15 and reported in Chapter 4, practitioners have a generally negative perception of their academic preparation for readiness to enter the workforce. A significant finding of this research is that 70% of practitioners did not perceive themselves as “possessing the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer” upon completion of their funeral service education program; only 10% of practitioners (*agreed*) or (*strongly agreed*) that they possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry-level practitioner upon completion of their funeral service education program. This result evidences the needed for greater work-related skills preparation as part of the academic curriculum for programs accredited by the ABFSE. Additional discussion of workforce preparation will occur later in this chapter.

Research question 10: Is there a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral director and/or embalmer based on the type of institution where the funeral service practitioner pursued her/his funeral service education?

There was no evidence of a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral service practitioner based on the type of academic program the participant pursued. Across all institution types, the perception of preparation was low. Significantly, these results suggest that practitioners do not believe schools are doing a good enough job of preparing students for the demands of the profession.

Research question 11: Does annual income from work in funeral service differ depending on the number of years of college education completed?

A one-way ANOVA showed that mean differences in annual income by years of college education do not differ in a statistically significant way. Practitioners who had completed either two or four years of higher education reported the highest level of annual income, whereas practitioners who had completed only one year of college education reported the lowest level of annual income. The highest amount of annual income was observed for practitioners who had completed four years of college. Curiously, practitioners who have completed five or more years of college education, as a group, reported earning less annual income than practitioners who have completed either two or four years of college education. Further research is needed to understand why practitioners with five or more years of college education earn less annual income than those with two or four years of college education.

Research question 12: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for managers and non-managers?

Annual income from work in funeral service was not equal for the managers and non-managers who participated in this study. A statistically significant mean difference in mean annual income was noted, with managers typically earning an annual income captured by the salary range of \$70,000 - \$79,999 and non-managers typically earning an annual income captured by the salary range of \$40,000 - \$49,999. Although it was expected that managers would earn a higher annual income than non-managers, it was necessary to ask this question to gather the data required to answer the research question that considered differences in annual income for men and women who work as either a manager or a non-manager at a funeral home.

Research question 13: Is annual income earned from work in funeral service equal for men and women?

Annual income from work in funeral service is not equal for the men and women who participated in this study. A statistically significant mean difference in mean annual income was observed, with men typically earning an annual income captured by the salary range of \$60,000 - \$69,999 and women typically earning an annual income captured by the salary range of \$30,000 - \$39,999. As noted in Chapter 2, the presentation of overtly sexist notions of the role of women in funeral service were not uncommon in publications related to funeral service education appearing in the 1970s (LaMore, 1976; National Funeral Directors Association, 1971). Over forty years later, concerns about sexism in funeral practice continue to

be observed in funeral service literature. In an article entitled “A Vital Role” (with the sub-heading of “With enrollment now at more than 50 percent female, it’s surprising how many women are still having a hard time finding employment”) appearing the April 2013 issue of *The Director* magazine³¹, Darby³² (2013) notes the following:

And what about women preparing to enter our industry? I have the opportunity to talk to several mortuary science classes across the country. An enrollment that is more than 50 percent female makes it obvious that many women are entering the field. But what is surprising is how many of them tell me they are still having a hard time finding employment. These women have impressive grades, recommendations, and perhaps even an internship already on their résumés. But when they interview with some firms, there’s an elephant in the room. Too often (although not always), there is an unspoken question about whether she can do her job regardless of her education. Before you write me off as a “women’s libber” or “man hater,” hear me out. I am, in fact, quite the opposite. I truly enjoy the relationship that men and women create – together. In an industry where it can be quite challenging to find qualified candidates, I would hope we would not narrow the field of possible candidates prematurely (p. 28).

³¹ *The Director* magazine is the official publication of the National Funeral Directors Association.

³² Linda Darby is the chief executive officer of Triguard, a copy that supplies products and services to the funeral service profession.

Darby's comments are significant beyond the evidence they provide that women continue to struggle in their efforts to find employment as funeral directors. A striking observation in her essay is the self-deprecating language she uses in her approach to the subject of sexism in hiring practices. Cognizant of the fact that her audience consists primarily of funeral service practitioners, Darby feels the need to explicitly state that she is neither a "women's libber" or a "man hater." These comments suggest that the discussion about gender inequality in the process of hiring women for positions as funeral directors is still perceived as taboo. In that the results of this study demonstrate women in funeral service earn less money than their male counterparts, the effects of sexism on annual income disparities observed between men and women continue to this day.

Research question 14: Is there an interaction of managerial employment status on gender and annual income earned from work in funeral service?

Differences in annual income can be explained by two principal factors of a) gender, and b) employment status as either a manager or a non-manager. The main effects of these two factors were both statistically significant, meaning that men earned more annual income from work in funeral service than women, and managers earned more annual income from work in funeral service than non-managers. The interaction between these two factors was not statistically significant. Differences in mean salary are therefore only explained by the main effects of the two factors, rather than by any of the various levels of the factors created by their interaction.

Whereas the number of female practitioners will continue to increase into the future, a concern for professional practice is the disparity of annual income levels between men and women. The extent to which lower annual income for women may affect retention of female practitioners in funeral service is not known. Further research into the effects of income disparity between male and female funeral service practitioners is needed.

Research question 15: What suggestions do practitioners have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered at ABFSE-accredited programs?

In response to this question, 23 practitioners discussed the need to expand experiential learning activities prior to, as well as during, a student's funeral service education experience. A common perception is that it is important for prospective mortuary science students to have solid understanding of what it means to be a funeral director *before* investing the time and money to study mortuary science at the college level. Given the demands of the profession, especially those placed on practitioners' time with evening on-call schedules and the frequent need to work weekends, this research found that practitioners perceived a benefit to either requiring, or at least permitting, prospective mortuary science students to have some kind of clinical experience in funeral service prior to attending a college program for professional training.

With respect to specific learning outcomes, a surprising finding of this research is that practitioners did *not* discuss the need for cremation education to any remarkable degree in their comments at the end of the survey. As noted in the survey

instrument presented in Appendix D, there currently are *no* learning objectives that require a student know how to operate a cremator, even though there are learning objectives that require a student know how to use embalming-related instruments and equipment for the purpose of preparing bodies for an open-casket viewing. The Cremation Association of North America (CANA, 2011) observes that the cremation rate in the United States has increased a dramatic 93% over the past 15 years, from 21.8% in 1996 to 42.0% in 2011. There should be little doubt of the need for cremation education into the future, but few practitioners in this research discussed increased cremation education as important for improving the quality of funeral service education at ABFSE-accredited programs.

As previously noted in Table 16, some practitioners also discussed as significant to improving funeral service education a) the need to increase college education ($n = 9$) and b) the concern that too much emphasis is now being placed on preparing students to take the NBE ($n = 6$). The theme of increased education for professional practice has been ongoing within the ABFSE for decades. A recent doctoral dissertation by mortuary science educator Jacquelyn Taylor (2011) considered perceptions of higher education standards in mortuary science for professional practice. One outcome of Taylor's research is her observation that the funeral service profession needs to come together and make decisions about future educational requirements for professional practice. Taylor notes that the *Flexner Report*, written over a century ago and focusing on the academic preparation of physicians, called for the elevation of academic standards for professional practice,

including the requirement for extensive, post-secondary instruction. Taylor questions whether funeral service can be legitimately considered a profession when the minimum academic requirement for practice is the (two-year) Associates degree in most states. Because there is so much variation across states as to the number of years of college required to practice funeral directing and/or embalming, it seems unlikely, however, that any clear consensus of a minimum number of years of college education for professional practice will occur at any time in the near future.

Implications for Educational Policy

The primary goal of this research study was to assess the extent to which practitioners perceive mortuary science education programs as preparing graduates for work in funeral service in the context of changing death care preferences. With an increased preference for cremation over the past fifty years, funeral directors have witnessed a steady decline in the selection of “traditional” funerals that involve embalming, open-casket visitations, and the purchase of cemetery-related merchandise such as burial vaults and monuments, all of which were hallmark to 20th century mortuary customs. Whereas in the 1900s the “good” funeral director was the “invisible” funeral director who labored quietly behind the scenes to conduct a formal funeral ceremony that conformed to established cultural and religious norms of the day, today’s funeral director must be proactive in working with survivors to conceive meaningful, personalized ceremonies and memorial events that mark the end of a life (Manning, 2010). Now more than ever, morticians must be creative, articulate professionals who can speak to and interact with an increasing sophisticated

consumer who is no longer content to go along with traditions of the past (Manning, 2010; Van Beck, 1999; Wolfelt, 2004).

In recent years, critics of contemporary funeral service education have called for the outright rejection of the current ABFSE curriculum (Carlson and Slocum, 2011; Isard, 2010), arguing that in its present form it is archaic, obsolete and irrelevant to the modern death care preferences of the American public. On the contrary, however, from the perspective of funeral service practitioners, this study has found that practitioners generally perceive the learning objectives of the curriculum as both important and adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Although 12 of the 170 learning objectives were perceived not to be important to professional practice, overall criticisms of the learning objectives were few.

Weakness in academic preparation for work in funeral service was noted in curriculum content areas of Funeral Directing and Communication Skills. Practitioners generally perceive that funeral service education program graduates often lack the kinds of interpersonal communication skills and creativity necessary for working effectively with today's demanding client families. As one research participant stated, "students need training in the soft skills of listening, feeling, guiding, and supporting." Practitioners surveyed in this research generally perceive that students graduate from funeral service education programs with insufficient training in these "soft skills" so critical to the foundation for what it means to be a funeral director today.

In keeping with the comments by Earl (2012) that a principal purpose of funeral service education is to prepare students to take the National Board Examination (NBE), practitioners generally perceive themselves as having been well prepared to take the NBE by the funeral service education program they completed, with those attending private, single-purpose institutions indicating a stronger sense of preparation than those who attended public programs. Of concern, however, is the observation that practitioners who completed their funeral service education program since 2004 perceive that greater emphasis is now being placed by education programs to prepare students to take the NBE than was the case prior to 2004, often at the expense of not teaching critical interpersonal skills required for the contemporary practice of funeral service. As previously noted in Table 16, nine practitioners discussed their concern that programs are placing too much emphasis on NBE preparation. One participant noted that when he pursued his funeral service education program in the 1960s there was seldom discussion of the need to take the NBE, the assumption being that if students did well in their studies that they would also pass the exam.

One of the most intriguing findings of this study was that despite the observation of an increased effort on the part of academic programs to prepare students to take the NBE since 2004, practitioners' perception of preparation to enter the workforce was no different after 2004 than it was prior to 2004. For both groups of practitioners, the measurement of perceived preparation to enter the workforce either prior to, or after, 2004 was captured within the category of (*minimal*

preparation), which falls one scale point short of the perception of (*good preparation*).

These results are significant for two reasons. First, they bring into question the extent to which the ABFSE's policies of a) of requiring all funeral service students take the NBE as a requirement for graduation, and b) using first-time NBE scores as a measure of program effectiveness, serve any useful purpose in assessing program quality and instructional effectiveness for the goal of adequately preparing students for work in funeral service. Second, whereas practitioners generally perceive the learning objectives of the ABFSE curriculum as both important and adequate for professional practice, this research found evidence that there *is* a problem with respect to perceived preparation for the purpose of *mastering* the learning objectives. In other words, the problem is not that the curriculum is perceived as being either unimportant and/or inadequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service. Rather, practitioners perceived that the funeral service education program they completed did not adequately prepare them to master a significant portion of the curriculum, as evidenced by low ratings of academic preparation for the purpose of mastering approximately one-third of the 170 ABFSE learning objectives.

One possible explanation for the perception of insufficient academic preparation observed in this study might relate to the ABFSE's decision in 1996 to recognize the associate's degree as the minimum educational standard for preparation for the funeral service profession (ABFSE Accreditation Standard 6.1). Flory (2008)

observed that prior to 1996, many funeral service education programs offered diploma programs of study that typically ranged from 12 to 18 months. With the movement to the associate's degree, Flory (2008) notes that:

...many schools packed 60 semester hours into 12 or 18 months because students are often older and want a shorter time frame. (Some states have simply ignored the requirement.) Because of the variety of state requirements and the confusing layers of education, colleges have developed course outlines that are too broad in scope for a short time frame. Properly taught in 12 months, the outlines would choke a graduate student. Thus, many colleges are skim-teaching the material based on what they believe will be part of the National Board Examination. They are not teaching accounting; they are teaching book-keeping. They are not teaching history, they are teaching a smattering of funeral service history. In many courses, they are just teaching basic definitions (p. 48).

As previously noted in the discussion related to Research Question 10, there was no evidence of a difference in perceived preparation to function as an entry-level funeral service practitioner based on the type of academic program the participant pursued. Participants were not asked to indicate the duration, in months, of the funeral service education program that they completed. Although insufficient data were available from this study to test the hypothesis that a negative perception of preparation might exhibit a significant correlation with the length of the academic program completed, Flory (2008) presents an interesting hypothesis that should be

considered as a direction for further research pertaining to factors affecting perception of academic preparation.

Implications for Professional Practice

As noted in practitioners' responses to the final survey question and presented in Chapter 4, professional skills in funeral directing are often cultivated and developed during clinical education and internship experiences that take place under experienced funeral directors at funeral homes and mortuaries (Marsaglia, 2013). There are, however, numerous legal and ethical barriers to providing clinical education to students, especially prior to their matriculation into an ABFSE-accredited funeral service education program. Most states typically prohibit individuals from participating in embalming-related work experiences unless that person is either a mortuary science student enrolled in an accredited funeral service education program, or a program graduate duly registered with the appropriate state licensing agency to work as an intern or apprentice. Data privacy concerns, OSHA blood-borne pathogen laws, and ethical protocols governing who may be in the presence of a deceased person from the time of death to final disposition all have the effect of restricting both prospective and current students from gaining clinical experience that might benefit them in their study of mortuary science.

It should be noted as well, that even in states where clinical experiences before or during college are legal, the practice of funeral service is sensitive in nature. Funeral directing involves caring for the remains of human beings, and as such must be done in a dignified, professional, and appropriate manner. Whereas the definitions

of “dignified,” “professional,” and “appropriate” can be argued *ad infinitum*, access to human remains for educational purposes will most likely always come with restrictions and limitations. As such, practitioners should be reasonable in their expectations about what kind of learning experiences mortuary science students might have had by the time they complete their college education. To the extent that practitioners can change state laws and/ or policies limiting access to human remains for clinical learning experiences, action on the part of practitioners to broaden clinical training laws might be an effective way of addressing experiential education concerns evidenced by this research. Proactive efforts to bridge working relationships between funeral homes and mortuary science programs would also be helpful for the purpose of improving funeral service education.

As discussed in Chapter 1, most states require that an aspirant for a funeral director and/or embalmer license pass the National Board Examination (NBE) as a requirement to earn a license to practice funeral directing and/or embalming. This is because:

The purpose of the National Board Examination (NBE) is to provide official licensing agencies with a national evaluation of an applicant for licensure in the diverse areas of competency required for the field of funeral service. The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards develops, administers and provides score reporting services to the state licensure boards....The NBE is used in all 50 states and the District of Columbia as an assessment of content knowledge needed to practice as a licensed Funeral

Director or Embalmer. (<http://www.theconferenceonline.org/students-nbe.shtml>)

As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the results of this study indicated that 81.2% of practitioners either (*strongly agree*) or (*agree*) with the statement “*I believe I was well prepared by my funeral service education program to take the National Board Examination (NBE),*” while only 4.2% of practitioners either (*strongly disagree*) or (*disagree*) with this statement. As previously noted in Chapter 1, it is stated in the National Board Examination Study Guide manual published by the ICFSEB that “the purpose of the International Conference’s National Board Examination is to differentiate between candidates who possess the MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS [*sic*] to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer from those who do not” (ICFSEB, 2007, p. 3). Yet in spite of their overall perception of being well prepared by their funeral service education program to take the NBE, significantly 69.5% of practitioners either (*strongly disagree*) or (*disagree*) with the statement “*upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer,*” while only 10.1% of practitioners responded that they either (*strongly agree*) or (*agree*) with this statement.

An important question related to licensing policy and the NBE is this: To what extent can a passing score on the NBE be said to be valid measurement of an “evaluation of an applicant for licensure in the diverse areas of competency required for the field of funeral service” as declared by the ICFSEB? Because the ICFSEB does not publish the data used to validate the NBE for this purpose, it is not possible to assess the extent to which this statement is accurate. On the contrary, the results of this study indicate that despite being well prepared by their funeral service education program to take the NBE, overall preparation for entry-level work in funeral service was not perceived as adequate.

How, then, might the ABFSE assess, in a meaningful way, the extent to which academic programs adequately prepare their graduates for work in funeral service? In an *Issue Brief* published by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2008), policy scholar Clifford Adelman argues that greater emphasis needs to be placed on assessing the mastery of learning outcomes through the use of a *qualifications framework*:

A qualifications framework is a statement of learning outcomes and competencies a student must demonstrate for a degree at a specific level to be awarded. It is not a statement of objectives or goals. It is not a wish list. It is a performance criterion. When an institution of higher learning is governed by a qualifications framework, it must demonstrate that its students have

demonstrated. And that means all of its students, not just the [ones] who take a standardized test (p. 6).

Moving forward, perhaps the ABFSE should require some kind of performance criterion that places greater emphasis on the demonstration of learning outcomes and competencies beyond those which can be determined by a passing score on the NBE. If, for example, practitioners expect that program graduates have the ability find and raise blood vessels on a human cadaver, it is not enough for a student to be able only to answer a question about locating a blood vessel presented on a standardized test. One way to approach the improvement of mastering learning competencies in keeping with the theory of a qualifications framework might be the development of some type of practical examination as part of the process of qualifying a student for graduation. Further discussion of the role of qualifying frameworks for assessing competency is one encouraging way to approach the improvement funeral service education into the future.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because a) the vast majority of mortuary science programs are housed within community colleges, and b) few mortuary science educators hold research degrees such as the Ph.D., scholarly output related to mortuary science is sparse. The literature reviewed for this dissertation found that the majority of scholarly works related to the professional practice have been the result of doctoral dissertations written by individuals who teach at funeral service education programs. There is only one peer reviewed journal for the profession, the *Journal of Funeral Service*

Education, and as previously discussed its publication is irregular. Although ABFSE accreditation standard 3.2.6 requires that each program must “encourage student and faculty research in the field of funeral service,” there is, regrettably, a scarcity of contemporary scholarship related to the professional practice of mortuary science. The most common research related to death care was observed to be conducted by marketing firms and private organizations, the results of which are typically sold to their clients and not published in peer-review journals. Because the majority of this research is proprietary in nature, the methodology and data-collecting protocols are not typically disclosed and cannot be subject to legitimate criticism. This is something which needs to change.

This research study was the first of its kind to consider practitioners’ perceptions of the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. A limitation of this research is that the perceptions studied were only those of practitioners; there were no attempts to study the perceptions of death care preferences on the part of the general public. Future research needs to consider the extent to which there is congruence between the contemporary practice of funeral service and the death care preferences of an increasingly diverse American public. Fifty years ago Jessica Mitford (1963) warned that if funeral directors fail to offer goods and services beyond the traditional norms of the day, they run the risk of becoming irrelevant and obsolete - a vestige of a past, no longer perceived to offer anything of value to the very people whom they desire to serve.

As new technologies for disposition, such as alkaline hydrolysis (i.e. reducing a body to bone fragments using water, heat, and caustic base chemical), become more normative in American society, funeral directors will remain relevant to death care only to the extent they embrace the kinds of change being demanded by families today. Researchers, especially those affiliated with funeral service education programs accredited by the ABFSE, have an obligation to discover and disseminate new knowledge to students, practitioners, and the public alike, lest funeral service fade into the kind of professional irrelevance Mitford warned about five decades ago. The time for change is now.

Epilogue

Jessica Mitford, arguably the most incisive critic of American funeral customs, was once asked what kind of funeral she wanted for herself. According to her obituary appearing in the *New York Times* (Severo, 1996), she (facetiously) said she hoped for:

An elaborate one...with six black horses with plumes and one of those marvelous jobs of embalming that takes 20 years off...[and] streets to be blocked off, dignitaries to declaim sobbingly over the flower-smothered bier, proclamations to be issued -- that sort of thing.

Her comments were, of course, satire – another playful jab at the profession she took so much pleasure in (and, in ironic contrast to the communist sympathies of her youth, earned good money from) mocking with wry tongue and poison pen. To

wit, Mitford's family arranged to have a horse-drawn carriage with feather plumes stationed in front of the Delancey Street Foundation building in San Francisco's Embarcadero, the site of one of her two memorial services (the second having been held at the Lyric Theatre in London). Attendees included Shana Alexander, Maya Angelou and Molly Ivins. The cost of the event most likely ran into the thousands of dollars – even though the cremation of her body cost \$475. Reflecting on how the woman affectionately known by her admirers as *The Queen of the Muckrakers* was memorialized at her death, Lynch (2000) writes that:

One can only speculate – as Dinki and Benji [Mitford's surviving children] and I tried to do – on what she'd think of the multimedia, intercontinental extravaganzas held in California and London that marked her death. Committees were formed and money was raised and halls were engaged and music selected and speakers arranged, and a good cause named for memorial contributions....In London they rented the Lyric Theatre in Shaftesbury Avenue at a cost, one reckons, exponentially higher than any "average" funeral. But for the hundreds of those who loved her and attended, from Mayo Angelou to Salmon Rushdie, to her husband and her daughter and her son, the services had meaning and comforts beyond the invoices. For this was a woman who was admired and celebrated and loved, really truly loved, for all her passions and causes and foibles. To have done nothing would have been simpler, easier, more convenient and cheaper – a good bargain on a bad deal.

So something had to be done. Not because it matters to the dead, but because it matters for the living (p. 52).

What Mitford never understood, or perhaps simply chose to ignore, is the heartfelt human reality observed by Lynch (2000, 2007) that the dead really *do matter* to the living - even though they are no longer able to care.

The conclusion of this dissertation was written four months after the horrific murder of 20 first graders and six teachers at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut³³ - each one shot to death by a 20 year old gunman, who then took his own life following the deadly rampage. Despite a constant barrage of caskets, hearses, and funeral processions appearing in the news media for weeks following the slaughter, there were no essays by the critics of funeral service speculating about what the cost of the funerals might have been, no caricatures of floral tributes in the shape of dollar signs, and no suggestion that, for purposes of economy, the bodies of the murdered innocents be disposed of quickly and without ceremony. Instead, funeral directors and embalmers from across the state stepped forward to care for the remains of the dead and comfort the grieving survivors to the best of their ability. As Folino (2013) reported:

All told, 12 funeral homes in Connecticut and another in New York served the 26 families of the Sandy Hook Elementary School. More than 160 Connecticut funeral directors volunteered their expertise, time and kindness to support their professional brothers and sisters in a variety of ways, from

³³ December 14, 2012

making arrangements to preparing the deceased, coordinating all aspects of the funerals and personally doing jobs that PAs³⁴ normally do (pp. 4-5).

The funeral directors and embalmers helped to get the dead where they needed to go, and living where they needed to be.

One of the last victims to be buried was 6-year old Ana Grace Marquez-Greene, whose funeral was attended by over 1,000 mourners.



Figure 3. The funeral procession of Ana Grace Marquez-Greene.³⁵

³⁴ The term “PA,” as used by Folino in this article, means “personal assistant.” P. S. Folino (personal communication, April 1, 2013)

³⁵ Photo taken by Brad Horrigan, appearing on the ctpost.com website at <http://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Final-day-of-funerals-for-Newtown-victims-4140538.php#photo-3930775>. Copyright December 22, 2012 by the Hartford Courant. Reprinted with permission.

As presented in Figure 3, an unadorned vintage funeral carriage - led by two white horses attired with black plumes - brought young Ana Grace to her final resting place. The image of Ana Grace's funeral procession serves as a reminder that at a time of unthinkable pain and suffering there were funeral directors and embalmers who, in spite of the satire and lampooning that has forever been associated with *Dismal Trade*, were there to serve her grieving family with dignity and compassion. To the extent that funeral service education programs are able to prepare students with the skill and acumen to provide meaningful care to survivors at a time of loss and suffering, the profession of funeral service will remain a valued institution within American society for many years to come.

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Appendix A

Research Exemption from IRB Review Form

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**Research Exempt from IRB Committee Review
Category 2:
SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS, STANDARD EDUCATION TESTS & OBSERVATIONS
OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR**

Route this form to: See instructions below.	U Wide Form: UM 1571 March 2010
IRB Use Only	
#	

Submission Instructions:

E-mail a copy of this application and any other materials required to the Research Subjects' Protections Programs Office: RSPPeRev@umn.edu

Electronically submitted protocols must be sent from a University of MN e-mail account. Original signatures are not required. U of M x.500 IDs have been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

Academic Advisors and Co-Investigators should be carbon copied (Cc) on the submission e-mail.

For help with this form and to download additional appendices: see <http://www.research.umn.edu/irb/download/> or call 612-626-5654

1.1 Project Title (Project title must match grant title. If different, also provide grant title):

Practitioners' Perceptions of the Academic Preparation of Funeral Directors and Embalmers in the Context of Changing Death Care Preferences in the United States.

1.2 Principal Investigator (PI)

Name (Last name, First name MI): LuBrant, Michael P.	Highest Earned Degree: M.A.
Mailing Address: MMC 740; 420 Delaware Street SE Minneapolis, MN 55455	Phone Number: 612-624-3980
	Pager or Cell Phone Number: 651-206-2382
	Fax: 612-624-4478
U of M Employee/Student ID: 2253720	Email: mpl@umn.edu
U of M x.500 ID (ex. smith001): mpl	University Department (if applicable): Medical School Administration
Occupational Position: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Fairview Researcher <input type="checkbox"/> Gillette Researcher <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Human Subjects Training (one of these must be checked--refer to training links at the end of this section): <input type="checkbox"/> CITI, <input type="checkbox"/> Investigator 101, <input type="checkbox"/> NIH training (EXCEPT for 5/8/06 to 2/29/08), <input type="checkbox"/> UM/RCR (between 1994-2003) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other - Indicate training received, when and from which institution: University of Minnesota - part of PhD program degree requirements.	HIPAA Training (Required if Data Contains PHI): <input type="checkbox"/> HIPAA
As Principal Investigator of this study, I assure the IRB that the following statements are true: The information provided in this form is correct. I will seek and obtain prior written approval from the IRB for any substantive modifications in the proposal, including changes in procedures, co-investigators, funding agencies, etc. I will promptly report any unexpected or otherwise significant adverse events or unanticipated problems or incidents that may occur in the course of this study. I will report in writing any significant new findings which develop during the course of this study which may affect the risks and benefits to participation. I will not begin my research until I have received written notification of final IRB approval. I will comply with all IRB requests to report on the status of the study. I will maintain records of this research according to IRB guidelines. The grant that I have submitted to my funding agency which is submitted with this IRB submission accurately and completely reflects what is contained in this application. If these conditions are not met, I understand that approval of this research could be suspended or terminated.	
mpl	2/25/2011
x.500 of PI	Date

Training Links:

FIRST (Fostering Integrity in Research, Scholarship and Training): <http://clegacy.research.umn.edu/first/humansubjects.htm>
 HIPAA: <http://www.research.umn.edu/first/AdditionalCourses.htm>
 - "UM/RCR" includes all human subjects protection training offered in-person or online at the University of Minnesota from 1994-2003.
 - The online NIH tutorial offered during the period May 8, 2006-February 29, 2008 is NOT acceptable to meet this requirement.
 - If you completed a version of this training not included on the list provided, provide details as indicated
 - The University of Minnesota uses two methods to verify records about completion of human subjects protection training: 1) training registration online, or 2) researcher must provide copy of completion certificate. To check your online training record, go to <http://www.research.umn.edu/first/Reports.htm>

1.3 Department, Division Head, or Dean Information

Please note as the researcher, you are responsible for confirming and following your departmental standards and requirements for research.

Rebecca Ropers-Huilman
Name of Department Head, Division Head, or Dean

1.4 Are there additional Co-Investigators and Staff?

- Yes. Download an [extra personnel sheet](#) and include it with your application.
- No. Continue to 1.5.

1.5 Is the PI of this research a student?

- Yes. . Include [Appendix J](#).
- Electronically submitted protocols must be carbon copied (Cc) to their advisor.
- No. Continue to 2.

Academic Advisor to the Student Investigator	
Advisor's Name (Last name, First name MI): Hendel, Darwin D.	University Department: Organizational Leadership and Policy Development
Mailing Address: Org Leadership, Policy/Dev 310H Wulling Hall 86 Pleasant St S E, Minneapolis, MN 55455	Phone Number: 612-625-0129 Email: hende001@umn.edu U of M x.500 ID (ex. smith001): hende001

2. Funding

2.1 Is this research funded by an internal or external agency?

- Yes. Include [Appendix A](#).
- No.

If no, explain how costs of research will be covered:

3. Institutional Oversight

3.1 Is this research proposal being reviewed by any other institution or peer review committee?

- Yes.
It is the responsibility of the PI to secure the appropriate approval from these committees and document that approval to the IRB. Attach a copy of documentation of approval, if received, and indicate committees below.

If yes, please list which committees will review this proposal:

- No.

4. Conflict of Interest

Federal Guidelines emphasize the importance of assuring there are no conflicts of interest in research projects that could affect the welfare of human subjects. Disclosure of financial interests is required from all individuals involved in the design, conduct or reporting of the research. If this study involves or presents a potential conflict of interest, additional information will need to be provided to the IRB. Examples of potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- A researcher or family member participating in research on a technology, process or product owned by a business in which the faculty member holds a financial interest
- A researcher participating in research on a technology, process or product developed by that researcher
- A researcher or family member assuming an executive position in a business engaged in commercial or research activities related to the researchers University responsibilities
- A researcher or family member serving on the Board of Directors of a business from which that member receives University-supervised Sponsored Research Support
- A researcher receiving consulting income from a business that funds his or her research

“Immediate Family” means, at a minimum, spouse and each dependent child.

“Financial Interest Related to the Research” means financial interest in the sponsor, product or service being tested.

University of Minnesota Researchers, please refer to:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Individual_COI.pdf

Fairview Health System Researchers, please refer to:

<http://www.fairview.org/prof/research>

<http://www.gillettechildrens.org/>

4.1 Do any of the Investigators or personnel listed on this research have a business interest or a financial interest of \$10,000 or more associated with this study when aggregated for their immediate family?

- No.
 Yes.

If yes, identify the individual(s) and complete section 4.3:

4.2 Do any of the investigators or personnel (when aggregated for their immediate family) listed on this research have:

Ownership interests less than \$10,000 when the value of interest could be affected by the outcome of the research.

- No. Yes.

Do ownership interests exceed 5% interest in any one single entity when aggregated for the immediate family?

- No. Yes.

Compensation less than \$10,000 when the value of the compensation could be affected by the outcome of the research.

- No. Yes.

If yes, identify the individual(s) and complete section 4.3:

4.3 Has this potential conflict of interest been disclosed and managed?

- No.

If you are a University of Minnesota researcher, please disclose your potential conflict of interest online for review by your Department Head and Dean via the Report of External Professional Activities (REPA) at: <https://egms.umn.edu/REPA/>

If you are a Fairview Health System researcher, please complete the Fairview Health Services Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms (http://www.fairview.org/prof/research/proceed_forms.asp) and submit the completed forms to the Fairview Office of Research.

If you are a Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare researcher, please contact the Director of Research Administration, at 651-229-1745.

Yes. Date of Management Plan:

The IRB will verify that a management plan is in place with the Conflict Review and Management Committee (CRC). If the CMC does not have an approved management plan for this research, the CMC will contact the individual(s) listed in question 4.1 for additional information.

Final IRB approval cannot be granted until all potential conflict matters are settled. The IRB requires a recommendation from the CRC regarding disclosure to subjects and management of the conflict. The full IRB committee determines what disclosure language should be in the consent form.

5. Summary of Activities

Use lay language, do not cut and paste from or refer to a grant or an abstract.

5.1 Briefly state your research question.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate practitioners' perceptions of the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States.

5.2 Describe the tasks subjects will be asked to perform.

Describe the frequency and duration of procedures, psychological tests, educational tests, and experiments; including screening, intervention, follow-up etc. *Reminder:* No personal or sensitive information can be sought under exempt guidelines. (If you intend to pilot a process before recruiting for the main study please explain.)

Subjects will be asked to complete one on-line survey designed to measure their perception of academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers at programs of funeral service accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. It is anticipated that it will take subjects approximately 45 minutes to complete the survey. If they desire, subjects will be given the opportunity to complete the survey in more than one sitting.

Pilot testing of the survey will occur. Specifically, the National Funeral Directors Association will send an e-mail message to 150 of its members, selected at random from an e-mail database of all members, inviting their participation in the piloting of this survey. NFDA will explain to Individuals that they were randomly selected to participate in the piloting of an on-line research study about funeral service education in the United States. A link to the pilot version of the on-line survey will be included as part of the e-mail message sent by MFDA to this randomly-selected group of prospective pilot subjects. The pilot survey will include a question at its end in which subjects are asked to provide feedback about any of the questions that appear on the survey. Pilot subjects will also be given the opportunity to report any problem(s) they may experience while completing the survey.

Survey results and qualitative feedback provided pilot study subjects will be thoroughly reviewed. Any reported problem(s) will be addressed and corrected prior to the launching of the survey on a wide-scale, national level to the population of interest.

Attach all surveys, instruments, interview questions, focus group questions etc. 

5.3 Describe what non-participants will do during this period (activities and supervision if applicable):

If your subjects will be students, it is important that the study design not penalize students who will not be participating if not all students will be participating.

Not applicable.

5.4 How long do you anticipate this research study will last from the time you are determined to meet the criteria for exempt research?

Exempt research is generally considered short-term in nature. This office routinely inactivates exempt applications after five years from the time it was determined to meet the exempt criteria. If you think your project will extend beyond five years, contact the IRB office (612-626-5654 or irb@umn.edu).

It is anticipated that this research study will take less than one year to complete.

6. Participant Population

6.1 Expected Number of Participants: 1,500

# of Male: 600	# Female: 900
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6.2 Expected Age Range

Please confirm subjects are at least 18 years old, checking all that apply (you may not conduct research with subjects younger than 18 under exempt category two, if you would like to include subjects younger than 18, you must complete the full IRB application requesting expedited review if appropriate):

- 18-64
 65 and older

6.3 Describe the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of subjects in this research study.

Inclusion Criteria:

- 1) A prospective subject must have completed a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education;
- 2) A prospective subject must hold a valid United States state-issued license (or licenses) to practice funeral directing and/or embalming;

(Exception: Because the state of Colorado does not license funeral directors and/or embalmers, practitioners who identify themselves as funeral directors and/or embalmers working in Colorado will be considered eligible to participate in this study.)
- 3) A prospective subject must, over the past 12 months, have worked in some capacity as as funeral director and/or embalmer in the United States.

Exclusion Criteria:

- 1) A prospective subject who did not complete a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education will be excluded from participation in this study;
- 2) A prospective subject who does not hold a valid United States state-issued license (or licenses) to practice funeral directing and/or embalming will be excluded from participation in this study;

(Exception: As described in 6.3.2. above, an exception will be made for self-identified funeral directors and/or embalmers working in the state of Colorado. Colorado is the only state where any person may practice funeral directing and/or embalming without a license. Colorado does not license funeral directors and/or embalmers.)
- 3) A prospective subject who has not actively worked in some capacity as a funeral director and/or embalmer in the United States during the past 12 months will be excluded from participation in this study.

6.4 Location of Subjects during Research Data Collection

Check all that apply:

- Elementary/Secondary Schools (include Appendix M) 
- Community Center, specify: _____
- University Campus (non-clinical), specify: _____
- Subject's Home, specify: _____
- International Location (include Appendix K): _____
- Other special institutions, specify: Subjects are most likely to be employed at funeral homes, mortuaries, crematories, and/or cemeteries located throughout the United States. Subjects may complete the survey at their place of employment, their home, or any place of convenience to them.

7. Compensation

7.1 Will you give subjects gifts, payments, compensation, reimbursement, services without charge or extra credit?

- Yes.
- No.

If yes, please explain:

8. Recruitment

8.1 Are subjects chosen from records?

- Yes. Complete 8.1a-c
- No. Continue to 8.2

8.1a What type of records:

- Medical
- Educational
- Employment
- Other: _____

8.1b Are the records publicly available?

- Yes. Proceed to question 8.2
- No. Proceed to question 8.1c

8.1c Do you already have permissible access to the private records? (i.e. through your job, volunteer work, internship, etc.)

- Yes. Describe how you have permissible access.

- No. You must ask the custodian of the record to make initial contact for you (describe how they will do this in question 8.2) and let the potential subject contact you if they are interested. Attach a letter of cooperation from the custodian of the record indicating that they will make initial contact on your behalf. Please note that even if the custodian is willing to give you the private list, if you do not have permissible access to the records, the fact that the custodian will give you the list does not create permissible access. The custodian will still have to make initial contact.

8.2 Describe the recruitment process to be used:

Attach a copy of any and all recruitment materials to be used e.g. advertisements, bulletin board notices, e-mails, letters, phone scripts, or URLs. 

It is estimated that approximately 1,500 subjects may choose to participate in this research study. The estimate of a response size of n = 1,500 is based upon survey response rates provided by the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). NFDA, which has approximately 19,000 individual members, has

conducted several large-scale surveys of their membership and reports a typical survey response rate of approximately 15 percent.

An e-mail message will be sent to the following agencies regulatory agencies, professional organizations, and/or trade publications that maintain e-mail databases of funeral directors and/or embalmers believed to meet the eligibility criteria for participation in this study. Attached to this form (see Appendix 8.2b) is the text that will be e-mailed to each of the agencies and organizations listed below:

[All] Funeral Service Regulatory Boards in the United States
[All] State Professional Funeral Service Associations in the United States
Editor: American Funeral Director Magazine
Editor: Memorial Business Journal
Editor: Mortuary Management Magazine
Cremation Association of North America
International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association
International Order of the Golden Rule
National Funeral Directors Association
National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association
Selected Independent Funeral Homes

8.3 Explain who will approach potential subjects to take part in the research study and what will be done to protect individuals' privacy in this process:

Initial contact of subjects identified through records search must be made by the official holder of the record, i.e. primary physician, therapist, public school official.

Potential subjects will be approached by the individual who maintains the e-mail database for the regulatory agency, professional organization, and/or publication stated in 8.2 (above). Individuals' privacy will be protected because the PI of this research study will not request any information from the subjects that might potentially reveal their identity.

9. Confidentiality

See [Protecting Private Data Guideline](#) from the Office of Information Technology (OIT) for information about protecting the privacy of research data.

9.1 Describe provisions that will be taken to maintain confidentiality of data (e.g. surveys, video, audio tape, photos):

All data will be gathered by the University of Minnesota's Office of Measurement Services, where it will be stored on a secure server. All data files transferred to the principal investigator will be stored on password-protected, encrypted computers owned and maintained by the University of Minnesota.

No personally-identifiable information is requested as part of this survey. It is possible, however, that a subject may choose to complete the survey in more than one sitting. If this is the case, the subject will need to provide log-in information as part of the processes of re-gaining entry to their survey. The Office of Measurement Services will be responsible to granting access to subjects for the purpose of completing their surveys and will regulate log-in codes, as may be necessary. The Office of Measurement Services will not disclose any log-in code information to the PI of this study, and any log-in code information that may be required to complete a survey will be deleted by OMS either at the completion of the survey, or if the subject decides to withdraw their participation in this research study.

9.2 Describe the security plan for data including where stored and for how long, noting that you may not keep identifiable data indefinitely:

No identifiable data will be gathered as part of this research study. Data gathered from the survey will be kept indefinitely. The data will be stored on encrypted, password-protected computers and servers owned and maintained by the University of Minnesota. The data set will also be saved on a password-protected, encrypted flash drive, which is the person property of the PI for this research study.

9.3 Will the PI have a link to identify subjects?

- Yes.
 No.

9.4 Will identifiable data be made available to anyone other than the PI?

- Yes.
 No.

If yes, explain who and why they will have access to the identifiable data:

10. Informed Consent Process

Reminder: If you are mailing a survey to subjects and asking them to return it to you, or doing a phone interview, you must send or read a consent statement which includes the same information as the consent form but is not signed.

10.1 Describe who will conduct the consent process with subjects and how consent will be obtained:

The consent process will be explained in writing to the subject as part of the introduction to the survey. Consent, therefore, will be overseen by the Office of Measurement Services at the University of Minnesota. Specifically, it will be explained in writing to the subject that if s/he chooses to complete the survey, then it will be assumed s/he also gives her/his consent to participate in the research study. The subject will also be informed that there is no consent form for her/him to sign in order to participate in the research study. As part of the consent process, the subject will also be informed that choosing either to participate, or not to participate, in this research study will in no way affect any past, present, and/or future relationships s/he may have with the University of Minnesota.

10.2 Recognizing that consent itself is a process of communication, describe what will be said to subjects to introduce the research: Do not say "see consent form". Write the explanation in lay language.

If you are using telephone surveys, attach telephone scripts. 

The subject will first be thanked, in writing, for her/his interest in participating in this research study. Next, the subject will be informed of the eligibility criterion for participation. The subject will then be informed of what to expect in terms of the format of the survey and the kinds of questions that they will be asked. Next will be an explanation of how the data from the survey will be used, followed by an explanation of the survey length and the considerations given to subject privacy. Finally, there will be an explanation of the consent process for participation in this research study.

10.3 Prepare and attach consent forms for review. For exempt category two research, it is not necessary to obtain signed documentation of consent (i.e. a signature). Please submit a 'consent information sheet' which does not include a signature line. The IRB office reserves the right to require that you obtain signatures, but in most cases it is not necessary.

Even though the IRB may determine that some research is exempt from the federal regulations, adequate provisions still need to be in place to protect research participants.

In making its consideration of exempt status, the HRPP/IRB office still has to determine that:

- a) The research involves no more than minimal risk to participants
- b) Selection of participants is equitable
- c) If there is recording of identifiable information, there are adequate provisions to maintain the confidentiality of the data
- d) If there are interactions with participants, there will be a consent process that will disclose such information as:
 - that the activity involves research
 - a description of the procedures
 - that participation is voluntary
 - name and contact information for the investigator
- e) There are adequate provisions to maintain the privacy of participants.

[Information Sheet for Research](#)

This regulation does not apply to FDA regulated research.

You have reached the end of this form. Please make sure that you have responded to every question on this application (even if your response is "not applicable").

Appendix B

IRB Approval to Conduct Research

1102E96474 - PI LuBrant - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

Subject: 1102E96474 - PI LuBrant - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

From: irb@umn.edu

Date: Thu, 3 Mar 2011 09:35:15 -0600 (CST)

To: mpl@umn.edu

TO : hende001@umn.edu, mpl@umn.edu,

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

Study Number: 1102E96474

Principal Investigator: Michael LuBrant

Title(s):

Practitioners' Perceptions of the Academic Preparation of Funeral Directors and Embalmers in the Context of Changing Death Care Preferences in the United States.

This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of exemption from full committee review. You will not receive a hard copy or letter.

This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

The study number above is assigned to your research. That number and the title of your study must be used in all communication with the IRB office.

Research that involves observation can be approved under this category without obtaining consent.

SURVEY OR INTERVIEW RESEARCH APPROVED AS EXEMPT UNDER THIS CATEGORY IS LIMITED TO ADULT SUBJECTS.

This exemption is valid for five years from the date of this correspondence and will be filed inactive at that time. You will receive a notification prior to inactivation. If this research will extend beyond five years, you must submit a new application to the IRB before the study's expiration date.

Upon receipt of this email, you may begin your research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

You may go to the View Completed section of eResearch Central at <http://eresearch.umn.edu/> to view further

1102E96474 - PI LuBrant - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

details on your study.

The IRB wishes you success with this research.

We have created a short survey that will only take a couple of minutes to complete. The questions are basibut will give us guidance on what areas are showing improvement and what areas we need to focus on:
<https://umsurvey.umn.edu/index.php?sid=94693&lang=um>

Appendix C

Request for Participation Disseminating Survey Instrument

[Date]

TO: [All] Funeral Service Regulatory Boards in the United States
[All] State Professional Funeral Service Associations in the United States
Cremation Association of North America
Editor: American Funeral Director Magazine
Editor: Memorial Business Journal
Editor: Mortuary Management Magazine
International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association
International Order of the Golden Rule
National Funeral Directors Association
National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association
Selected Independent Funeral Homes

FROM: Michael LuBrant, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, University of Minnesota;
Director, Program of Mortuary Science, University of Minnesota

RE: Research Study Investigating Funeral Service Education in the United States

I am writing to ask for your assistance in disseminating information about a research study of funeral service education in the United States to the membership of, and/or subscribers to, your respective regulatory agencies, professional organizations, and/or trade publications. I am conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree Educational Policy and Administration, with a concentration in higher education.

This study represents the first large-scale investigation of practitioners' perceptions of the academic preparation of funeral directors and embalmers to be conducted in the United States. A goal of this research is to improve funeral service education offered through programs accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). I would respectfully ask that you please contribute to the success of this research by forwarding the following message (below) to individuals whose e-mail addresses you may have in your organization's database. If you would like to preview the survey instrument, you may do so by clicking on the following link: [to be determined]

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at (612) 624-3980, or e-mail mpl@umn.edu. If you would prefer to talk with someone other than myself about this research you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota either by telephone (612) 626-5654, or via the Web at <http://www.irb.umn.edu>. The reference number assigned to this study is [t.b.d.]

[Date]

Dear Funeral Service Practitioner,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a research study about funeral service education in the United States. The purpose of this study, which serves as the basis of my Ph.D. dissertation, is to gather information from practitioners about their experiences and perceptions of funeral service education in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States. In addition to being a doctoral candidate, I am a 16-year licensed funeral director and embalmer, and I presently serve as the director of a mortuary science program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). The information gathered as part of this study will be presented to the ABFSE for the purpose of improving funeral service education in the United States.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at (612) 624-3980, or e-mail mpl@umn.edu. If you would prefer to talk with someone other than myself about this research you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota either by telephone (612) 626-5654, or via the Web at <http://www.irb.umn.edu>. The reference number assigned to this study is [t.b.d.]

If you agree to participate in the study, you can begin the survey by clicking on the following link: [t.b.d.]

Sincerely,

Michael P. LuBrant
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Policy and Administration, Higher Education
College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota
Director and Assistant Professor
Program of Mortuary Science, University of Minnesota

Appendix D

Survey Instrument

Dear Funeral Service Practitioner,

I am writing to ask you for your participation in a research study about funeral service education in the United States. The purpose of this study, which serves as the basis of my Ph.D. dissertation, is to gather information from practitioners about their experiences and perceptions of funeral service education in the context of changing death care preferences in the United States.

In addition to being a doctoral candidate, I am a 16-year licensed funeral director and embalmer, and I presently serve as the director of a mortuary science program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). The information gathered as part of this study will be presented to the ABFSE for the purpose of improving funeral service education in the United States.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at (612) 624-3980, or e-mail mpl@umn.edu. If you would prefer to talk with someone other than myself about this research you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Minnesota either by telephone (612) 626-5654, or via the Web at <http://www.irb.umn.edu>. The reference number assigned to this study is 1102E96474.

At the bottom of each page you will find the survey navigation buttons. You need to use these buttons to move from one page to the next (either forward or backward) when completing the survey instrument. Please do not use the forward and backward arrows on your Web browser because they may not work to move the survey, rather the buttons on the survey document will work correctly. Be sure to use the SAVE button if you chose to complete the survey in more than one sitting.

Sincerely,

Michael P. LuBrant
Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Policy and Administration, Higher Education
College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota
Director and Assistant Professor
Program of Mortuary Science, University of Minnesota

Survey Instrument Copyright, Michael LuBrant - All Rights Reserved - 2011

Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

25% 50% 75% 100%

POWERED BY 

Thank you!

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study, the title of which is "Practitioners Perceptions of the Academic Preparation of Funeral Directors and Embalmers in the Context of Changing Death Care Preferences in the United States."

Participant Eligibility

The population of interest for this study consists of funeral directors and embalmers 1) who have completed a program of funeral service education accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) in 1962 or later, 2) who presently hold a valid United States state-issued license (or licenses) to practice funeral directing and/or embalming, and 3) who, during the past 12 months, have worked in some capacity in funeral service as either a funeral director and/or embalmer in the United States. (Note: Funeral directors and embalmers working in Colorado, where there is no licensure, are eligible to participate in this study). If you identify yourself as being part of this population, you are eligible to participate in this study.

What to Expect

The survey will begin by asking you a few questions to determine your eligibility to participate in this research. If you are an eligible participant, you will be prompted to the first set of research questions. Individuals who are ineligible to participate will be directed out of the survey.

You will then be asked a set of questions about your perceptions of funeral service education. The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum is based on a number of learning objectives which are categorized according to academic discipline (For example, there are 9 learning objectives for the academic discipline of business law). You will be asked to indicate both 1) your perception of the importance of these learning objectives and 2) your perception of the extent to which you believe the funeral service education program you completed prepared you to master these learning objectives. You will also be asked a question about your perception of the adequacy of these learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service.

Next, you will be asked a few questions about your perception of the National Board Examination of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (NBE) in the context of your funeral service education experience.

The survey continues by asking you some demographic questions, the purpose of which is to organize the data gathered from this research.

The final question of this study is "open-ended," meaning that you will have the opportunity to provide comments about your perceptions of funeral service education.

How the Data Will Be Used

In addition to being published as part of my dissertation, the results of this study will be presented to the Curriculum Committee of the American Board of Funeral Service Education. It is hoped that educators, policy-makers and practitioners will use the results of this study to improve the quality of funeral service education in the United States.

Survey Length and Privacy Considerations:

It will take you about 15 minutes to complete this survey. For your convenience, you will have the option of completing the survey in more than one sitting. Responses can be saved at any time using the "Save my responses" button located at the bottom of each page of the survey.

Your participation in this research is confidential. All survey data will be gathered by the Office of Measurement Services at the University of Minnesota (OMS). The data set I receive from the OMS will contain no personally-identifying information, insuring the privacy of all who choose to participate in this research.

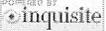
You may choose to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Choosing to withdraw from participation will in no way affect any past, present and/or future relationships you may have with the University of Minnesota, the institution through which this research is being conducted.

Consent to Participate in this Study:

It will be assumed that if you choose to complete the survey that you consent to participate in this research study. As such, you are not required to sign a consent form to participate in this research, and no consent form will appear as part of the survey.

If you would like to participate in this study, you may do so by clicking on the "Next" button below.





Part 1: Eligibility. The following questions are asked in order to determine your eligibility to participate in this study.

When did you complete your funeral service education?

- I completed my funeral service education prior to 1962.
- I completed my funeral service education either during or after 1962.

To the best of your knowledge, did you complete a funeral service education program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)

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

- Yes
- No

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

- I have worked primarily as a funeral director.
- I have worked primarily as an embalmer.
- I have worked primarily as both a funeral director and an embalmer.
- Other: I have worked primarily as a/an _____

At the present time, do you manage a funeral establishment in the United States that sells, or offers to sell, both funeral goods and funeral services to the public?

- Yes
- No

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



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

Yes
 No

Do you practice funeral directing and/or embalming in the state of Colorado?

Yes
 No

<p>Funeral directors and embalmers are typically licensed by a state agency to practice mortuary science. Some mortuary science practitioners possess multiple licenses, especially if they work near a state border line.</p> <p>In this research, it is important for us to know the licensure status of survey participants. Understanding that some participants might simultaneously hold more than one valid license in more than one state (or perhaps no license, if they work only in Colorado), the following question is being asked for the purpose of organizing the survey data in useful ways.</p> <p>Using the drop-down boxes below, please indicate the number of valid licenses you possess at the present time for each of the following licensure categories:</p>	Number of Licenses
A combined funeral director and embalmer license	
A funeral director-ONLY license	
An embalmer-ONLY license	

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time



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

Mindful of the amount of time required for participation in this study, multiple versions of the survey have been created so that no one participant is asked to evaluate all 170 ABFSE learning objectives.

In this research, different forms of the survey - each containing some, but not all 170 learning objectives - will be assigned to participants based upon their reported month of birth.

From the table below, please select the month in which you were born. The survey will then continue with the presentation of seven different sets of learning objectives, each of which is grouped according to academic discipline.

What month were you born in?

September

< Back Next >

Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time



Based on the response you provided on the previous page, you will be asked research questions about the learning objectives associated with the following subject areas:

- Pathology
- Chemistry
- Small Business Management
- Funeral Service Law
- Ethics
- Federal Trade Commission
- Funeral Merchandising
- History of Funeral Directing and Embalming

First, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the IMPORTANCE of each learning objective to the contemporary practice of funeral service. In this research, the scale of perceived importance ranges as follows:

Extremely important - Very important - Important - Somewhat important - Not important - No opinion.

Next, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering each learning objective. In this research, the scale of perceived preparation ranges as follows:

Excellent preparation - Very good preparation - Good preparation - Minimal preparation - No preparation - Can't remember/Unable to answer.

Finally, you will be asked to indicate your perception of the adequacy of each set of learning objectives for the contemporary practice of funeral service. In this research, your perception of curriculum adequacy will be measured by asking you to indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe that a [e.g. Restorative Art] curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service." The measurement scale used for this question ranges as follows:

Strongly agree - Agree - Somewhat agree - Disagree - Strongly disagree - No opinion.

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Pathology:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Demonstrate a knowledge of diseases and related terminology which will enable competent communication with members of the medical community, allied professionals and surviving family members	<input type="radio"/>											
Describe the benefits derived from the postmortem examination of human remains	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify the pathological conditions and etiological factors which require special procedures in the removal, handling, preparation, and disposition of human remains	<input type="radio"/>											
Understand the relationship between the disease process and embalming analysis.	<input type="radio"/>											

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Pathology:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of pathology presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

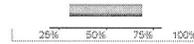
"I believe that a pathology curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

[< Back](#)

[Next >](#)

[Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Chemistry:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain selected facts of general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, and embalming chemistry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the characteristics of solutions, colloids, suspensions, and the processes of diffusions and osmosis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the essential characteristics of autolysis, hydrolysis, fermentation, and putrefaction in the area of the chemistry of decomposition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Define organic chemistry and describe the characteristics of organic compounds as they relate to embalming chemistry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compare and contrast the essential characteristics of carbohydrates, lipids, and proteins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[< Back](#)

[Next >](#)

[Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Chemistry:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Differentiate among the representative chemicals in embalming fluid (arterial, cavity, and accessory) and describe their respective functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and list the potentially harmful chemicals used in the preparation room, and their regulations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[< Back](#)

[Next >](#)

[Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Chemistry:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of chemistry presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a chemistry curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Small Business Management:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Define and discuss the role of small business in the economy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the future trends of small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the composition of small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the role of a small business as an economic contributor to society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the purpose of the Small Business Administration (SBA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the risks and problems involved with opening a small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain why management in a small business is more demanding than in a large firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Small Business Management:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify ways in which the odds for survival among small business firms can be improved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the human resource requirements needed for success in small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the factors involved in buying/selling an established business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the importance of location in the success of a small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain how credit and collection programs are managed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the importance of managing capital assets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the importance of inventory procurement and control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Small Business Management:

Learning Objective	Importance					Preparation						
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?					What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?						
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Understand the elements of sound business management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss methods of estimating capital needs and types of financing available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain how to reduce risk through insurance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand how federal legislation impacts small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify potential computer uses and applications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the use of application software packages in the solving of funeral service business problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Small Business Management:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of small business management presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a small business management curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Law:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service law presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a funeral service law curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Ethics:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Define ethics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distinguish between legal and ethical issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apply a standard of ethical behavior in personal and professional conduct	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an understanding of terms associated with ethical issues and practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Ethics:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of ethics presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that an ethics curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Federal Trade Commission:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Understand the purpose of the FTC and its affect on funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify who must comply with the Federal Trade Commission Funeral Industry Practices Rule and how to comply with the Rule.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the specific price disclosures required by the Federal Trade Commission Funeral Industry Practices Rule	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand what misrepresentations are prohibited by the Federal Trade Commission Funeral Industry Practices Rule	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Federal Trade Commission:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of Federal Trade Commission presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a Federal Trade Commission curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Merchandising:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral services?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Demonstrate knowledge of funeral merchandise to facilitate communications with colleagues, sales representatives and the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the component parts of funeral merchandise, including materials used, styles, finishes, dimensions and functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate conceptual and practical knowledge of factors and strategies for determining the firm's product mix	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiate between methods of price determination and price quotation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate knowledge of effective methods of merchandise display	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Merchandising:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral services?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Utilize techniques for the effective presentation of merchandise and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the importance of monitoring and evaluating sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Merchandising:

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

"I believe that a funeral merchandising curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service"

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of History of Funeral Directing and Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Recognize the historical roots of some contemporary funeral service practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the evolution of funeral merchandise, funeral transportation and funeral homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appreciate the development of current embalming practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the development of funeral service education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the development of inter-professional relationships and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of History of Funeral Directing and Embalming:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of history of funeral directing and embalming presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a history of funeral directing and embalming curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

Based on the response you provided on the previous page, you will be asked research questions about the learning objectives associated with the following subject areas:

- Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling
- Restorative Art
- Microbiology
- Sociology
- Funeral Service Management
- Accounting

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

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

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

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Recognize the application of general psychology to funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the values and purposes of the funeral rite for the family and friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the typical reaction and responses experienced during the emotion of grief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the theories of grief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe issues relating to children and death	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain how grief affects the functioning family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Recognize the difference between grief counseling and grief therapy and identify the limitations for the funeral director	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiate between the types and styles of counseling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the major goals of counseling as well as the functions of the counselor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Utilize the basic counseling skills and techniques and apply them to funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the pre-need, at-need and post funeral counseling opportunities in the community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>




ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Recognize and understand their personal resources for coping with loss	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize when to make referrals to the appropriate community resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

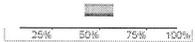



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling:

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

"I believe that a funeral service psychology and counseling curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion




ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Restorative Art:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain the importance of obtaining permission to perform any restorative procedure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiate between restoration and embalming procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Name and locate the major bony structures of the skull and explain how each influences surface forms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Name and locate the major muscles of the face and explain how each influences surface form and expression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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25% 50% 75% 100%

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Restorative Art:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify and describe the natural and acquired facial markings of the face and neck	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe and explain facial proportions and how they relate to the natural form of the facial features and facial restoration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and describe the forms of the head and face from the profile, frontal and bilateral views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and describe the four major facial features, their parts and variations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classify and explain the principles of pigments, their classifications, and relate their application to cosmetic compounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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25% 50% 75% 100%

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Restorative Art:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Apply, from a specified cosmetic medium, the correct colorants to achieve a natural appearance under various conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and describe the various cosmetic and restorative equipment, materials, and treatments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Classify and explain the principles of illumination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Restorative Art:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of restorative art presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a restorative art curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is a adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Microbiology:

Learning Objective	Importance					Preparation						
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?					What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?						
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify basic microbial morphology and describe basic microbial physiology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpret host-parasite relationships and interactions, and the requirements of successful parasitism	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe and apply knowledge of personal and environmental disinfection and decontamination procedures by proper use of chemical disinfection and sterilization procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the fundamentals of the infectious processes and specific and non-specific defense mechanisms against disease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Microbiology:

Learning Objective	Importance					Preparation						
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?					What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?						
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Understand the methods of transmission of infectious diseases and recognize the control procedure of these diseases with special emphasis on protection to the embalmer, the funeral director and the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiate between the indigenous microorganisms and pathogens and/or opportunists causing disease commonly associated with the human host and dead human remains	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Microbiology:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of microbiology presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a microbiology curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Sociology:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Demonstrate an understanding of the application and purpose of sociology in funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an understanding of the cultural requirements and cultural diversities of each family the funeral director is privileged to serve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the family governing systems found in our society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify with the different types of family structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be aware of the changing social factors which affect funeral rites and the families that are served by the funeral directors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Determine the role of the deceased in the family structure and the affect of the death on that family's structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Sociology:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of sociology presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a sociology curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Management:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify the goals and objectives of funeral service management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe management functions as they relate to funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss concepts of funeral service management as related to client-families, community, personnel (staff), and professional associates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify areas of management and discuss their significance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate knowledge of operational procedures specific to funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss procedures related to disaster management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify trends in funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Service Management:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of funeral service management presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a funeral service management curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Accounting:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Understand the fundamental accounting equation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the chart of accounts and its use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the use of the financial statements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize which accounts appear on each financial statement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand the difference between the cash and the accrual basis of accounting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reconcile a bank statement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop an understanding of payroll accounting concepts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Accounting:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Understand the three basic depreciation methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use the 3 basic inventory costing methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand how accounting methods are used to write-off bad debts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compute cash discounts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Compute simple interest calculations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Develop an accounting proficiency in order to understand financial statement analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Accounting:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of accounting presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that an accounting curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

Based on the response you provided on the previous page, you will be asked research questions about the learning objectives associated with the following subject areas:

- Human Anatomy
- Communication Skills
- Embalming
- Business Law
- Funeral Directing

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

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

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

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Human Anatomy:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Define anatomical terminology and body organization sufficient to communicate effectively with fellow allied health professionals, as well as with the lay public	<input type="radio"/>											
Compare and contrast among anatomical guides, linear guides, and anatomical limits and explain selected topographical regions	<input type="radio"/>											
Compare and contrast the different categories of articulations, listing examples of each	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify and describe the major layers and accessory structures of the integumentary system	<input type="radio"/>											

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Human Anatomy:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify the major subdivisions of the skeletal system (list and identify individual bones, their numbers, and their important functions)	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify major and accessory organs of the digestive system and identify the entry to exit point through the system	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify organs of the urinary system and trace the flow of urine through the system	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify the major organs of the male and female reproductive systems	<input type="radio"/>											
Identify the major organs of the respiratory system and trace the flow of air during inhalation and exhalation. Differentiate between internal and external respiration	<input type="radio"/>											

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Human Anatomy:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify and describe the flow of blood through the major vessels of the cardiovascular system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the major structures and functions of the cardiovascular system, the blood vascular system, arterial circulation, venous system, and components of the blood	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the major organs and vessels of the lymphatic system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the location and function of selected endocrine structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss the major structures and subdivisions of the nervous system	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Locate and identify selected skeletal muscles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Human Anatomy:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of human anatomy presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a human anatomy curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Communication Skills:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the importance of listening skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recognize the significance of group dynamics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate the skills needed to write appropriate business correspondence, resumes, obituaries, and presentation outlines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

< Back Next > Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time

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ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Communication Skills:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of communication skills presented on the previous page of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a communication skills curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain how the handling, treatment and disposition of the dead human body meets the sociological, psychological, theological, physical and legal requirements of family and community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the causes and manners of death whereby notification of death to public officials is required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the concepts of sanitation, disinfection, temporary preservation, and restoration of human remains	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand and employ the necessary terminology to facilitate communication with members of allied professions and the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain and identify cooperation with professional agencies and their responsibilities with respect to the dead human body, agencies include but are not limited to, medical examiner and/or coroner, hospitals, organ procurement agencies, OSHA, FTC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate and describe the use of embalming instruments, equipment and sundries, and embalming techniques and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the general chemical principles of embalming fluids and calculation, and summarize the chemical components	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate and explain adequate methods of self-protection from communicable and infectious diseases, personal and environmental protective measures, and hazardous chemicals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Discuss and demonstrate safe environmental work practices through proper disposal of contaminated materials, and proper methods of disposal of blood and body fluids during and following the embalming process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and demonstrate the ethical practices, legal and professional responsibilities associated with the custody, sheltering, identification, and preparation of the dead human body by the process of embalming or preparation without embalming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe the anatomical considerations for vessel sites and selections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain how the vascular system is used to distribute and diffuse embalming chemicals to the tissues of the body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify and document body conditions, embalming techniques and procedures performed with written embalming reports based on embalming analysis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the problems caused by, and the embalming treatments for various causes of death, including but not limited to infections, communicable diseases, trauma, pathological conditions, and disaster situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the treatment for organs and tissues recovered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain and demonstrate the preparation of the infant, autopsy and non-autopsy embalming techniques and procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain and demonstrate cavity embalming procedures and postmortem conditions of discolorations, decomposition, dehydration, general body conditions, vascular difficulties, moisture considerations, radiation and their embalming treatments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Integrate information learned in Microbiology, Anatomy, Pathology Chemistry, and Restorative Art to predict a protocol to be used for the embalming process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Embalming:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of embalming presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that an embalming curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Business Law:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Explain the American system of jurisprudence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distinguish between torts and crimes, and breach of contracts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the requirements of a valid contract	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Be able to apply the Uniform Commercial Code regarding the sale of goods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
List the requirements for negotiable instruments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the basic forms of business organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Business Law:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Identify and explain the legal issues regarding agencies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify the characteristics related to bailments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Distinguish between real and personal property, and method of acquiring and transferring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Business Law:

Reflecting on your perception of the adequacy of the ABFSE learning objectives for the subject area of business law presented on the previous pages of this survey, to what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement:

"I believe that a business law curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Directing:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Determine and identify the primary responsibilities of the funeral director, including regulatory and legislative compliance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain the time frames in which the services of the funeral director are typically provided (i.e. pre-need, at-need, and post funeral follow up)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe and apply appropriate telephone procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an understanding of transferring human remains from the place of death to the funeral home using generally accepted procedures and equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Directing:

Learning Objective	Importance						Preparation					
	How IMPORTANT do you believe this learning objective is to the contemporary practice of funeral service?						What is your perception of the PREPARATION you received from the funeral service education program you completed for the purpose of mastering this learning objective?					
	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important	No opinion	Excellent preparation	Very good preparation	Good preparation	Minimal preparation	No preparation	Can't remember/Unable to answer
Apply communication skills necessary to meet with a family in the arrangement conference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify and describe various religious funeral customs as practiced in America	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Describe fraternal funeral procedures and military honors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss with client families prefunded/preplanned funerals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discuss basic expectations for the shipping of human remains	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exhibit knowledge of the specific vocabulary associated with funeral service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explain terminology and considerations unique to cremation arrangements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

ABFSE Learning Objectives for the Subject Area of Funeral Directing:

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

"I believe that a funeral directing curriculum based upon the ABFSE learning objectives is adequate for the contemporary practice of funeral service."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion

Part 3: Your Perceptions of the National Board Examination of the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (NBE) in the Context of Funeral Service Education.

Have you taken the Funeral Service Arts section of the NBE?

- Yes
- No

Have you passed the Funeral Service Arts section of the NBE?

- Yes
- No

In what year did you pass the Funeral Service Arts section of the NBE?

Have you taken the Funeral Service Sciences section of the NBE?

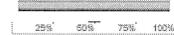
- Yes
- No

Have you passed the Funeral Service Sciences Section of the NBE?

- Yes
- No

In what year did you pass the Funeral Service Sciences section of the NBE?

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



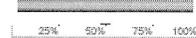
Thinking back to your funeral service education experience, how frequently were you told by your instructors that you needed to learn something specifically because it would be tested on the National Board Examination (NBE)?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Almost always
- No opinion/not applicable

To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "I believe I was well prepared by my funeral service education program to take the National Board Examination (NBE)."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion/not applicable

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



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

- I did have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program.
- I did not have funeral home work experience prior to completing my funeral service education program.

To what extent do you either agree or disagree with the following statement: "Upon completion of my funeral service education program, I believe I possessed the minimum qualifications to function as an entry level funeral director and/or embalmer."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- No opinion/ not applicable

[< Back](#) [Next >](#) [Save my responses so that I can complete the survey at another time](#)



Part 4: Demographic Questions Related to Your Personal Characteristics as a Survey Participant.

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

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

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

- Private institution offering only a funeral service program
- Private institution offering multiple academic programs, including funeral service
- Public institution

Please indicate the one state in which you have practiced the majority of your work in funeral service during the past 12 months.

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

< Back

Next >

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What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

Please specify your ethnicity.

- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

Please specify your race.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

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

- At the present time, I do not earn any income from work in funeral service
- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$19,999
- \$20,000-\$29,999
- \$30,000-\$39,999
- \$40,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$59,999
- \$60,000-\$69,999
- \$70,000-\$79,999
- \$80,000-\$89,999
- \$90,000-\$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

In what year were you born?

< Back

Next >

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Part 5: Closing Comments- Your Opportunity to Provide Written Feedback.

You have just completed a detailed survey about funeral service education in the United States, a significant portion of which focused on select learning objectives upon which the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum is based. In the space below, please share any suggestions you may have for improving the quality of funeral service education offered through programs accredited by the ABFSE:

Empty text area for providing written feedback.

[< Back](#)

[Finish](#)

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