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ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS OF FUNERAL HOME OPERATORS

REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE IN

MORTUARY SCIENCE

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1998

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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April 2000

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Need for Study

The Ancient Egyptians were the first culture to practice funeral directing and embalming. As the science evolved, the trade of funeral directing and embalming became a skill handed down from the master tradesmen to their apprentices. Between the years of 1874 and 1900 many embalming schools were established. Schools of embalming before 1900 were recognized more for the men who founded them and the chemicals they used than for the quality of instruction they provided (Habenstein & Lamers, 1985). Of these men, Dr. Auguste Renouard is the most notable. In 1874, he began to teach a small number of undertakers in the back room of a furniture store. He has been credited with introducing the first funeral director and embalmer's certification. Dr. Renouard and his son, Charles A. Renouard, later established an independent, non-commercial school of embalming.

In the early years of embalming school, training courses would last three to four days with a few lasting up to three weeks. Each school designed its own curriculum. After 1900, embalming schools began a standardized curriculum and lengthened the time of instruction. In 1910 the average training course in embalming school lasted about six weeks. In 1925 it was increased to eight weeks. Beginning in 1928 courses were lengthened to three months; in 1930 to six months; and in 1934 to nine months (Habenstein & Lamers, 1985).

On September 21, 1966, a standard prerequisite of one year of college before mortuary science education was established (The Conference 1997).

In 1942, The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), originally known as the Mortuary Education Council, was founded (Habenstein & Lamers, 1985). This council was formed to formulate the proper educational, scientific and professional standards to be used by mortuary science schools. Today, the ABFSE is responsible for accrediting these mortuary science schools to ensure proper instruction.

Today, there are forty-nine accredited mortuary science programs in the United States. Of these programs, sixteen are private, technical institutions teaching funeral service education. The remaining 33 programs are taught at multi-purpose colleges and universities.

The State of Illinois offers four accredited mortuary science programs, one of which is located at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC). Of these four accredited programs, SIUC maintains the only mortuary science program offered at a multi-purpose university. Two of these four programs are located at community colleges and the remaining program is at a private institution.

The SIUC program introduced a bachelor of science degree in 1997. This was only the fifth mortuary science program in the country to offer a bachelor's degree. The baccalaureate degree offers the student funeral director advanced training in many areas that are not offered with the associate degree. These areas include, but are not limited to: embalming, management, marketing, restorative art, and color and cosmetics.

In the 1999-2000 academic year, the SIUC Mortuary Science and Funeral Service baccalaureate program enrolled 48 students. This shows a slight increase over the 1998-1999 enrollment figure of 34. An enrollment of 60 students is projected for the 2000-2001 academic year. With this increase in enrollment and the projected growth trends, there is the probability that there will be more highly educated funeral professionals seeking jobs in funeral homes throughout the State. Funeral home operators in Illinois have traditionally hired personnel certified with associate degrees or certificates due to the educational opportunities available. Rarely have they encountered practitioners having advanced training in the funeral profession. With the onslaught of more highly educated professionals in mortuary science, funeral home operators may be faced with having to offer increased wages and better benefits to new employees. As a result, there is the likelihood that funeral homes will have to pass this increase on to their clientele.

A study was needed to explore the attitudes and opinions of funeral home operators regarding the appropriateness of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science.

Statement of Problem

What are the attitudes and opinions of Illinois funeral home operators regarding a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science and funeral service?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the attitudes and opinions of Illinois funeral home operators regarding the importance of a bachelor's degree in mortuary science.

The prospective mortuary science student can then use the results of this study to understand how funeral home operators feel about this advanced training and if the pursuit of such a degree is beneficial to them.

Research Questions

1. Do funeral directors believe a baccalaureate degree is necessary in mortuary science?

2. Should a baccalaureate degree be required for licensure as a funeral director and embalmer in the state of Illinois?

3. Would funeral directors be willing to offer higher compensation to those mortuary science graduates possessing a bachelor's degree?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, these definitions were used:

Accredited Mortuary Science Programs: These are programs that have been certified by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) and have met all the criteria set forth by the committee to teach mortuary science at their institutions.

Advanced Training: Training received above an associate's degree or certificate.

Attitude: Those manners showing one's feeling or thoughts; one's opinion (Webster, 1984). This study was designed to identify the attitudes toward the Bachelor's Degree in Mortuary Science.

Curriculum: The courses of study offered by an educational institution (The American Heritage, 1994).

Mortuary Science: That part of the funeral service profession dealing with the proper preparation of the body for final disposition.

Multi-purpose University: A university offering a wide variety of study fields.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Bachelor Degree in Mortuary Science

The purpose of this study was to identify attitudes and opinions of funeral home operators regarding the importance of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science. Literature for this research was reviewed on the following topic: Higher education in mortuary science.

Higher Education in Mortuary Science

The National Funeral Directors Association (2000) conducted an on-line survey on the members opinions of funeral service being a trade or a profession. Within the on-line survey, six questions were asked to the members. Two of these questions pertain to advanced degrees in mortuary science. Question three asked, "If you selected a profession, what is the minimum amount of education that you would expect." Six individuals indicated a bachelor's degree would be the minimum amount of education expected from funeral service practitioners, with two selecting that an associate degree. Question six: "Are you in favor of requiring a bachelor's degree for licensure for new mortuary science graduates?" had nine respondents answer yes with two selecting no. This survey indicates that funeral directors consider their occupation a profession. The majority of participants believe that a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science should be a requirement for licensure.

Bruce Overton (1999) and the National Funeral Directors Association Educational Task Force are continuing work on a model baccalaureate curriculum. Mr. Overton states that "When completed, the curriculum must include such goals as better preparing the future practitioner for the role the public and profession requires today and in the future. It must create a meaningful learning environment that makes sense to the student and can be obtainable by the schools" (p. 180). The structure of the curriculum will attempt to prepare the student for the workforce, qualified, and with fewer outdated regulations and requirements. One feature of this curriculum will be the adoption of the internship program. The internship program will allow the student the opportunity to learn practical applications while in the field. The practical application of their learning can be reviewed by the qualified professional instructor. When the student graduates, he/she will be qualified and ready for employment. Internship programs will eliminate the need to establish an apprenticeship at a funeral home. The model curriculum will increase employment mobility for licenses wherever it is adopted. This will allow graduates the opportunity to transfer more easily from one state to another.

Many employers say they can not find qualified help. With the implementation of the internship program, the employer should not have any problems finding qualified individuals. One problem that may occur from the model curriculum is that schools have too much to teach and not enough time in which to teach it (p. 180).

Ninker (1998) stated that, " It is clear that a person with a college degree brings to a funeral home a higher level of education, better people skills for the most part, a greater maturity, and the ability to communicate with professional people who have degrees and advanced degrees." He asked the question "Why then would anyone not wish to hire only graduates with a baccalaureate degree?" (p. 24).

Weeks (1997) believed if we are to be considered professionals, the level of education must meet or exceed the educational level of our clients. Split licensure, based on levels of education and competencies is one alternative. This will involve three levels of education. The first level, that of an embalmer, would require an associate degree in mortuary science, and allow limited responsibilities. The second level, licensed funeral directors would have earned a bachelor's degree in funeral home management, business administration or a related field, in addition to holding the mortuary science associate's degree. The third level would require a counselor to have a master's degree.

Successful funeral directors of the 21st century will be college educated. Haynes (1996) believed that a bachelor's degree provides students with well-rounded experiences from academics to social and political arenas. Students participating in such programs experience diversified ethnic and socioeconomic levels that will prepare them for leadership positions in their community. Leadership into 2000 demands that persons in authority be educated beyond two-year degree programs.

Schneider (1992) wanted to leave this thought, " No matter what we choose to study, if we respect our education-formal or informal, directly or indirectly pertinent-we will better our existence" (p. 26).

Summary of Literature and Research

1. A literature review and research of higher education for mortuary science practitioners, shows that all the individuals believe a bachelor's degree would be beneficial to the funeral industry.

2. Literature shows that employers should be looking for highly skilled, educated individuals with the skills needed for real world applications.

3. Education is valuable, and the advanced training in mortuary science can only be beneficial to the consumer, the employer, and the practitioner.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Description of Research Type

The purpose of this study was to identify attitudes and opinions of funeral home operators regarding the importance of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science. The main focus was on funeral home owners and managers and their perception of the bachelor's degree with respect to its necessity, its being required for licensure, and funeral home operators offering higher wages to employees who possess the degree.

Subjects

The population for this study consisted of funeral home owners and managers in Illinois who are members of the Illinois Funeral Directors Association (IFDA). The IFDA publishes a members yearbook annually. Five hundred funeral homes that are members of the IFDA were identified from the annual yearbook. Of these 500 funeral homes, 75 funeral homes were randomly selected to participate. Each funeral home was chosen randomly from a page of the IFDA annual yearbook.

Data Collection Instrument

A mailed, self-reported opinionnaire was used to gather data from funeral home owners and managers. A search was conducted for an instrument that could be used for the data collection. After an extensive search, the author could not locate a opinionnaire to utilize. An instrument had to be created. A data collection

instrument was created by Robert A. Broomfield, Thomas Shaw, and Cydney

Griffith (Appendix A). These individuals are licensed funeral directors in the State

of Illinois. Cydney Griffith and Thomas Shaw are faculty of the Mortuary Science

and Funeral Service program at SIUC.

After an instrument was designed, a draft of the proposed instrument was

submitted for review to Dr. John Washburn and Mr. Derek Johnson, a funeral

home owner. An approval was received by Dr. John Washburn and no revisions of

the instrument were necessary. The final version of the instrument used in this

study was designed to gather demographic data and attitudes held by funeral home

operators concerning degree training, license requirements, and wages.

The data collection instrument was submitted to the Human Subjects

Committee at SIUC for approval. On February 17, 2000, a Request for Approval of

Research Activities Involving Human Subjects and a Letter of Approval (Appendix

C) were received.

The data collection instrument was structured in the following way:

1. Question 1 was concerned with the necessity of a bachelor degree in

mortuary science and Part A of question 1 is the skill levels that the funeral home

operators believe are attained with this degree. Part B of question one was for those

funeral home operators who answered NO to question one. This asked for the skill

levels attained in the associate degree. An area was provided at the end of both Part

A and Part B for comments.

Question 2 asked the practitioner if a bachelor's degree should be required

for licensure in the state of Illinois.

Question 3 asked the funeral practitioner if they would be willing to compensate a funeral director with a bachelor's degree a higher salary package than a funeral director without a bachelor's degree.

Questions 4 through 10 were concerned with demographic information such as funeral home ownership, number of annual adult funerals, position with funeral home, licenses held, years of experience, what college degrees are held, and their age. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the research questions and the questionnaire items.

Table 1

<u>Research Question and Related Questionnaire Items</u>

<u>Research question</u>	<u>Questionnaire Item</u>
RQ1	1
RQ2	2
RQ3	3

Procedures

A cover letter (Appendix B) was developed to be sent with the data collection instrument. The cover letter contained the following elements: An introduction by the author, an introduction to the survey, a request for assistance, instructions for returning the data collection questionnaire, and a statement of confidentiality and

compliance with the Southern Illinois University Human Subjects Committee approval of research.

A descriptive research method was used, utilizing a mailed and hand delivered opinionnaire survey.

A cover letter, opinionnaire, and a self-addressed stamped envelope, was hand delivered to 25 funeral home owners and managers who are members of the IFDA. Each participant was asked to read the cover letter prior to completion of the opinionnaire. A 9 X 12 clasp envelope containing a cover letter, an opinionnaire, and a self-addressed stamped envelope was mailed to 50 funeral home owners and managers who are members of the IFDA. The funeral home owners and managers were instructed to complete the opinionnaire and return it in the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed with the survey. The deadline for responses was two weeks after the mailing.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this survey were analyzed by computer using Microsoft Excel. Returned surveys were checked for completion. Fifty (66.7%) surveys were completed and returned. Data were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each research question contained on the opinionnaire.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify attitudes and opinions of funeral home operators regarding the importance of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science.

The main focus was on funeral home owners and managers and their perception of the bachelor's degree with respect to its necessity, its being required for licensure, and funeral home operators offering higher wages to employees who possess the degree.

Data reported by the funeral home owners and managers provided answers to the following questions regarding attitudes and opinions of funeral home operators and the importance of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science.

1. Did funeral home operators believe that a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science is necessary for funeral service practitioners?

2. Did funeral home operators believe that a baccalaureate degree be required for licensure as a funeral director and embalmer in the state of Illinois?

3. Were the funeral home operators willing to offer higher compensation to those mortuary science graduates possessing a bachelor's degree?

Respondent Data

From the 75 opinionnaire's mailed, fifty (66.7%) funeral home owners and managers completed the survey. Of those who responded, 35 (70%) were owners of

funeral homes and 15 (30%) were management staff.

The age of respondents were classified into three ranges: 21 (42%) in the 20 to 40 age group, 24 (48%) were in the 41 to 60 age bracket, and 5 (10%) in the 61 and above classification.

Table 2 illustrates the number of respondents who believe that a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science was a necessity.

Table 2

Necessity of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	15	30
No	35	70

Upon answering question one, the participant was instructed to move to the next section that corresponded to their answer. The participant was instructed to choose those skills attained or enhanced with their chosen response. Table 3 includes responses from those participants who responded yes to question one.

Table 3

<u>**Areas enhanced with a baccalaureate degree**</u>

<u>Areas</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
Professional recognition	12	80
Advancement	10	66.7
Communication	14	93.3
Technical	5	33.3
Business	15	100
Interpersonal	8	53.3
Analytical	10	66.7
Personal satisfaction	10	66.7
Ethics	4	26.6
Other	0	00.0

<u>Note</u>. **Responses were based on check marks next to the appropriate area and can be duplicated.**

Table 4 presents data concerning the areas attained with an associate's degree.

Table 4

Areas attained with an associate's degree

Areas	Number of Responses	Percent of Respondent
Professional recognition	25	71.4
Advancement	21	60
Communication	24	68.6
Technical	27	77.1
Business	16	45.7
Interpersonal	27	77.1
Analytical	13	37.1
Personal satisfaction	13	37.1
Ethics	23	65.7
Other	0	00.0

Note. Responses were based on check marks next to the appropriate area and can be duplicated.

All of the additional comments submitted by the respondents appeared to reflect their opinions that technical, ethical, and analytical areas would be learned with years of experience.

The associate degree respondents felt that business skills would also be learned on the job. Question five of the opinionnaire asked if a baccalaureate degree should be required for licensure as a funeral director and embalmer in the state of Illinois. Table 5 represents the responses.

Table 5

Baccalaureate degree required in Illinois

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	9	18
No	41	82

Slightly more than 80% of respondents indicated that they did not believe that a baccalaureate should be required for licensure.

Funeral home operators were asked if they would pay a funeral director and embalmer with a bachelor's degree a higher salary. Table 6 illustrates those responses.

Table 6

Higher salaries for a bachelor's degree

Response	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	10	20

No	40	80

Twenty percent (20%) responded yes to giving funeral directors and embalmers higher salaries with eighty percent (80%) responding no.

Table 7 provides the statistical review of respondents business ownership.

Table 7

Ownership of study respondents

Ownership	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Sole proprietorship	28	56
Partnership	19	38
Public Corporation	3	6

Of those funeral home operators that participated in the study, 56% of those respondents were sole proprietors, 38% had a partnership, and 6% were public corporations.

The funeral home respondents were asked how many full service funerals their facility provides each year. Table 8 breaks down these full service funerals into two classifications: One full service to 199, and 200 full service and above.

Table 8

<u>**Full service funerals provided by study respondents**</u>

<u>Services</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
1-199	41	82
200+	9	18

       Forty one funeral home operators in this study responded that they provided less than one hundred and ninety-nine full service funerals at their firm each year. The remaining nine, provided more than two hundred full service funerals at their firms each year.

       Funeral home operators were asked which licenses they hold in the state of Illinois. Table 9 illustrates the responses to question seven.

Table 9

<u>**Licenses held by respondents**</u>

<u>License</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of Respondents</u>
Funeral Director/Embalmer	49	98
Funeral Director	1	2
Embalmer	0	0

Ninety-eight percent of the respondents possess a funeral director/embalmer's license in the state of Illinois. Only (2%) of the respondents possesses a funeral director's license.

Table 10 represents the number of years that respondents have been licensed. These have been classified into two categories: One to twenty five years and twenty six and above.

Table 10

Years of licensure of respondents

Years	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1-25	32	64
26+	18	36

More than 60% of the funeral home operators have held a license for more than twenty five years. Only 36% of the funeral home operators have held a license for more than twenty six years.

Question 9 of the opinionnaire asked the participant to indicate those degree(s) they have earned. Table 11 represents the respondents answers.

Table 11

Degree(s) earned

Degree(s)	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Certificate	9	18
A.A.S.	20	40
A.S.	12	24
B.A.	1	2
B.S.	4	8
Other	4	8

Note. Responses were based on check marks next to appropriate response. Responses may be duplicated.

Of the fifty funeral home operators that responded to this study, twenty have earned an Associate of Applied Science degree. Twelve individuals have earned an Associate of Science degree, nine have earned a certificate, four have earned a Bachelor of Science degree, one individual has earned an Bachelor of Arts degree, and the four remaining individuals have earned other degree's.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study identifies the attitudes and opinions of funeral home operator's regarding the importance of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science. A review of literature documented the opinions of funeral directors and educators as to the educational need of the funeral service practitioners of the future.

This study employed an opinionnaire designed by funeral directors to collect the data. The data collection instrument can be categorized into one of the following question areas: Degree necessity, skills attained, individual comments, license requirements, wages compensatory to degree, and demographics.

The study population consisted of 500 funeral home members of the Illinois Funeral Directors Association (IFDA). Of the 500 members identified, 75 (15%) were randomly chosen to participate during January-March, 2000.. A clasp envelope containing a cover-letter, an opinionnaire, and a self-addressed stamped envelope was mailed to 50 funeral home operators. An additional 25 cover-letters, opinionnaires, and self-addressed stamped envelopes were hand delivered to funeral home operators. March 17, 2000 was the cut-off date for receipt of instruments.

On March 18, 2000, the data collection instruments were tabulated. Fifty (66.7%) surveys were received.

Returned surveys were checked for completion. Data were analyzed by computer using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. Percentages were calculated for each research question contained in the study.

Findings

Findings for this study are discussed for each question on the opinionnaire.

Research Questions

1. Do you believe that a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science is necessary for funeral service practitioners?

Of the 50 participants, 30% responded yes that a baccalaureate degree is necessary for funeral service practitioners. Seventy (70%) percent felt that a bachelor's degree was not necessary. Part A and Part B of question one, asked the respondents to check the skills that are enhanced or sufficient with the degree that they had chosen. Table 12 represents those percentages.

Table 12

Area levels attained	Percentages of Respondents	
Areas	Baccalaureate Degree	Associate Degree
Professional recognition	80	71.4
Advancement	66.7	60
Communication	93.3	68.6
Technical	33.3	77.1
Business	100	45.7
Interpersonal	53.3	77.1
Analytical	66.7	37.1
Personal satisfaction	66.7	37.1

(Table continued)

Ethics	26.6	65.7
Other	00.0	00.0

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2. Should a baccalaureate degree be required for licensure as a funeral director and embalmer in the state of Illinois?

Nine respondents answered yes to question two. This is 18% of the respondents. Forty one answered no to this question, giving a 82% response.

3. Would you pay a funeral director and embalmer with a bachelor's degree in Mortuary Science a higher salary than one with an associate's degree in Mortuary Science?

Twenty percent (20%) responded yes to giving funeral directors and embalmers higher salaries with eighty percent (80%) responding no.

4. Please describe your business ownership: Sole proprietorship, partnership, or public corporation.

The majority of responses, twenty eight were sole proprietorship (56%). Nineteen responses (38%) were partnerships, and three respondents (6%) were public corporations.

5. How many full service funerals does your facility provide each year?

These full service funerals were classified into two categories, 1-199 and 200 and above. Forty one respondents (82%) fell into the 1-199 range, with nine (18%) falling into the 200 and above category range area.

6. What is your position at the funeral home?

The participants were asked to check the appropriate response with a check mark. Of the 50 opinionnaire's returned for inclusion in the study, 35 (70%) were owners with 21 (42%) being management staff.

7. In which area(s) are you licensed?

The participant was asked to check the appropriate license. Forty-nine (98%) of the responses held funeral director/embalmer licenses. One (2%) individual held just a funeral directors license.

8. How long have you been licensed in the profession?

The answers to this question were broken down into two brackets, 1-25 and 26 and above. Sixty four percent of respondents have held a license between 1-25 years. Eighteen (36%) have held a license for at least twenty six years or longer.

9. What degree(s) have you earned?

With this question, funeral home operators were asked to place a check mark next to the degree(s) they have earned. Table 13 illustrates those responses.

Table 13

Degree(s) earned

Degree(s)	Percentage of Respondents
Certificate	18
A.A.S.	40

(Table continued)

A.S	24
B.A.	2
B.S.	8
Other	8

Of the responses to other, two of those individuals hold a Master of Business degree, one individual holds a certificate, and the remaining individual holds four different degrees; A.S., B.A., B.S., and a Master of Science degree.

10. Please indicate your age.

Three age brackets were established when analyzing data. Those brackets were; 20-40, 41-60, and 61 and above. Twenty one (42%) fell into bracket one, twenty four (48%) fell into bracket two, and five (10%) fell into bracket three.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from the results of this study:

1. A large majority of funeral home operators do not believe that a baccalaureate degree is necessary in mortuary science. Of those funeral home operators who responded yes to the need for a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science, all believed that business skills are enhanced with a bachelor's degree. A much smaller percentage, 33.3%, felt that a four-year degree improved technical skills. Only 26.6% indicated that ethical skills were improved.

For those funeral home operators who responded no to a bachelor's degree, none of the skills were chosen by respondents.

The majority believed that technical and interpersonal skills are achieved with an associate's degree. Thirteen participants indicated that analytical skills and personal satisfaction were attained with the two year degree.

2. With forty one (82%) individuals responding no and nine (18%) responding yes that a baccalaureate degree should be required for licensure in Illinois, it is clear that participants felt that the current the requirements are sufficient.

3. The majority of respondents (80%) checked no to the question of offering a higher wage for a bachelor's degree in mortuary science. Only (20%) replied yes to offering the higher wage. A large percentage of funeral home operators would not be willing to compensate higher educated funeral practitioners with higher wages.

Discussion

Within the last five years, the necessity of a baccalaureate degree in mortuary science has been discussed. The idea of bachelor's degree to some, immediately implies that funeral costs will have to rise and employees will expect extremely high salaries. To date, there is no evidence to prove this notion. A study was needed to gather data regarding the funeral home operator's attitudes and opinions regarding the importance of a bachelor's degree in mortuary science.

The first question on the opinionnaire asked the funeral home operators if a baccalaureate degree was necessary for funeral service practitioners. The majority (70%) of respondents answered no to this question.

Fifteen individuals (30%) answered yes to this question. Question number 3 asked if the funeral home would pay a higher wage to those with a bachelor's degree. Of those fifteen individuals who responded yes to question one, five (33.3%) responded that they would not pay a higher salary to those individuals with a bachelor's degree.

Of the respondents who answered yes to question one, only one individual checked every skill level that was enhanced with a bachelor's degree. This is intriguing and deserves further examination. Some of the comments pertaining to this area, indicated that the majority of business, ethics, and communication skills could only be learned through on the job training and experience.

One item of interest was that three respondents answered no to the necessity of a bachelor's degree but answered yes to a bachelor's degree being required for state licensure.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The ABFSE should do research on funeral home owners and managers to regarding exactly what they are looking for in an employee. Once the research is complete, data should be analyzed and presented to the schools of mortuary science. The schools and the ABFSE should then compare their curriculum to the funeral home operators responses to the research, and make the necessary correction to the curriculum.

2. **Funeral home operators should be willing to compensate funeral service practitioners for their level of educational and competency.**

3. **State legislators need to review licensing requirements to determine if a baccalaureate degree is needed for licensure.**

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Death Anxiety

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This research into death anxiety was prompted by the witnessing of avoidance reactions to the topic of death and the anxiety that this topic produces. Anxiety spans across the life cycle. According to Montefiore, there exists a "...large amount of clinical literature that states or implies that death anxiety is an almost universal human experience..." (76). In discussing death with various age groups, areas were found to exist that need a better understanding of the feelings of fear and anxiety, requiring the creation of programs which can be presented to various age levels, facilitated in a safe environment in which to act out the feelings of grief.

The purpose of this research was to uncover the reasoning associated with death anxiety and to endeavor to find at what level this anxiety begins. The research also focused on three theories that were felt to attribute to death anxiety: 1) death anxiety is greatest in the older adult due to the anticipated nearness of his death, 2) death anxiety is greater in males, and 3) those who practice a faith have less death anxiety than those who do not practice a faith. Due to the time constraints of the study, a child-sensitive survey was not conducted; therefore, the majority of the information on children was obtained through a literature search.

We are a death-defying society where people are reluctant to confront issues pertaining to death. Perhaps new technologies have increased death anxiety by prolonging life, making us feel that we should be avoiding the subject of death. Some physicians fear that discussing death may upset a patient, that it will create depression, the precipitation of a heart attack, or hopelessness, because the patient may feel that the physician is giving up on him or even that the doctor is not a good doctor. "Reports...show such talks do not increase death anxiety" (JAMA 321). No harm is done, so the message is

clear - talk to people about death.

Children are not always studied. We tend to wait and obtain adults reactions to death as children. Some findings suggest that the child's discovery of death begins much earlier than cognitive theorists are saying.

Maria Trozzi points out three myths that are passed on to children:

1) Death is not a part of living.

2) Children don't mourn.

3) We can protect children by shielding them from loss.

Parents tend to avoid talking to a child about death. They feel that a child is too young to be concerned about death so the subject is not confronted. Parents hope that he will "get over it" if left alone and by not discussing it. Therefore, a child's losses are not acknowledged, his emotional needs are abandoned, and in essence, a child becomes a "forgotten mourner." The display of emotions should not be discouraged because it can lead to further problems of anxiety. The wrong messages are being sent to a child when the adult stands tough and hides his own emotions for the "sake of the child." Does this add to a child's death anxiety? According to Maria Trozzi in Talking With Children About Loss, "because our society is unable to process children's grief, a tragic death can grind families...to a halt" (31). "If old age causes death, as parents have told their children, is it any wonder that we continue to have an adult society that fears aging and cherishes youth?" (Lonetto 96).

Piaget feels that children have a lack of concept and an incomplete understanding of what death is all about, leaving them unable to grasp the finality of death. But, lest we be fooled, a child is capable of perceiving and being influenced differently than adults. If we analyze the games played, the books read, and the t.v. shows viewed by a child, we can begin to understand how and why a child understands the subject of death. For example, when a child plays "Cops and Robbers," the bad guy gets shot, but he always goes home to mom and

dad when the game is over. In Ring-Around-the-Rosie, these words are said, "Ashes, ashes, we all fall down," but they all get back up again. What happens to Sleeping Beauty? The prince kisses her back to life. Cartoon characters are indestructible; they come back alive and unharmed after tragic accidents occur to them. What happens to Wile E. Coyote in the Road Runner cartoon series? He falls off a cliff but is seen alive and well in the next clip. All of these examples prove that what a child plays, hears, and sees, reinforces the way he thinks.

"Parents tend to experience a good deal of frustration and helplessness when faced with questions about death from their children..." (Lonetto 187). "A confusion regarding death exists...due to the child's awareness of the mystery surrounding death that he observes in his parents" (Schowalter 42). What does this tell a child about death? The child's awareness of the effect of this topic on adults promotes the child's own anxieties because the less one knows about a subject, the scarier it becomes. If these fears are being repressed by not being allowed to be brought to the forefront, how can these fears be dealt with? If death is never discussed, it must be something that should be feared and a child will concoct his own ideas on the subject. It is all right to talk about death. Answer a child's questions truthfully - answer them; do not skirt the issue.

"If an adult persists in believing that a child has little awareness of death, and hence cannot fear it, he fails to help the child understand the void caused by death" (Schowalter, 27-28). Many people do not realize that awareness does not lead to sadness. Anxiety can be caused by a child wondering if he will lose another loved one or if he did something to cause the death.

Death happens to us all. So why do we fear it? According to the works of McCarthy, "...fears of separation and abandonment stand forthrightly as really significant issues in death anxiety..." (33). Death may be viewed as a punishment for behaviors in life. Some fear loneliness, pain, loss of control, or wonder what happens to them after death. "The

fear of death is manifested most openly among people with high self-esteem, since death represents the end of opportunities to pursue goals important to one's self-esteem" (McCarthy 8). According to the works of Kail the following is a list of reasons that people fear death:

<table>
<tr><td>Death as Fear and Anxiety</td><td>Death as Reward or Punishment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Will dying be painful?</td><td>Live long and prosper.</td></tr>
<tr><td>I worry about my family.</td><td>The wicked go to hell.</td></tr>
<tr><td>I'm afraid to die.</td><td>Heaven awaits the just.</td></tr>
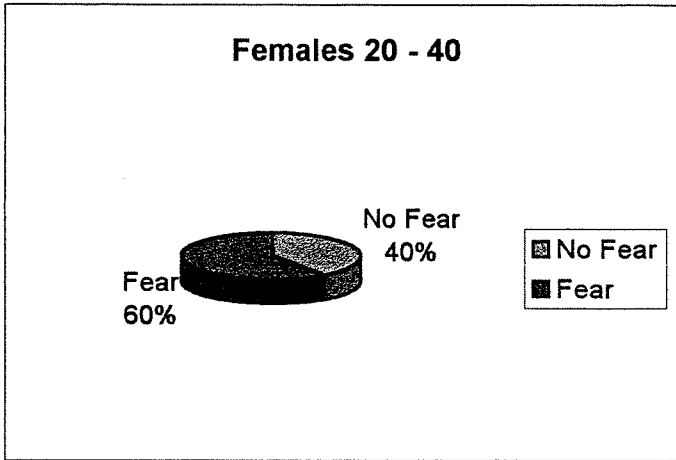<tr><td>Who will care for the kids?</td><td>Purgatory prepares you for heaven.</td></tr>
</table>

In searching the literature regarding death anxiety, it was found that anxiety exists among the general public. Limitations to this study centered around the fact that children and adolescents were not surveyed. Research with children and those under the age of twenty was acquired solely through literature and articles, while those aged 20-80 was acquired through a literature search as well as surveys conducted in various settings, i.e. a college campus, Senior Citizens' groups, and a funeral home, to name a few. A random sample of participants who volunteered to complete the surveys at the college encompassed multiple ethnic backgrounds.
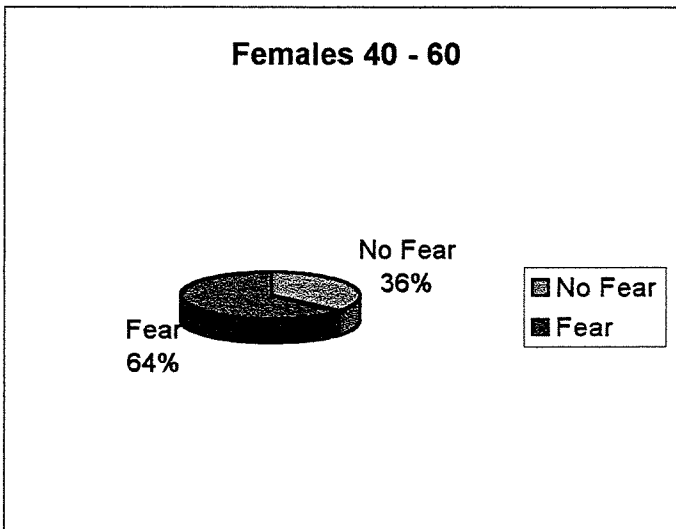
Statistically, it has been suggested that men having higher death anxiety are rare. "Whenever researchers have found differences between the sexes, women have consistently shown a higher fear of death than men (McCarthy 23). According to this research, it was found that females have a significantly higher death anxiety than males in the 40 - 80 year-old bracket; whereas males have a higher death anxiety in the 20 - 40 year-old bracket. (Refer to charts A & B)

Also indicated, as depicted in the graphs, is that older adults do not have high levels of death anxiety; young adults do. (Refer to chart C)
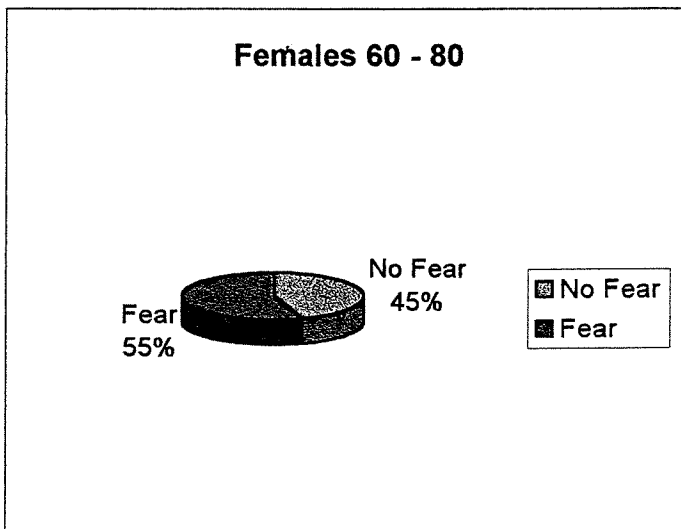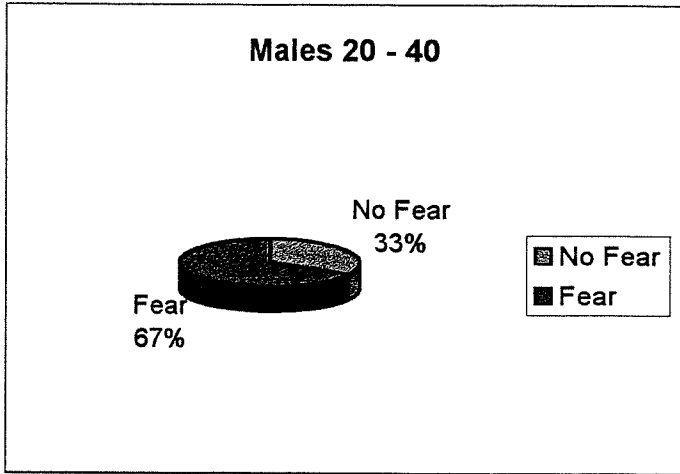
Females - Fear Death

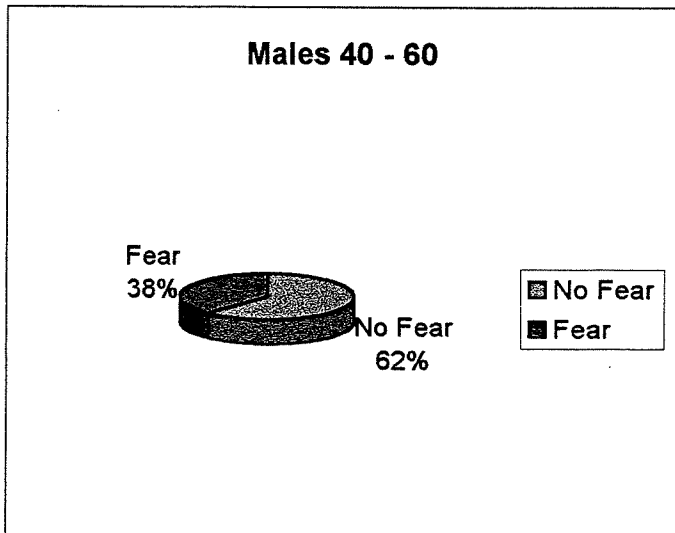## Females 20 - 40

No Fear
40%

Fear
60%

No Fear
Fear

No Fear   40%
Fear   60%

Females 40 - 60

No Fear
36%

Fear
64%

No Fear
Fear

No Fear   36%
Fear   64%

Females 60 - 80

No Fear
45%

Fear
55%

No Fear
Fear

No Fear   45%
Fear   55%

Males - Fear Death

Males 20 - 40

No Fear 33%

Fear 67%

No Fear
Fear

No Fear 33%
Fear   67%

Males 40 - 60

Fear 38%

No Fear 62%

No Fear
Fear

No Fear 62%
Fear   38%

Males 60 - 80

Fear 0%

No Fear 100%
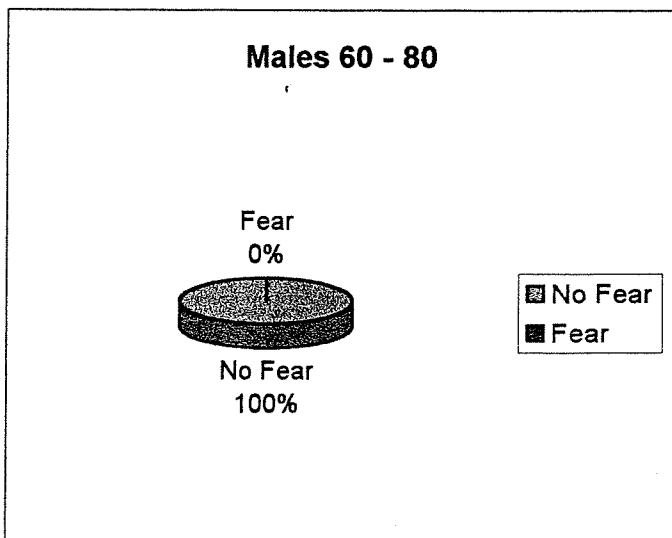
No Fear
Fear

No Fear 100%
Fear   0%

Fear - By Age

Ages 20 - 40

No Fear
42%

Fear
58%

No Fear

Fear

No Fear   42%
Fear   58%

Ages 40 - 60

No Fear
48%

Fear
52%

No Fear

Fear

No Fear   48%
Fear   52%

Ages 60 - 80
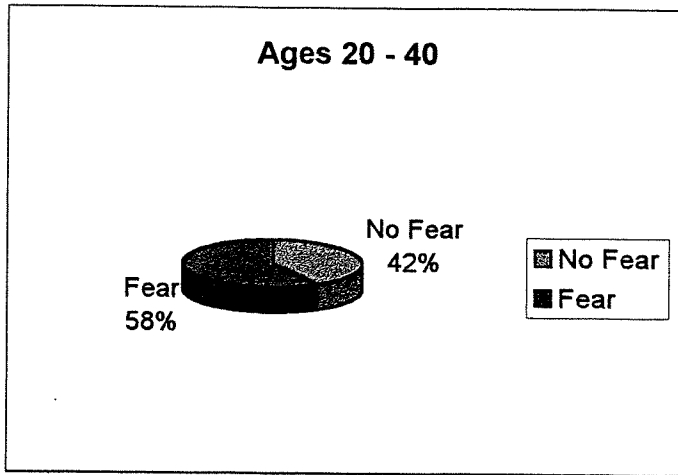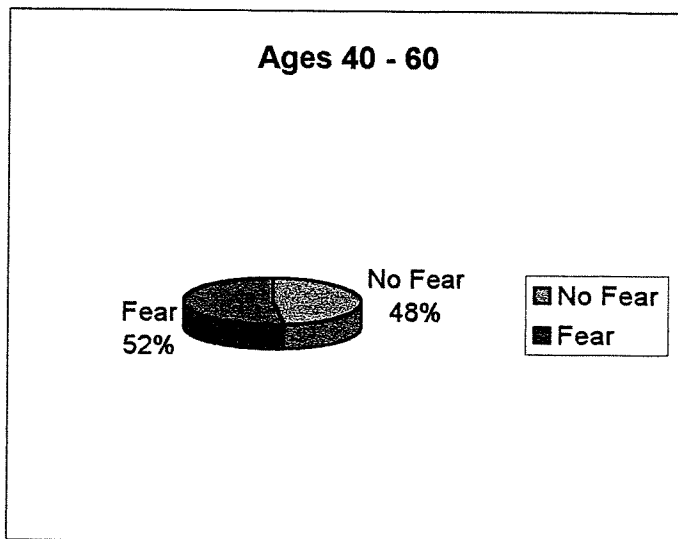
Fear
46%

No Fear
54%
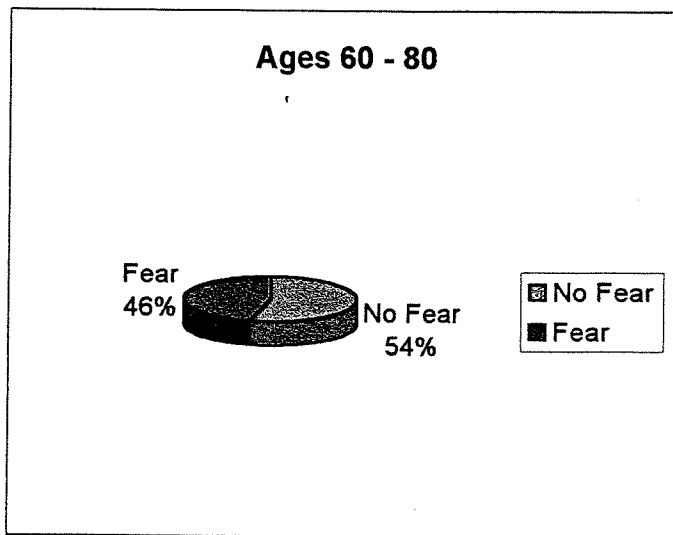
No Fear

Fear

No Fear   54%
Fear   46%

Fear Related to Practicing or Not Practicing Faith

Ages 20 - 40
Faith

No Fear
35%

Fear
65%

☒ No Fear ■ Fear

No Fear 35%
Fear 65%

Ages 40 - 60
Faith

No Fear
52%

Fear
48%

☒ No Fear ■ Fear

No Fear 52%
Fear 48%

Ages 60 - 80
Faith

No Fear
54%

Fear
46%

☒ No Fear ■ Fear

No Fear 54%
Fear 46%

Ages 20 - 40
No Faith

No Fear
50%

Fear
50%

☒ No Fear ■ Fear

No Fear 50%
Fear 50%

Ages 40 - 60
No Faith
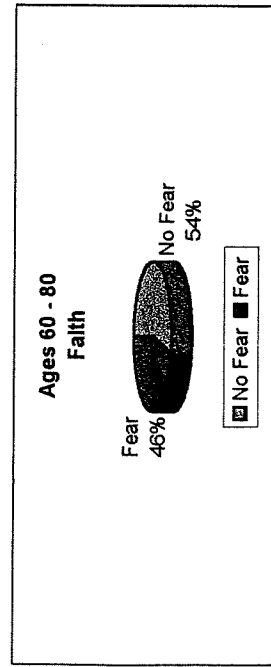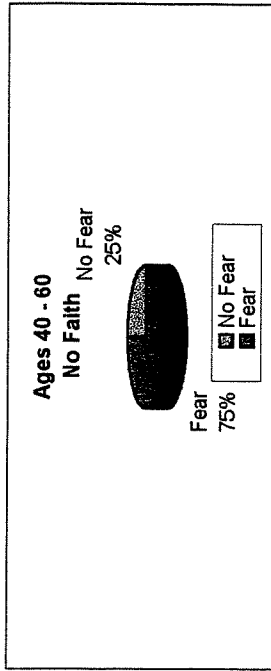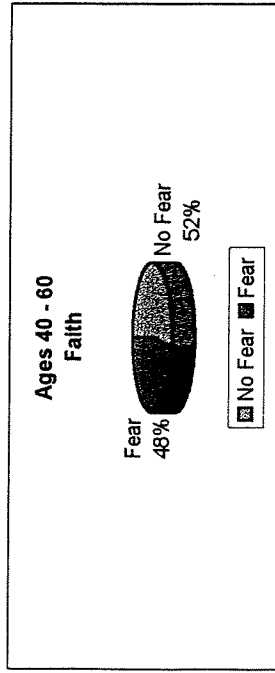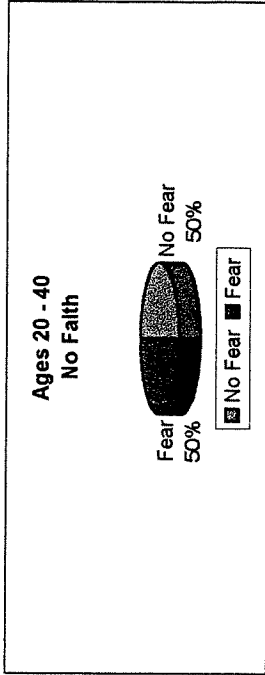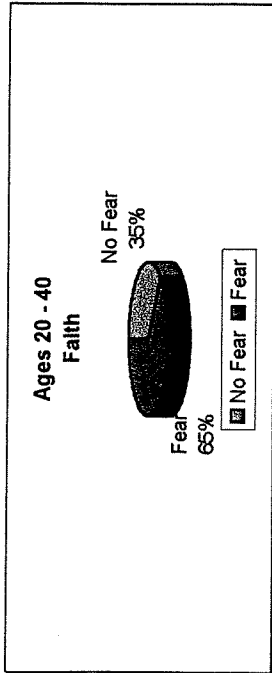
No Fear
25%

Fear
75%

☒ No Fear ■ Fear

No Fear 25%
Fear 75%

Data showed that in relation to death anxiety being less in those who practice a faith, that this was indeed true. (Refer to chart D)

It is concluded in this study that death anxiety is determined by life experiences and is feared when perceived as an individual experience. Death education can make a person view life more positively and is a valuable tool that can be utilized in alleviating and diminishing the anxiety.

Results indicate that religious belief does have an impact on feelings concerning death. Our culture, upbringing, religious background, and our experiences with death help to shape our attitudes towards death.

A distinct factor in the survey that was not included in the initial considerations was that in the 20-40 year olds, 86% had fear associated with pain; 100% of those between the ages of 40-80 fear pain associated with death. This stood out and was an eye opener that yielded additional information from which to base educational programs concerning death anxiety. This instrument may be used for further study and is useful for future reference to direct those in the caring professions.

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A Comparative Study Between Technology and Traditional Instruction Outcomes in Mortuary Science Pathology Course Offering

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Computer based education in classroom presentations are increasing at an exponential rate in the United States and the world. The availability of presentation programs lends stimulation and advantages in the presentation of difficult concepts. Programs such as *Microsoft Power Point* allow faculty to create lecture presentations either in flexible hard copy formats without LCD use or the coupled use of hard copy delivery with slide presentation enhancement. Fundamental to *Power Point* - LCD modality are cost constraints associated with the purchase and maintenance of laptop or mobile computers and LCD projection equipment. While didactic delivery involving multimedia formats were considered a luxury previously, many educational centers derive great benefit in terms of enhanced attendance ratios in programs supplanted with these educational enhancements. With increasing use of new technologies for course subject materials, questions arise if technology is the most effective approach to learning especially in mortuary science programs where class size and cost constraints become important concerns. Many institutions of higher learning

struggle with the rising cost of technology placing increasing financial burdens on individual departments [1]. In support, external funding avenues, such as *Pew Grants*, are effective [2].

Computerized Lectures. Multimedia delivery systems draw on the integration of numerous formats of delivery including video, sound, E-mail discussion, and other cyber based activities. While the full impact of all of these offerings working in a coordinated and concerted manner is seldom realized in the real contemporary classroom setting, electronic didactic modes are readily available and documented [3-6]. *Microsoft Power Point* has become a commonly used approach by educators as a convenient format to prepare and present lecture materials. One-study estimates that 63% of faculties use *Power Point* as an instructional modality in technology supported classes [4]. Obvious advantages to this approach include (1) easy learning curve (2) flexible lecture delivery formats (3) intriguing self-contained and external backdrops (4) ease of direct web-based dialogue and integration and (5) customization of individualized instructional design reflective of course needs assessment. While multimedia driven lectures represent an exciting avenue in the educational process, does this mode of presentation help lecturers communicate better allowing students to learn at a more efficient and effective level [5]? In an attempt to address this question, a comparison between traditional and technology lecture delivery systems in our pathology course specifically was initiated using national board examination scores as a means of outcome measurement.

Outcome Measurements of Performance. Two groups of students from the 1998-99 mortuary science classes were presented subject material as required by the Conference for Funeral Service Examining Boards in Chemistry and Pathology. The structure of the Pathology course offering was previously described [7] and was taught by the same instructor during this period. One group received traditional based lectures accompanied by handouts and supplanted with overhead and chalk / white board enhancements. The technology lecture effort covered the same course subject material but delivered in *Power Point* format (a laptop linked to an enhanced LCD projector) with handouts. National board examination scores were obtained and analyzed for graduates over the 1998-99 period, a total of 48 students. Examination scores observed in the traditional group of students (44%) had a mean score of 75.9 ± 8.1 with a relative error of 10.6% while those receiving technology enhanced lecture presentation (56%) had a mean score of 79.2 ± 6.7 with a relative error of 8.4%. The Chemistry course offering for our Class of 2000 using *Power Point* was only completed in Fall semester 1999. Individuals from this group have not as yet completed program requirements in order to take the national board examination.

Technology or Traditional. The use of technology has distinct advantages but presents with several drawbacks. While lecture presentations using *Power Point* format are within the grasp of many educators, creation of effective didactic

technology based presentations require considerable time to develop. Certainly, not all course offerings in total are adaptable to technology based presentations. Deciding to use technology is dependent on conducting a formal needs assessment on subject material under consideration. Clearly, technology allows the educator to expand the subject material and introduce greater depth into sub-categories within the same period of time required for traditional approaches. With current push by universities and colleges to incorporate student and faculty laptop programs, greater flexibility and dialogue between students and faculty could be achieved within the classroom and through distance education.

Does technology make a difference in learning? Certain studies show "no significant difference" [8-9]. This question is paramount since considerable time and developmental effort is required of educators attempting to deliver and keep current with new and developing technology. The answer to this question requires the establishment of a standard of outcome measurement. While national board scores may not entirely serve as this standard of measurement, they do serve as a guide of improvement trends. In the present limited study, a 4.2% increase in performance was observed between our two groups. As noted in the Russell report , which involved over 400 case studies, learning outcomes appear to be independent of delivery mode [8,10]. However, another study noted marked superiority of "free recall", "comprehension", and "recognition" over standard text format delivery systems in learning effectiveness [5].

Students surveyed In our program indicated that lectures delivered by *Power Point* allowed for greater degree of concentration on details being presented. They felt much more inclined to engage in a bi-directional discussion of points presented during lecture with the instructor when technology based lectures are used. Further, certain ambitious students felt inclined to develop their own technology based learning materials for personal and group study use. Juxtaposed, the presence of too much detail on slides causes some students to loose focus during lecture. The availability of too much material presented on *Power Point* slides can create a state of unwarranted ease and security allowing certain students to shorten their attention span during lecture, thus minimizing their "Socratic" responsiveness.

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