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# Perceptions of Career and Technology Education Among African American Students

Laura Smith

Clemson University, [smithla@anderson3.k12.sc.us](mailto:smithla@anderson3.k12.sc.us)

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PERCEPTIONS OF CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION AMONG  
AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Laura Beth Smith  
May 2015

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Robert Knoepfel, Committee Chair  
Dr. Michael Campbell  
Dr. Patricia First  
Dr. Mason Gary

## ABSTRACT

Recent studies have found that Career and Technology Education can lower dropout rates among high school students (Stone and Lewis, 2012). Students that are enrolled in Career and Technical Education are exposed to a plethora of career opportunities that they may not be cognizant of without the learning environment found at Career and Technology Centers. African American students participate in Career and Technology Education more than any other racial or ethnic group (Silverberg, 2004).

Because Career and Technology Education has been found to be an important aspect of increasing graduation rates and African American students participate more than any other racial or ethnic group, the purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of student experiences while attending a Career and Technology Education Center. The goal of the study was to determine how students' experiences impacted their high school completion and the career cluster in which they chose to enroll.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.*

*~ Malcolm S. Forbes*

There are and have been many important people in my life that I could acknowledge and thank for all my success and all the encouraging words over the last few years. I've had the support and encouragement of so many people along this journey: I've had my share of cheerleaders and plenty of ears to listen and offer words of advice and encouragement.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the study**

Career and Technology Education has evolved over the last few centuries. What was once referred to as an industrial schools for African American students has evolved in to a place for students to earn college credits, valuable career skills, and workplace skills. The literature reveals that by utilizing the skills learned in Career and Technology Education, students are more likely to experience a successful adulthood. The perceptions of CTE have precipitated much discussion on how to improve the programs, and stigmas attached to facilities and programs because early programs were industrial schools. Boesel, Hudson, Deich, and Masten (1994) reported the stigmatized perception of CTE that existed in the early 1990's. The stigmas were associated with students of low achievement levels, special needs, or behavioral problems. Many studies concluded that much effort has been put forth to improve these perceptions and stigmas associated with CTE. Shuckler (2013) argued that "the stigma attached to the term 'vocational' is gradually disappearing as the nation has come to recognize the economic importance of a skilled workforce" (p.1). Stone and Lewis (2012) stated "Regardless of the negative connotations, studies have found that increased enrollment in CTE courses is associated with lower dropout rates. For many students, learning skills whose utility is self-evident provides a sense of purpose to their studies" (p.9). With the experiences and exposure at a career and technical school, students can visualize and conceptualize the careers that

they are potentially interested in. CTE affords students experiences that are not offered at a traditional high school.

This chapter will describe the purpose of the study. Next, the significance of the study will be articulated in order to address the need for a study of this type. Lastly, the context and population under study will be described. The population was chosen for the study because of the goal of improving graduation rates of African American students in the rural south.

The researcher sought to answer one overarching question with two subsequent questions. The central question : What are the student perceptions of their experiences in Career and Technical Education? Two secondary questions that were addressed in the study are: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school?, and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your Career Cluster?

The design of the study was qualitative. The researcher used a case study method and conducted the research at Henderson V Career Campus in Henderson, South Carolina. The researcher used coding to determine themes from structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. A definition of terms is provided to clarify many of the important terms used throughout the discussion.

A limitation of the study was that the researcher gained information from only one location. In case study research, the researcher delves into one location and gains insights into the participants' perceptions. Another delimitation is that the data was only collected from only one group of participants. African American students were chosen as

the population for this study because this group is underrepresented in the literature on Career and Technology Education.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the perceptions of Career and Technology Education for African American students at Henderson V Career Campus. Perceptions included experiences while attending the campus that helped the students make future career decisions after completing high school. Current studies have focused on urban Career and Technology Centers and dealt with all races; this study contributes to the literature base by focusing only on African American students.

### **Significance of the Study**

Current research has primarily focused on student experiences in Career and Technical Education in urban areas. Gaps in the literature exist with studies that have been conducted in a rural area. Current studies have not specifically dealt with African Americans. This study extended the knowledge base and presented findings from a study of the perceptions of students attending a career and technology school in a rural setting who identify themselves as African American. The participants that were selected for the study were twelfth grade students that have participated in Career and Technology Education all four years of high school.

As discussed by Creswell (2012) a case study is best used when a researcher is studying a program and more than one individual; thus the use of a case study is necessary to gain an insight into student perceptions of Career and Technology Education. This study attempted to extend the knowledge base of Career and Technology

Education by employing the use of a case study to gain access to the voices of students currently enrolled and those that have been enrolled in a Career and Technology Program for four years.

Because Career and Technology Education has been found to increase graduation rates (Stone and Lewis,2012;McCaslan and Parks, 2002), Career and Technology Education needs to be explored more and researched more to enhance the knowledge base for these programs to improve the student experience and overall instruction. Jacobson (2013) discussed the importance of CTE in that it is “practical, applicable in the real world of work and inclusive of all learners. Instruction is delivered in a student focused learning community in which all backgrounds and experience levels find their role and come together to build fruitful collective intelligence” (p.3). Practitioners and students will benefit from this study by understanding and hearing the voices the students that are currently enrolled in a CTE program.

### **Research Questions**

This study included one primary research question and two secondary research questions. The primary research question was: What are the student perceptions associated with Career and Technical Education? Two secondary questions that were addressed in the study were: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school? and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your Career Cluster? The sample population was comprised of African American students because the researcher was interested in their perceptions of CTE.

## **Design and Analysis Procedures**

A case study was chosen as the design method for this study. As defined by Creswell (2012), a case study is a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports case themes” (p.97). The location of this study was Henderson V Career Campus, a pseudonym for a career and technology center located near the researcher’s home. This location was chosen because it met the criteria of serving a population of African American students and because it was located in a rural setting. There are differing definitions for the term rural. Henderson V Career Campus has an African American student population of 579 students out of a population of 1527 students. Secondly, the location was chosen because of the location since it is in a smaller city than most of the research locations for studies conducted on Career and Technical Education. According to the United States Department of Agriculture a rural area is an area of 50,000 people or less in a given area (ers.usda.gov).

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were chosen based on race and their participation in Career and Technology Education. African American students were chosen for this study. Additionally, students that are in their fourth year of Career and Technical Education were chosen for this study. The participants were informed of the study and their role in the study. There were eight African American participants that were

included in this study. All eight participants were seniors at Henderson V Career Campus.

### **Data**

A survey was administered to the participants selected via an online website. As noted by Newcomer and Tripplet (2007) web survey can take advantage of the features of the web to create “complex questionnaires” that allow the researcher to gain more information. The survey was proctored by the researcher. After the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and were audio taped for reliability and accuracy. The tapes were destroyed after transcribing the interviews. Thirdly, the researcher conducted a document analysis using information from multiple sources: the Henderson V Career Campus school report card, the mission and vision statement for the Henderson V Career Campus, and enrollment data from the career clusters at the Henderson V Career Campus .

### **Making Sense of the Data**

Coding was used to make sense of the data that was obtained from interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Saldana (2009) described coding as a way to “arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize” (p.8). The purpose of coding is to categorize data. This systematic way to make sense of the data allows researchers, practitioners, and students to better understand the experiences of students who are participating in Career and Technology Education.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are provided to clarify the terms that are used throughout the study:

Career and Technology Education-Organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment and in current or emerging occupations requiring training other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree (Gordon, 2014,p.457).

Code-A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009, p.3).

Future Orientation-Future orientation is the image individuals have regarding their future, as consciously represented and reported. Future orientation is a person's model of the future (Seginer, 2003, p.3).

Theoretical Framework-Theories that provide a lens to guide the researcher as to what issues are important to examine as well as the people that need to be studied (Creswell, 2003, p.131).

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

The purpose of the study was gain an insight into student perceptions of Career and Technology Education; the researcher chose to use a case study. Since this is a case study, limitations exist with this form of methodology. Creswell (2012) noted that there are challenges with this methodology. These include conducting research within the location. "Selecting the case requires that the researcher establish a rationale for his or

her purposeful sampling strategy for selecting the case and for gathering information about the case.” (p.102). When using a case study as a methodology, the researcher can only make generalizations from only one case or location.

The location of the case is a delimitation in that the researcher gained information from only one location. Another delimitation is that the researcher chose to only interview African American students for the study.

### **Critical Theorist Perspective**

In the present study, the researcher chose to take a Critical Theory Perspective to discuss the findings from the study (Boote and Beile, 2005). A critical theorist believes in changing the world (Sipe and Constable, 1996). The change that the researcher in the present study would like to see is an improvement in Career and Technology Education and the addition of more programs in the surrounding areas that would aid students and afford them more opportunities after graduating from high school. Sipe and Constable (1996), have characterized a critical theorist as someone that is “active, purposeful, and concerned with the marginal group”. The group of students that the researcher chose to interview the present study are from a demographic group that has often been described as being marginalized.

A noted critical theorist, Michael Apple, coined a term he calls “common culture” (1993) in which the values and teaching of the dominant group is transferred to all groups of the system. From a critical theorist perspective, it is unfair to expect students of the marginalized group to behave and receive the same education as all students. The

researcher wanted to use findings from the present study to make recommendations to practitioners about this marginalized group.

### **Summary**

This chapter included an overview of the purpose of the study. Because a gap was identified in the literature on research on Career and Technology Education, the population identified for the study was African American students in rural areas. A case study was chosen as the methodology to examine the data collected. The researcher used a critical theorist perspective to analyze the data and make recommendations for the improvement of student access to Career and Technology Education as well as changed perceptions of CTE.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A discussion of the history of Career and Technology Education is essential to better understand the evolution and progression of Career and Technology Education in the United States. Chapter Two includes a summary of the history of Career and Technology Education. The policies impacting the development of CTE are examined with specific attention given to how the legislation has impacted the development of CTE programs in South Carolina. Lastly, the chapter includes a review of research that describes current perceptions and barriers to Career and Technology Education that are the results of past experiences with Career and Technology Education. A critical perspective will be used to examine the literature from the critical theorist, Michael Apple.

#### **Rationale for Literature Review**

Because Career and Technology Education has evolved in many ways over the past centuries, it is important to provide a historical background for the changes that have occurred over the years. Boote and Beile (2005), stated “To advance our collective understanding, a researcher or scholar needs to understand what has been done before, the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, and what they might mean. A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field”. Career and Technology Education has changed names, meanings, and perceptions about how the various programs have evolved since the idea first began in the United States around the nineteenth century.

Boote and Beile (2005), also stated “To be useful and meaningful, education research must be cumulative; it must build on and learn from prior research and scholarship on the topic”. The following pages are a review of literature on the history of Career and Technology Education, a history of CTE in African Americans, the impact of Career and Technology Education and graduation rates among African Americans, perceptions of CTE and African Americans, p on CTE, and challenges with CTE and African Americans.

### **Critical Theory Perspective**

Career and Technology Education is one path that may help students succeed. Unfortunately, many students are not exposed to or informed of how CTE can advance their skills or prepare them for their choice of career. Sipe and Constable (1996) described critical theory perspective as follows: “Reality is subjective and constructed on the basis of issues of power”(p.155). A Critical Theorist asks the questions: “What is just? What can we do?” (p.155). Further, the authors stated “ In critical theory, there seems to be much similarity to the interpretivist’s stance regarding most of the features of reality; but the socio-politico-economic features of reality are taken as objectively real, and not dependent on the perspective of the observer. For critical theory, then, the power structure is ‘out there’ and ‘found,’”... (1996).

Michael Apple, was characterized by Brown (2011) as “Writing out of the new sociology of education, Apple’s work demands serious review and reflection on the part of teacher and policy-maker alike. Employing the tools of this new discipline, he deconstructs school pedagogy and curriculum as part of a broader struggle to democratize

learning. Apple then speaks out against the racially rendered, class-specific nature of knowledge as evidenced in the ways it privileges the voices of dominant groups”(p.3-4). Apple argues how power impacts education negatively and how the dominant group dictates the decisions of all students in education.

Apple, a critical theorist, has written, developed and described a term and phenomenon he called “common culture”. He stated “The current call to ‘return’ to a ‘common culture’ in which all students are to be given the values of a specific group- usually the dominant group- does not in my mind concern a common culture at all. Such an approach hardly scratches the surface of the political and educational issues involved” (p.237). The term “common culture” can be applied to Career and Technical Educational students. Students are often advised of the option to pursue a four year college path, which is the dominant group’s choice for students. These students are often not given information that would educate them about a two year degree or the skills that can be acquired while attending a CTE school.

Apple also discussed the knowledge that students are receiving today. He stated “Hence, the tendency for the curriculum to become increasingly planned, systematized, and standardized at a central level, totally focused on competencies measured by standardized tests (and largely dependent on predesigned commercial materials and texts written specifically for those states that have the tightest centralized control and, thus, the largest guaranteed markets) may have consequences exactly the opposite of what authorities intend”(p.129). The planned curriculum and demands of standardized testing are limiting students’ options. Students are not allowed to make as many choices about

the classes that they enroll in due to the planned nature of the content required for students in order to graduate.

Apple continued with the statement, “A common culture can never be the general extension to everyone of what a minority mean and believe. Rather, and crucially, it requires not the stipulation of the facts, concepts, skills, and values that make us all ‘culturally literate,’ but the creation of the conditions necessary for all people to participate in the creation and recreation of meanings and values”(Apple, 1993). The dominant group of the culture in South Carolina are groups that want that their children to attend a four year school. There are not very many families that are persuading their children to attend a technical school nor are they promoting any skills that could be acquired at a CTE school. Because of this “common culture,” there is a stigma that is aligned with CTE schools, and this stigma is being exacerbated by the dominant culture. The “common culture” has forced CTE schools to be more diligent about the perceptions of the school, and the schools are more aware of the how the community perceives the school.

In Apple’s *Official Knowledge* (2014) he discussed “Creating New Knowledge in Schools”, and stated “Rather than seeing our tasks as finding efficient ways of getting students to learn the knowledge already selected for the curriculum, I have urged us to ask whose knowledge it is in the first place. That is, I have asked us to take very seriously the intricate connections between what we teach in classrooms and the unequal relations of power in the larger society. Power, of course, is both social and personal. It not only signifies one group’s attempt to dominate another; as I argued in chapter three, it

also refers to a person's or a group's ability to help create the social conditions and meanings that make life more fulfilling" (p.151). In the state of South Carolina, students are required to take twenty-four prescriptive courses, and they are not given much autonomy in choosing their own courses of study. These same students are swayed in the four year track of college, and they are not made aware of the options that include a technical school, two year school, or any skills that could be acquired while attending a CTE school. If our goal as educators is to see students become successful, then we should make a concerted effort to help students find out what they are interested in and what they would like to study. The curriculum for each student should be different and should be guided by the students' interests.

### **History of Career and Technology Education**

Career and Technology Education has been continuously evolving since the nineteenth century that started as trade schools, apprenticeships, and vocational education, and has transformed into Career and Technology Education. Current Career and Technology Education is a product of the nineteenth century trade schools. As noted by Gordon (2014), there were three types of trade schools, (a) schools that offered only trade training, (b) schools that offered a combination of trade training and general education, and (c) schools that allowed students to be apprentices and to receive both trade and general education courses. This type of training prepared and aligned education with the skills that were going to be needed in a career setting. The second major development in Career and Technology Education in the nineteenth century was the development of programs called manual training, commercial training, domestic science,

and agriculture (Gordon, 2014). The term vocational education was coined because of these programs. The students were using the skills that they acquired in the classes in vocational settings to improve their job performance. The first school of this kind was opened in 1884 and was known as the Baltimore Manual Training High School. The curriculum of this school was replicated by many other schools in America (Gordon, 2014).

An important aspect of the CTE is the apprenticeship . As noted by Gordon “Apprenticeship is the oldest known type of vocational education in the United States” (p.6). The process of apprenticeship was a way for someone to learn from an expert; this education took the form of learning the skills necessary to perform the tasks of a job. Today, there are more than 358,000 people currently participating in Registered Apprenticeships (Gordon, 2015). As noted by Stone and Lewis (2014), most students who have participated in apprenticeships expressed positive thoughts about their experiences.

In a study conducted by Schug and Western (1999) in Wisconsin, the authors found that these students favored project-based learning, program requirements, and premium workplace experience. Further, the students felt that this type of learning was most preferred to the traditional classroom experience. The students stated that they felt that this type of program would give them an advantage in the labor market (Stone and Lewis, 2014).

## **History of African American Career and Technology Education**

Beginning in the early 1600's and into the 1800s there were apprenticeship programs for former slaves. These programs taught slaves the skills that would allow them to work for former slave owners. During this time, Tuskegee and Hampton, both industrial institutions, were founded to enable African Americans to learn skills as well. Booker T. Washington was in favor of these types of schools for African Americans. Washington favored vocational education CTE because he thought that helped African Americans economically in order to integrate into the US society (Gordon, 2014). He also felt that "it was important for the Black race to learn the dignity in common labor". He stated "As a race there are two things we must learn to do-one is to put brains and skill into the common occupations of life, and the other is to dignify common labor"(p.32).

W. E. B. Du Bois had a differing opinion of vocational education for African Americans. He felt that an academic education was more important than a vocational education. Du Bois felt that "African Americans needed chances for advanced education to develop and insisted on full civil rights and increased political representation"(p.31). He also felt that "academic education was the cornerstone to progress and the solution to racial conflicts for African Americans" (p.31).

There were two pieces of legislation passed that promoted vocational education during the 1800s that impacted the African American community: The Morrill Act of 1862 and the Morrill Act of 1890. The initial Morrill Act was the first legislation that dealt solely with vocational education. This act was to help support land grant

institutions, and it was “an important step toward the creation of a practical education and the eventual training of scientists, professionals, and business executives” (Pincus, 1980, p.335). The Morrill Act of 1890 was enacted to provide secondary school opportunities to African American students. The purpose of the act was to mandate southern states and make land grant institutions available to both black and white students. Prior to the enactment of the law, there were separate schools and money was used for white students (Gordon, 2014). As a result of this act, both black and white land grant institutions were formed. Each state or territory received \$1,500 annually, with the amount increasing by \$ 1,000 each year until the year 1900. The training at these land grant institutions was mostly manual training and sub-collegiate trade courses. There were sixteen Historically and Predominately Black Land-Grant Colleges and Institutions that were created from this legislation.

A vocational guidance movement began in the 1930s for African Americans. The movement began with the goal of reducing economic and educational inequalities in the North and South. Gordon stated “They saw that African American students were either aspiring to very low-level occupations or expecting to pursue an academic or professional education” (p.188). This movement had very little effect on blacks because of the depression and because of the exclusion of blacks from certain occupations.

Opportunities for black women increased in the early twentieth century. African American families were interested in the education of both men and women. Anna Julia Cooper was one of the first woman to fight for women’s rights. She fought for equal pay for both men and women. The three most common fields of occupation for women were

nursing, cosmetology, and printing. Printing was a new occupation that opened because print shops on campuses were expanding and men were choosing other occupational fields (Gordon,2014).

The next few decades saw few changes in vocational education for African Americans. The Carl D. Perkins Act was enacted to “develop more fully the academic and career and technical skills of secondary education students and postsecondary students who elect to enroll in Career and Technical Education programs”(US Department of Education, 2006).

The first vocational act that prompted attention to Career and Technology Education was the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. This legislation was the first vocational act; the purpose of the law was to separate vocational education from the comprehensive high school education. Gordon stated “The Smith-Hughes Act tended to promote a segregated curriculum, with agriculture, homemaking, and trade and industrial education segments separated not only from academic programs, but from all other vocational programs as well” (p.105). The act was not repealed until 1997.

The South Carolina General Assembly enacted the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) in 2006 with the goal of promoting career awareness in middle and high schools. Further, the goal of the legislation was to improve the process through which students choose classes at the high school level in order to help students gain an idea of the career path that they might want to pursue.

### **Other Legislation on Career and Technology Education**

Today, African American students participate more than other ethnic groups in CTE (Gordon, 2014). African American students earned more credits than students from other racial groups, and they also earned a higher share of their total CTE credits than any other racial group. African American students are more likely to concentrate their career and technical studies in health, food service, hospitality, personal services, and business service. These occupations have a high projected job growth, but have below job earnings (Gordon, p.209).

Jacobson (2013) defined the current state of CTE by stating “the programs take a broader approach that includes academic preparation as well as because basic academic skills like mathematics and English and personal qualities such as critical thinking, teamwork and professionalism are considered essential for success in the current global environment” (p.2). There has been a shift from students learning only a skill to learning how to use skills in the workforce.

### **Impact of CTE on High School Completion and Graduation Rates on African Americans**

Career and Technology Education has been successful in improving graduation rates and in helping students obtain their post high school goals. Plank, DeLuca, and Estacion (2008) stated “During the past 15 years, there have been efforts to improve vocational education programs not only to prepare students for jobs, but to increase their educational attainment”. Kulik (1998), in over 30 years of research, found that any participation in CTE decreased the dropout rate by six percent.

Swanson (2004) found that on average, the dropout rate for American high schools is 30%. That number can be as high as high as 45% for American Indian, Hispanic, and African American students. Recent research by Aragon, Alfeld, and Hansen (2013) suggests that participation in CTE can play a role in dropout prevention. Aragon et al. also found that 95% of high school students participate in some form of Career and Technical Education. By and large, students participating in CTE are from middle and lower achieving groups thus making these students ideal for dropout prevention. Lastly, the authors found that students who take a certain ratio (3:4) of CTE to academic courses have lower likelihood of dropping out.

Research conducted by Oakes & Guiton (1995) found that low-income students and minority students participate in vocational curricula at a higher rate. These same students participate in academic curricula at a lower rate than their white and more affluent peers. The National Center of Education Statistics (1997) reported that 11% of whites, 15% of blacks, 13% of Asians, and 17% of Native Americans are in the vocational track. Another study found that non-blacks were almost three times more likely to be in the honors or advanced track in English and math. Kao and Thompson (2003) stated that this “pattern of racial and ethnic disadvantage continues” and supposed that blacks are at a disadvantage by only taking vocational classes.

McCaslin and Parks (2002) found that CTE can decrease the likelihood of dropping out of high school. Their research found that combining CTE and academic coursework is more successful for students who attend college. They stated “combining

Career and Technical Education with academic coursework may have increased student attachment to school and increased the probability of completing high school”(p.7).

One of the cautions for educators in CTE is to be cognizant of students’ interests. Students that were randomly assigned to courses were less likely to complete the program and are in danger of dropping out of school. Bishop and Mane (2004) stated “CTE advocates are not saying that randomly assigning a student to take a CTE course will lower their propensity to drop out. Indeed they would predict that forcing a student to take a particular course would increase the risk of dropping out. They are saying that students differ in their preferences and goals and that creating more options will induce a larger share of them to stay in school”(p.383).

As noted by Plank et al. (2008), “By connecting school with the transition to adulthood and a career, CTE can clarify the application and value of academic subjects as they pertain to jobs or perhaps the postsecondary education that is needed for a career of interest, thereby keeping youths engaged in school” (p.5).

### **Perceptions of Career and Technology Education**

Career and Technology Education was once called vocational education, and that term still has a negative connotation and is often perceived unfavorably by parents and students. As noted by Withington, Hammond, Mobley, Stipanovic, Sharp, Stringfield, and Drew, (2012) “The term vocational education still carries a negative connotation for some people, and policy leaders and educators are exerting efforts to revise the instruction provided and the outcomes for students (p.152). In contrast, as noted by

Brand, the term Career and Technology Education denotes a more rigorous academic and technical instruction.

The Washington and Du Bois debates are still continuing even today with the discussion over whether or not African Americans should be on a vocational track or whether or not they should focus solely on an academic track. As Gordon noted (p.35) “Washington felt that for the masses of African Americans, the route to success in the financial and social spheres was through the acquisition of the vocational skills that are in demand by today’s society. Du Bois felt success would come through the development of those mental faculties that would result in African Americans being competitive at the managerial or executive level”. Minority groups still have a negative opinion of career and technology courses because of this debate many years ago.

In 1999, The American Vocational Association changed its name to the Association for Career and Technical Education. The process began because the members and directors felt that there was a “concern about the image of vocational education and the use of the term vocational in the name of the association” (Gordon, p. 93). They felt that the word vocational was “viewed as non-college-bound training meant for someone else’s children”. According to Gordon (2014), the association felt that “Policy makers, businesspeople, parents, students, educators, and the media generally have a negative opinion about the word ‘vocational,’ associating the word with outdated or lower-level skills and programs of the past” (p.93). Many still feel that this word has roots from the industrial schools for blacks such as the Tuskegee and Hampton schools.

The negative perceptions of this word can also be attributed to the idea that many feel that CTE courses and subjects are for the students that will not attend college or will not complete any type of school after high school. Withington et al (2012) noted that “Traditionally, vocational education has been viewed and structured as alternate education, separate from ‘regular’ educational programs, for students who are considered to be not interested in going, or not able to go, to college”(p.141). Wonacott (2000) found that educators often see CTE as a place for non-college bound students, potential dropouts, and special needs students.

The perception of parents and Career and Technology Education has been studied by many groups, the research has concluded that parental perceptions can greatly influence a student’s decision for careers and courses taken in school. Fisher and Padmawidjaja (1999) conducted a study on the parental influences on career development perceived by African American and Mexican American College students. They stated that an extensive amount of research had been conducted on white families, but few were conducted on minority families. In the study, sixty-five percent of students said that the availability of their parents was helpful in determining their career path. The term availability referred to their parents being “accessible and ready to help”. Their study found that 50% of students cited their parent’s role in providing guidance and encouragement as a career development. These same students said that it was beneficial for their parents to be persistent and give feedback on their choices. In the same study, thirty-five percent of the students “believed that parental acceptance of their career choice was an influential component to their career planning”.

Another important aspect of CTE is whether or not the students are motivated and want to be a part of the program. In the study conducted by Aragon et al (2013), the group of researchers wanted to determine the benefits of Career and Technology Student Organizations, CTSO, on female and racial minority groups. They compared this group to males and white students. The group found that “Students of color reported significantly higher levels of academic motivation and educational aspirations compared to White students. This finding runs counter to the student engagement literature that finds students of color tend to disengage from educational activities at higher rates than White students”. From this piece of literature, CTSOs can help minority students remain focused and interested to increase the completion rate at CTE centers. They also found that engagement increased when the student of color was also male.

Since the change of the name from vocational education to Career and Technical Education, there has been an increased emphasis on changing the perceptions of career and technical schools. Gordon (2014) noted “It appears that some states and districts have worked to strengthen the appeal of Career and Technical Education courses-for example, moving away from training for what used to be considered blue-collar jobs, such as manufacturing, secretarial work, and child care toward programs in pre-engineering, information technology, and education” (p.209).

### **Policy on Career and Technology Education**

There have been pieces of legislation, both federal and state, that have addressed and are addressing the needs of minorities in CTE. As McCaslin and Parks (2002) noted “Policymakers have identified education as an important issue, and have been keenly

aware and interested in increasing the academic and technical skills of American students in order that these individuals can more effectively participate in the international economy as world-class workers and citizens. The major policy initiatives have included setting high standards, increasing the courses required for graduation, and establishing high stakes testing” (p. 41).

One of the most prominent and well-known activists for Career and Technology Education was Walter F. George. A U.S. senator from Georgia, he sponsored every piece of vocational education legislation since the Smith-Hughes Act. In one year, \$40,000,000 was allocated for vocational education as part of his efforts to provide funding for vocational education. George believed that academic courses should be enhanced by vocational courses, and he read and respected Booker T. Washington’s approach to vocational education (Gordon, 2014).

Gordon (2014) broke Federal CTE Legislation into periods 1917-1963, 1963-1968, 1968-1990, 1990-1998, and 2006. The first period, 1917-1963, focused on providing workers with skills and retaining more students in secondary schools. During this time period, legislation expanded CTE schools, provided funds for maintenance of the facilities, and focused on agriculture, industry, and home economics. 1963-1968 was the period in which an attempt was made to “promote CTE equity and better service to disadvantaged students” (p.107). Gordon stated that the purpose of the Vocational Educational Act of 1963 had “the intent of the act was to ensure that persons of all ages in all communities would have ready access to vocational training or retraining of high quality, suited to their personal needs, interests, and abilities” (p.110). This legislation

also stipulated “that funds be used for persons who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps that prevent them from succeeding in a regular vocational education program”(p.110). The attempt of this legislation was to meet the needs of minority students.

There were four versions of the Carl D. Perkins Act which began the time period of 1990-1998 in the area of Career and Technology Education. The second version, Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990, was the first time that the act was directed toward “all segments of the population”. The act had a three-pronged approach to better workforce preparation. Unlike the acts and legislation prior to this act, this one “emphasized its integration of vocational education, between secondary and postsecondary institutions, and with business and labor” (Gordon, 2014, p.114).

The most recent Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 was signed by President George W. Bush. The purpose of the act was to “develop more fully the academic and career and technical skills of secondary education students and postsecondary students that elect to enroll in Career and Technical Education” (Department of Education, 2006). There are four areas of law revision since the new legislation. The term vocational education was replaced and will now be called Career and Technical Education. The Tech Prep program is now a separate funding stream within the legislation. Five percent of the state administrative funding must be reserved for CTE. New programs of study were included in the bill such as aligning secondary and postsecondary education and providing opportunities for students to acquire postsecondary credits while still in high school.

Career clusters were also introduced into CTE as a result of the Carl Perkins Act of 2006. Stipanovic, Lewis, and Stringfield (2012) noted that career clusters “organize related occupations by the types of products and services these occupations provide to society, such as manufacturing, health services, and architecture and construction” (p.84). They “provide guidance toward the knowledge and skills-academic and technical-that students must acquire to prepare for occupations at varying levels within the clusters”(84). As noted by Cox (2012), “an identity shift from vocational education to Career and Technical Education (CTE), which signals an emphasis on preparation for both careers, and further education rather than specific preparation for work”(p. 6).

The impact of career clusters on CTE has greatly influenced many students to consider courses in CTE. The Association of Career and Technology Education, ACTE, (2007) reported seven aspects that career clusters can influence. Of them, “they provide a quality education system that integrates both academic and technical preparation” (Gordon, 2014). They also “assess students’ skills and meet new accountability requirements in a more uniform and systematic manner” (p.399). This is important for educators to understand their role in helping students to determine the best courses to take in order to accomplish their career goals.

Carl D. Perkins is the legislation that provides federal funding for Career and Technology Education. Since this is the primary source of funding for current CTE, it is imperative that the funding remain consistent. But, the funding has been reduced since the year 2008. According to Gordon (2014), the Perkins Act was reduced by \$140.2

million in the year 2011. The Tech Prep Program was eliminated due to the \$37.3 million dollar cut in federal funding as well.

The South Carolina Education and Economic Development Act of 2005, EEDA, was enacted and stated “The Department of Education shall develop a curriculum, aligned with state content standards, organized around a career cluster system that must provide students with both strong academics and real-world problem solving skills”(ed.sc.gov) According to Withington et al (2012) this act is considered to be one of the most comprehensive CTE plans in the nation. The authors stated “The law is considered to be particularly innovative in its integration of traditional CTE with a broad career pathways approach” (p.143). This act was created “to help address the state’s challenges with high dropout rates and high percentages of workers lacking the skills or postsecondary education needed for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p.142). EEDA applies to all students beginning with elementary school into middle school and high school, not just students enrolled in CTE courses.

The Economic and Education Development Act of 2006 mandated that students in conjunction with parents and a guidance counselor must choose a career cluster and complete an Individual Graduation Plan by the end of eight grade. This plan will help the student select high school courses, future career plans, and career goals. By the end of tenth grade, students must choose a career major within a career cluster offered at the high school. High schools in South Carolina must have at least three career clusters for students to choose.

Another key component of this legislation is the inclusion of the relationship between the high school student and a guidance counselor. The goal of the program is to promote the relationship with the student that will help guide him or her to a career that he or she will pursue. The legislation provides a table for guidance counselors to understand their role in this decision. Some of the key ideas included are: Design individual student academic programs, counsel students with disciplinary problems, collaborate with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons, and counsel students with excessive tardiness or absenteeism (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006).

Another role of the EEDA legislation as noted by Withington et al (2012), is to “implement evidence-based whole school reform and to identify and provide assistance for at-risk students”. From their research conducted in SC schools, the researchers found that schools varied in their implementation of this part of the legislation. They noted “Some were in the early stages of tracking the performance and outcomes for at-risk students, and others were further along in their efforts”. The act states “School districts must emphasize and promote the participation of all students in career development activities regardless of their race, color, national origin, sex, or disability”.

### **Challenges of Career and Technology Education and African Americans**

As noted by Jacobson (2013), “In a multicultural society, Career and Technical Education incorporates the values and needs of diverse learners and builds career pathways that have long lasting impact on society, its role extending beyond the classroom to provide support and motivation for individuals in process of discovering

their existential movement” (p.6). Bridging multicultural education and CTE can be a feat in itself to overcome when the majority of CTE teachers are white.

One of the challenges with CTE and minority groups is that there are few CTE instructors and teachers that are minorities. Gordon (2014) found that ninety percent of CTE teachers were white, four percent African American, and three percent Hispanic. He cited that there are problems recruiting members of minority groups to serve as instructors at CTE centers, and noted that “African American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian-and even male-teachers are dangerously underrepresented in our schools” (p.380). These minority teachers could serve as role models in these fields and may influence students of minority groups to pursue a certain career or career cluster.

Perna, Lundy-Wagner, Drezner, Gasman, Yoon, Bose, and Gary, (2009) discovered that there is an underrepresentation of both women and students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in education. They conducted a case study to determine the contribution of HBCUS, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, on the preparation of STEM careers. They noted “Although progress has been made, African Americans continue to be underrepresented among degree recipients in STEM fields” (p.2). Between 1995 and 2004 the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded to African Americans in natural and physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering fields increased by 34%. They cite the following reasons for this problem: “the most prominent barriers are inadequate academic preparation by elementary and secondary schools, insufficient attention to the psychological barriers that

limit persistence in STEM fields, and inadequate support by colleges and universities”(p.3).

### **Implications for Career and Technology Education for Minority Groups**

A challenge of CTE is the underrepresentation of minorities in the field of CTE. Gordon stated that “Though CTE teacher education programs offer the best option for increasing the numbers of minority leaders and minority students, that effort can be supplemented by luring minority professionals from the world of work and into CTE teaching” (p.384). More diverse teachers in this field can greatly enhance the success of CTE programs, lure more students of minority groups into various fields, and will enhance the overall experience of the CTE.

Another suggestion is to recruit minority groups into fields of CTE. This can be accomplished by surveying students to determine their interests and work to incorporate those interests into the varying career clusters. As noted by Aragon et al (2013), students’ motivation was increased by career and technology organizations. They found that these programs were successful in motivating students to participate in these courses. Students’ motivation can greatly impact the overall experience for all stakeholders involved. Teachers will be more apt to help students and work to improve their career and technology skills that will aid them in either a career or skills that will enhance their postsecondary goals.

Improving the image of CTE can greatly impact the participation of students in the various programs. Attempts have been made by many to improve the perception of CTE. One of the most effective attempts was changing the name from vocational to

Career and Technology Education, but there is still a stigma of CTE because the perceptions that low performing students attend and enroll in CTE courses more than any other group. With the advancement of technology and the introduction of many STEM courses, there should be a shift from this common misconception among students and parents.

Since minorities will make up fifty percent of the workforce in a few years, it is imperative that educators ensure that students are being given every chance to succeed. These chances include providing the courses that will enhance their skills in a competitive job market, incorporating multicultural best practices into the curriculum of CTE, and marketing CTE careers to minorities to improve the underrepresentation of minorities in CTE.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a discussion on the rationale for the literature review and a discussion of the Critical Theorists Perspective as it related to the study. A history of Career and Technology Education, a history of Career and Technology Education as it related to African American Students and Policy on Career and Technology Education was included in this chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

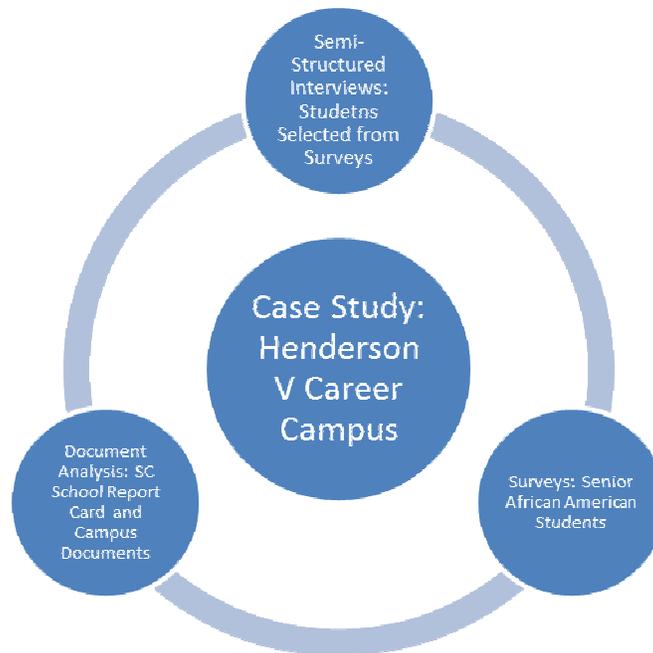
### METHODS

The present study made use of a case study design to explore the perceptions of African American students who were participating in Career and Technology Education. The location for the case study was a Career and Technology Campus in a rural area in a southeastern state. The center serves two high schools and has a total enrollment of 1500. Approximately 38% of the student population is classified as African American.

Data collection included the use of online surveys, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The total number of participants in the study was eight twelfth grade students who were enrolled at the career campus. Using a Critical Theorist Perspective, the researcher used the data collected to answer the research question: What are the student perceptions associated with career and technical education? Two secondary research questions were also addressed in the study. The secondary research questions were: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school? and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your Career Cluster?

The following figure represents the data that was obtained from the Henderson V Career Campus.

Figure 3.1 Data Collected at Henderson V Career Campus



### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the perceptions of African American students enrolled in Career and Technology Education programs at the Henderson V Career Campus. Perceptions included experiences while attending the career campus that helped the students make future career decisions after completing high school. This chapter will include the Problem Statement, Research Questions, Demographics of the Site and Subjects, Research Design, and a Summary of the chapter will be provided.

## **Problem Statement**

African American students participate in Career and Technology Education more than any other racial or ethnic group (Silverberg, 2004). African Americans also enroll in more CTE credits than any other racial groups. Gordon (2014) stated “Women, minorities, and immigrants could account for more than 70 percent of the net additions to the job market” (p.214). These two statistics account for the need for more research and more in-depth discussion in the area of CTE among African American students.

According to Gordon (2014), Career and Technology Education is more prevalent in small, rural communities than any other areas. Rural schools account for 40.1 percent of all occupational concentrators. Urban and suburban schools account for 26.2 and 33.8 percent of occupational concentrators.

Since there is a high percentage of African American students attending and participating in Career and Technology Education and CTE is more prevalent in rural areas, more studies and research needs to be conducted to fully understand the realm of opportunities that CTE can provide for local communities with a large minority population. The purpose of the study was to add to the literature base on CTE and African American students in order to inform policies and practices that will help students achieve their career goals and make a successful transition into adult life.

## **Research Questions**

Creswell (2012) suggested that Qualitative Research has “one central or overarching question and several subquestions”(p.138). Following the author’s

recommendation, the researcher's central or overarching question was: What are the student perceptions associated with Career and Technical Education? Two secondary questions that were addressed in the study were: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school? and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your career cluster. With the central question and two secondary questions, the researchers sought to gain an insight and understanding of how African American perceive their experiences while participating in Career and Technology classes.

### **Demographics of the Site and Subjects**

Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and the researcher attempts to become an observer in the setting of the participants (Creswell, 2012). The researcher maintains a sense of openness to the participants and makes all attempts to build a rapport with the participants and seeks not to disturb the environment (Creswell, 2012). The site chosen for this study was the Henderson V Career Campus. According to information provided on the South Carolina State Report Card for the year 2014, the Henderson V Career Campus had an enrollment of 1620 students. The number of students that took the Technical Skills Attainment tests was 1,527. 579 African American students are among the 1,527 students at the career center. 78.6% of all students receive subsidized meals. There are 53 students that are considered Limited English Proficient. The graduation rate for this center is 88.6%, and the state CTE center average is 94.9%. The school year 2013-2014 was the first year that school was considered an independent school in the school district. Prior to the 2013-2014 school

year, the school was considered to be part of both of the two high schools for the purposes of accountability. Along with this change, the school name changed from the Hanna Westside Extension Campus to Henderson V Career Campus.

The location of the campus is within the city limits of Henderson, a rural city in the south, with a population of 26,626 (United States Census Bureau). The population has grown 5.12 percent since the year 2000. The median home cost in the city is \$94,100. Compared to the rest of the country, Henderson's cost of living is 16.90% lower than the United States average (bestplaces.net).

Participation in the study was voluntary, and the researcher used purposeful sampling. As noted by Creswell (2012) purposeful sampling requires the researcher to "carefully select individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study". (p.156). The sample included eight students who were classified as seniors and who had completed courses at the career campus for a minimum of three years. These students classified themselves as African American. This type of sampling was important to gain the perspectives of these individuals over the course of their time spent at the career campus.

As noted previously in the literature review, there is a gap in the literature pertaining to African Americans and their experiences while attending a Career and Technology Center. The researcher interviewed African American students to gain information from their experiences since there is a lack of knowledge and a gap in the research concerning African American students.

## **Research Design**

The research design chosen by the researcher was Qualitative Methodology using a Case Study Method. Creswell (2012) discussed the characteristics of a Qualitative study. Some of these qualities are a) Natural setting b) Researcher as key instrument. c) Multiple methods d) Participants' meanings and e) Holistic account. All of these characteristics were present in the current study.

### **Natural Setting**

A qualitative study takes place in the natural setting where the problem or issue takes place as determined by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). For the present study, the researcher has determined the problem to be that there is a gap in the literature on student perceptions of Career and Technology Education among African American students. The researcher conducted the research in a rural career and technology center where the population is comprised of 38% African American students.

### **Researcher as Key Instrument**

The researcher as key instrument is important in a qualitative study in order to obtain accurate and complete information from participants (Creswell, 2013). Researchers conduct their own interviews, analyze documents, and observe participants' behavior. By maintaining the researcher as the key instrument, more accurate data is compiled and can be analyzed by the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Because the researcher conducted the interviews and surveys, this allows for the researcher to observe the setting and behavior of the participants. The participants of the study seemed anxious

and maybe uncomfortable in the setting of the interview. Since the interview was conducted outside the director's office, this may have contributed to the participants' anxiety and nervousness. During the first interview, Participant 1 stated "that she was glad that was over". When asked by the researcher what she was referring to Participant 1 stated that she "was very nervous and wanted to do a good job". She felt that being in the study required her "to do a good job".

Time constraints and the time of day may have also contributed to some lack of thorough discussion. Students chose a time slot that was convenient for their schedule. Interviews were scheduled beginning at 7:00 a.m. at the suggestion of one student. Interviews continued throughout the morning. Early morning sessions could have also decreased the likelihood of a thorough discussion by the students.

Another concern that the research felt was one in which was a limitation of the study and possibly hindered accurate results during the interview process. The researcher is a white female in her early 30's. The researcher felt that this may have been a barrier for discussion. During the interview process, the participants addressed the researcher as "ma'am". Although the researcher probed during the interview process, the researcher felt that the participants were not as open and didn't elaborate or give thorough answers to the questions. The students were all African American and may have felt uncomfortable with white female asking questions in a setting that they were uncomfortable. Since the researcher is an educator, the participants may have felt that the researcher was an administrator and felt threatened by their answers to the questions during the interview.

## **Multiple Methods**

By using multiple methods, the data can be analyzed more thoroughly and there are more checks and balances in the data collection process. Examples of multiple methods that a researcher may use are interviews, observations, and documents. Triangulation is the term that is used to describe the corroborating of evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2013).

## **Participants' Meaning**

Creswell (2012) defined Participants' Meaning as the researcher must "keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issues, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature" (p.47). The researcher must remain objective and must keep in mind that the purpose of this study is to learn the perspectives of the students. The students' answers to the surveys and interviews were essential to understanding the perspectives of the students. The researcher chose not to change any grammatical mistakes from the online survey and chose not to make any changes to grammar during the interviews. The researcher transcribed exactly what the participants stated to each question verbatim to ensure validity and to ensure that all information was the perspectives of the students. For example: One student stated that she was going to attend a "four year tech school". The researcher did not change any of the wordings to make sense of this information provided by the participant.

## **Holistic Account**

The concept of a Holistic account of the study is important for the researcher to make an accurate account of the study. Creswell stated “This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges” (p.47). The researcher in this study created a holistic, accurate account of student perceptions at this location and attempt to illustrate the role that Career and Technology Education can take in the lives of African American students in a rural setting.

## **Case Study Method**

The researcher used a case study method to identify the perceptions of African American students at a Career and Technology school. Yin (2009) defined the case study as “In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events-such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries” (p.4). The goal of the researcher was to holistically view the Career and Technology campus as a way to determine student perceptions.

Creswell (2012) discussed the general structure of a case study as having an entry vignette, an introduction that states the problem, questions, case study, data collection and analysis, a description of the cases, the development of the issue(s), detail about selected issues, assertions, and a closing vignette (p.106). The following table illustrates

the research design procedures, participants, and the possible outcome from the research that was conducted.

Table 2.1 Research Design Procedures, Participants, and Possible Outcomes

| Procedure                           | Participants   | Outcome   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Survey/Complex Questionnaire</b> | Senior African American Students   | Determine Student Perception among all senior African American students at Henderson V Career Campus.                         |
| <b>Interview</b>                    | 6-10 Participants- Selection Based on Career Cluster Selection   | Gain insight into individual student perceptions and delve more into reasons for student perceptions.                         |
| <b>Document Analysis</b>            | SC School Report Card Data, School Mission and Vision Documentation, Completion Rates of Students in Career Clusters | Determine which courses students chose to complete and not complete; Gain an insight into the goals and mission of the campus |

Because the need to use multiple sources is important in a case study, the researcher chose to use a survey, interview, and document analysis. Yin (2009) discussed the importance of triangulation in respect to a case study. He explained “The need to use multiple sources of evidence far exceeds that in other research methods, such as experiments, surveys, or histories” (p.114). The use of multiple sources allowed the researcher to ensure validity in the research and ensure that perceptions are of those of the students and are not preconceived notions made by the researcher.

## **Interviews**

As noted by Yin (2009), interviews are one of the most important sources of information that a researcher can conduct. The interviews that the researcher chooses to conduct can elicit much information that could not be obtained from any other type of data collected. Since case studies are so personal and relationship oriented, interviews are valuable and must be conducted in a way that the participant feels comfortable and confident in the interviewer. As also noted by Yin (2009), interviews for case studies are guided more in a conversational manner rather than “structured queries” (p.106).

Yin (2009) described “two jobs” during the interview process. The two jobs are “a) to follow your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and b) to ask your actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry” (p.106). These two “jobs” were crucial for the researcher of this study as the researcher is of a different ethnicity and the participants may not be comfortable of the researcher. The researcher must remain cognizant of the different cultural cues and differences among the two groups of people. The researcher wanted to gain an accurate account of student perceptions.

## **Surveys**

Yin (2009) aligned surveys with a type of interview. The survey that the researcher used was a survey on an internet database that allowed students to answer open ended questions to gain as much feedback as possible. Newcomer and Tripplet (2007) discussed web surveys as an effective measure to gain information from participants. The term “complex questionnaire” is used to describe a web survey that

allows the researcher to effectively gain valuable information from participants while using the internet. A complex questionnaire would allow the researcher to facilitate the surveys. A web survey allows the researcher to use HTML and Java script features to “handle skip patterns and recall information from earlier questions” (Newcomer and Tripplett, p.271). Web surveys also allow the researcher to use graphics and other visual aids to aid in the aesthetic aspect of a survey.

“ As of mid-2009 the two leading online survey companies were Zoomerang and SurveyMonkey, and both ranked in the top (most accessed) 1,000 websites worldwide according to the Alexa ranking of Web traffic, far surpassing their competitors” (Adams, p.360). The researcher chose SurveyMonkey to conduct the online survey because of familiarity with the program and prior usage. An advantage of using an online survey is that the researcher can program the survey so that participants may not opt out of any questions. Since the researcher chose to survey students, this was important for validity in order to gain the most accurate results.

Space was given to students for open responses that students could answer and add in any other information that may not have been asked in the survey. This section was voluntary and was not required by the survey instrument, an option that is sometimes required by the survey instrument. The questions asked on the survey were designed to give an insight into the researcher’s overarching question regarding student perceptions of Career and Technology Education and the two secondary questions: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school? and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your career cluster.

## **Document Analysis**

Document analysis is a valid measure to ensure that the information that the participants gave is accurate and measurable. Yin (2009) stated “For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p.103). He continued that the document analysis can help to verify spellings and other information that may be given by the participants’ interviews and can provide other vital information that participants may have omitted. One of the benefits of document analysis as noted by Yin (2009) is that this information is stable meaning that it can be reviewed repeatedly. Another strength of this type of data is that it is unobtrusive. The document was not created because of the case study, and this document is an unencumbered document that the researcher can use to check the accuracy of other data sources.

For this study, the researcher used document analysis to review the South Carolina School Report Card data of Henderson V Career Campus (South Carolina Department of Education, 2014). The document gave the researcher information on the school population, demographics, socioeconomic status of the school population, and the programs offered by the campus. Other documents that were analyzed by the researcher included the school’s vision and mission statements. This information provided the researcher with information on what the school views as goals for the students and if this related to the goals and perceptions of students.

Other documents that were viewed and analyzed by the researcher are the registration information from career clusters at the school. The researcher examined the

enrollment of each program of study and the dropout rate of each program. This gave the researcher an idea of why students decided that they did not want to participate. This aided the researcher the ability to answer the secondary question of whether or not the student was able to rule out any future career choices.

### **Classifying Data into Codes and Categories**

Classifying data into codes and themes is a process that is undertaken after the data has been collected at the research site by the researcher. Johnny Saldana (2009) described a code as “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.3). The process of classifying data begins after all data has been collected at the research site; the researcher then attempts to find codes within the data. Creswell (2012) described coding as “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to that code” (p. 184).

The process of classifying data is cyclical (Saldana, 2009). Saldana stated “Rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted. The second cycle (and possibly a third and fourth, and so on) of recoding further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and building theory” (p.8). The researcher classified and coded the data obtained as many times as necessary in order to fully grasp

and make an attempt to understand the perceptions of African American students while participating in Career and Technology Education at Henderson V Career Campus.

Saldana (2009) stated that “To codify is to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize” (p. 8). The process of categorizing the data by the researcher began with the surveys. Using a matrix for ease of keeping track of the data, the researcher began categorizing the data based on the answers provided by the participants from the surveys. The researcher, then, took the information from the surveys in order to find categories to answer research questions.

After categorizing the information from the surveys, the researcher began categorizing the data from the interviews conducted at the research site. The researcher categorized the data based on student responses that helped answer the research questions. The researcher categorized the data based on the ultimate goal of learning of student perspectives while participating in CTE.

The final piece of data that was categorized was the documents that pertain to Henderson V Career Campus. The researcher categorized data from enrollment records provided by the research site to determine enrollment in specific programs finding patterns that may relate to student perceptions. The mission statement and vision statement of the site were coded to also help determine student perceptions in CTE. The researcher chose to focus much attention to the school’s vision for the students.

Saldana (2009) provided a list of questions that a researcher must consider while coding. Of those questions, one that the researcher chose to specifically focus on was: “How do members talk about, characterize, and understand what is going on?” (p.18).

This was especially important in the present study because the researcher was attempting to understand the perceptions of students will they were participating in CTE. This type of question can lead to a discussion of how the students feel about the current programs they are participating and also perceptions of programs that they have previously participated in at Henderson V Career Campus.

As noted by Saldana (2009), the process of coding must be conducted multiple times. The data was analyzed multiple times to gain an understanding of student perceptions. The researcher attempted to find similarities in all the data to help form an “interpretation” as named by Creswell (2012, p.187). He stated “Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data” (p.187). This interpretation formed by the researcher added to the literature base of CTE and the gaps that are present in the area of African Americans in CTE.

Saldana (2009) described the different types of coding that can be used to categorize qualitative data. For the first round of coding, the researcher used Values Coding. This type of coding “is the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview. Though each construct has a different meaning, Values coding, as a term subsumes all three.” (p.89). Since the goal of the researcher is to determine student perceptions, this type of coding was appropriate for the data sources. The coding allowed for the researcher to use actual student words to determine categories.

Saldana (2009) stated that this type of coding “is appropriate for all qualitative studies, but particularly for those that explore cultural values and intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies” (p.90). As the present study is a case study, this was the most appropriate type of coding for the study to determine student perceptions.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the methods used to answer the research questions posed in the study. The methodology that was employed for the present study was a case study. This method aided in the researcher’s goal to seek to answer the overarching research question of the student perceptions of CTE among African American students at Henderson V Career Campus. The researcher chose to use a complex questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis to help answer the overarching research questions along with three secondary questions. The researcher used coding to gain an interpretation of the data gathered at the research site.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study examining perceptions of African American students who were enrolled in a Career and Technical School in a rural southeastern state. The chapter includes a description of the participants and the school site. Next, the process of coding is introduced. The researcher made use of three sources of data: a) student responses from a complex questionnaire, b) student interviews, and c) document analysis. The researcher used an iterative process as defined by Saldana (2009) to identify and refine the themes identified in the three sources of data. All data collected as well as a copy of the survey and consent forms for participation are discussed and appear in the appendices. The following table represents the audience and source of information for the study.

| Information/Information Source | Survey | Interviews | Document Analysis |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------|-------------------|
| Students Involved              | Yes    | Yes        | No                |
| Administration Involved        | No     | No         | Yes               |
| Staff Involved                 | No     | No         | Yes               |
| Board Members Involved         | No     | No         | Yes               |
| Support Staff Involved         | No     | No         | Yes               |

## **Description of Participants and Research Location**

The present study was conducted at Henderson V Career Campus. According to information provided on the South Carolina State Report Card for the year 2013, the Henderson V Career Campus had an enrollment of 1620 students. The number of students that took the Technical Skills Attainment tests was 1,527. 579 African American students are among the 1620 students at the career center. 78.6% of these students receive subsidized meals. There are 53 students that are considered Limited English Proficient. The graduation rate for this center is 88.6%, and the state CTE center average is 94.9%. The 2013-2014 school year was the first year that school was considered an independent school in the school district. Prior to the 2013-2014 school year, the school was considered to be part the two high schools. Along with this change, the school name changed from the Hanna Westside Extension Campus to Henderson V Career Campus.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants chosen by the researcher for the study were a mixture of both genders. All eight of the participants were African American and all were in the twelfth grade. There were four males and four females. These participants were selected from the survey group that had completed the survey the prior week with the researcher. Three of the girls stated that they wanted to become a cosmetologist and the other female wanted to become an anesthesiologist. All four boys were enrolled in the Automotive Technology and Mechanic courses at the Career Center. Half of the participants were from one high school and the other four students were from the other high school.

Table 4-2 Participants of the Study

| Participant | Gender | Grade   | Race             | Program               |
|-------------|--------|---------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1           | Female | Twelfth | African American | Cosmetologist         |
| 2           | Female | Twelfth | African American | Cosmetologist         |
| 3           | Female | Twelfth | African American | Cosmetologist         |
| 4           | Female | Twelfth | African American | Anesthesiologist      |
| 5           | Male   | Twelfth | African American | Automotive Technology |
| 6           | Male   | Twelfth | African American | Automotive Technology |
| 7           | Male   | Twelfth | African American | Automotive Technology |
| 8           | Male   | Twelfth | African American | Automotive Technology |

The researcher was able to observe the participants in their classroom setting prior to the interviews and surveys. The researcher found this helpful and useful to determine subjects for the study. The participants were very open and communicative with their classmates and teachers while being observed. As noted by the researcher, the participants seemed to enjoy and value their work in their respective classrooms.

The researcher chose purposeful sampling for the participants of the study (Creswell, 2013) and participation was voluntary. The participants for the survey were asked to take the survey online using an online database for survey questioning called Survey Monkey. Students were allowed to take the test in the cosmetology classroom with the use of tablets. The researcher insured that all students were aware that their

name would not be used and that the survey was voluntary by the use of a waiver that the students signed prior to beginning the survey. The survey can be found in Appendix A of the Appendices.

After the survey was completed, the researcher asked participants for their agreement to participate in an interview to ensure that the same students participated in the interview process. The researcher wanted to ensure that the same participants participated in both the survey and interview to ensure validity in the research. The researcher had used purposeful sampling to ensure that these students were seniors and had participated in CTE all four years of high school.

Eight students agreed to an audio-recorded interview that took place in the office boardroom of the career center. The board room is located next to the director's office in the main office of the campus. The students were called by the secretary to the board room. Students signed a waiver noting that their names would not be used and they acknowledged on the signed consent form and during taping that they were being recorded. The interviews consisted of approximately ten questions, and the participants were prompted to answer other questions during the interviews when one question led to another line of thinking or to a more in-depth discussion.

### **Presentation of Data**

The purpose of the study was to determine student perceptions of Career and Technology Education among African American students. The study sought to answer the following questions: What are the student perceptions associated with Career and Technical Education? Two secondary questions that will be addressed in the study are:

a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school? and b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your career cluster. The study aimed to further the research and literature base on student perception of Career and Technology Education and to help practitioners gain an insight on student perceptions of the CTE. Little research has been conducted in a rural setting with both African American students and CTE.

The study used a complex questionnaire (Newcomer and Triplet, 2007) also known as an online survey, interviews of eight participants, and document analysis. The interview process took place at Henderson V Career Campus. The researcher gained access for document analysis by the use of the South Carolina Department of Education website (ed.sc.gov) that features school report card and data that was pertinent to the study. The researcher used a case study method to discuss the perceptions as related to the students of Henderson V Career Campus.

Results from the complex questionnaire appear in Appendix A. The researcher did not change any wording nor change any punctuation in the results section of the online survey. The table lists each question listed on the complex questionnaire (Newcomer and Triplet, 2007). The questions are listed in numerical order with the question on the left hand side of the table and the answers from participants on the right side of the table. The online database allowed the researcher to require an answer from each participant. Some questions allowed the participant to choose not applicable. The researcher conducted interviews with eight of the twelve students that also participated in the survey. The researcher asked a series of questions that often prompted more questions

about a particular topic. Participants were audio-recorded and were asked to agree to the recording at the beginning of the interview. The transcribing for the interviews is found in Appendix E of the document.

Document analysis consisted of the 2013 School Report Card Data on Henderson V Career Campus and the vision and mission statement. These documents were located on the school's website. The School Report Card included the enrollment of the school, the demographics of the school, education of the teachers at the school, testing data called Technical Skills Assessment, graduation rate, and also a report from the School Improvement Council. The mission and vision statement was located in a section on the school website called "About Us". The mission and vision statements appear in Appendix G.

### **Coding Process**

The researcher conducted several rounds of coding to ensure validity and accuracy of the study. The researcher used a color coded system and chose the codes directly from the participants' words. Saldana defined this as values coding. As noted by Saldana (2009), during the process of coding the researcher "strives for codes and categories to become more refined" (p.10). Four rounds of coding were used by the researcher with four themes emerging. The researcher's first round of coding consisted of several codes that were phrases rather than just terms. At the end of the four rounds of coding, the themes were refined based on participant responses; the four themes that were identified were: Future Orientation, Guidance Counselors, Career Clusters, and College Planning. The process of coding and examples from the data are described below.

## **Future Orientation**

Seginer (2003) discussed the term future orientation and how it related to adolescents. “Future orientation is the image individuals have regarding their future, as consciously represented and reported. Future orientation is a person’s model of the future” (p.3). During the interviews and survey conducted by the researcher, the researcher noted that all students had a sense of future orientation and cited this as a reason that they wanted to attend the Career and Technology Center. Seginer continued with a statement that is relevant to this study in that she stated “Future orientation has a special importance for individuals going through developmental and transitional periods in which they are normatively expected to prepare themselves for what lies ahead” (p.3). Students cited that they made the decision to enter into Career and Technology Education after ninth grade with the help of a guidance counselor. This was an important transition for students in that they had to decide what career cluster they would choose and which courses of study they would take in the next four years of their high school career.

From the online complex questionnaire, one participant cited “As a backup plan for the future” for answer to two questions on the survey. The answer to the two questions were a) why did you choose the career cluster you are currently enrolled and b) how do you plan to use the career cluster you are currently enrolled in the future? The answer to this question could possibly be one participant or two participants since this was two different questions, and the complex questionnaire remained anonymous and collected electronically. Another participant cited the reason for choosing his or her

career cluster was to “reach my goals”. This participant felt that the career cluster that he or she chose would aid them in their future aspirations.

Participant 3 stated why she chose to be a part of CTE as the following: “To help me out in life. Like, to help me set a goal to what I want to be when I get out of school.” This participant had a sense of future orientation in that she knew that she needed help setting a goal and she saw CTE as means of accomplishing her goals.

Participant 4 stated his reason for choosing to take classes at the Henderson V Career Campus as the following: “Because I want a career and automotive technology, and I thought that taking classes in automotive technology would help me in the future.” This participant had a sense that taking classes at the campus would help him obtain a goal that he had already set for himself.

Participant 7 stated his reason for choosing to take classes at Henderson V Career Campus applies to the idea that the students have a sense of future orientation and perceive CTE as a means to obtain their future goals. He stated his reason for attending Henderson V Career Campus as “So, I can learn more about my future”. His sense of future revolves around going to an Automotive Technical School.

From the mission statement, the researcher noted that the mission Henderson V Career Campus is to “provide students with real world skills that can translate into certifications and college credits for jobs and/or future education”. The sense of future orientation is present in the mission statement in that the campus provides the coursework that allows the students to have a desire to enhance their future and provides opportunities that are not available at the students’ traditional high school. Another

statement in the mission statement, is a belief that the school “strives to fulfill their mission by providing many opportunities to learn skills that they can use in the workforce”. This statement reiterates the students’ desire for future opportunities that are afforded by the career campus.

### **Guidance Counselor**

The reliance and importance of guidance counselors in the participants’ decisions about the career cluster that they chose is immeasurable. The guidance counselor or a Career Development Facilitator, a term used in the state of South Carolina, aids students with choosing their coursework for high school and aid in helping students choose their career cluster. There are a total of sixteen clusters in the state of South Carolina, but schools vary with the number of career clusters offered at either a traditional high school or a Career and Technology School.

Seven of the twelve students responded yes that a guidance counselor helped them choose their career cluster from the complex questionnaire conducted on SurveyMonkey.com. These students needed the aid of a guidance counselor to aid them in their decision making for career clusters. Interestingly enough, only two of these students stated that they, themselves, chose their career cluster. The other ten stated a guidance counselor, or a last name of someone that helped them chose their career cluster.

During the interview process, most students stated that a guidance counselor helped them choose their career cluster and their course of study for the career campus. Participant 5 stated “I talked to my parents and they talked to my guidance counselor and

thought that this would be a good one.” This student had the aid of both parents and a guidance counselor to help chose the career cluster and the course of study. Another student stated that “My guidance counselor helped me. She helped me plan how to take the classes.”

The overall message of Henderson V Career Campus’ Core Beliefs emphasize the importance of students working with a variety of educators and others that can help students make decisions in their career planning and planning for their future. The statement “We believe shared decision-making improves the educational process” also reaffirms the idea that the students attending Career and Technology Schools along with traditional high school students need aid in making decisions that will improve their education as well as decisions for their future.

### **Career Cluster**

Career Clusters are part of the South Carolina legislation called the Education and Economic Development Act, EEDA, that was enacted in 2006. This act requires schools to prepare students for career training and awareness. There are sixteen career clusters defined by the South Carolina Department of Education, and each high school must have a minimum of six clusters for students to choose to enroll classes.

From the survey conducted by the researcher, the researcher noted some students were deficient in knowledge about the career clusters. Students cited the course that they were enrolled rather than one of the career clusters. The cluster is a broad term used to describe various classes and courses that students may enroll at either a traditional high school or at Career and Technology Center. An example of this is in question 1 of the

survey. The question asked participants which career cluster he or she was enrolled. Of the twelve participants, nine incorrectly identified their career cluster. The participants named the class that they were enrolled or the type of field that they would enter. An example was that one participant stated that her career cluster was nursing rather than the correct title of Health Sciences.

From the interviews conducted by the researcher, the participants once again gave the same incorrect answer to their career cluster. He or she cited a job title such as cosmetology rather than the correct title, Human Services. The following statement interview was noted several times by the researcher.

Reseracher: “Can you tell me the title of the Career Cluster you are in?”

Participant 1: “Cosmetology.”

Many of the same participants equated a career cluster to a specific job. The participants view career clusters as a specific job not as a bank of options as intended by the legislation in 2006. The purpose of EEDA was for each district to “develop a curriculum, aligned with state content standards, organized around a career cluster system that must provide students with both strong academics and real-world problem solving skills”(ed.sc.gov, 2006, p.1).

One of the questions of the survey conducted by the researcher was to determine why participants chose the career cluster to which they were enrolled. These answers were all related to a job that they wanted to pursue.

Examples from the survey, include the following answers\*:

i wanna work on cars for a living  
because i love to work on cars  
I,ve been around cars all my life

Because I want to become an nurse  
because i love to do hair  
because i want to work with kids  
because i love to do hair  
i like hair and nails  
because i love to do hair  
Cosmetology is what I want to do in life.  
I have always been interested in hair and owning my own salon, and to also have  
something to fall back on in the future.  
AS a back up plan for the future

\*Researcher did not correct spelling or punctuation from responses.

The interview with participants elicited the same type of responses. The participants had a sense of knowing what they wanted to do when they finished secondary education, but the career cluster did not transfer into their career goals. For example, the following participant stated that she wanted to own her own business, but she was in a cosmetology career cluster.

Researcher: "Why did you choose the Career Cluster that you chose?"

Participant 2: "I want to own my own business."

Researcher: "What career cluster are you in?"

Participant 2: "Cosmetology."

### **College Planning**

Many of the participants in the present study cited a desire to go to a four year school, but few had been accepted at the time of the interview in December of the participants' senior year. Seven of the twelve participants stated that they wanted to attend college in the survey. Question seven of the survey asks participants to which college(s) they have been accepted. Only three four year universities were listed under this question. One answer was a two year technical school, and the rest of the answers were that they had not been accepted to any college. The previous question asked

participants if they were going to attend college which college will they attend, and there were ten colleges listed as colleges they would attend.

The following is from the interview with a participant about their goals after high school:

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant2 : "I want to go to a four year college."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted?"

Participant 2: "Not yet. I want to study cosmetology and study nursing. In the end, I want to be a nurse and own my own salon."

Participant 4 also has not been accepted to a college nor has that student applied.

Researcher: "What are your goals after you finish here?"

Participant: "Go to college."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted?"

Participant: "No."

Researcher: "Do you know when you'll be accepted?"

Participant: "No."

Participant 5 wants to be an anesthesiologist, but has not applied to a college and wants to attend a "4 year tech school".

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant: "To be an anesthesiologist."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted to a college?"

Participant: "Not yet, I'm going to a four year tech college first."

Participant 5 stated that he is only applying to Greenville Tech, but has not applied yet.

Researcher: "Have you applied to any schools?"

Participant: "Not yet. Greenville tech is the only place I plan on applying."

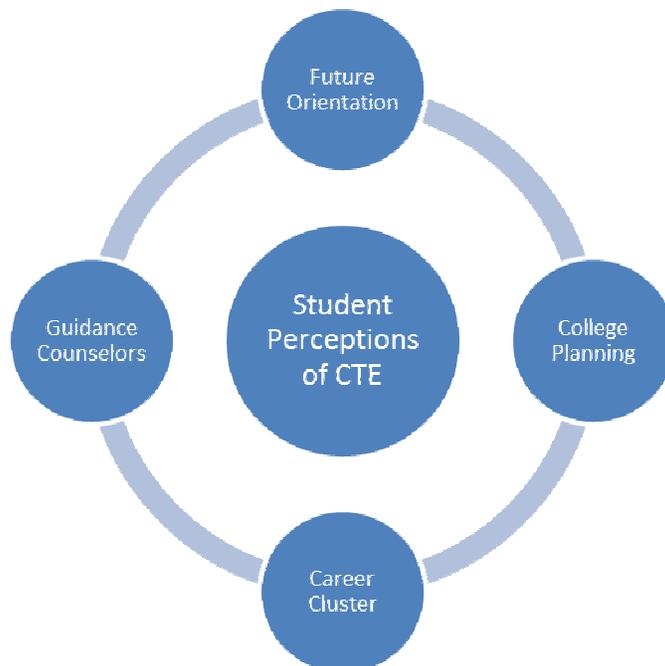
The Mission Statement of Henderson V Career Campus states emphasizes the importance of the coursework that is offered and states that the campus will "provide students with real world skills that can translate into certifications and college credits for jobs and/or future education". The document reiterates the importance of the campus to

ensure that these students are afforded the opportunities that will enable them to be successful and complete those goals after leaving the campus.

The Vision Statement of the Henderson V Career Campus values the importance of career education by stating the vision of the school is “to empower each student to become responsible individuals of ethical character and economically productive citizens by integrating academic and career education with project based learning through real world experiences”. The school values an education that incorporates many facets of the learning environment, and the responsibility of educating students on college and college planning resides with the school.

The four themes are visually presented in Table 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Student Perceptions of CTE Found at Henderson V Career Campus



## **Summary**

The researcher conducted a complex questionnaire with a total of twelve participants with an online database entitled Survey Monkey. A total of eight participants participated in an audio recorded interview conducted at the location site. The researcher analyzed documents that included the South Carolina State Report Card Data on the location site, the vision, mission, and core beliefs of the location site were analyzed for document analysis. The researcher determined that four themes were present throughout the study including Future Orientation, Guidance Counselors, Career Clusters, and College Planning.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings. First, the purpose of the study as well as the research questions are restated. A summary of the methodology as well as the critical theorist perspective is offered after the restatement of purpose and the research questions. Next, the themes found in the data are described and situated in the existing literature. After the research questions are answered, implications for practice and future study are offered using a critical theorist perspective.

#### **Purpose of Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to determine student perceptions while taking courses at a Career and Technology School. The site chosen to conduct the research was Henderson V Career Campus. The central question that the researcher sought to answer was: What are the student perceptions of their experiences in Career and Technical Education? The study had two secondary questions: a) How has Career and Technology Education helped you complete high school?, b) How has Career and Technology Education helped you choose your Career Cluster? The participants of the study were African American students in twelfth grade that had participated in CTE courses since tenth grade. The researcher chose to only include the students that had participated multiple years in the program to gain as much an insight into perceptions over the course of the students' years in high school. The study is significant because it added to the literature base on the experiences of underrepresented populations in CTE.

## **Study Design and Theoretical Perspective**

The methodology that was employed in the current study was a qualitative approach with a case study design. According to Liamputtong (2007), qualitative research provides opportunities for researchers to form relationships with participants. As a result of these relationships, the researcher can establish trust and rapport with students. This type of research helps the investigator to see the world from the participants' perspective. The methodology of Qualitative Research as defined by Creswell (2012) is inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting data and analyzing data. Creswell (2012) noted that one of the best reasons to apply this type of research design is because a problem or issue needs to be explored and the silenced voices need to be heard. An advantage of qualitative research is that it can be written in a literary, flexible, or narrative style and it does not have the same restrictions as a quantitative study. In qualitative research, it is expected that the researcher include narratives from the participants. Including the participants in interviews allows for a more flexible and literary style for the participants to share their stories.

Specifically, the chosen qualitative study design was a case study. A case study enables the investigator to explore a real-life system over time through data collection and observation. Creswell (2012) noted that a case study is best used when a researcher is studying a program and more than one individual. The researcher analyzes the data after it is collected in order to explain the phenomenon under study.

A paradigm defined by Creswell (2012) that is particularly relevant to this inquiry is that the researcher employs a basic set of beliefs in his or her writing. Critical Paradigm is one in which the researcher attempts to empower someone to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender. As such, a critical theorist perspective was chosen for use in this study. The choice to use the critical theorist lens relied heavily on the work of Apple (2014) who explored educational systems. He believed that the major cause of the failure of educational systems could be attributed to the fact that control over education has left educators without responsibility to consumers. Apple advocated for more autonomy to be given to students in order for them to have greater ownership of their education. Indeed, research by Damon (2008) substantiated the conclusion that students are more likely to be more productive adults when they felt that they had a sense of purpose in their own education. This is a value that was shared by the researcher and it was instrumental in the choice of the research questions and guided the coding process and interpretation of results. The critical theorist perspective is in one in which the researcher is compelled to bring about a change or reform. Change occurs through communication; conversations are for the purpose of determining the best course of action. Researchers using a critical theorist perspective ask questions such as: “What is just?” and “What can we do?” (Sipe and Constable, 1996, p.155). When a critical theorist discovers an issue that needs to be reformed, they bring the issue to light and “mobilize participants to create a better world” (Sipe and Constable, 1996, p.161).

## **Description of Themes and Link to Existing Research**

Four themes emerged from the process of coding the data. These themes included: Future Orientation, Guidance Counselors, Career Clusters, and College Planning. All four themes helped answer the research questions posed in the study and allow for conclusions with regard to improvement in the delivery of Career and Technical Education. The following subsections will summarize how the four themes are described in the literature.

### **Future Orientation**

From the theme Future Orientation, as suggested by the researcher, students perceive CTE as a means of obtaining their post-secondary goals. Since these students have a sense of future orientation, the goal of the researcher is to determine whether or not CTE helped students graduate high school. These students value Henderson V Career Campus and can appreciate the role in which this facility can aid them in the future goals.

The idea that students possess Future Orientation has been propelled by the idea that all students “get a college education” (Cohen and Besharov, 2002). Cohen and Besharov discuss that this has been “the basic advice given to all young people and for good reason” (p.1). Eighty-two percent of teens believe that need a college degree to get a good job, and the majority seem determined that they will follow this path (Johnson and Farkas, 1997).

In a study conducted by Brown and Jones (2004), they studied the future orientation of African American students. They stated “The construct of future orientation, conceived thus, has important implications for the academic motivation of

African American students. First, the degree to which students orient themselves toward future goals is likely to have an effect on their motivation for academic work, which is largely geared toward future rewards, in at least two ways. First, students who exhibit higher levels of future orientation would tend to perceive academic goals as nearer and thus have higher motivation. Second, students more oriented toward the future would tend to perceive schooling as instrumental to their later success” (p.252).

From interviews and the questionnaire, the researcher determined that the Henderson V Career Campus has afforded these participants a way to perceive their goals more clearly and more tangibly. They have been given the opportunity to explore their career choices through the courses that they have chosen to take at the Henderson V Career Campus.

This theme is significant in the realm of education and advances the literature by affirming the belief that students will have a higher and more refined senses of future orientation with courses that they have autonomy and are allowed to explore their career interests. The study allowed for the researcher and participants a chance to investigate why the perceptions of students at Career and Technology Centers are valuable.

### **Guidance Counselors**

The theme Guidance Counselors helps to answer the overarching question of the study: What are the perceptions of African American students in CTE? From the data and triangulation of the data, the researcher suggests that the guidance counselors are perceived by students to be very influential and important in helping them choose their career cluster and courses during their experience at Henderson V Career Campus.

Guidance Counselors serve an important role in the high school setting. Guidance counselors, in terms of CTE, are responsible for helping students determine their coursework at CTE centers and help students choose their career cluster from a choice of sixteen as defined by the US Department of Education. Stone and Lewis (2012) discuss how there is often a “Missing Link” (p.36). Their discussion begins with the idea that career decisions among students is very complicated and should be guided by a professional.

However, guidance counselors often have many responsibilities and cannot provide the support that is needed or should be afforded to students in high school. In the American Youth Policy Forum (May 2008), a recommendation for CTE is that “Counselors need training and development about the value of CTE and about the 16 career clusters and emerging careers in those industry sectors, so they are better able to advise students and parents” (p.10). From the present study, there is a suggestion that there is an overwhelming reliance of the students at Henderson V Career Campus on their guidance counselors to aid them in choosing their career clusters and coursework at the career campus.

Wimberly and Noeth (2005) found that two-thirds of tenth graders reported that their high school guidance counselor helped them select their high school courses (ix). The same students reported that their guidance counselors were very helpful which was just over half of students in eighth and ninth grade citing their guidance counselors are helpful. A contradictory study conducted by Helwig (Stone and Lewis, 2012) found that there was “mediocre satisfaction with their school’s role in helping them engage in career

development activities, such as making a connection between school subject and occupational direction, feeling supported by their school in searching for a career direction, and feeling supported by their school with career preparation” (p. 46).

The significance of this theme in the present study denotes the importance of guidance counselors in helping students determine their career path and their choices for coursework. According to Wimberly and Noeth (2005), a recommendation for practice in CTE is that college planning begins in middle school. The college planning should be guided by a professional at the middle school that can allow students to explore their career options. During middle school, students can begin to discover their interests and skills that they possess that can translate into career choices. Surveys and interviews can be conducted by guidance counselors to help guide the students into making informed decisions about their future coursework and future career options.

### **Career Cluster**

The present study suggests that there needs to be some education for students to understand career clusters and their intended purpose. This theme also helped answer the overarching question: What are the perceptions associated with CTE among African American students? Students are unaware of the career clusters and are unaware of the courses that are offered within the career clusters.

Career clusters provide a way for schools to organize instruction and student experiences around sixteen broad categories that encompass virtually all occupations from entry through professional levels (Brand, 2008). Students in the interviews and

complex questionnaire did not cite the correct career cluster in which they were enrolled nor did they understand that they could take multiple courses within their career cluster.

A study conducted by Carnevale, Smith, Stone III, Kotamraju, Steuernagel, and Green (2011) discovered that “seventy-two percent of jobs available for workers with a Bachelor’s degree or better are found in nine occupational clusters. Yet at this education level, all career clusters are essentially accessible. The remaining 28 percent of jobs for workers with a Bachelor’s degree or better pay the highest wages relative to the career cluster” (p.11). This is important to note so that students have an awareness of the career clusters and the jobs that are available in each cluster. Students may choose to participate in one of these nine if given the information on the cluster.

Another piece of information found from this study that could be helpful to these students is that Health Science is projected to rank first in the number of jobs added and second in growth rate through 2018. Registered nurses hold the largest number of jobs in healthcare. Most individuals enter the field with an Associate’s degree. This information would be beneficial to the students to know that a two year degree from a technical school could be all that is needed for this career. Many of the students that were interviewed wanted to attend a four year school for nursing when they could attend a technical school for much less money.

The theme Career Cluster advanced the literature in the field of CTE by revealing the misconceptions of students on career clusters. Students were unaware of the choices with career clusters and were uninformed with the courses that they could take within the clusters. This was significant for practitioners to understand and realize the importance

of ensuring that students understand career clusters and importance of the career clusters in their career choices in the future.

### **College Planning**

The theme from coding, College Planning, helped the researcher gain an insight into the research question: What are the perceptions of CTE among African American students? The theme College Planning denotes, as recommended by the researcher, a need for more instruction and education among CTE students to aid them in college planning and appreciating all the aspects of college planning.

College planning for students can be an arduous task and can be very difficult for students and parents. Students can feel overwhelmed, misinformed, and uninformed. The present study concluded from participant interviews and the complex questionnaire that students are under informed and naive about college planning. During the interview, students stated that they were going to go to college, but had not applied and had not been accepted. These students were interviewed and completed the questionnaire during their senior year in the month of December. Most students have been accepted into college and mostly all seniors that plan to attend college have applied before December of their senior year.

Wimberly and Noeth (2004) noted that there are expectations to attend college and this perpetuates the idea to students that they must attend college. Students cite that they want to attend college, but many lack the knowledge to obtain that goal, and they do not possess the skills to obtain information about college. The same researchers stated “Although students have ambitious educational and career aspirations, many lack basic

information about how to fulfill their postsecondary goals. Many students and their parents fail to plan because they do not have the essential information resources, personal support networks, and structured programs' (p.2).

From the present study, the researcher suggests that students lack the knowledge to obtain their goal of attending college. The students do not understand the process of applying or entering college. "Some students and their parents have a vague understanding or hold misconceptions about high school course requirements for college admission, the importance of teachers in college planning, and college tuition costs" (p.2).

The same researchers found that parents also want their children to attend college, but those parents that did not attend college themselves, and they "may neither know the key post-secondary planning steps nor have the skills to assist their children with post-secondary planning" (p.2). This presents a problem for schools in that they are educating the parents of the students that did not attend college themselves. Educators should be aware of the misconceptions and ignorance of parents that did not attend college themselves and plan for more instruction to these groups of parents and students.

Since college planning is considered a partnership between parents, students, and schools, there is a call for the need for educating all stakeholders involved in the college planning process. The significance of this study is closely related to this need of educating all members in order to help students in the college planning procedures. Students need more assistance in understanding timelines with college applications and understand the importance of when to apply to colleges. For the most part, applying to

college during the second semester is not a good practice for students. Most colleges have already begun the admittance processes, and many of these students may be left behind or without a post-secondary option. This study brought to light this problem with the college planning process at Henderson V Career Campus and enhanced the literature on student perceptions as they related to college planning.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

Acknowledgement by the researcher as an instrument is important in qualitative studies (Patton,2002). This acknowledgement by the researcher allows the researcher to understand their role in influencing participants' during data collection. This is also an important consideration when collecting data, interpreting data, and drawing conclusions from the data. A final consideration is how the previous knowledge and experience can influence the suggestions for changed practice that the researcher may offer.

The researcher has worked in the field of education for nine years. She has worked in a middle school as a seventh grade reading teacher, a seventh grade Readers' Workshop teacher, an English 1 teacher, and for the last two years has been an instructional coach. During the nine years at a middle school, she has been afforded the opportunity to work with many groups of students. One group that she identified during this time was the group of students that were interested in skills that would not be acquired at a four year college or university. This group heightened the researchers' interest in this group because she felt that this group could be better served in a Career and Technology Center; however, the district in which she teaches does not have a career center for students. Interactions with students precipitated the desire for a career center

to be developed, and the researcher wanted to investigate the perceptions of students that are currently enrolled in a career center.

The researcher noted several issues that could have swayed student responses during the interview. After completing the first interview, Participant 1 stated “I’m so glad that is over.” When the researcher asked the participant why she felt that way, She responded “Because I was nervous”. The researcher tried to ensure the participant that she had answered all the questions very well, and tried to make the participant more comfortable. The researcher realized that other participants may feel nervous or uncomfortable while conducting the interview. An attempt was made by the researcher to help the participants feel more comfortable with all subsequent interviews. This also made the researcher more cognizant of the participant uneasiness during the interview process. Because the participant was nervous, the researcher tried to seem more comforting and open with the next participant and all the subsequent participants. The uneasiness of the participant made the researcher feel that may have influenced the way that students responded to the questions.

The location of the interview may also affected the results and responses from the participants during the interview. When the researcher initially visited the location of the research, the director offered a board room for the interview location. After completing the interviews, the researcher determined that this location may have affected the behavior and open responses of the students because of the sophistication of the location. The board room is located outside the director’s office, and this may have made the

participants seem a little uneasy and nervous about the interview conducted by the researcher.

### **Answering the Research Question**

The data was collected in three phases: a) complex questionnaire b) interviews and c) document analysis. Using an iterative process and values coding, the researcher identified four themes: Future Orientation, Guidance Counselors, Career Clusters, and College Planning. Previously in this chapter, these themes were situated in the existing literature. These four themes enabled the researcher to answer the primary and secondary research questions.

The overarching research question was: What are the student perceptions of African American students in Career and Technology Education? The themes Future Orientation and Guidance Counselor allowed the researcher to answer the overarching question. The participants in the study perceived CTE as a vehicle for future advancement and a way to improve their future. All participants openly and freely talked about their comfort and appreciation for the career campus. They enjoyed their experiences, and believed that the teachers and instructors had been mentors to them. It was obvious to the researcher that there was a close relationship between the students and teachers. Some students had nicknames that they used to refer to the teachers during the interviews. One participant stated that he wished the classes were longer. Another participant stated the career campus gave him an advantage that students that were not enrolled at a career campus would not have been given.

The students saw the guidance counselor as the conduit that gave them access to their classes at the career center. When the researcher asked the students who helped them choose their classes at the campus, all students stated that their guidance counselor helped them choose their classes and career cluster. The interaction between the participants and guidance counselor occurred during the IGP. From the present study, the researcher determined that during these IGP meetings, students were under informed of valuable information such as Career Clusters and College Planning. Students were also unaware of the link between academics and career preparation. Students didn't view CTE as part of their academic program. Instead, the students saw CTE as a way to acquire skills to transition into the workforce.

Similarly, the secondary research question: how did CTE help you graduate high school was answered by using the theme Future Orientation. As noted, the students viewed CTE as a way of acquiring skills. None of the participants during the interviews specifically mentioned completing high school. The participants in the study saw CTE as a way to finish their program of study, therefore, this allowed them, in turn, to finish high school.

The three themes Guidance Counselor, Career Cluster, and College Planning were used by the researcher to answer the question: How did CTE help you choose your career cluster? Student awareness of career cluster was introduced by the guidance counselor during the IGP process when students were in eighth grade. From the complex questionnaire and interview, the researcher determined that students did not know in which career cluster they were enrolled. Ignorance in career cluster and college planning

could have detrimental impact on their career path. Because of this lack of knowledge, these students are unaware of the options that can be afforded to them through the career campus. Students viewed the programs in terms of jobs rather than career development. Because the students only viewed these programs as avenues for jobs and because they don't see CTE as part of academic preparation, the students do not understand the importance of the role of furthering their education for the purposes of advancing their careers. Even if the students did see this link they did not have the skills to pursue additional education.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The literature review included a discussion of the evolution of Career and Technical Education in the United States. Two contrasting ideas on the role of CTE for African American students were juxtaposed. Booker T. Washington favored the Tuskegee and Hampton Industrial models that were built on the notion that African American students should be taught vocational skills in order to ensure economic self-reliance. In contrast, W.E.B. Du Bois advanced the idea that academic education was preferable to vocational education because he saw education as the conduit to equal rights for all citizens. The review of literature also described and articulated the evolution of CTE as seen in policy. As noted, CTE evolved from skill development acquired in apprenticeships to institutions open to all students with multiple opportunities for career exploration. Stigmas and negative perceptions once associated with CTE centers have been difficult to overcome.

The evolution of the purpose of CTE can also be seen in the goals that were enumerated in policy. Beginning with the First Morrill Act, the first Morrill Act was enacted to provide secondary education opportunities to African Americans. The act allowed for African Americans to be allowed access to land grant institutions. Sixteen Historically and Predominantly Black Land Grant College and Institutions were created from this legislation.

The multiple iterations of the Perkins Act was the first time that the goal of the legislation was directed toward all populations. The acts have provided multiple opportunities for all students. The 2006 version introduced Career Clusters and mandated IGPs during the eighth grade. During the most recent revision, the term vocational education was replaced with Career and Technology Education. Aligning secondary and postsecondary education was a goal with this legislation.

The findings of this study suggest that the participants in CTE viewed their experience as envisioned by Washington and from the First Morrill Act. As a critical theorist, this finding is disheartening given the fact that the purpose of the existing legislation is to eliminate the stigmas associated with CTE and tracks still exist.

Eliminating stigmas and negative perceptions of CTE is a goal that many educators have been working to resolve for many years. Negative perceptions of CTE can cause students to view CTE as an avenue for students that do not want to attend college or only want to obtain skills for a job.

The researcher's own experiences prompted the idea to think about how students view Career and Technology Education. She felt that students were possibly misinformed and under informed in many that relate to career clusters and college planning. During a recent conversation with a guidance counselor at the school in which she is employed, the guidance counselor discussed a student's career goal. Because the school is readiness grouped as defined by the school itself, the student is in the lowest readiness group in the eighth grade. Despite this, the student during an IGP conference stated that he wanted to be an engineer. The researcher had a conversation with the guidance counselor and wanted to know how the guidance counselor handled this situation. The researcher was curious if the guidance counselor worked to sway the student into another career or offer other careers that were more attainable for this student. The guidance counselor chose not to give the student other suggestion because he did not want to hurt this child's feelings or as he said "crush his dreams". As an educator, the researcher understands the importance of remaining positive; however this is an unattainable dream for this child.

Drawing from a critical theorist perspective, the researcher asked herself, "what is just" and "what can I do". The guidance counselor chose to almost ignore this issue, and the researcher is still contemplating a solution to this issue. Because the guidance counselor chose to not inform the student of the other possible careers or to be honest with the student, the student now is under informed of the opportunities that could be afforded to him.

## **Recommendations for Practice and Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to determine student perceptions of CTE and enhance the literature in the area of CTE among African American students. This section of this chapter will outline the recommendations for practitioners in the field of CTE and offer suggestions for future research in the area of CTE.

In the present study, the researcher determined that there is a great need for more guidance counselor interaction and instruction with students that are attending CTE centers. These students are often off campus for a portion of the day and are not in contact with guidance counselors as traditional students not attending CTE centers. Brand (2008) discussed the need for more guidance counselors and they often serve too many students to be effective. Brand (2008) also stated one of the problems associated with guidance counselors assessments is that they are assessed on how many students enter four-year colleges and universities, and they may feel added pressure to sway students into taking this path rather than a pathway into the workforce or a two year school.

The researcher determined that there is a gap in the students' knowledge of career clusters and the courses that they could enroll within those career clusters. Students did not know the career cluster in which they were enrolled and, this could greatly enhance their knowledge about future courses and future career opportunities that they could be exposed. A recommendation for practitioners would be to ensure that students understood the Individual Growth Plan that is outlined for them beginning in eighth grade that follows them throughout high school. The Career Development Facilitator could

ensure that parents and students both understand this process, and the courses available in each career cluster.

Another recommendation for practitioners is to ensure that students receive the best advice and guidance on career choices. Students are often given surveys and questionnaires that do not adequately measure their interests or skills that would aid them in a career or the education that they need to obtain for certain careers. Stone and Lewis (2012) recognized “Unfortunately, not enough attention is paid to assisting young people to engage in thoughtful, thorough career development”. Students often have to make coursework decisions early in either middle school or high school and are not given the tools to make decisions about their future careers. This is because they were inadequately assessed about their career interests.

A final recommendation for practitioners is a recommendation that would aid the students of CTE centers greatly. These students need more information and education about the procedures of college and planning and preparation. Wimberley and Noeth (2005) stated “To ensure that students have ample time to consider and explore their postsecondary education and career options, college readiness activities should begin in the middle school and be reinforced throughout the high school years. (p.17).

In the present study, students were unaware of deadlines for being accepted into a college and unaware of the deadlines for college preparation. Because of the possibility of applying late to college, some of these students may miss out on federal and state funding that would aid them in paying for their courses and college expenses. This type

of ignorance among the students could have been avoided with more instruction and guidance during high school on college planning and procedures.

A suggestion for future research lies in the area of career clusters and their significance on student choices. The researcher discovered that students may have chosen another career cluster while attending Henderson V Career Campus. The researcher would like to discover if being a part of a career cluster helped them eliminate a career choice. Was their choice guided by a dislike of the career that they were exposed or the courses in which they were taught? An instructor can play a vital role in the success and interest of students, and this may have swayed a student to choose a different career cluster based on interest or the instructor of the course.

Another suggestion for future research would be for a researcher to interview and survey CTE centers that have changed their names from a vocational school to a career campus or a Career and Technology Center. As mentioned in the literature review of this study, the term vocational school had a negative stigma among parents and community members. There has been a shift in focus to changing the names of vocational schools to CTE centers or as in Henderson County School District Five, a career campus. The survey and interview would include the faculty members on perceptions and if they feel that the perception of their school had changed in a positive manner. The researcher could use enrollment record from the school and determine if there is a higher enrollment in certain areas and determine what programs and courses seem to be the most interest.

A final suggestion for future research is for the researcher to determine student interaction with a guidance counselor. How much interaction does each student at a CTE

center have with a guidance counselor? Do these students miss out on some of the opportunities that students at a traditional high school may experience because they are participating in CTE courses off campus? This would be interesting to research as the researcher in this study suggested that the students that she interviewed lack some knowledge that a guidance counselor could have provided to these students. These students may have missed out on financial assistance paperwork deadlines that could have aided them in their successful transition from high school to college.

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the findings in the data which included the four themes found from the triangulation of data: Future Orientation, Guidance Counselors, Career Clusters, and Career clusters. The discussion of the findings included a thorough discussion of the findings attributed to the themes, and finally the chapter gave recommendations for practitioners and recommendations for future research.

The purpose of the present study to determine student perceptions among African American student while enrolled in courses at a career and technology center. The students provided the researcher with information to enhance the literature base not only on CTE, but also how students feel about CTE. The researcher was able to suggest future recommendations for practitioners which was a goal of the researcher in order to enhance the experience of students while enrolling in courses at a CTE. For practitioners to understand and appreciate the experience of students, student perceptions can be analyzed to determine the best approach to their education and success after completing high

school. Student perceptions can guide the courses that are offered in the CTE center, as this can allow more students to feel more autonomy in their coursework options.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Student Survey Questions

1. How many years have you attended Henderson V Career Campus?
2. What Career Cluster are you currently enrolled?
3. Why did you choose that Career Cluster?
4. How do you plan to use that Career Cluster in the future?
5. Have you been enrolled in another Career Cluster?
6. If so, why did you choose another Career Cluster?
7. What are your goals after completing Henderson V Career Campus?
8. If you are going to attend another two year or four year school, what school will you attend?
9. Please list any two year or four year schools that you have been accepted.
10. Did a guidance counselor or other faculty member at your high school help you choose classes at Henderson V Career Campus?

## Appendix B

### Student Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology Center?
2. Why did you choose the Career Cluster that you chose?
3. How did you identify the program that you wanted to be in?
4. How did you plan the course of study that you are currently in?
5. What are your goals after high school?
6. How has being involved in a Career and Technology school helped you obtain your goals after high school?
7. What suggestions do you have for those students that are considering taking courses at a Career and Technology Center?
12. What do you like most about Henderson V Career Campus?
13. What do you least like about Henderson V Career Campus?
14. Please list any other information that you would like to share about your experiences at Henderson V Career Campus.

## Appendix C

### Student Consent Letter

Child/Minor Agreement to Be in a Research Study  
Clemson University

#### **Student Perceptions of Career and Technology**

You are being invited to be in a research study. Below you will find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

##### **Who Are We?**

I am a doctorate student at Clemson University, and I am finishing my degree in Educational Leadership at Clemson University.

##### **What Is It For?**

The purpose of this study is to determine how Career and Technology Education has helped students obtain their career goals and future plans.

##### **Why You?**

You are being asked to participate in this study so that the researchers can determine how students are helped obtain their goals at Career and Technology Centers. This study will not have any negative impact on your grades, you will not receive a grade for the survey or study, and you will not be given extra credit for your participation.

##### **What Will You Have to Do?**

You will be asked to complete a survey that your teacher will guide you through an online website. After the survey is completed, approximately ten students will be asked to participate in an interview conducted by the researcher. This interview will take place in the office.

If you do not want to be a part of the interview, you can discontinue your participation in the study.

##### **What Are the Good Things and Bad Things that May Happen to You If You Are in the Study?**

There are no known risks associated with the participation of this study. You will have an option to deny the request to be interviewed.

##### **What If You Want to Stop? Will You Get in Trouble?**

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may discontinue being a part of the study. You will not receive any kind of punishment nor will this negatively impact your grades or class performance.

**Do You Have Any Questions?**

You can ask questions at any time. You can ask them now. You can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. Here are the telephone numbers to reach us 864-314-2260. Laura Beth Smith, Department of Educational Leadership, Clemson University

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By being in this study, I am saying that I have read this form and have asked any questions that I may have. All of my questions have been answered and I understand what I am being asked to do. I am willing and would like to be in this study.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

## Appendix D

### Parent Permission Form

Parent Permission Form  
Clemson University

#### **Perceptions of Career and Technology Education**

##### **Description of the Research and Your Child's Part in It**

Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Laura Beth Smith are inviting your child to take part in a research study. Dr. Knoeppel is a professor at Clemson University. Laura Beth is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. Knoeppel. The purpose of this research is study the ways in which Career and Technology Education has helped students determine their career goals and preparation for those goals.

Your child's part in this study will be to complete a survey that will be administered by your child's teacher through an online website. After the survey is completed, ten students will be selected to participate in an interview performed by Laura Beth Smith. The interview will take place in the office with the office staff's knowledge of the study. The survey will take approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes.

It will take your child about one class period for the survey and twenty to twenty-five minutes if selected to take part in the interview.

##### **Risks and Discomforts**

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to your child in this research study.

##### **Possible Benefits**

We do not know of any way your child would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand how students choose career path and ways that we can determine how to guide students in their career decisions.

##### **Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will do everything we can to protect your child's privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that your child was in this study or what information we collected about your child in particular.

We might be required to share the information we collect from your child with the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance and the federal Office for Human

Research Protections. If this happens, the information would only be used to find out if we ran this study properly and protected your child's rights in the study.

### **Choosing to Be in the Study**

Your child does not have to be in this research study. You do not have to let your child be in the study. You may tell us at any time that you do not want your child to be in the study anymore. Your child will not be punished in any way if you decide not to let your child be in the study or if you stop your child from continuing in the study.: Your child's grades will not be affected by any decision you make about this study.

If you choose to have your child stop taking part in this study, the information your child has already provided will be used in a confidential manner.

We will also ask your child if they want to take part in this study. Your child will be able to refuse to take part or to quit being in the study at any time.

### **Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at Clemson University at 864-656-1882.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or [irb@clemson.edu](mailto:irb@clemson.edu). If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC's toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

## Appendix E

### Participants' Interviews Transcribed

were interviewed in a boardroom located in the office of Henderson V Career Campus.

Participant 1

Researcher: "Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant 1: "Because I like to do hair and everything else about it."

Researcher: "Can you tell me the title of the Career Cluster you are in?"

Participant: "Cosmetology."

Researcher: "Did you have anyone in cosmetology?"

Participant: "Yes, my grandmam's ma was a cosmetologist and I learned from experience and from her."

Researcher: "Did anyone at your school, your guidance counselors' help you determine which career cluster?"

Participant: "Yes, my guidance counselor."

Researcher: "How many classes have you taken?"

Participant: "Computer class and cosmetology"

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant: "After high school, I'm going to go to college and own my own business there."

Researcher: "What college are you going to go to?"

Participant: "I'm going to go to Charleston Southern University."

Researcher: "How has being involved in Career and Technology School helped you obtain your goals after high school?"

Participant: "It's helped a lot because as you builds your skills, you know, if you look like doing what you do, you can do whatever you want to do if you put your mind to it."

Researcher: "What do you like most about the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "They help you as you go, if you don't understand something, they will help you, if you get something they will help you individually. They help you as you go.

I like everything because if you look at it, there's different things you can do. It's not just one thing you can do here."

Participant 2

Researcher: "Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "I just fell right into it."

Researcher: "Why did you choose the Career Cluster that you chose?"

Participant: "I want to own my own business."

Researcher: "What career cluster are you in?"

Participant: "Cosmetology."

Researcher: "How did you identify the program you wanted to be?"

Participant: "In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, they had a walkthrough at E-camp. I thought that this is me. I don't need to go any further."

Researcher: "Did a guidance counselor help?"

Participant: "No, I just knew what I wanted to do. I just did myself."

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant: "I want to go to a four year college."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted?"

Participant: "Not yet. I want to study cosmetology and study nursing. In the end, I want to be a nurse and own my own salon."

Researcher: "When you graduate here, will you have your cosmetology license?"

Participant: "Yes, ma'am."

Researcher: "How has being involved in Career and Technology Center helped you?"

Participant: "It's more like the teachers and the surrounding just push and push help you where you want to be. It's the teachers that keep telling me to stick with it."

Researcher: "Has it been just one teacher or the whole the atmosphere or the environment?"

Participant: "Ms. A. She's my cosmetology teacher. You can just go to her with any problem, she will not turn you away. She is the guidance counselor for us. We were her first class. We were like her babies."

Researcher: "What do you like most about the Career Center?"

Participant: "Everybody is nice here. At the home school, it's a lot of kids, so you don't get that one on one connection that you don't get at your home school."

Participant 3

Researcher: "Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology?"

Participant: "To help me out in life. Like, to help me set a goal to what I want to be when I get out of school."

Researcher: "So, before you came to the Career and Technology Center, do feel like you didn't have a goal?"

Participant: "No, I didn't know what I wanted to do."

Researcher: "So, when you set your goal, how did you choose what Career Cluster you choose?"

Participant: "I liked to cook and I like nursing. I've been in both nursing and culinary arts program here. I wanted to see about those two different types of classes."

Researcher: "You just wanted to see which one you liked best?"

Participant: "Ah-huh.

I think I still like nursing still."

Researcher: "How did you choose which Career Cluster you wanted to be in?"

Participant: "The guidance counselor helped me."

Researcher: "What are your goals after you finish here?"

Participant: "Go to college."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted?"

Participant: "No."

Researcher: "Do you know when you'll be accepted?"

Participant: "No."

Researcher: "How has being involved in a Career and Technology School helped you obtain your goals after high school?"

Participant: "Cause it kept you a positive look on what you'll learn and it'll what you'll get yourself into. Learn skills for the real world."

Researcher: "What do you like most about the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "That it's easy, but they help you. They break it down to you, what you need to learn, they won't leave you by yourself."

Participant 4

Researcher: "Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "Because I want a career and automotive technology, and I thought that taking classes in automotive technology would help me in the future."

Researcher: "So, she helped you identify the program you wanted to be in?"

Participant: "Yes, my guidance counselor helped me."

Researcher: "How did you determine the classes you were going to take and in what order?"

Participant: "My guidance counselor helped me. She helped me plan how to take the classes."

Researcher: "What have you learned over the courses of three courses?"

Participant: "I know more about how the car works than I learned just watching my parents."

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant: "I'm going to UTI in Orlando, Florida."

Researcher: "How long is the program?"

Participant: "Less than a year, he said."

Researcher: "After you finish there, what do you want to do?"

Participant: "There is a high, high chance that you will get drafted out of there because like businesses come there to, so I'm expecting to get a job. If I can't get anything around here, I'm going to take the most high paying job."

Researcher: "How has being here helped you get there?"

Participant: "The reason that I found out about the UTI school was because Dan Moore came to my class to try to get us to come to that school. He goes around the schools to try to get students to come to that school. He's like my mentor. He's helped me through all the process.

He came to my house and helped me with my application and all that stuff."

Participant 5

Researcher: "Why did you choose the Career Cluster that you chose?"

Participant: "I talked to my parents and they talked to my guidance counselor and thought that this would be a good one."

Researcher: "How did you identify the Career Cluster that you wanted to be in?"

Participant: "My friend had health science too, I haven't had no health science, but she was like it helped her with her career so I decided to do health science."

Researcher: "What are your goals after high school?"

Participant: "To be an anesthesiologist."

Researcher: "Have you been accepted to a college?"

Participant: "Not yet, I'm going to a four year tech college first."

Researcher: "How has being involved in Career and Technology Education helped you obtain your goals after high school?"

Participant: "It helped me get ready for the hospital and the terms that we going to be using there."

Participant 6

Researcher: "How did you choose to be a part of Career and Technology Education?"

Participant: "Because I grew up around cars. That's all I know."

Researcher: "Have you taken any other classes here?"

Participant: "Yeah, I took Wildlife Sciences and Animal Sciences.

So, did you take those classes just as electives or did you take them because you thought maybe you might want to pursue a career in that?

Little bit of both."

Researcher: "Did you determine that's not what you want to do?"

Participant: "Well, it can always be used a backup."

Researcher: "Do plan on staying around here?"

Participant: "I'll probably move to Greenville. You know the MotorMile."

Researcher: "What has this school done to help you get to UTI in North Carolina?"

Participant: "It helped cause you know, the teachers, they teach really good. It's just the book work; I'm more of hands on person

Researcher: "How did you find out about UTI?"

Participant: "He came to the school. He's been really helpful."

Researcher: "What do you like most about the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "Teachers. They're great. Mr. Martin, Mr. Copeland, just really good teachers."

Participant 7

Researcher: "Why did you choose to be a part of the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "So, I can learn more about my future."

Researcher: "How did you choose your Career Cluster?"

Participant: "I just talked with my parents and talked about what I wanted to do."

Participant 8

Researcher: "Why did you choose to come to Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "So I can learn about cars."

Researcher: "Who helped you determine your Career Cluster?"

Participant: "I was kinda influenced by my granddad because he works on cars."

Researcher: "Have you stayed in the same career cluster?"

Participant: "Yes, ma'am."

Researcher: "Have you applied to any schools?"

Participant: "Not yet. Greenville tech is the only place I plan on applying."

Researcher: "How has being involved in a Career and Technology School helped you obtain your goals? What do you think that this school here has done to help you be where you want to be?"

Participant: "It gives a better advantage over people who like don't go to have the school stuff. It helped me how to learn how to service stuff better."

Researcher: "So, did it give you the knowledge of the cars or of just the program itself?"

Participant: "Just like the basic systems of a car and how they work."

Researcher: "Do you think you have learned that-those things that you would or would not learn by working on a car or do you think that you learned those things at the school?"

Participant: "Learned it at the school. Because some things you have to learn it out of a book because it changes every year."

Researcher: "What suggestions do you have for those that are considering taking courses at a Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "They should go as early as they can."

Researcher: "What do you like most about the Career and Technology Center?"

Participant: "Hands on. I learn better hands on."

Researcher: "What do you like least?"

Participant: "I wish the classes were longer. Here, it's like only an hour class, over at Hanna, classes are an hour and a half. We don't get to learn as much."

Appendix F:

Survey Results

**Table 4.2: Student Responses from Online Survey**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Question 1: What Career Cluster are you currently enrolled? | <b>Cosmetology 7 responses</b><br><b>Auto Tech 3 responses</b><br><b>Health Science 1 response</b><br><b>Nursing 1 response</b>  |
| Question 2: Why did you choose that Career Cluster?         | <b>i wanna work on cars for a living</b><br><b>because i love to work on cars</b><br><b>I,ve been around cars all my life</b><br><b>Because I want to become an nurse</b><br><b>because i love to do hair</b><br><b>because i want to work with kids</b><br><b>because i love to do hair</b><br><b>i like hair and nails</b><br><b>because i love to do hair</b><br><b>Cosmetology is what I want to do in</b><br><b>life.</b><br><b>I have always been interested in hair and owning my own salon,and to also have something to fall back on in the future.</b> |
| Question 3: How do you plan to use that                     | <b>AS a back up plan for the future</b><br><b>be a master technician</b>   |

**Career Cluster in the future?**

**learn the basic knowledge of cars**

**By going to UTI and getting started straight out of high school**

**To get my degree in nursing**

**i plan to own my own salon one day**

**to reach my goals**

**i plan to own my own salon one day**

**want my on nail shop**

**i plan to own my own salon**

**By owning my own salon.**

**I plan to own a salon after college and use this to make extra money in college.**

**AS a back up plan for the future**

**Question 4: Have you ever been enrolled in another Career Cluster?**

Yes 8.33%

75.00%

No 9

16.67%

Other<sup>2</sup>

Total 12

**Question 5: If so, why did you choose another Career Cluster?**

**na**

**to help improve on what i already know**

**The really help you reach goals in life**

**I have not been enrolled in another Career Cluster**

**Question 6: What are your goals after completing Henderson V Career Campus?**

**i did not**

**n/a**

**i did not**

**no**

**no**

**go to UTI**

**go to college in the automotive field**

**Getting a carrer started in Automotive**

**Becoming an RNA**

**i plan to go to the air force**

**going to college**

**i plan to go to the air force**

**going to a nail school**

**i plan to go to the air force**

**Going to college to major in business and management**

**I plan to study nursing at a 4 year college**

**Go to a 4 year college and major in Secondary Math education  
Clemson**

**Question 7: If you are going to attend a two year or four year school, what school will you attend?**

**Greenville tech**

**UTI**

**USC upstate for four years**

**Question 8: Please list any two or four year colleges that you have been accepted.**

**im not going to  
tri-county, brown mackie, greenville  
tech**

**im not going to  
two**

**Charleston Southern University**

**I want to attend USC Upstate**

**Clafin University  
i have not been to college yet**

**tri-county**

**i have not been to college yet**

**i havent got none yet**

**Livingstone college**

**Winthrop University**

**brown Mackie**

**Clafin University**

58.33%

Yes 7

41.67%

No 5

Total 12

**Question 9: Did a guidance counselor or other faculty member at your high school help you choose classes at Henderson V Career Campus?**

**Mrs. Mascaro**

**Question 10: If so, who helped you choose your classes at Henderson V Career Campus?**

**Mrs. Cathy Robinsons**

**my counselor at westside**

**n/a**

**my counselor at westside**

**mrs. masscaro**

**my guidance counselor**

**Me**

**Me**

## Appendix G:

### Mission and Vision Statements

The vision statement of the Henderson V Career Campus is as follows:

“Henderson Five Career Campus, in collaboration with community, parents and students, will provide a safe, supportive learning environment with a variety of educational opportunities to empower each student to become responsible individuals of ethical character and economically productive citizens by integrating academic and career education with project based learning through real world experiences.”

The school’s mission statement is as follows:

“Who we are...

The Henderson V Career Campus serves Henderson School District 5 by providing Career and Technology Education to the students of Westside and TL Hanna High Schools. There are a number of courses that provide students with real world skills that can translate into certifications and college credits for jobs and/or future education. We serve a diverse population of students, and we strive to fulfill our mission by providing them many opportunities to learn skills they can use in the workforce.”

Also found on the school’s website are the School’s Core Beliefs:

We believe that each student is entitled to quality public education.

We believe every student is entitled to a safe, secure and positive learning environment.

We believe that students have different educational needs and that each individual has worth and potential for growth and development.

We believe each individual should be treated with dignity and respect.

We believe effective education helps students apply knowledge.

We believe ethical values and positive self-image contribute to the success of the individual and our society.

We believe in preparing each individual student to become a productive citizen in a changing environment.

We believe that we should educate the total student.

We believe with every right comes responsibility.

We believe that all students are responsible for their participation in the educational process.

We believe learning is the business of public schools and that knowledge and skills are our product.

We believe that family involvement and broad-based community support is critical in the development of a student.

We believe shared decision-making improves the educational process.

We believe the understanding of diversity, including ethnic differences, can promote harmony and mutual respect in our society.

We believe the quality of life in our community is improved by increasing the educational levels of our population.

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