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A Study to Examine the reasons for Licensure Preferences by MCTP Students

James S. McNeill
Old Dominion University

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APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by James S. McNeill under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz, DTE, in OTED 636, Problems In Education. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education.

Approved By:

John M. Ritz

Dr. John M. Ritz, DTE
Advisor and Graduate
Program Director

11-3-97

Date

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Finally, the researcher wishes to acknowledge the MCTP student members. Their interest in responding to the study yielded surprising results to the researcher. He deeply appreciates their assistance in this research paper.

James S. McNeill

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Military Career Transition Program (MCTP) was designed to assist senior enlisted and commissioned military personnel in getting their licensure to teach in our public schools. Through this program, military and defense workers can be licensed in either Special Education, Elementary Education, Middle School Education, Technology Education, or Secondary Education as teachers in the Commonwealth of Virginia (MCTP Pamphlet, 1990). Since its beginning in 1988, the program has graduated over 500 teachers who are currently teaching in thirty-nine different states (MCTP Pamphlet, 1990). The program has enjoyed a vast success with a placement rate of over 90%, fulfilling its goal of training former military members to become teachers (MCTP Pamphlet, 1990).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Existing statistical information on MCTP students show the majority of them are pursuing licensure in the Middle School Education Program. Current enrollment figures for the Spring 1997 semester show a three to one preference for Middle School Licensure (MCTP Exiting Data Sheet, 1996). Through a Descriptive (Survey) Research Study approach, the researcher will ascertain the reason for the preference for the middle school license.

RESEARCH GOALS

The following goals were used to direct this study:

1. Determine the exact reason for the middle school licensure preference by MCTP graduate students.
2. Determine if the age of their prospective students was a reason for their preference for middle school licensure.
3. Determine if MCTP graduate students choose middle school licensure because their military and undergraduate experience lends itself best to this area of teaching.
4. Determine if MCTP graduate students prefer middle school licensure solely because they can become a licensed teacher faster through this approach, because it requires less content area credits.
5. Determine if MCTP graduate students, who are middle school licensure designates, would choose secondary education, technology education, special education, or elementary education licensure, if it did not require as many content area credits.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

This study will supply a definitive answer as to why MCTP graduate students prefer middle school licensure. Interviews with MCTP faculty have shown they have an idea of why the students prefer it, but no exiting data or student statistics have asked or answered this question. The researcher believes that the answer to question could provide valuable information about the needs of former military and Department of Defense personnel who are making the transition to educators

of public school students and provide possible answers to improve recruitment into other levels of education.

The selection of middle school licensure by MCTP graduate students is fascinating considering the most needed teachers according to ASCUS (Association for School, College, And University Staffing) are in Special Education, Physics, Chemistry and Bi-lingual Education. Licensure in these areas would increase their employment opportunities according to the ASCUS survey (SCEA, 1994). Finally, information as to the preference for licensure could help influence programs available to MCTP graduate students. Perhaps, the answers to these questions could influence advising at Old Dominion University to help former military and Department of Defense members into different licensure areas of study. According to ASCU survey data, teachers are in greater need in all areas and MCTP students could help fill these vacancies (SCEA, 1994).

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited to the MCTP at Old Dominion University and does not seek to evaluate or answer any questions about other alternative licensure programs offered to former military members. The study will only be seeking to find answers as to the selection preference for middle school licensure. Subjects of the study are limited to currently enrolled MCTP graduate students and to former MCTP graduate students who have completed the program as well. The responses by these members may help in under-

standing previous selections for teacher licensure.

ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher believes students in the MCTP are pursuing licensure as middle school teachers because it requires less content area credits than the other areas. Middle school licensure calls for 18 credit hours in two subject areas, while elementary calls for 12 credit hours in four subject areas, special education calls for up to 33 credit hours, technology education requires 21 credit hours in one subject area. This assumption has been professed by MCTP faculty as well and is certainly a reasonable explanation for this clear preference in the area of teacher licensure for MCTP graduate students.

PROCEDURES

This study was designed to determine the predominate preference for middle school teacher licensure in the MCTP. The study will use a survey to be completed by a random sample group of all MCTP middle school teacher designates who are seeking teacher licensure, and past members who have completed the MCTP middle school teacher licensure program of study.

The survey will be in the form of a questionnaire mailed to the graduate students requesting answers to the research goal questions in a closed form checking format. After completion of the survey, the graduate students and former members will return their surveys in a pre-addressed stamped envelope to the researcher. The answers will then be compiled

and analyzed to determine the reason for the middle school teaching selection.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following listing of terms is designed to help the reader in understanding frequently used terms in the research study:

Elementary School Teacher- A teacher who instructs students in grades K through three in public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Licensure- A term used to describe the certification requirements for teaching in public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Middle School Teacher- A teacher who instructs students in grades four through eight in public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Secondary Education Teacher- A teacher who instructs students in grades nine through twelve in a specialty area of study in public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Special Education Teacher- A teacher who instructs students with special needs or learning disabilities as a primary area of vocation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Technology Education Teacher- A teacher who instructs students in the study and application of the systems of technology including the impacts of technology on the individuals, society, and the environment.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

The MCTP was begun to help former military members and defense workers make a transition from their former occupations to the classroom as teachers. Drawing on their experience that helped them instruct military and defense personnel, Old Dominion University has put together a number of successful teacher licensure programs. This study is designed to analyze the trend of many MCTP graduate students towards seeking middle school licensure over other areas of teaching.

In the remaining chapters, the researcher will conduct a review of literature to examine the alternative licensure program history, and the national and state findings for licensure of teachers in Chapter II. In Chapter III, the researcher will present the methods and procedures used to examine this problem. Chapter IV will contain the findings of the survey distributed to the middle school licensure candidates and program graduates. Finally, Chapter V will contain the report summary, the conclusions, and the recommendations of the researcher.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher plans to look at the Military Career Transition Program as an alternative licensure method to teaching and examine the trends of licensure in the different possible areas on a state and national level in comparison to preferences for licensure at Old Dominion University in the MCTP. This will be done by first presenting a history of alternative licensure, secondly presenting the national and state trends in licensure and concluding with the current preferences in the MCTP.

HISTORY

The program of alternative licensure is a controversial method developed in the 1980's to allow subject area experts to become teachers. Virginia is one of the first states to use this method of developing teachers (Cornett, 1990). Many states were faced with a critical shortage, and as the school age population increased, alternative licensure was seen as a means to meet this demand (MacDonald, Manning, and Gable, 1994). The other reason for a desire to alternative licensure is the belief that many quality teachers can be obtained through this method (Cornett, 1990). These causes have fueled a movement to develop an alternative route to teacher licensure. President Bush further energized this movement with federal incentive grants (Hawley, 1990).

To date, forty-eight states have developed alternative licensure (AACTE, 1990) and in Virginia there are seventeen colleges and universities offering programs leading to alternative licensure (SCEA, 1994).

NATIONAL LICENSURE TRENDS

National trends in educational conditions do not show an indication of a middle school teaching preference. However, it does show a rise in the number of students enrolled in grades K through 8 and at a greater rate than grades 9 through 12. Overall, schools are facing a higher level of enrollments after a long period of decline (Conditions Of Education, 1996). This supply of school age children is affecting teacher demand as the number of teachers with alternative licensure are entering the pool of teachers supplied. According to the U.S. Department Of Education, the number of delayed entrants hired to teach from fields other than education increased from 12% to 19% in public schools, and from 14% to 19% in private schools. This increase could be the reason for another interesting trend, the decrease of emergency licenses issued between 1988-91 (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1995).

Recently, the Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, in his annual State of American Education speech, reported that the demand for teachers has increased and at least two million teachers will have to be hired to replace the generation of teachers about to retire (USA TODAY, 1997). Added to this problem is that research indicates only a

slight increase in the number of undergraduates who will receive education degrees. The U.S. Department Of Labor has released projections that indicate an increase of demand for teachers by 14% in all occupations by the year 2005. The demand for elementary teachers, which includes middle school nationally, will increase 16% by 2005 and the demand for secondary education teachers will increase by 29%. The most stunning projection for teacher demand is the need for special education teachers at an increase of 53% (USA TODAY, 1997).

STATE LICENSURE TRENDS

On the state level, there is no statistical indication of a preference for middle school licensure. Statistical data requested by the researcher from the state indicates a balance between the number of licenses in each licensure area and the number of jobs available. This clashes with the national data reviewed which indicates an increase of demand outstripping the supply of teachers (Educator Supply and Demand In Virginia, June 1994). The number of middle school licenses comprised only 39% of the total licenses issued versus 30% for secondary education, 4% for elementary and 11% for special education (Educator Supply and Demand In Virginia, 1994). According to the state data sent to the researcher, there will be no shortage of teachers between now and 2002. The data indicates only a possible shortage in a few specialty areas during the 1996 school year, and the researcher is unable to explain reported critical short-

ages cited by faculty for the state given the data received.

MCTP LICENSURE PREFERENCES

Among the MCTP participants, the number of students seeking licenses in middle school areas is significantly high and is acknowledged by its program designers. "Most teacher candidates enroll in the Middle School Mathematics/ Science option, followed by coursework leading to 'add-on' special education certification (MacDonald, Manning, and Gable, 1994)." For the school year 1996-97, there will be a total of 105 licensed graduates, 58 will receive licenses in middle school subjects. The remainder will receive licenses in special education (14), technology education (11), secondary education (5), and elementary education (17) (Ritz, 1997). Other interesting trends in the program show that 84% of the participants are men. This clashes with other alternative programs that show a predominance of women. Nationally, the number of delayed entrants who were female comprise 75% of the total number of teachers entering the field.

SUMMARY

To summarize, alternative licensure programs were developed to respond to the reform movement and the demand for quality teachers. This method of taking persons in search of second careers and the large number of military who meet these qualifications led to the development of

the MCTP at Old Dominion University (MacDonald, Manning, and Gable, 1994). Many of the students have chosen middle school licensure over other areas to teach. This preference is contrary to the licensure and demand for teachers across the nation and in the Commonwealth of Virginia (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 1995 and Educator Supply and Demand In Virginia, June 1994).

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter will describe the population to be surveyed, the instrument to be used, the method for collecting the data, and the statistical analysis to be used. This chapter will allow the reader to understand how the survey was conducted and what the researcher hopes to determine with the data collected.

POPULATION

The population for this survey consists of middle school licensure designates who enrolled in the MCTP at Old Dominion University. The population will contain graduates of the program who are currently working in the field or have just completed the program and are seeking employment. The total population to draw from totals 866 MCTP middle school members. Students who were technology education middle school undergraduate designates were excluded from the survey. The researcher selected one in every ten members from the list of MCTP middle school members to sample. Of the 866 possible members to survey, sixty were selected or seven percent of the total MCTP middle school population.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The instrument for this survey consisted of a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained statements formulated from the research goals to determine the reasons for the

middle school licensure preference. Respondents to the questionnaire answered the survey by placing a check next to the statement indicating if they agreed or disagreed with the reason for choosing middle school licensure. They were asked to indicate which was their primary reason from among the chosen statements agreed to by placing a check to the right of that statement. The validity of the instrument was checked by the research advisor and approved for use prior to administering the survey (See Appendix A).

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data will be collected by mailing a cover letter with the survey questionnaire to the selected population. The cover letter will consist of an explanation for the survey and an appeal for it to be completed and returned to the researcher in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope in the time stated to be included in the survey (See Appendix B). A follow-up letter will then be mailed a few weeks later to non-respondents to the survey to insure sufficient sampling of the MCTP members (See Appendix C).

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Upon return of the survey within the allotted time period, the data will be compiled and a percentage formulated for the number of respondents. The data will be further broken down into two categories, those who agree with the stated

reason for middle school licensure and those who did not agree with the stated reason for it. Among those statements agreed to by the respondents, a determination as to the primary reason will be made as well. Answers in the form of percentages will be given.

SUMMARY

A survey questionnaire will be submitted to the sample population for response. The questionnaire will consist of reason statements for middle school teaching preference and compiled with a percentage indicator for the number who agree/disagree with the stated reason for the middle school preference. This information could then show a reason for the middle school preference or a need for further study of this question.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of the survey administered to the MCTP middle school licensure designates. The survey was to determine why there is a large preference for middle school licensure among MCTP members.

The instrument used to determine the reason for this preference was developed by the researcher and submitted to the faculty advisor for approval (See Appendix A). It consists of a series of five statements stating their reason for middle school licensure. The fifth statement being a "none of the above" preference, if the person surveyed did not agree with any of the statements. The random sample group was asked to check whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement in the left margin and in the right margin to check which statement was their primary choice for middle school licensure.

The survey was mailed to sixty members of the 866 middle school licensure designates with a cover letter (See Appendix B) asking them for their assistance in determining their reason for middle school licensure. Of the sixty people surveyed, forty members returned the survey in completed form. Twenty surveys were not completed. Ten of them were returned "address unknown" and nine were not returned for unknown reasons. Two were returned after the deadline for completion and were not included in the sample results (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1
SURVEY COLLECTION DATA

Number Of Middle School Designates 866	Number of Sample Pop. Surveyed 60	Percentage of Total Pop. Surveyed 6.93%
Percentage of Total Pop. Responding 4.62%	Number of Sample Pop. Responding 40	Percentage of Sample Pop. Responding 66.7%
Total Number of Sample Pop. Not Responding 20	Percentage of Total Pop. Not Responding 33.3%	Number of Sample Responding Too Late 2

RESULTS OF SURVEY

The researcher was pleased with the response to the survey and was able to receive a favorable number of responses (greater than 60%). Reporting of the results have been broken down into the five categories of middle school preference.

The first category states that they selected middle school licensure because they preferred teaching students of this age group. Of the 40 respondents to the survey, 75% agreed that the age of the students was a reason for selecting middle school licensure. Only twenty-five percent disagreed with this statement as a reason for middle school licensure preference. This category for statement of middle school preference was because their military and undergraduate experience lended itself best to this area of teaching. Among those surveyed, less than half of the respondents (47.5%) agreed to this statement as a reason for middle school licensure. Fifty-two and a half percent disagreed with this statement for middle school licensure, or slightly more than half of those questioned.

The third category for preference in middle school licensure was because middle school licensure would lead to a license quicker than secondary education, technology education, special education, or elementary education because it required less content area credits. This received the second highest agreement response among the five categories offered for choice. Fifty-two and a half percent agreed

this was a reason for the middle licensure preference. Less than half (47½%) felt this was a factor for their choosing middle school licensure.

TABLE 2
SELECTION PREFERENCE DATA

CATEGORY	AGREE	DISAGREE	PRIMARY CHOICE
Selected Middle School Because of Age Group.	30 (75%)	10 (25%)	20 (50%)
Selected Middle School Because of Experience.	19 (47½%)	21 (52½%)	2 (5%)
Selected Middle School Because of Less Credits	21 (52½%)	19 (47½%)	11 (27½%)
Would Select Another Area for Licensure.	8 (20%)	32 (80%)	0 (0%)
"None of The Above."	8 (20%)	32 (80%)	7 (17½%)

In the fourth category, respondents to the survey were asked if they would have chosen a different area for certification, if it did not require as many content area credits. Only eight people responding agreed this was a reason for their middle school licensure preference. An overwhelming majority (80%) disagreed in response to this reason for preference.

Finally, the last category asked the MCTP members if none of the reasons given to select from was the factor for their middle school licensure preference. Only 20% of the respondents agreed that a reason, other than the ones to choose from, was a factor for their middle school preference. A full 80% of the sample group felt that one of the stated reasons to choose from was their personal choice for selecting middle school licensure.

PRIMARY CHOICE SELECTION

Among the five categories for selection, respondents were asked to make a selection for primary choice in their determining of a reason for the middle school licensure. Half of the respondents (50%) felt that the age of the students was their primary reason for middle school preference. This was almost twice the number of percentage agreement to a primary choice category.

The second highest selection for primary choice was credit requirements. Twenty-seven and a half percent of the respondents to the survey felt that the number of content area credits required for middle school licensure was their

primary choice for middle school licensure preference. The remaining percentage of respondents (72½%) felt that the other possible categories were the primary choice for selections.

The final three categories (military experience, content area courses, and "none of the above") received only 22½% of the respondents selection of primary choice for middle school preference. Military and undergraduate experience made up only five percent as a primary choice reason and none (0%) felt that "none of the above" was a primary choice reason for middle school licensure preference.

SUMMARY

A survey was conducted among MCTP middle school licensure designates to determine the primary reason for the large preference for middle school licensure over other licensure areas. Survey results showed that there was an agreement to the reasons for middle school preference. Seventy-five percent agreed that the age of the students was a factor in their preference for licensure. Forty-seven and a half percent felt experience was a factor, and fifty-two and a half percent felt that it was a faster means to licensure.

Among the respondents to the survey, the primary reason for middle school licensure was the age of the students. A full fifty percent felt that this was the primary choice reason. Only 27½% felt that middle school requiring less credits was a primary choice reason, and only 17½%, 5%, and 0% was shown for "none of the above," military experience,

and number of courses in the content area.

In Chapter V the researcher will summarize the research and analyze the data to determine what conclusions can be made from this data. He will also determine what recommendations can be made as a result of these conclusions drawn from the data.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research study was to determine the reasons for the large preference for middle school licensure by a majority of the MCTP members at Old Dominion University. Using a Descriptive (Survey) Method of Research, the researcher set out to ascertain the cause of this preference.

Research of teacher licensure selection on a national and state level showed a direct contrast in licensure demand. National trends showed there was a larger percentage of demand for secondary education teachers and special education teachers over elementary and middle school. State studies showed no critical shortages, except in short periods and only in secondary education-special education areas. Selection for licensure preference in the state showed no marked selection preference.

The sample population surveyed to determine the MCTP preference was randomly chosen among the 866 MCTP middle school licensure designates supplied by the MCTP office. A survey instrument was developed by the researcher using the research goals as a guide and validated by the research advisor as an adequate sample tool. The survey was mailed to the sample group in August 1997 with a cover letter and followed by a follow-up letter in September of 1997 (See Appendices A, B, and C).

Response to the survey was good and 40 of the 60 members sampled responded in time to be included in the survey (66.6%).

Survey results were compiled and collated into the different categories for seeking middle school licensure. The results of which were detailed in Chapter IV, and yielded some surprising answers.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher sought to find the answer to the following research goals and made these conclusions based on the survey data collected:

1. Determine the exact reason for the middle school licensure preference by MCTP graduate students.
The researcher has determined that the exact reason is MCTP members prefer to teach students of this age group. Fifty percent surveyed chose this as their primary choice for middle school licensure. That percentage of agreement for primary reason is $22\frac{1}{2}\%$ greater than the second highest selection and was agreed to be a factor for licensure preference by 75% of all members surveyed.
2. Determine if the age of the prospective students was a reason for their preference for middle school licensure. As previously stated, the age of the students was discovered to be a reason. Seventy-five percent of all members surveyed felt this was a reason for their licensure preference and 50% selected it as their primary reason.
3. Determine if MCTP graduate students choose middle school licensure because their military and undergraduate experience lends itself best to this area

of teaching. Survey data is inconclusive on this point. Only 47½% surveyed agreed it was a reason for licensure and of that 47½%, only 5% felt it was was the primary reason for their middle school preference.

4. Determine if MCTP graduate student members prefer middle school licensure solely because they can become a licensed teacher faster through this approach, because it requires less content area credits. The researcher has concluded that middle school requirements was a factor with 52½% surveyed agreeing to as a reason for licensure. However, the researcher was surprised to find that it was not the primary reason as previously assumed and stated in the Assumptions section of this study in Chapter I.
5. Determine if MCTP graduate members who are middle school licensure designates would choose secondary education, technology education, special education, or elementary education licensure, if it did not require as many content area credits. The researcher was able to conclude from the data that members would not choose another area for licensure. Eighty percent surveyed disagreed with this statement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data collected and the conclusions made based on the data, the researcher has made the following recommendations for the MCTP licensure preparation:

1. MCTP members should be encouraged to explore other areas of licensure, if content area course requirements are not a major factor in selection. National surveys show that there is a demand for other licensure areas, even though there is a demand for middle school teachers.
2. MCTP members should be exposed to other age groups during their practicum experience and initial course offerings. This should be done before allowing a member to make an area of licensure decision. This will aid the MCTP members in making a more informed decision and overcome any age bias they may have developed.
3. Further study must be made to understand licensure preference among the MCTP membership in order to provide them with every opportunity for success as educators. This requires further research and verification of study results.

In conclusion, the researcher has found the main reason for the large middle school preference is the age of the students. MCTP members prefer to teach middle school students because of the age group of the students and no national or state data shows this type of preference in licensure. The researcher has made this conclusion based on the survey results and research performed in this study. He has made recommendations and urges MCTP faculty and staff to address this issue.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Instrument Used In MCTP Survey

APPENDIX B - Cover Letter Mailed With Survey

APPENDIX C - Follow Up Letter Mailed With Survey

APPENDIX A

Instrument Used In MCTP Survey

MCTP MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER
LICENSURE SELECTION PREFERENCE SURVEY

Purpose: To determine the reason for your selection of middle school teacher licensure in the MCTP.

Directions: Carefully read the statements concerning middle school teacher licensure listed below and signify your agreement or disagreement to the statement with a check. After you have rated the five statements, indicate the statement with an "X" in the right hand column that was the primary consideration in your selection to seek middle school teacher licensure.

Agree	Disagree		Primary Choice
_____	_____	My reason for selecting middle school teacher licensure is because I prefer to teach students of this age group.	_____
_____	_____	My reason for selecting middle school teacher licensure is because my military and undergraduate experience lends itself best to this area of teaching.	_____
_____	_____	My reason for selecting middle school teacher licensure is because I can become a licensed teacher sooner than a secondary education, technology education, special education, or elementary education student because it requires me to take less content area credits.	_____
_____	_____	I would choose another area for teacher licensure, if it did not require me to take more content area credits.	_____
_____	_____	My reasons for selecting middle school teacher licensure does not concern any of the statements listed above.	_____

Respondents Name: _____

Address: _____

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter Mailed With Survey

July 15, 1997

Dear Fellow MCTP Member:

I am writing to you to ask your assistance in completing a research project of mutual interest to you. I am a fellow student in the MCTP and I am trying to determine the reasons for students selecting middle school teacher licensure. The determination of this preference could be beneficial in understanding the needs of all MCTP members. Therefore, I hope you will take the time to complete this survey.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find the survey. Please complete the survey, and return it to me in the pre-addressed stamped envelope before August 1, 1997. In this way your answers will be included in the results of this study. Your help is greatly appreciated and a benefit to us all. Thank You.

Sincerely Yours,

James S. McNeill

MCTP Graduate Student Member

APPENDIX C

Follow Up Letter Mailed With Survey

August 15, 1997

Dear Fellow MCTP Member:

A few week ago, a survey was mailed out to you. I am writing to urge you to please complete the survey. I dearly need your assistance in determining the reasons for your choosing middle school certification. This data could be helpful in understanding the reason for its large academic pursuit by many MCTP members.

Enclosed you will find another copy of the survey and a pre-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience in returning the survey to me. If you can, please return it to me no later than September 7, 1997. I need your input to have a successful sample. Thank You.

Sincerely Yours,

James S. McNeill
Fellow MCTP Member