AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


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Charles E. Carpenter

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of employers, teachers and graduates of the Oregon Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs regarding non-technical employment qualities. The Luft "Non-Technical Employment Qualities Survey Instrument" and open-ended questions were used to elicit personal responses from members of each group for the purpose of comparing the results.

The research questions addressed the perceived rankings of non-technical employment qualities, the extent to which programs were perceived to have addressed these non-technical employment qualities, the extent to which graduates were perceived to possess these non-technical employment qualities, the extent to which graduates were perceived to seek and receive feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities, the specific non-technical employment qualities that were perceived as essential prior to entering the workforce, the perceptions as to why employees were terminated and the perceived reasons why graduates left employment. The findings concluded that the respondent populations were in general agreement as to their perceptions. Employers and teachers agreed more frequently regarding their perceptions as to the extent graduates possessed these non-technical employment qualities and the extent to which graduates sought and received feedback. Graduates agreed more frequently with the
employers as to their rankings of the qualities needed, but there was great disagreement between graduates, and their employers as to the number of qualities possessed and the amount of feedback sought. Employers and teachers disagreed more frequently in their rankings as to which qualities were the most important.

The principle implication of this research for education with regard to these populations is that a close relationship between employers and the instructors preparing graduates for employment is imperative.

The principle research recommendation entails further inquiry into the specific behaviors that demonstrate the possession of these skills and that would prevent employment termination.
A Descriptive Study of the Perceptions of Employers, Teachers and Graduates of Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs Regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed On the Job

by

GwenEllyn Anderson

A THESIS

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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GwenEllyn Anderson, Author
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Dedicated to my grandparents,
Louis and Victoria St. Angelo,
who, despite limited formal schooling,
always encouraged education,
and modeled for their grandchildren and
the community the value of life-long learning;
and to my mother,
who taught me to read.
A Descriptive Study of the Perceptions of Employers, Teachers and Graduates of Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs Regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed on the Job

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Oregon hosts a number of federally-funded programs designed to help remove individuals from public assistance and to become self-sufficient. One of the most predominant programs is funded by Carl D. Perkins Grants (Carl D. Perkins, 1992). Each year, over 1000 women-in-transition participate in one of these 17 programs in Oregon designed for single parent and displaced homemakers (Faddis, 1994). While the delivery of each program varies, its orientation is career and job transition. The programs all focus on moving women off public assistance. As designed, they currently accomplish this through the following procedures:

1. identifying targeted individuals;
2. preparing them for work through education and/or training;
3. supporting them financially with reimbursements for child care;
4. providing transportation costs and educational supplies during their education and/or training; and
5. helping them find, interview for, and secure jobs.

With the changing nature of today's employment picture, according to Lankard (1990), employers are faced with selecting more employees from those with minimum job competencies. Conversely, the jobs for which employers are hiring today require workers to have a broader range of competencies than ever before — competencies that
are job specific but also include the kinds of management and organizational skills previously required only of supervisors (p. 1).

In 1990, then Secretary of the Department of Labor, Elizabeth Dole, established the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) to answer what are Workplace Skills? According to the SCANS report ("What work requires," 1991), to find meaningful work, high school graduates need to master certain workplace skills. The SCANS report called these essential "foundation skills" or "competencies." They included academic and behavioral characteristics and were categorized into three domains:

• Basic Skills — reading, writing, speaking, listening and knowing arithmetic and mathematical concepts;

• Thinking Skills — reasoning, making decisions, thinking creatively, solving problems, seeing things in the mind's eye and knowing how to learn; and

• Personal qualities — responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and honesty (Whetzel, 1992).

The competencies more closely related to what people actually do at work were identified by five domains:

• Resources — identifying, organizing, planning, and allocating time, money, materials and workers;

• Interpersonal skills — negotiating, exercising leadership, working with diversity, teaching others new skills, serving clients and customers, and participating as a team member;

• Information skills — using computers to process information and acquiring and evaluating, organizing and maintaining, and interpreting and communicating information;

• Systems skills — understanding systems, monitoring and correcting system performance and improving and designing systems; and

• Technology utilization skills — selecting technology, applying technology to a task and maintaining and troubleshooting technology (Whetzel, 1992).
Department of Labor Secretary, Lynn Martin, who followed Dole, supported the ideas discussed in the first SCANS report and believed that because of today's economy, education must do more for students than provide reading, writing and arithmetic skills. "Diplomas must reflect the demands of a changing workplace for broader skills beyond the 3 R's" (Martin, 1991).

Although these skills are considered critical to career progression, many employers believe that employability skills — skills that enable an individual to acquire and keep a job — are of primary importance (Lankard, 1987, p.1).

Josefowitz & Gadon (1988) acknowledge that these skills are trainable. The SCANS Commission believes that they must be incorporated into the education of students K-12. At the same time, a gap may exist between those who will receive this training once it is incorporated into the K-12 curricula and those adults who have already left K-12 education. The skills identified as necessary for successful employment and those related to employer satisfaction with job performance and retention are trainable (Baird et al., 1991; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Josefowitz, 1980; Josefowitz & Gadon, 1988).

However, the ability of displaced homemakers to adapt to or even notice organizational cultures or norms may be under-developed because their status as a homemaker has kept them out of the work culture. The very skills necessary to complete a successful transition from home to training and/or work seem to be the same skills that displaced homemakers indicate they lack.

Those unfamiliar with the culture risk isolation and distance from those most knowledgeable of the organization's culture and expected norms (Argyle, 1991). Displaced homemakers have relied on part-time or seasonal, low-income work. They may be the first wage-earning women in their families to rely on their income for primary support of the family. They are likely to have few, if any, female models in their histories or current environment for the work habits required by their employers.
Displaced homemakers are often both unfamiliar with and unskilled in many of the competencies outlined by the SCANS report. When hired, however, their directors and supervisors are likely to value and practice those exact skills. The development of upper- and middle-management is more likely to include primary wage-earner work habit models and competencies.

While supervisory styles may vary according to professions, basic manners and work habit expectations are common to those in positions to hire and fire. "People aren't fired because they lack technical competencies. They're fired because they can't get along" (Caudron, 1991, p.27). Termination may return these women to public assistance programs in defeat and anger and regenerate dependence on public assistance and the system.

Based on this writer's experience as an Academic Director and cross-cultural trainer for International Programs with The Experiment in International Living, working with women entering for the first time or re-entering the job force is not unlike preparing students to travel, study and survive in a foreign culture. Their degree of effectiveness will be determined by (1) their knowledge of the culture; (2) their verbal and non-verbal language skills; and, (3) their ability to adapt to change (Argyle, 1991; Dodd & Montalvo, 1987; Furnham & Bochner, 1986). The ability to address these differences by getting feedback and the ability to use that feedback to make qualitative judgments about one’s communication effectiveness and suggest how one might adjust behavior to different situations also increases intercultural effectiveness (Singer, 1987).

Programs financed to provide training and jobs for women in transition would do well to address the work culture’s expectations and train students in methods of organizational cultural exploration; heightening their observation skills within the foreign work culture, their communication skills at various levels of the work culture, their ability to ask and receive feedback, and their ability to adapt to differences on site.
In doing so, women in transition will more effectively make the cross-cultural transition into the world of work.

Significance of the Study

This study focused attention on program curriculum as it related to job stability and retention. It provided a framework for assessing what had been occurring in the programs during the studied period. The determination of these relationships could promote further improvements in the focus of program delivery regarding these issues, the improvement of job retention and the reason to support continued funding for these and similar programs.

Statement of the Research Problem

Although successful in placing individuals in their first jobs, it was unclear whether these programs addressed those Non-Technical Employment Qualities that individuals needed to retain jobs. According to the most recent annual report (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994), the current funding successfully helped individuals get jobs. Did it help them keep jobs?

This study sought to closely examine the Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon in order to discover the perceptions of the teachers, employers and graduated students regarding the competencies needed, the programs’ coverage of these competencies, the students’ awareness and assessment of their competencies, and the assessment of their employers regarding the competency levels. It further sought to explore perceptions as to why individuals leave or are terminated from employment.
The results were used to suggest:

1. What is currently expected of employees entering the workplace;
2. What women in transition currently believe is expected of them as they enter the workplace;
3. Where gaps in expectations and reality exist;
4. What areas need to be addressed in training during the programs or in orientations once on the job; and
5. Where further research is needed.

The SCANS Commission added the additional charge to suggest effective ways to assess proficiency and to develop a strategy for disseminating the results to homes, schools, unions, and business. The Research and Policy Committee of the Committee on Economic Development summarized in their 1984 survey of employer concerns that they wanted schools to teach both general and specific employability skills, including attendance, punctuality and good work attitudes (Lankard, 1990). From their findings, they concluded that employability skills were important and must be taught in the schools.

While they identified and recognized the importance of these skills, and included the assessment of these proficiencies, neither the SCANS report nor the report of the Research & Policy Committee explained how to teach these skills.

It is important that these Non-Technical Employment Qualities be outlined in order to ensure that programs address these skills. Teaching these skills will more likely help individuals keep jobs and therefore, remain off public assistance. In addition, it is expected that once these skills are learned, individuals will recognize their place as an integral part of the organizational culture of an institution and engage more fully in their growth and the ultimate growth of the organization. When individuals are
able to read the organization’s cues, their overall adaptive skills improve (Caudron, 1991), whether they remain on that job or move to another.

This study sought to compare the perceptions of three different groups of people regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities through cross-tabulation of the surveys from program instructors, graduated students and selected employers of students from the Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon between July 1992 and June 1994.

Research Questions

The study posed the question, “To what extent do the programs help students shape a realistic view of the non-technical competencies needed to secure and maintain jobs?”

To undertake this investigation, three surveys were developed to reflect the nature of the research problem of the study. Answers to the following key questions were sought from the instructors and graduates of these programs and selected employers:

1. How do these studied populations rank order the perceived non-technical employment qualities required by employers as reported in the literature?
2. To what extent do these studied populations perceive that the programs currently address non-technical employment qualities as identified from the literature?
3. How do these studied populations rate graduates as having these non-technical employment qualities?
4. To what extent do these studied populations perceive that the graduates seek and receive feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities?
5. Which qualities do these studied populations perceive that employers want graduates to possess prior to entering the workforce?

6. What perceptions do these studied populations have as to why employees are terminated? and,

7. What are the reasons these studied populations believe graduates leave employment?

Studied Population

The units of analysis for this study were three: (a) students between the ages of 16 and 65 who graduated between July 1992 and June 1994 from the Oregon Carl D. Perkins federally funded self-sufficiency programs and particularly those who found jobs within clerical-office field, (b) full and part-time faculty who taught in the same federally funded programs, and, (c) work-site directors or supervisors who had employed graduates from these same federally funded programs. Women who found jobs within the clerical-office field were selected as a sub-category of study because they were the largest employed population as indicated in follow-up studies conducted by the Carl D. Perkins grants (Faddis, 1992).

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used throughout the study:

**Displaced homemaker.** A former homemaker who must enter the work force because of divorce, separation, death, disability, or long-term unemployment of a spouse.

**Employability skills.** Those skills identified in the study under Non-Technical Employment Qualities.
Teachers/Instructors. Instructors hired full- and part-time to teach in the grant-funded programs.

Homemaker. An individual who has worked as an adult primarily without remuneration to care for the home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills.

Job task skills. Those occupational skills needed for particular jobs (i.e. typing, filing, computing, etc.)

Job-keeping skills. See Non-Technical Employment Qualities.

Public assistance. Currently replaces the popular term ‘welfare.’

Non-Technical Employment Qualities. Those interpersonal, self-management skills used on the job other than job task skills (i.e. punctuality, balancing work and home, interpersonal boundaries, personal hygiene, etc.)

Self-sufficiency. A term used by government agencies to describe the ability to financially provide for oneself and one’s family without need for public assistance.

Single parent. An individual who is unmarried or legally separated from a spouse, and has a minor child or children for which the parent has either custody or joint custody.

Students/Graduates. Used in this study to refer to women in transition who are currently or have graduated from federally funded programs.

Transition. Defined by Brammer (1992) as a short-term life change characterized by a sharp discontinuity with the past. Excluded from this definition are developmental changes and broad social or political changes.

Women in transition. All women between the ages of 16 and 65, who because of death, divorce, separation, desertion or the disablement of a husband, must return to the world of work to provide adequate funds to maintain self-sufficiency.
Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the general background of the purpose of this study. The research problem of the study was introduced. Although audits and reports are completed annually to track the programs, and retention statistics are kept, little systematic investigation has been conducted to gain responses to the programs from students, faculty and employers regarding how well the programs prepare individuals to maintain jobs.

Students are asked to comment generally on their reaction to the program in which they are currently enrolled or from which they graduated. Anecdotal examples specific to the work environment are not sought. Faculty are included in candid interviews on-site. Their comments are compiled and compared subjectively to the program goals and objectives. Current reports do not indicate how closely the programs address the work habits and attitudes that employers indicate they require of employees.

The first goal of the study was to explore the perceptions of the students’ employers from the Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities. The second goal was to compare these perceptions with those of students who have graduated from the programs and with those of the programs’ instructors. The study sought to discover a relationship rather than differences between the programs’ coverage of these competencies, the students’ awareness and assessment of their competency levels, and the assessment of employers regarding their competency levels. It further sought to explore perceptions from the members of these three groups as to why individuals leave or are terminated from employment.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As competition within the labor market increases, programs that prepare new or re-entry employees to compete in that market are faced with the challenge of providing skills relevant to what employers need. Literature that supports the rationale for this study has been subdivided into four areas: (a) an historical perspective on the current Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs in Oregon; (b) displaced homemaker characteristics and re-entry needs compared with those of the under- or unemployed; (c) desired business and industry entry-level competencies, with emphasis on clerical/office occupations; and (d) the use of survey questionnaires as a valid methodology.

Displaced Homemaker Characteristics and Re-entry Issues

Definitions

This study uses the term “single parent” as it is defined by the Carl Perkins-supported Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs in Oregon (Thompson, 1987) and refers to any “individual who is unmarried or legally separated from a spouse, and has a minor child or children for whom the parent has either custody or joint custody.”

The term “displaced homemaker” was coined in California in the mid-1970's (“Displaced Homemakers,” 1981; Guilfoy, et al., 1981). Tish Sommers, finding herself suddenly displaced from her role as a homemaker and in need of employment, joined with Laurie Shields and formed the Alliance for Displaced Homemakers. Their purpose was to advocate for legislative programs specifically aimed at women like themselves. Similar grassroots organizations grew and the term was used in articles, television programs and other media to raise awareness of this phenomenon as a national issue (Harlan & Steinberg, 1989). The Alliance used the expression to
describe "an individual who has, for a substantial number of years, provided unpaid service to her family, has been dependent on her spouse for her income, but who has lost that income through death, divorce, separation, desertion or the disablement of her husband" ("Displaced Homemakers" 1981). It has come to mean middle-aged women, forced back into the job market because of a spouse’s death, divorce, desertion, disablement or separation ("What do employers want", 1988; Guilfoyl, et al., 1981; Harlan & Steinberg, 1989).

The term has grown in political significance and has been built into federal and state laws (Guilfoyl, et al., 1981). The Vocational Education Act of 1963 amended the federal law Education Amendments of 1976 and used four criteria to define displaced homemakers. Its complete definition included (a) persons who had solely been homemakers but who now, because of dissolution of marriage, must seek employment; (b) single heads of households; (c) homemakers and part-time workers seeking a full-time job; or, (d) men and women in traditional jobs seeking employment in non-traditional jobs (p. 15).

The Comprehensive Employment & Training Act (CETA) Amendments of 1978 provided for the establishment of displaced homemaker programs ("Displaced Homemakers," 1981). CETA defined a displaced homemaker as an individual who:

(1) has not worked in the labor force for a substantial number of years, but has, during those years, worked in the home providing unpaid services for family members; and (2)(i) has been dependent on public assistance or on the income of another family member but is no longer supported by that income, or (ii) is receiving public assistance on account of dependent children in the home, especially where such assistance will soon be terminated, and (3) is unemployed or under-employed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment. (p. 15)
The 1992 reauthorization of the Carl Perkins Act amended this definition to read that a displaced homemaker meant any individual who:

a. is an adult; and

b. (1) has worked as an adult primarily without remuneration to care for the home and family, and for that reason has diminished marketable skills;

(2) has been dependent on public assistance or on the income of a relative, but is no longer supported by such income;

(3) is a parent whose youngest dependent child will become ineligible to receive assistance under AFDC within two years; or

(4) is unemployed or under-employed and is experiencing difficulty in obtaining any employment or suitable employment; or

c. is described in (a) and (b) and is a criminal offender.

Males are included in all legislative definitions, but the vernacular usage continues to imply ‘women.’ This may be because the term ‘homemaker’ traditionally refers to women, and because Carl Perkins funding included support for women seeking employment in non-traditional jobs. In 1980, men and women in Oregon continued to work in traditional sex-typed occupations (Thompson, 1987). As cited in Thompson, Berch and Heiss considered home production to be within the usual role of women. Home production is considered a woman’s responsibility when she is home full-time and “even if she holds a full-time job outside the home” (p. 20).

Displaced homemakers face dependence upon public assistance if they cannot find work. They are frequently not eligible for other assistance typically awarded paid workers who lose their jobs or retire from work (Thompson, 1987; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990). A displaced homemaker may not be old enough for Social Security. If her children are grown, she is not eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. If she is not disabled, blind or hearing impaired, she is not eligible for Supplemental Security Income. Her unpaid homemaker status does not provide unemployment insurance and because her dependency status as a spouse is
gone, she may lose benefits from her absent spouse’s pension, retirement or health plan (Harlan, 1989).

It is unknown how many displaced homemakers go unaccounted for because they either do not define themselves as displaced homemakers or do not know that programs are available to them under that title (Davies & Esseveld, 1982).

**Socio-Economic Issues**

Displaced homemakers exist everywhere in the United States (Guilfoy, et al., 1981). They are found among all social classes, races and ethnic groups; urban and rural settings. Their numbers include school dropouts as well as high school and college graduates (Guilfoy, et al., 1981; Harlan & Steinberg, 1989). More than 81% of displaced homemakers have no more than a twelfth grade education and have had no previous employment, or were last employed at a level of unskilled or semi-skilled labor (88%) ("Displaced Homemakers," 1981). Seventy-two percent are currently employed in positions classified as unskilled or semi-skilled (p. 46). Displaced homemakers who have worked in the past may have obsolete skills (Guilfoy, et al., 1981; Harlan & Steinberg, 1989). Others who have never worked outside the home may have natural abilities and life experiences that are unrecognized or underestimated (p. ii). They are universally “unemployed or under-employed and . . . experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment” ("Displaced Homemakers," 1981, p. 15).

Stentzel & Steenland (1987) indicated that displaced homemakers are extremely vulnerable from an economic standpoint. In the year following the average divorce, the women’s standard of living falls by 73%” (Weiss, 1991). Their lack of education and/or training keeps them at low-paying jobs and their work in the home without benefits prevents them from adequate retirement income (Guilfoy et al., 1981; Stentzel & Steenland, 1987). Eighty-five percent are the primary support of their family and earn less than $5,000 annually ("Displaced Homemakers," 1981). In a study that
examined the needs of mid-life and older divorced homemakers, Sims (1990) reported that their incomes “were considerably less than half of what they had been during marriage.”

Re-Entry Issues

“Despite great diversity in background, most displaced homemakers have one thing in common: the sudden loss of financial and emotional security” (Guilfoy, et al., 1981). The loss of wages changes an individual’s work role, provider role, capacity to consume and to associate in groups that require money (Keefe, 1984). In the study, “Displaced Homemakers,” (1981) it was acknowledged that other segments of the population face similar problems, but that those of displaced homemakers’ are multiple and more intense than those of ordinary clients seeking public assistance. These individuals are caught in the psychological trauma characterized by extreme loss. This trauma is compounded because the losses are multiple; loss of income, loss of marital status and loss of lifelong expectations (Guilfoy, et al, 1981; “Displaced Homemakers,” 1981; Schliebner & Peregoy, 1994) and result in intensified emotional barriers (See Table 1).

Unemployed women face a conflicting choice between staying home with children and working (Rayman, 1987). While for some, a response to loss of a job is relief because it provides a reason to spend more time at home, this focus quickly gives way to a need for income (p. 367). Davies & Esseveld (1982) suggested that focusing on children and returning to their care provides a sense of purpose and meaningfulness to an otherwise unorganized daily life, but argued that this is temporary and never replaces the need or desire to work.
Table 1.

**Issues Facing Single Parents/Displaced Homemakers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-Economic Issues</th>
<th>Emotional-Psychological Issues</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced standard of living</td>
<td>Loss of emotional security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low education levels</td>
<td>Multiple role responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low or no employable skills</td>
<td>Personal and social isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low or no income</td>
<td>Dysfunctional stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>No benefits or retirement</td>
<td>Loss of social status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inaccessibility to upgrading skills training</td>
<td>Altered social roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupational segregation into traditional, low-</td>
<td>Increased physical and psychological stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paying jobs</td>
<td>Loss of respect</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased depression and decreased self-esteem</td>
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<td>Increased pressure to become self-sufficient</td>
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<td>Decreased motivation to find work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stigma and blame for poverty situation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased risk of personal, psychological and behavioral problems in children</td>
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</table>

Turner (1990) examined various social roles and the conditions that facilitated and impeded the implementation of role change. He defined a social role as a “comprehensive pattern of behavior and attitudes, constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of situations ... consisting of rights and duties, or of expected behavior” (p. 87). He described four types; (a) basic roles, like gender and age; (b) structural status roles, like occupation and family; (c) functional group roles, like mediator or devil’s advocate; and (d) value roles, like criminal or saint. His study dealt exclusively with the first two because no literature could be found that dealt with changes in the
latter two. Role change occurs when a shared concept or execution of a typical role performance changes and change in one role always means a change in an entire system of roles. For example, a change in the role as primary income provider automatically changes the roles of that system's dependents.

Role change, therefore, becomes an important consideration in the experience of the displaced homemaker. Women are generally socialized to define themselves through their family relationships (Lund, 1990). This relationship includes performing the role of primary care-taker and nurturer (p. 58). Lund reviewed the literature of divorce therapists and their work with women in transition. She reported that in assuming traditional care-taking roles and attitudes, women develop dependent, self-effacing personalities that make it difficult for them to survive outside the family system. In contrast, the male traditional role is one of economic provider and the family link with the legal, political and social structures of society. Displaced homemakers, however, are often forced to take on both roles. “The transition of women to head of household demands that women, especially single parents, immediately incorporate all these roles into their repertoire merely to survive” (p. 61).

Because the responsibility for the success of the family and the relationship is often assumed to be that of the woman, a displaced homemaker often feels like a failure and isolated from her usual social systems (p. 61). Society contributes to this feeling because it often implies the failure of the marriage is a result of the woman’s inability to maintain the relationship and keep the family together. All studies reviewed indicated that displaced homemakers struggle with low self-esteem around this issue.

Economically disadvantaged women live with the stigmas and often, the blame for their poverty (Harlan & Steinberg, 1989). The psychological response to this is added depression and lack of ability for a woman to see herself as an independent, capable individual. Successful divorce recovery requires the transition from seeing one-
self as part of a couple to recognizing the independent self. This successful transition increases self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Kübler-Ross (1987) described five stages of loss through death that are now popularly used to describe a normal reaction to any trauma or loss. In her studies with the terminally ill, she discovered that individuals accepted impending death only after they first experienced denial, anger, bargaining and depression. With good support systems and care, these same stages after loss through death, divorce, separation, abandonment or disability can take between six months to a year for an individual to “recover” or make a comfortable transition. It seems likely that women faced with the problem of supporting her family in the roles of primary care-taker and primary income source can ill-afford six months-to-a-year to “recover” emotionally.

Displaced homemakers are “forcibly exiled” from their role as wife and mother and must find a place in the job market (Guilfoy, et al., 1981) (emphasis added). The pressure to find work places them in competition with others who are unemployed and like those unemployed, increases their susceptibility to physical and psychological health problems. They are more likely to experience greater illness (Rayman, 1987; Riegle, 1982), depression (Rayman, 1987; Riegle, 1982; Warr & Payne, 1983), and isolation (Davies & Esseveld, 1982; Eden & Aviram, 1993; Warr & Payne, 1983). Although depression and eating disorders (overeating or self-denial of food) were more commonly acknowledged by women, these symptoms seemed to appear regardless of gender or socio-economic status (Warr & Payne, 1983).

After lengthy unemployment, motivation is known to deteriorate and leads to what Riegle (1982) referred to as the “discouraged worker” syndrome; wherein, individuals acknowledge powerlessness and simply give up trying to find work (Davies & Esseveld, 1982; Jahoda, 1981; Riegle, 1982). Eden & Aviram (1993) and Warr & Payne (1983) suggested that this leads to chronic unemployment and the belief that employment or re-employment is not possible. Individuals become “trapped in a
vicious cycle of job loss, which causes loss of self-esteem and self-efficacy which, in turn, causes a lack of effort to find a job” (Eden & Aviram, 1993, p.352), and the return of women, in particular, to dependence upon public assistance (Weiner & Boss, 1985).

Long-term unemployment affects not only the individual worker, but also the entire family system. The impact is great because the family derives its routine and ordering of time, place in a social network, status, and economic well-being from the labor force participation of its parental member(s). Social workers observe increased behavioral problems when parents are unemployed and research indicates increases in alcohol and drug abuse, child and spousal abuse and juvenile delinquency (Keefe, 1984; Riegle, 1982). Unemployed parents are so often absorbed in meeting basic survival needs that other, essential developmental needs of their children go unattended. This results in increased psychological problems, behavioral problems and hyperactivity in the children. The frequent neglect of their nutritional needs increases the children’s emotionality and retards their physical and mental development (Riegle, 1982).

Because displaced homemakers list their need for money second only to improved self-esteem (“Displaced Homemakers, 1981; Guilfoy, et al., 1981), they need jobs that pay well in promising occupations (Guilfoy, et al., 1981). Rayman (1987) noted, however, that people with lower incomes are more likely to take any job regardless of fit. While this provides an income, albeit often temporary, it can create additional stressors for the woman and her family.

Freeman, Logan, & McCoy (1987) distinguished two types of stress for individuals with multiple-role responsibility; functional and dysfunctional. With the former, an individual experiences low levels of stress that require new or unused resources for coping. The cost required to cope equals the resources available. Typically, this cost requires available energy, planning, specific skills and motor activities (p. 413). With the latter, dysfunctional, one accumulates an unusual amount
of stress from several areas of one's life, or there are greater barriers to problem-solving (i.e. decreased resource availability) (p. 414).

Freeman also used a three-part assessment instrument with working women to determine their levels of risk. Like the women in the Harlan & Steinberg (1989) studies, many of those in the Freeman study did not realize that their experiences were normal under the circumstances. The realization of situational and emotional commonalties is known to reduce stress. These women were also more likely to experience dysfunctional stress because they lacked environmental supports such as “child care, transportation services, a support network, or role models” (p. 415).

Role theory indicates that these individuals are likely to “experience transitional problems in coping with new roles” (p. 415). The timing and the accumulation of stress-related experiences affect the individual’s ability to cope and determine whether the stress becomes dysfunctional” (p. 414). Other variables significant to the level of dysfunction include:

1. a woman’s developmental phase,
2. her prior experiences in coping with conflicting role demands,
3. the amount of consensus between her and her spouse about her decision to work,
4. extent of role sharing, and
5. her satisfaction with the quality of time available for her primary role responsibilities (p. 414).

With the exception of (c), “the amount of consensus,” all of these apply to women who are single heads of households. These variables are also interactive (p. 414). Lack of ability to respond to stress in one area creates additional stress and fewer resources to deal with the stress of the other areas.

Freeman et al. (1987) developed four profiles to identify high-risk working women. Many of the components fit what is known about displaced homemakers:

1. Single women (divorced, widowed, never married) living alone or with few external supports (relatives, peers, companion)
whose children have not been taught age-appropriate personal and household skills and who do not have models for handling multiple roles including work.

2. Married women whose husbands do not agree with their decision to work, whose husbands and children do not participate in role sharing, who have difficulties in delegating these responsibilities and who do not have models or external supports for handling multiple roles.

3. Married or single women who do not have job skills, training, or experience (most frequently the poor and minorities, although women from all socio-economic classes and races may be affected) with low-paying, unrewarding, and difficult jobs; who are vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual or racial discrimination; and who do not have supports at work or elsewhere for coping with these work conditions.

4. Married or single women who have recently returned to work after five or more years absence (especially those in the middle-age developmental phase who are still involved in launching their children and must shift to an inner-directed frame of reference), whose husbands are unemployed, who are beginning a new training or educational experience, and who may not have role models or other external supports for coping effectively with transitions (p. 414-415).

Tebbets (1980) studied levels of depression and compared the well-being of low-income working women with homemakers. One hundred thirty-six women volunteered to take the Epidemiological Scale of Depression (ESD). This was a 20-item survey which studied the frequency with which respondents experienced affective, cognitive and behavior symptoms of depression. Scores on this scale measured the severity of depressive symptomology experienced in the prior week. It did not measure levels of clinical depression.

After screening, 42 working women and 40 homemakers were chosen and paid for their time to complete the ESD. An additional 10 working women of moderate incomes were screened and paid to complete the ESD as a way of cross-tabulating the results relative to income.

In exploring the relationship between dysfunctional stress and its relationship to depression, wage-level and employment, Tebbets found that women who worked, even
in low income jobs, were “significantly less depressed” than those who did not work (p. 8). She cautioned, however, that women who work “have significantly higher incomes than those who do not work” (p. 8). Women who had any income were less likely to be on public assistance or to live in public housing, both of which were independently linked to high depression scores. When annual per capita income, welfare status and housing type were entered as control variables, the relationship between job holding and lower level of depression retained its significance (p. 8). It was concluded, therefore, that the economic benefits of being employed did not “account in full for the positive association between workforce participation and well-being” (p. 8).

Two other variables were explored in the Tebbets study; the family structures of working and non-working women and their levels of education. Working women were more likely to be single heads of households, the primary income source and have fewer children. Their levels of education, while minimal, contributed to their lower levels of depression. “Among these low income mothers, better educated women hold jobs and it is the difference in education levels of job holders and homemakers that accounts for the difference in their depression scores” (p. 9).

Although the depression scores of working women were lower than those of homemakers in the study, they were “far above population norms” (p. 9). Tebbets guarded against portraying any image of the working woman thriving because of work. The ESD customarily uses a point scale of 16 to separate mild from severe symptomology. Scores above 16 are considered severe. In her study, Tebbets found that the average low income working woman had a score of 17.2 and the homemakers scored an average of 23.6 (p. 9).

Tebbets also asked her participants to rate, using a 100-point scale, the amount of stress, distress and worry they experienced in their roles as mother, intimate partner, friend and/or relative. They were also asked to evaluate their physical and mental
health. In addition, women on public assistance were asked to rate their level of worry concerning the welfare system. Women who worked were asked to rate the amount of stress associated with their jobs and women who did not work were asked to rate the amount of stress associated with not having a job. The results showed significant differences between the groups of working and non-working women in their levels of worry around being on public assistance and in their intimate relationships. In other categories, the results favored the full-time homemakers. However, her study also found that the lack of employment was associated with other negative indicators of well-being and contributed to higher dissatisfaction in the homemaker role (p. 10).

A lack of flexibility or ease associated with performing tasks in the dual roles was rated on a scale from 1-5. Lack of flexibility did not lead to as high a level of work stress for moderate income working women as it did for low income working women. "For both income groups, however, high flexibility is associated with high work satisfaction" (p. 13).

Finally, Tebbets found that the level of depression for low income working women who were also solo heads of households was directly proportional to their number of children and the ratio of children to adults. A larger number of either corresponded to a greater level of depression. These same factors, however, made no difference on the scores of either homemakers or moderate income working women. This was also true for the response to the question regarding the level of child care that women could afford. A high level of dissatisfaction on this scale corresponded to a higher level of depression among low income working women, but "bore no relation to the well-being of the other two groups" (p. 13).

Nevill (1984) argued no role could be viewed in isolation and that, because roles were not stagnant, no presumption could be made that a change of role would have an adverse effect. Because roles change over time, the fulfillment derived in one role was likely to change also. However, she cited her previous study with Damico (Nevill &
Damico, 1978) that indicated women in low-status jobs showed more conflict between home and employment roles. She suggested that this may be due to a low-status job contributing to the family income needs, but lacking contribution to the self-supporting or pleasurable needs also associated with employment.

Also citing her work with Super (Super & Nevill, 1980) to determine the effect of gender, socio-economic status and role salience on the career maturity of high school students, they found that salience of the work role determined career maturity. Nevill noted that a person who is not interested in work, or expects to find values in other roles of life, might not develop the attitudes or knowledge which constitute career maturity (p. 132).

Career maturity requires a knowledge of the world of work. Their isolation from the world of work and the value of their role as homemaker, put displaced homemakers at high risk for dysfunctional stress.

Nevill suggests that women who have high career maturity may have overcome other psychological barriers required to commit to work and in doing so, had or have developed the self-esteem and career maturity typically ascribed to males “for whom the world of work is more accessible” (p. 132). She concluded that successful transition improves women’s sense of this, also.

Employer-Preferred Selected Competencies

To find work, the SCANS Commission suggested that workers would need both “foundation skills” and “competencies.” The Commission defined “foundation skills” by dividing academic and behavioral characteristics into three broad skill areas: Basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities. They outlined five more areas to define “competencies” as those specific activities that people do at work.

Employers are not likely to disagree with the Commission’s suggestions, but divide their preferences into slightly different categories. They consistently expect
employees to possess strong academic skills, good interpersonal skills and the ability to
make decisions and solve problems (Taylor, Borne, & Lipsitz, 1990). Similar to the
SCAN's Commission, employers tend to categorize their preferred skills into three skill
areas; basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics, and computation); technical skills
(work training specific to a job); and the broad category "interpersonal skills."

Employers in entry-level studies ("What employers say," 1988; Ascher, 1988;
Goldberg & Loos, 1981; Maxfield, 1988; Taylor, et al., 1990) considered basic
academic skills as fundamental, but ranked them less significant for being hired or
evaluated. This may be in response to the perceived needs of an entry-level position
rather than a position evaluation or promotion.

Although the studies reviewed concentrated on employers in metropolitan areas
who frequently hired large numbers of entry-level employees, Banta, Phillippi & Lyons
(1991) studied the employers of graduates from two- and four-year institutions. The
number of employees in each of the organizations varied and organizational size
appeared to play no observable difference in the generally preferred skills. Banta, et al.,
(p. 16) found that these employers gave high marks to basic skills and included
computer and data processing skills among those basic skills needed specifically for
clerical occupations. A student's grade point average (GPA) was considered
unimportant to performance rating (p. 18).

Employers stated that their firms would train and develop the technical skills
needed on the job (Goldberg & Loos, 1981; Herschbach, 1988; Maxfield, 1988;
Taylor, et al., 1990) and that external training did not significantly reduce the cost of in-
house training. In these cases, technical skills included a broader set of basic skills.
For example, employers of clerical occupations considered typing, filing and data
processing skills basic for employment in this field. They were willing, however, to
train an employee coming in with these skills in the more technical applications specific
to their organization.
Akeyo (1985) included technical skills in her study of Oregon clerical/office employers. She sought to determine which competencies were perceived necessary for entry-level clerical/office work and to determine which strategy was best in helping high school students prepare for successful clerical/office employment. One hundred fifty-three competencies were categorized into ten specific task categories. Those non-technical skills were listed under 'Human Relations Competencies' (p. 135).

Akeyo surveyed a random sampling of 1,374 business employers and 514 clerical/office occupations teachers. She used Cohen's Power Analysis (p. 44) and divided these participants into rural and urban categories in order to balance the sample. This yielded a total sample of 300 business employers and 200 clerical office occupations teachers. This also represented an even distribution of rural and urban participants in each group.

Her results indicated that business employers used 'personal interview' and 'attitude' above all other criteria to hire beginning clerical/office graduates from high schools in Oregon. The next closest grouping included personal appearance, cooperative work experience, personality and scholastic records. Good attendance was ranked ninth.

Within the competency category ‘Communication Skills,’ Akeyo found ‘uses appropriate, concise, and up-to-date terminology’ and ‘understand and verify instructions’ were rated highest under the sub-category ‘Oral’ (p. 71). This category also included the sub-category ‘Silence’ which included the ability to read and interpret non-verbal body language.

In reviewing Akeyo’s (1985) results, this writer found that among the ‘Human Relations’ competencies preferred by employers, the top four were: “Understand the need to keep certain information private”; “Show good judgment,” and “Maintain business-like attitude and behavior” which tied with “Carry out a job to completion.”
In her study, those employers who indicated they did not hire beginning office employees with high school education were asked to identify why that might be so. Akeyo offered a list of eight choices together with blanks for “Other” (p. 124). Employers could mark as many choices as were applicable and no ranking was requested, however, the study referred to no “Other” write-ins.

Akeyo’s choices seemed heavily weighted in areas beyond the control of the high school graduate. “Lack of experience for the jobs available” and “no office positions for high school graduates” ranked the highest among the 18% of the employers in this group. “Immaturity” (presumably within the graduate’s control) ranked third, but “specialized work” and “specialized training” ranked fourth and fifth respectively.

Contrary to the other studies reviewed, Akeyo’s employers ranked “on the job training is too long and/or expensive” sixth and “inadequate preparation in high school” seventh, although the latter was marked by only 3.5% of the respondents. None of the employers marked “insurance costs are too high.” Her study supported the value of cooperative work experience in high schools as a strong preparation toward clerical/office occupations employment.

What the SCANS Commission referred to as “competencies,” employers seemed to include under “interpersonal skills” and may refer to what Maxfield (1988) calls “work readiness” characteristics. The employers in the studies of Maxfield (1988) and Goldberg & Loos (1981) suggested that, because the hiring process usually requires several stages and the need for an applicant to demonstrate these work readiness skills to several individuals at several organizational levels, these work readiness characteristics are more important than job specific training.

Employers want workers who are motivated, reliable and have good work attitudes. Good work attitudes were always ranked within the top five characteristics
required to secure or keep jobs. Employers value oral and written communication skills and the ability to get along with clients and co-workers.

Employers were asked in all studies to rank the characteristics or skills they perceived to be the most necessary. These were outlined as only those characteristics or skills that could be altered by training, rather than any immutable characteristics such as sex, age, ethnicity. Instructions (Maxfield, 1988) included the need to distinguish neatness and good grooming from being “pretty or handsome.”

Maxfield (1988) presented eight hypothetical employees on paper to 40 senior personnel officers and instructed them to indicate which employees they would hire and which they would not. All hypothetical employees shared the same characteristics to a greater or lesser degree. She requested that the participants focus specifically on what characteristics were needed in order to secure the job, rather than what might help someone be promoted.

The employers in her study suggested that an eighth grade reading level and seventh grade mathematics level would suffice for entry-level work. The need for a high school diploma or GED and job-specific training was considered unimportant in the presence of good job attitude and motivation according to Maxfield’s study, but was not mentioned in the other studies reviewed.

Goldberg & Loos (1981) asked a random sampling of 100 leaders in business and industry to rank order a list of 64 items as to their importance in securing a job. When Goldberg & Loos analyzed the top 20 responses, they found them evenly divided among what they clustered into three general areas: Skills, attitudes and values. Of these top 20 responses, 7 were from the skills cluster, 6 were from the attitudes cluster, and 7 were from the values cluster.

When asked to rank these characteristics a second time according to job specific categories, part of the 100 participants, a sub-study of office-related supervisors chose
the following as their top four:

- Communicates effectively with clients and fellow workers;
- Maintains good health, neatness, good grooming and fitness habits;
- Demonstrates initiative; and,
- Willingly acquires additional training and education relative to the job function (Goldberg & Loos, 1981).

These results were closely related to those of the total group of 100 respondents, but the office-related supervisors added that it was also important to be able to “maintain accurate and appropriate records” and “to be independent and self-reliant.”

Goldberg & Loos found that “safety” and “attitude” were ranked higher by employers of fewer than 25 employees. Regardless of their organization’s size, “cooperation” was ranked first or second highest by all other employers. This included employers of groups with as few as 26 and greater than 500 workers.

Goldberg & Loos found in their study that employers complimented their employees for demonstrating integrity, telling the truth, keeping promises and paying debts. They also found them to desire upward economic mobility and a willingness to acquire more learning and education related to their jobs, which they viewed as a positive attribute at work.

Among the sub-study group of office-related supervisors, “checking own work for accuracy” and “uses time and energy efficiently” were considered ‘Not Important’ (Goldberg & Loos, 1981). This is in contrast to Gaustad’s (1988) study of 50 supervisors of clerical/secretarial positions. Although they made some distinctions between skills needed by secretaries that were not needed by general clerical employees, Gaustad found that the “capacity to manage their time” was an area needing improvement by all and “frequency of costly mistakes” ranked third as a reason for termination.

Employers placed high value on one’s ability to cooperate or work well with others (Goldberg & Loos, 1981; Maxfield, 1988; Taylor, et al., 1990). This supports
Caudron’s (1991) belief that people are not terminated because they lack technical skills, but rather because they cannot get along with others.

Luft (1978) surveyed 180 teacher-coordinators, employers and counselors (60 participants in each group) involved in cooperative work experiences in Utah to determine the most important non-technical employment qualities they desired. He asked them to rank a list of 31 items related to work competencies of a non-technical nature.

Luft found that counselors and teacher-coordinators appeared to agree with employers on the importance of each competency, but that there was "more disparity in perceptions of the importance of the non-technical employment qualities between counselors and employers than between teacher-coordinators and employers" (p. 60).

Four of the top six significant qualities included acceptable grades, positive self-concept and self-confidence, personal appearance suitable to the job, and good attendance. The other qualities in this group dealt with willingness to join a union and knowledge of union advantages, disadvantages, and requirements for union membership (p. 59).

Terminology regarding interpersonal skills was used differently in the studies reviewed, but could often be interpreted to mean the same or a closely related characteristic. Oral and written communication skills were frequently generalized under the term “communication” (Maxfield, 1988; Taylor, et al., 1990) or “effective communication” (Goldberg & Loos, 1981) under which they included “oral and written understanding.” “Communication Skills” might also include verbal and non-verbal behavior, or skills that indicated the ability to get along with others.

What Maxfield (1988) outlined under appearance, and distinguished from speech, under the “work-readiness” category, Taylor, et al., (1990) listed as one category. These were “maintains good health, neatness, good grooming and fitness
habits.” No other survey referred to self-care. Within the category “good interpersonal skills,” Lankard (1990) included “crucial to such efforts at (sic) “valuing differences.”

The term “teamwork” was used by (Taylor, et al., 1990) to describe the similar terms “cooperates with fellow workers” in Goldberg & Loos’ (1981) study and “gets along with others” by Banta, et al. (1991). Gaustad (1988) cites this same characteristic under reasons why employees were terminated and specifies, “inability to get along with co-workers.” Carnevale (1989) used the term “group effectiveness” to suggest this skill. “Personal management” was among the highest ranking skills in Carnevale’s study of basic skills needed by workers to function in today’s high technology workplace (p. 31).

This writer interprets the use of “adaptability” or “flexibility” to be interchangeable in the studies reviewed. These terms were also used to mean the ability and willingness to learn and suggested the need to be able to respond to constant change in the workforce.

In his book, “Job Shift: How to Prosper in a Workplace Without Jobs,” William Bridges (1994) redefines our notion of job and suggests that today’s employers are looking for people who are versatile enough to do “assignments” rather than to do jobs. He states that, where once employers hired according to one’s education, experience and endorsements (The Three E’s), they now look for people who really desire the work, who have requisite abilities (other than merely technical skills), who have a temperament suited to the individual or particular work environment; and who have appropriate assets (arbitrary attributes desired for specific situations or desired by individual employers.) He calls these DATA qualities.

His workshops with employers and organizations across the United States indicate that the two most desired personal characteristics sought by employers are the ability to deal with ambiguity and having a sense of humor. Bridges recommends that
educators and training programs teach people “to get work done” and “to find what work needs to be done.”

In the studies reviewed, “interpersonal skills” also included motivation and reliability. “Personal initiative” could be considered having “good or positive work attitude” or may be used to describe a type of motivation. “Reliability” included being depended upon to get to work daily, as well as depended upon to get work done in a timely manner.

Employers were also asked to rank the difficulty they had finding employees with the preferred characteristics (Goldberg & Loos, 1981; Maxfield, 1988; Taylor, et al., 1990). Consistently, those skills and characteristics most desired by employers where those that they listed as most difficult to find. This was particularly true for “motivation” and “reliability.” Employers believed that motivation and reliability, “to show up everyday and on time,” do increase a person’s productivity on entry-level positions (Maxfield, 1988).

Employers recommended that training programs stress basics, including grammar and spelling; require neatness, punctuality, regular attendance and good grooming; and teach the skills required to get along with others. They also stressed the need to encourage self-esteem within the classroom as a way of promoting personal high standards and positive attitudes.

Historical Perspective of Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon

In 1984, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Technical Act of 1961 was reauthorized and renamed the Vocational Education Act. Influenced by a coalition of over 100 women’s groups and organizations, under the reauthorized act, each State set aside 10% of its total funding for women. This was the first time Congress had designated federal dollars solely for the education and retraining of women (Thompson, 1994). The coalition wrote much of the equity portion of the initiative and Congress took their
suggestions practically word-for-word. In addition to allotting a percentage of funding to women’s education and retraining, the initiative also required that each request for proposal (RFP) include a full-time administrator for each grant.

Oregon took a significant lead in serving this population. Hilda Thompson, former State Specialist for Oregon Education, was hired by the State’s Department of Education to administer the nearly $1,000,000 granted as a result of the 10% clause. She was charged with initiating the RFP’s, distributing the grant dollars and supervising the evaluation of each program. Her background with adult basic education services and her commitment to linking similar services within the community and across the State, together with her work in the community colleges of Washington State, led her to approach the Oregon community colleges as natural settings wherein to provide the services necessary to reach the goals of Section 221 of the amended Perkins Act: Programs for Single Parents, Displaced Homemakers, and Single Pregnant Women.

First priority was given to fund “start-up efforts to develop and establish centers to serve the training and educational needs of single parents and homemakers” (Lane, 1994). Although the projects were designed to provide services to meet the community and local needs, as a guiding principle, all projects shared the common goal of helping participants become economically self-sufficient through education, training and support services. Each Center was entrusted to provide nine “essential elements” — the last six of which were directly funded with Carl Perkins dollars (“Proposal Guidelines,” 1985):

A. Community-wide cooperative and collaborative effort on behalf of poor women.

B. Commitment by the community college to continue funding the center well after federal funds are no longer available or have been reduced.

C. An identified community college administrator assigned responsibility for the advocacy and support of programs for single parents and homemakers.
D. Adequate, assessable and convenient facilities in which to house the center.

E. Effective recruitment, assessment, and retention strategies for single parents and homemakers.

F. Classroom instruction that includes personal development, basic skills, career planning, job-finding skills, and provides credit.

G. Long-term (two year) and short-term (one year of less) vocational technical training for jobs that will provide economic self-sufficiency for families.

H. Placement in jobs with advancement potential, six- and twelve-month student follow-up after job placement.

I. Support services, including personal counseling, supervised support groups, child care, transportation, fees/tuition, supplies, etc.

By October 1985, six self-sufficiency Centers had been established. All but one center were in community colleges.

Under Thompson's guidance, the Center administrators gathered quarterly to share ideas, philosophies, language and issues. Networking with each other and throughout their communities increased awareness of the Centers and prevented other agencies from writing proposals that would compete for the same money. This, together with a standardized data collection system from the inception and a clear mission and vision statement, helped ensure the success of the individual Centers, the introduction of Oregon's program as a national model of collaboration, and the continuous funding of each program after its trial first year.

By 1988, eleven Centers had been established. As a group, the administrators agreed to methodically expand the number of programs without relying on more money. It was hoped that two new Centers would be added each year until all Oregon community colleges had well-established programs, "planned for and funded as an integral part of their student services" (Thompson, 1994). Although not all community colleges provided Centers, at the time of this study, 17 Centers operated as well-
established programs. Only 1 of the 17 operated outside the auspices of a community college. Two programs were located off the main campuses, but were affiliated with a community college.

The Oregon Programs

Early discussions established that each program would remain autonomous locally yet stay accountable to the State system. The State would provide funding and coordinate networking, evaluation and advocacy at the local, state and national level (Lane, 1992), but individual programs would remain responsible to local controls. This meant that the name of each program and its curriculum content would be developed independently. The core curriculum of all programs, however, was referred to as “life skills.” Copying from each other was considered complimentary, but the need to honor the diverse populations being served required a generous degree of self-determination (Thompson, 1994).

Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs shared 8 common goals:

1. To help participants overcome personal barriers to education and employment by increasing self-esteem and interpersonal skills.

2. To help participants develop an action plan by providing self-assessment activities, career exploration opportunities, and information concerning education and training options.

3. To develop job search skills through practice in identifying and exploring job opportunities, resume writing, and interviewing.

4. To provide access to basic education classes to help participants improve basic skills or earn a GED (Graduate Equivalent Degree).

5. To provide access to vocational training in fields that offer economic self-sufficiency and potential for advancement, including non-traditional career areas.

6. To provide support services such as counseling, support groups, and financial assistance for child care, transportation, tuition, books, clothing, and emergency needs.
(7) To coordinate with other community agencies and organizations in providing services to single parents and displaced homemakers.

(8) To increase program services through fun-raising activities and grant writing (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994).

The purpose of these goals and objectives was to enable program participants to become economically self-sufficient. This required that the participants secure and maintain jobs.

The core “life skills” class in each program ranged from two to twelve weeks. The length of the classes varied and ranged from two hours per week to over 30 hours per week, totaling anywhere from 20 to more than 300 hours. Those programs that offered fewer classes per week tended to extend their programs over a greater length of time. Classes were offered as few as two times each year and as many as twenty. The number of credits awarded ranged from 2 to 12 credits and was typically paid by the project funds or by a college tuition waiver.

Topics covered during the “life skills” classes were grouped under three basic categories: Personal Development, Career Exploration, and Job Search skills (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994). Other topics often covered included parenting and academic study skills.

Job placement services were not typically offered, but each program provided some type of support group, either concurrent with the class or as a follow-up in order to “help participants maintain momentum as they searched for jobs or continued their education” (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994).

The Oregon Participants

Faddis & Horowitz (1994) used a written questionnaire and on-site interviews to annually poll participants as to their needs. Their findings showed that by 1994, their programs served an average of over 1500 women each year. The majority of women
heard about the programs through friends or relatives. Participation was voluntary. In an unduplicated count, 50% of the participants listed themselves as single parents and 38% considered themselves displaced homemakers. The other 12% included married homemakers, women with a disabled spouse, low-income women seeking to upgrade their employment skills, or persons who checked both single parent and displaced homemaker (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994). Only three projects had had greater than 10% minority women as participants.

The median age of the women was 36, although they range in age from 16 to 73 years-old. In 1994, the marital status of the participants showed that one-third were divorced, 23% were separated, 22% were married, 16% were single and 5% were widowed. Participants without spouses indicated that the duration of separation had been less than one year (40%), between one and five years (37%), or was greater than five years (23%) (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994).

The majority of participants had always had children living at home. Their education levels ranged from no diploma to college or technical degrees and graduate work. Some had never been employed and the greatest number were unskilled. In 1994, the most frequently listed source of income was public assistance. That same year, the median net monthly household income was $520, with 81% of the participants classified as economically disadvantaged (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994).

Low self-esteem, lack of marketable job skills, lack of job search skills and lack of planning goal-setting skills (Faddis & Horowitz, 1994) were those issues described by participants and project staff as the majority of problems facing these women. They further cited problems associated with physical abuse, substance abuse and insufficient financial resources for daily care of themselves and their children, and the incidental costs of education or training as major hurdles to their self-sufficiency.

Asked to rate their strengths and needs in six- and twelve-month follow-up surveys, participants most frequently indicated a high need for “personal growth
instruction.” This was further described by them as decision-making, assertiveness, confidence building, and time management and other similar types of skills.

Use of Questionnaires as Valid Methodology

Descriptive Research

The goal of descriptive research is to create a greater understanding of persons, events or objects. Rather than establish cause-effect relationships or test hypotheses, the intent is to understand social phenomena from the point of view of the actors as they relate to the situation in which they occur (Luft, 1978). Its purpose is to describe “what is” (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991; Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1979; Borg, 1963).

Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) suggested that in addition to gathering data and analysis, descriptive research involves interpretation, contrast, classification and integration of findings in order to describe “what is” and how that happens to be “what is” (p. 107). They suggested that descriptive research has three main functions:

1. to acquire evidence concerning a situation or population;
2. to identify norms or baseline information for the use of comparative purposes; and further serves,
3. to determine how and if one should move to another type of research (p. 107).

Borg (1963) added that descriptive research often functions as a preliminary step for follow-up research using “more rigorous control and more objective methods” (p. 202). Although he agreed that its major function is to tell “what is,” Borg believed that descriptive research often serves to plan and evaluate by seeking the ideas and recommendations of the respondents; so that they tell us what is and perhaps what should be (p. 203).
Hobbs (1993) cited five key axioms that form the bases of descriptive research. They are:

1. Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic.
2. Knower and known are interactive, inseparable.
3. Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.
4. All entities are in a state of mutual, simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.
5. Inquiry is value-bound. (p. 62-63)

Also according to Hobbs (p. 63-67), the implications for research of this kind are multiple. Research is carried out in the natural setting being studied, with no manipulation or control of variables. While the problem statement guides the study, the design is not prescribed, but rather flexible. It develops as the research progresses and new data are discovered. Within this context, learning that occurs during the process of the investigation becomes a valid part of the study.

In descriptive research, the researcher is the primary data-gathering instrument and is, therefore, expected to have an effect on the study. Minimization of this influence is an essential part of the research design. Critics view this influence as an inherent weakness, but supporters defend it as a design strength.

In descriptive research, “sampling is not representative and generalizability is not a concern. Although the researcher may arbitrarily choose the first sampling unit, subsequent units are selected on the need to expand, test, or fill in information” (p. 65). The data are analyzed using an inductive process and meanings are interpreted by the respondents in the process. “Meaning is tied to context” (p. 66) and because every situation is unique, generalizations can only be made with caution. Because of this design, theory emerges as the data are collected and analyzed.

Finally, the language of descriptive research uses the term “trustworthiness” in place of the quantitative terms, internal and external validity, and reliability. The
importance of validity and reliability remains unquestioned, however, the usage of the term, "trustworthiness" is controversial and an unsettled debate among researchers (p. 67).

Descriptive designs often study both qualitative and quantitative issues. They use several methods to gather information: (a) case studies, (b) surveys, (c) developmental studies using cross-sectional or longitudinal methods, (d) follow-up studies, (e) documentary analyses, (f) trend analyses, and (g) correlation studies (Dillman, 1991). Because this study uses a survey approach, that design will be explored further.

**Questionnaire Design and Administration**

Survey research typically employs questionnaires and interviews in order to determine the opinion, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons that are of interest to the researcher (Borg, 1987). Questionnaires, surveys and interview procedures, both self-administered and through personal or telephone interviews, are long-established devices for the collection of data and the most frequently used methods in the social sciences (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1991; Dillman, 1991; Sudman & Bradburn, 1983). Plumb and Spyridakis (1992) noted that this type of research has the advantage of "ecological validity" because it asks questions of real people in real situations. They stated that an additional advantage of questionnaires is that they can be used very specifically, such as in a classroom or at a conference, or be sent great distances, so that they are not constrained by geography (p. 626). However, a common problem is that the researcher has little control over the self-selection of respondents and their willingness to participate and answer the questions in good faith. It can only be assumed that the respondent is actually the intended recipient and member of the selected population (p. 626).

Questionnaires also rely on a person’s ability to read and write, and telephone interviews rely on aural and verbal abilities which may play a role in accuracy of
responses as well as response rates. In addition, questionnaires often depend on memory of events or perceptions and gather only what respondents believe or want to believe to be true, not necessarily what is true about their feelings or attitudes. These issues lead to several specific considerations when developing a survey instrument.

Design and administration of questionnaires are two categories that researchers need to consider. Design follows the development of a clear picture of what is to be asked and from what population. The studies reviewed outlined three regularly used formats for questionnaire design. Unstructured responses are considered easy, but rely solely on what the respondents offer; whether they provide much or little information. Checklists have the advantage that they prompt respondents to think like the researcher and that their supplied responses are easier to analyze and interpret. Bradburn and Sudman (1988) state that this method is sometimes attacked as superficial because it provides predetermined responses. They further suggest that this criticism can be accommodated with a well-designed questionnaire and follow-up (p. 6).

With checklists, some consideration should be taken to prevent the primacy effect wherein respondents choose items at the beginning of the list more often than those at the end. This can be prevented by randomly ordering the items for each respondent, increasing motivation to maintain consistency (maybe with special instructions or reminders on the questionnaire itself), and by shortening the length of the checklist (Bradburn & Sudman, 1988; Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992; Sudman & Bradburn, 1983).

Questionnaires can effectively use scaled responses (such as the Likert and Thurston rating scales). This method is also subject to the primacy effect as well as a halo effect wherein the respondents rate their responses according to what they would like to believe or exist, rather than what necessarily is (Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992). Use of a semantic differential scale (such as Guttman’s scaling) helps modify these
problems. This method, which is especially effective in measuring attitudes, rates each concept on three different factors; evaluation, activity and potency (Borg, 1987).

Question format and question order are two other considerations in good questionnaire design. The use of open-ended or closed questions depends on the general research questions and the type of data sought (Bradburn & Sudman, 1988; Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992). Wording plays an important role because the researcher wants to ensure that the questions will mean the same thing to each respondent, that bias will be avoided, that the respondent will be able to understand and be able to answer the questions, and that the respondent will be willing to answer the questions. Attempts should be made to make the introduction to the questionnaire respondent-friendly (Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992). This can be aided by never beginning with open-ended questions and by placing non-threatening questions at the beginning of the questionnaire to put the respondent more at ease.

Methods for instilling ease and cooperation from the start are included in considerations for administering questionnaires. All of the studies reviewed suggested that any mailed questionnaire include a stamped, self-addressed envelope or be designed in such a way as to be its own return mailer.

Good cover letters were considered to include information about the questionnaire’s purpose and why the respondents were chosen, how their anonymity would be guarded or not, a comment as to the credibility of the researcher and how the respondents could get information during or after their participation. Bradburn and Sudman (1988) suggested adding a direct appeal for the respondent’s cooperation. They stated that well-executed mailings could achieve the same level of cooperation as personal interviews (p. 123).

The question of anonymity often poses the challenge of wanting to offer anonymity but also needing to know who has responded and who needs a follow-up contact or how to contact a respondent for further information. However, Plumb and
Spyridakis (1992) cited studies showing that anonymity does not seem to effect response rate to questionnaires. One of their studies showed that, despite efforts to guard their anonymity, the respondents, themselves, included their names and return addresses on the return envelopes (p.629).

Follow-ups were regularly suggested in the studies reviewed, however, Plumb and Spyridakis cited one study that recommends follow-up contacts only when the initial response is less than 20% (p. 630). Telephone contacts seem to be more effective than mail reminders, however they require more intense use of time (p. 630). Nederhof (1988) found that telephone reminders were as effective as certified mailings in reducing non-response rates (by 34% in two different samples) (p. 353). Telephone follow-ups were toned as a friendly reminder and queried as to whether the questionnaire had arrived and whether there were any questions, rather than as a reproach. Another questionnaire was offered and sent when the first was said to have not arrived.

Nederhof's telephone reminders increased the response rates from 72% (after three mailings) to 82% in the first survey and from 71% to 81% in the second mailing. Nederhof adds that the telephone reminders added to a higher contact rate and this allowed him to identify ineligible respondents; those individuals who no longer represented the survey sample. He was able to correct the sample, and increase his response rate by 3-to-6 percentage points for each survey. Nederhof also found that response rates seem to be effected by contrasting cover designs, but only after second mailings.

While monetary incentives do seem to improve response rates without biasing the results (p. 630), they seem to be as effective if sent only with a second mailing (Bradburn & Sudman, 1983; Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992).

Dillman, Sinclair and Clark (1993) examined the relationship of questionnaire length, design and level of question difficulty in census mail surveys. A sample of 17,000 households were selected with 8,500 units in each stratum divided into five
panels of equal size in order to test five different census forms. In the end, three forms were worth comparing; the booklet (a short form); the micro (which eliminated the housing questions and two of the personal questions for each household member; and the roster (which asked for only the names and birthdates of each household member).

Overall, people were more likely to return both the micro and roster forms than the booklet form but there was no important difference between the completion rates in either of these forms. Using preletters that introduced the survey and postcard reminders in addition to the mailed questionnaires also improved the response rates.

Dillman (1991) had earlier argued that what he called "respondent-friendly" design would also improve response rates of mailed surveys (p. 290). Dillman, Sinclair and Clark (1993) explored this hypothesis and found some evidence to support it. "Respondent-friendly" refers to the ease of completion and lack of confusion created for a respondent in the survey. It also refers to any positive or negative feelings an individual has towards the survey itself. This was combined with difficult or objectionable questions to determine to what extent individuals would simply refuse to answer a question.

Respondent-friendliness only improved significantly from the 1990 low response areas of the census, and shortening the questionnaire improved response significantly only from the high response areas. Combining these two, however, showed substantial improvement in both low and high response areas (p. 302). Asking for social security numbers seemed to be the single most important factor in creating an objectionable question.

Sanchez (1992) examined two studies that used different questionnaire designs for the same set of survey questions to present evidence of design choice and effects directly attributable to that choice (p. 207). The compared designs included the placement in a grid of two questions dealing with past and current religious affiliation
and the format used in questions that required interviewers to probe for the name of specific Protestant denominations.

Consistency of design seemed to be the important factor in Sanchez' studies. Interviewers were more likely to skip answers when questions were stacked in some areas and linear in others. It was suggested that individuals tended to develop a rhythm of responding left-to-right across or directly down the page. When one of these styles was changed in the middle of a survey to another style, the "not ascertained" responses increased (p. 211). Interviewer experience did not make up for format deficits (p. 216).

Regardless of the specific choices made by the researcher in the design and administration of questionnaires, it is important that questionnaires be tested to avoid the potential problems raised above. Adherence to the guidelines offered, increases the development of a thorough instrument and ensures greater reliability and validity of the data gathered.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature provided a historical perspective of the Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon and how they have evolved in their delivery of services today. The average single parent/displaced homemaker was described in terms of socio-economic characteristics and psychological issues that plague them as both the primary wage earner and sole parent. The perspective of the employer was reviewed to determine which non-technical employment skills are typically sought by them from new employees. Finally, the use of questionnaires as a valid methodology of descriptive research was reviewed to provide support for the research design used in this study.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This study posed the question, "To what extent do the perceptions of graduates from the Oregon Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs regarding the non-technical employment qualities needed to keep jobs match the perceptions of their instructors and selected employers?" The purpose of the study was to explore answers to the following key questions asked of the graduates and instructors of these programs and selected employers:

1. How do these studied populations rank order the perceived non-task job survival competencies required by employers according to the literature?
2. To what extent do these studied populations perceive that the programs currently address non-technical employment qualities as extracted from the literature?
3. How do these studied populations rate graduates as having these non-technical employment qualities?
4. To what extent do these studied populations perceive that the graduates seek and receive feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities?
5. Which qualities do these studied populations perceive that employers want graduates to possess prior to entering the workforce?
6. What perceptions do these studied populations have as to why employees are terminated? and,
7. What are the reasons these studied populations believe graduates leave employment?
The Populations

The populations for study were three: (1) Individuals between the ages of 16 and 65 who graduated between July 1992 and June 1994 from 16 of the 17 Oregon Carl D. Perkins federally funded self-sufficiency programs. A sub-population of those graduates who identified themselves as having had their first job within the clerical/office field was also studied. (2) Full- and part-time faculty who were currently teaching in the same federally funded programs; and, (3) Selected work-site directors or supervisors who had employed graduates from these same federally funded programs. No generalizations were made beyond these groups.

Individuals who found jobs within the clerical/office field were selected because they were the largest employed population indicated in follow-up studies conducted by the Carl D. Perkins grants. No generalizations were made beyond this group.

During the month of March 1995, discussions were held with the State Coordinator of Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs, Marilyn Lane, and Sandy Nelson, Coordinator for the New Workforce program at Chemeketa Community College. The New Workforce program received funding from the Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker grant. The researcher was supervised by Nelson and her advice was sought regarding distribution and collection of the survey.

Although the original study hoped to survey only students who had graduated in 1992 and who on previous evaluations had indicated employment in clerical/office occupations, Faddis (personal communication, April 3, 1995) indicated that there was no way to identify the specific employment of graduates. Because of her experience in evaluating this population, she recommended that graduates from 1992 were more likely to have the desired work experience, but were less likely to be traced. This was due to graduates relocating. The mailing lists of graduates from recent years were more likely
to be current but these students were less likely to have been employed and more likely to still be in some form of training.

These two factors led to the decision to distribute a greater number of surveys. The graduate survey respondents were increased to include all graduates from Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs between July 1, 1992 and June 30, 1994. A category to indicate Female or Male was added to the student survey and directors were asked to exclude labels for Teens, Dislocated Workers and any people they served not funded by Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker grant dollars.

Both full- and part-time instructors that were currently teaching in one of the programs were surveyed. Their responses were given equal weight regardless of employment level. In addition, the instructors were asked to complete a question regarding the service population covered by their program.

Employers were selected from responses on the Graduates Survey. In addition to the survey questions, employers were asked to complete information regarding the general nature of their business, the size of their company and the percentage of their time spent supervising Clerical/Office staff.

Development of the Survey

Several steps were completed to develop the surveys used in the study. First, several survey instruments (Baird et al., 1991; Banta, Phillippi, & Lyons, 1991; Baxter & Young, 1982; Cappelli, 1992; Goldberg & Loos, 1981; Gottlieb & Driscoll, 1982; Luft, 1978; Maxfield, 1988; Yungho & Wright, 1989) were reviewed to determine what kinds of questions about employer expectations for employees had already been investigated.

Second, several publications (Bradburn & Sudman, 1988; Jacobs, 1974; Lindenmann, 1983; Sudman & Bradburn, 1983) were read to add insight into the types
of questions that would be appropriate for the purposes of this particular study; the order and composition of the questions, the number and style choice of responses; and the readability of the questionnaires.

The Luft (1978) "Non-Technical Employment Qualities Survey Instrument" was chosen as the basic survey instrument. Permission was received to modify the survey. The word "student" was changed to read "graduate" or "employee" and several items were deleted that did not apply to the participants in this study. The modifications resulted in a 27-question survey that became Section A of the survey. An additional eight sections were added to each survey for the purpose of gaining qualitative evidence to compare the items ranked in Section A.

The student survey asked participants to identify their first employer after graduation. This information was used to select employer participants in the survey. The identification of the students was not revealed to the participating employer.

An additional page of statistical data was added to the student survey that matched the data collected annually in the Oregon Department of Education's Evaluation Report of Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs in Oregon. This last category was personal information and included information such as age, ethnicity, place of employment, years on the job, source of income. The instruments are shown in Appendix A.

A cover letter for each participating group was developed to accompany the instrument and to provide an explanation as to its purpose. The letters are illustrated in Appendix B.

Each group of surveys was subjected to validation by a corresponding group of people. The validation group was chosen in an attempt to match the group with the study's potential participants. The instructors' survey was reviewed by the Chemeketa Community College Counseling & Advising career counselors. A current class of Single Parent/Displaced Homemakers reviewed the survey for the graduates and the
members of the Chemeketa Community College School Board reviewed the survey in their role as community employers. The purpose of the review was to assess the survey for completeness, overlap of items, clarity, and thoroughness of the instrument.

From their responses, the surveys were revised and changed according to appropriate recommendations. As a result, three 9-section surveys were constructed. These were reviewed and refined by Dr. Bonnie Faddis of RMC Research Corporation in Portland, Oregon. Faddis and RMC completed the annual evaluations and site visits of all Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs during the time of this study. In March 1995, final discussions occurred with the doctoral advisor and the survey was approved for administration.

**Distribution and Collection of the Survey**

A student survey was sent to all Oregon Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker program participants who graduated between July 1, 1992 and June 30, 1994. An instructor survey was sent to all current full-and part-time instructors in the Oregon programs. Students were asked to identify their first employer after graduating from a program or subsequent training and from these data, employer surveys were sent to any employer identified by student participants.

Because the programs would not release names of students in order to maintain their confidentiality, it was determined that surveys, cover letters and return, stamped envelopes would be enclosed in a sealed, stamped envelope and sent to the program directors for distribution. They would run the necessary labels. These labels would be affixed to the prepared envelopes and mailed by the program directors. In this way, no mailing lists were shared and confidentiality was maintained.

In early April, each program director was contacted by telephone to introduce the researcher and to explain the study. These telephone contacts were followed with a
letter further explaining the study and outlining the exact labels requested. This letter is Appendix C.

An additional telephone call was made a week later to determine the exact number of labels run and the number of surveys to be sent. Additionally, the number of full- and part-time instructors in each program was requested at this time and instructor surveys were sent to each program for distribution.

A total of 2,558 graduate surveys were prepared and sent to the directors for mailing. An additional 63 instructor surveys were sent to the program directors for distribution. From these surveys, it was anticipated that a minimum of 50 employers would be identified for participation.

Because mailing lists were not accessible to this researcher, it was determined that no coding was warranted for a possible second, individual distribution. However, the graduate surveys were coded by program in the event that low return rates from any one program might warrant an additional group re-mailing.

Graduate and teacher surveys were distributed during the month of April 1995. One program distributed their surveys in May and one program did not participate in the study. Follow-up telephone calls were completed during the last weeks of May and again in June of 1995 with July 15, 1995 determined to be the final survey date.

It was recommended and decided that follow-up reminders were neither cost-effective nor practical given the confidentiality issues and demands that such a mailing would place on programs that were already working with limited staff support.

By July 15, 1995, 351 (14%) graduate responses had been received and were used as the studied graduate population. From these graduate surveys, 77 respondents who identified their first job as "Clerical/Office" were selected for additional study. It was the intent of this study to look specifically at those female graduates whose first employment after graduation and/or training was within the Clerical/Office field.
From the 63 surveys sent to program instructors, 31 responses (49%) were received and all surveys were used. No further contact was made with program instructors.

Because of the low number of employers listed by students, all employers listed were contacted. This generated 149 employer contacts. Employers that were listed without specific supervisor names were sent in care of “Manager” or “Supervisor.” Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 36 graduates who indicated that their first employment was in the Clerical/Office field, but who had not listed their first employer. Permission was requested to send a survey to their first employer. These interviews generated an additional six employer names. A total of 27 employer responses (18%) were received and used. A reminder post-card was sent which generated an additional two employer responses. Five employers returned surveys indicating that they were unable to respond because they did not know the graduate or the program.

No generalizations were made beyond these groups.

Reporting the Data

The responses to Section A from each of the three survey groups were averaged and ranked according to response ratings. These rankings were summarized for each survey group and then cross-tabulated with each of the survey groups.

Responses to the additional seven sections and three open-ended questions were analyzed using procedures outlined in Strauss and Corbin (1990). The process of open coding was used to compare and conceptualize the open-ended responses. Categories and subcategories were developed and labeled to show these comparative relationships. Once core relationships were developed, patterns among the responses were explored and validated across the categories. These patterns and relationships were shared with
three of the researcher's colleagues for further validation. The categories and subcategories were re-labeled as a result of their additional input.

A summary of the characteristics of each of the three studied populations and the Clerical/Office sub-group were also reported. Profiles of the graduate and clerical/office respondents were compiled from their data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the research design of the study. Three populations were studied using a survey method; graduates, instructors and selected employers of Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon. The survey was designed, validated and revised using a modification of The Luft "Non-Technical Employment Qualities Survey Instrument" (1978) in combination with open-ended questions and statistical information. The survey, cover letter and return envelopes were prepared and mailed to the directors of each of 17 programs in Oregon. The prepared mailings resulted in 351 graduate responses and 31 teacher responses. From the graduate responses, selected employers were contacted which resulted in 27 employer responses. The graduates who indicated that their first employment was in the Clerical/Office field were also studied.

Average ratings, total responses and categories were used to describe the results from each of the respondent populations. No generalizations were made beyond these populations.
CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter includes an overview of the respondents and a report of the findings from each survey source. For the purpose of reporting the findings, Chapter IV is divided into three sections; a description of the respondent characteristics, the perceptions and responses to open-ended questions of the graduates, teachers and employers in this study. Because this study was particularly interested in graduates who began work in the Clerical/Office field, their characteristics and perceptions are also noted.

Graduate Responses

Characteristics of Graduate Respondents

A total of 351 graduates responded to the survey. They identified themselves as 152 Single Parents (43%), 121 Displaced Homemakers (35%), 75 Other (21%), and 3 (1%) left no response to this question. See Figure 1. Six males responded to the survey.

Among the respondents, 315 (90%) indicated that their Primary Ethnic Heritage was White, 9 (3%) were American Indian, 4 (<1%) were Asian, 5 (<1%) were Black/African American, 9 (3%) were Hispanic and 9 (3%) left this question blank. Only two respondents (<1%) under 20 years-of-age completed the survey. Fifty-six (16%) were between the ages of 20 and 29, 130 (37%) were in the group 30-39 years-of-age, 98 (28%) were between 40 and 49, 52 (15%) were between 50 and 59, and 9 (3%) were 60 or older. See Figure 2. Four individuals (<1%) did not indicate their age.
Figure 1. Characteristics of graduate respondents by percentage.

Figure 2. Graduate respondents by age.
Under Marital Status, 64 (18%) individuals stated that they were Single, 91 (26%) were married, 154 (44%) were Divorced, 26 (7%) were Separated, 13 (4%) were Widowed and 3 (1%) chose to leave this question blank. See Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Graduate respondents' marital status by percentage.](image)

![Figure 4. Graduate respondents by level of education.](image)

Nine respondents (3%) had No Diploma, 67 (19%) had graduated from High School or completed a GED, 188 (54%) had at least Some College, 34 (10%) had
completed a Technical Training Program, 4 (<1%) had completed an Apprenticeship and 46 (13%) had completed a College Degree Program. Four individuals (<1%) left this question blank. See Figure 4. One individual had received both Technical Training and had completed an Apprenticeship.

Two hundred five (58%) were currently employed, 142 (41%) had no employment and 4 (1%) left this question blank. Under their Most Recent Job category, 5 (<1%) had Never Been Employed and 24 (7%) were Unskilled. The other categories included 38 individuals (11%) working in the area of Aide or Caretaking, 45 (13%) in Food Service, 78 (22%) in Clerical/Office and 41 (12%) in Business/Management. Fifty-two (15%) individuals considered themselves Semi-skilled and another 48 (14%) chose Semi-Professional or Professional. See Figure 5. Twenty individuals (6%) indicated no response.

Twelve respondents (3%) indicated that they had no Monthly Household Income or less than $200. Eight individuals (2%) had incomes between $1-$200. Thirty-three individuals (9%) had incomes between $201-$400. Sixty (17%) had incomes between $401-$600 and 39 (11%) had incomes in the $601-$800 range. Forty-eight (14%) had incomes between $801-$1000, while most, 98 individuals (28%) had household incomes in the $1001-$2000 range. Thirty-nine program graduates (11%) indicated that their incomes were greater than $2000. See Figure 6. Fourteen individuals (4%) chose to leave this question blank.

These incomes were regularly supplemented by other sources. Graduate respondents indicated that they received additional financial support from one or a combination of the following: Alimony, Child Support, Housing Subsidy, AFS Cash Grant, AFS Medical, Food Stamps, Other AFS, Unemployment, Social Security, Pension and Disability. Among these, Food Stamps and AFS Medical were the most frequently indicated primary or supplemental source of income. Some students stated that they relied solely on their Husband’s Salary and or were living on Financial Aid.
Four individuals added in writing that they had no source of income at all; three lived with their parents or a boyfriend and one engaged in a Work Exchange Program for room and board.

Figure 5. Graduate respondents’ most recent job category.

This demographic profile of survey respondents does not necessarily represent the total demographics of the Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs across the State (Faddis, 1994). The typical graduate respondent in this survey was a white, single parent female between the ages of 30 and 39. She was divorced with some college and likely to be currently employed in the Clerical/Office field. Her income was between $1000 and $2000 dollars each month, although this income was supplemented by Food Stamps, AFS Medical and an AFS Cash Grant. It should be noted that many programs give college credit and students that indicated Some College may have been
referring to these program credits rather than a formal application and registration for mainstream community college classes.

![Bar chart](image-url)  
**Figure 6.** Graduate respondents' monthly household income.

**Characteristics of Clerical/Office Respondents**

Respondents who indicated that their first job after graduation was in the Clerical/Office field included 30 (39%) Single Parents, 26 (34%) Displaced Homemakers, 21 (27%) Others and 1 who marked that she was both a Single Parent and a Displaced Homemaker. See Figure 7.

Among this group, all of whom were women, 71 (92%) were White, 2 (3%) were Hispanic, 2 (3%) were Native American, 1 (1%) was Asian and 1 (1%) was Black. One individual in this group chose not to indicate any ethnic background. No respondents in this category were under the age of 20. Among them, 11 (14%) were 20-29 years-of-age, 29 (38%) were 30-39 years-of-age, 23 (30%) were 40-49 years-of-age, 14 (18%) were 50-59 years-of-age, and 1 was 60 or over. See Figure 8. The
1992 through 1994 annual reports of Faddis reflect similar respondent rates by this population (Faddis, 1992; Faddis, 1993; Faddis, 1994).

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 7.** Characteristics of clerical/office respondents by percentage.

The largest number of women in this group, 38 (49%) were divorced. Twenty-one (27%) were Married, 10 (13%) were Single, 5 (6%) were currently Separated and 4 (5%) were Widowed. See Figure 9.

One woman working in the Clerical/Office field had No Diploma, although most of the women, 51, (66%) had Some College in their background, including the college credit offered by the individual programs. Among the others, 9 women (12%) had a High School Diploma or GED and another 9 (12%) had completed a College Degree. Seven (9%) had completed a Technical Certificate and 1 had finished an Apprenticeship. See Figure 10.
Figure 8. Clerical/Office respondents by age.

Figure 9. Clerical/Office respondents marital status by percentage.
Fifty women (64%) were currently employed and 28 (36%) were not. The
Monthly Household Incomes of the Clerical/Office group ranged as follows: $0
Income, 3 (4%), $201-$400, 2 (3%), between $401-$600, 8 (10%), $601-$800, 12
(16%), between $800-$1000, 10 (13%), between $1000-$2000, 30 (39%), and
greater than $2000, 10 (13%). Two women chose to leave this section blank. See Figure 11.

Within the entire group of Clerical/Office women, their Sources of Income came
from one or a combination of the following: Personal Salary, Alimony, Child Support,
Housing Subsidy, AFS Cash Grant, AFS Medical, Food Stamps, Other AFS,
Unemployment, Social Security, Pension and none was on Disability. Among those
that receive an income from a source Other than above, five relied solely on their
Husband's Salary and five were living on Financial Aid. The distribution of these
sources was not asked of the respondents and the percentage that each contributes to the
household income is not known.

**Perceptions of Graduates Regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed**

The survey asked graduates to rate their perceptions of the importance of
selected Non-Technical Employment Qualities. Each of 27 questions was rated from 0
(Not Important) through 3 (Highly Important). Table 2 indicates the average score of each question rated.

![Bar chart showing income distribution among Clerical/Office respondents monthly household income.](image)

**Figure 11.** Clerical/Office respondents monthly household income.

Graduates perceived that it was most important to “Show a sense of responsibility for undertakings,” Item #5 (2.9801). This was followed by Item #3, “Be mentally capable to perform job activities” (2.8860); Item #27, “Arrive for work on time” (2.8803); Item #4, “Be honest with the employer, public, peers an supervisors” (2.8746); and Item #12, “Have good work attendance” (2.8718).

Among the Clerical/Office respondents, Item #3, “Be mentally capable to perform job activities” ranked highest (2.9102), followed by Item #4, “Be honest with the employer, public, peers an supervisors” (2.8846) and Item #5, “Show a sense of responsibility for undertakings” (2.8718). Item #12, “Have good work attendance” was rated third (2.8590) and Items #26, “Follow instructions as they are given,” #27, “Arrive for work on time,” and Item #14, “Complete work in a thorough manner” received ratings of 2.8333, 2.8205 and 2.8077 respectively. These are shown in Table 3.
Table 2.

**Ratings of Program Graduates as to Importance of Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed on the Job**

*Note.* Scale: 0 = Not Important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Highly Important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>show a sense of responsibility for undertakings</td>
<td>2.9801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>be mentally capable to perform job activities</td>
<td>2.8860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>arrive for work on time</td>
<td>2.8803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors</td>
<td>2.8746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>have good work attendance</td>
<td>2.8718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>complete work in a thorough manner</td>
<td>2.8120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>communicate effectively with others</td>
<td>2.8006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>follow instructions as they are given</td>
<td>2.8006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>cooperate with supervisors</td>
<td>2.7607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>use time to the best advantage of the company</td>
<td>2.7265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>cooperate with other workers</td>
<td>2.7094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>have a positive self-concept and to be self confident</td>
<td>2.7009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>be of good moral character</td>
<td>2.6923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>display social skills and conduct acceptable to others</td>
<td>2.6894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>show initiative to perform on the job</td>
<td>2.6666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>have a personal appearance suitable for the job</td>
<td>2.6638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed</td>
<td>2.6381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>show tact in relationships with others</td>
<td>2.6182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>take criticism when shown what has been done wrong</td>
<td>2.5555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>be physically suitable and in good health for the job</td>
<td>2.4615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed</td>
<td>2.4473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>have a pleasant personality</td>
<td>2.4444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>be motivated toward greater achievements</td>
<td>2.3818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>have interests in addition to work</td>
<td>2.3533</td>
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</table>

Table Continues
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>have imagination which allows for creative performance</td>
<td>2.2991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>have school records showing acceptable grades</td>
<td>1.5043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>have been at the top of the class</td>
<td>1.0598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

**Ratings of Program Graduates in the Clerical/Office Field as to Importance of Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed on the Job**

*Note. Scale: 0 = Not Important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Highly Important.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
<th>Rank of All Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>be mentally capable to perform job activities</td>
<td>2.9103</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors</td>
<td>2.8846</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>show a sense of responsibility for undertakings</td>
<td>2.8718</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>have good work attendance</td>
<td>2.8590</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>follow instructions as they are given</td>
<td>2.8333</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>arrive for work on time</td>
<td>2.8205</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>complete work in a thorough manner</td>
<td>2.8077</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>communicate effectively with others</td>
<td>2.7564</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed</td>
<td>2.7308</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>cooperate with other workers</td>
<td>2.7179</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>have a positive self-concept and to be self confident</td>
<td>2.7179</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>cooperate with supervisors</td>
<td>2.7051</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>use time to the best advantage of the company</td>
<td>2.6923</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>be of good moral character</td>
<td>2.6666</td>
<td>13</td>
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Table Continues
### Table 3, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
<th>Rank of All Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>display social skills and conduct acceptable to others</td>
<td>2.6538</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>show tact in relationships with others</td>
<td>2.5897</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>take criticism when shown what has been done wrong</td>
<td>2.5770</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>have a personal appearance suitable for the job</td>
<td>2.5770</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>show initiative to perform on the job</td>
<td>2.5512</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>have a pleasant personality</td>
<td>2.4359</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed</td>
<td>2.4231</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>be physically suitable and in good health for the job</td>
<td>2.3974</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>have interests in addition to work</td>
<td>2.3718</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>have imagination which allows for creative performance</td>
<td>2.3462</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>be motivated toward greater achievements</td>
<td>2.3077</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>have school records showing acceptable grades</td>
<td>1.5897</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>have been at the top of the class</td>
<td>0.0974</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extent to Which Programs Currently Address Competencies**

Graduates were asked to what extent they believed that the program from which they graduated addressed these non-technical employment qualities. One hundred twelve graduates believed that the programs “Completely address them” (32%) and 134 believed that they “Address most of them” (38%). Fifty-two graduates believed that the programs “Moderately address them” (15%); 29 believed they “Address a few of them” (8%) and 6 believed that they “Did not seem to address them” (<2%). Among the graduates, 7 (2%) believed that these competencies “Cannot be taught”; that “People either have them or do not have them.” Eleven graduates (3%) did not respond to this question. These responses are shown in Figure 12.
The Clerical/Office graduate responses to this question were as follows:
“Completely address them,” 24 (31%) or “Address most of them,” 36 (47%). Some graduates believed that the programs “Moderately address them,” 11 (14%), and “Address a few of them,” 3 (4%). No Clerical/Office respondents indicated that the programs “Did not seem to address them.” Among the Clerical/Office graduates, only 3 (4%) believed that these competencies “Cannot be taught”; that “People either have them or do not have them.” See Figure 12.

**Graduates’ Self-Ratings Regarding Possession of These Competencies**

In combination with their perceptions of the extent to which the programs addressed these non-technical employment qualities, graduates were asked to what extent they believed that they possessed these qualities when they began work after graduating from their programs? To the extent that graduates believed that they possessed these qualities, the results were as follows: “All of Them,” 86 (25%), “Most of Them,” 173 (49%), an “Average Amount of Them,” 50 (14%), a “Few of Them,” 13 (4%), and “Did Not Seem to Possess Them,” 6 (<2%). Twenty-three, however, (7%) did not complete this question. These percentages are shown in Figure 13.

These results compared with those of the Clerical/Office graduates as follows: “All of Them,” 18 (23%), “Most of Them,” 41 (53%), an “Average Amount of Them,” 10 (13%), and a “Few of Them,” 3 (4%). No one in this group believed that they “Did Not Seem to Possess Them.” Five respondents in this group (7%) did not complete this question. See Figure 13.

Graduates were then asked if an individual did not possess these non-technical employment qualities, would the graduates expect the employer to teach these qualities on the job? Over 56% (197 graduates) perceived that it was not the job of the employer to teach these qualities, while 27% (94 graduates) stated that, “Yes,” they would expect the employer to teach them. Twelve percent (41 graduates) believed that “These
qualities could not be taught; People either have them or do not have them.” Five percent (6 graduates) left this question blank. See Figure 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely address them</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address most of them</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately address them</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address a few of them</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not seem to address them</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot be taught</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response/Unable to Respond</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Extent to which programs currently address competencies as perceived by graduates.
Clerical/Office graduates compared with the larger group as follows: Sixty-five percent (51) Clerical/Office graduates perceived that, “No,” they would not expect the employer to teach these non-task employment qualities. Twenty-one percent (16) Clerical/Office graduates perceived that, “Yes,” they expected that an employer would teach them on the job. Ten percent (8) Clerical/Office graduates perceived that “These qualities cannot be taught; People either have them or do not have them” and four percent (3) left this question blank. See Figure 14.
Graduates’ Perceptions Regarding Feedback

Graduates were asked to what extent they believed that they sought feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities. Their responses were as follows: “Regularly seek feedback,” 161 (46%); “Rarely seek feedback,” 81 (23%); “Seek feedback only after there are problems,” 52 (15%); and “Never seek feedback,” 26 (7%). Thirty-one graduates (9%) did not respond to this question. See Figure 15.

Among those graduates that indicated they had first been employed in the Clerical/Office field, their responses were: “Regularly seek feedback,” 38 (49%); “Rarely seek feedback,” 21 (27%); “Seek feedback only after there are problems,” 5 (6%); “Never seek feedback,” 7 (9%); and 7 left this question blank. See Figure 15.
Graduate Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Graduates were then asked three open-ended questions about their employment and their perceptions of the need for these skills on the job. First, they were asked which one, non-technical-employment quality they believed every graduate must possess before leaving a preparatory program? Answers to this question fell into three larger categories; “Sense of personal self and attitude” (Self-confidence, self-esteem and attitude towards others), “Communications skills,” and “Self-Management skills” (Attendance, dependability and punctuality.) See Table 4.

The responses from those graduates whose first employment after the program was in the Clerical/Office field were similar. They perceived that the most important non-technical employment qualities needed by employers was “Confidence.” Another strong perception was the need for a “Positive” or “Good Attitude.” These students
answered "Motivation" and "Desire to Succeed" more frequently than the larger group of all graduates. See Table 4.

Table 4.

Graduates’ Perceptions as to Which One Quality Students Must Possess Prior to Leaving a Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates Responses as a Group</th>
<th>Clerical/Office Graduates Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of personal self and attitude</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Positive or good attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Motivation and desire to succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey went on to ask all respondents what non-technical employment qualities they perceived employees lack that makes employers want to terminate their employment? The five most common responses to this question were “tardiness” and/or “attendance issues,” “poor attitude,” “lack of honesty,” “lack of good communications skills with others” and “poor motivation.” See Table 5.

In response to this same question, the Clerical/Office respondents perceived these qualities to be “Bad Attitude” and a “Lack of Motivation” or “Interest in the Job,” “Tardiness” and “Poor Work Attendance,” and the “Inability to Get Along” or “Cooperate with Others.” See Table 5.

As asked of the entire group, why they left their last job, “Lay-offs and seasonal work” were the most frequent responses. “Illness and/or medical reasons,”
Table 5.

Reasons Graduates Believe Employees are Terminated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates Responses as a Group</th>
<th>Clerical/Office Graduate Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tardiness or attendance issues</td>
<td>• Poor attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor attitude</td>
<td>• Lack of motivation or Interest in the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of honesty</td>
<td>• Tardiness and Poor work attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of good communications skills</td>
<td>• Inability to get along or cooperate with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Continued schooling” and “Pregnancy and family” were also commonly noted.
Twenty-eight stated that a move had required that they leave and 11 stated that they had been fired. See Table 6.

The responses from the Clerical/Office graduates indicated that most left their jobs because of pregnancy or family commitments. A relocation to another town or State was the next most frequent response. The opportunity for better pay and benefits or the lack of them in that job was listed as another reason for leaving. Medical reasons accounted for personal decisions to leave and “Lay-Offs” or “Seasonal Work” accounted for external reasons to leave. Only one Clerical/Office field graduate indicated that she had been fired. See Table 6.

Teacher Responses

Characteristics of Teacher Respondents

Thirty-one teachers responded to the survey. Fourteen were employed full-time and 14 indicated that they were part-time employees in their program. Three teacher respondents left this question blank.
Table 6.

Graduates’ Personal Reasons for Leaving Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates Responses as a Group</th>
<th>Clerical/Office Graduate Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lay-offs or seasonal work</td>
<td>Pregnancy and family commitments; return to homemaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness and/or medical reasons</td>
<td>Relocation to another town or State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued schooling</td>
<td>Opportunity for better pay and/or benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and family commitments; return to homemaking</td>
<td>Illness and/or medical reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation to another town or State</td>
<td>Lay-offs or seasonal work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked to indicate the population of their service area. Their responses were as follows: Fewer than 25,000 (8), 25,001-100,000 (15) and More than 100,000 (3). Five teacher respondents left this question blank.

Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed

The ratings of the teachers who worked in these programs either full- or part-time can be seen in Table 7. Both Question #5, “Show a sense of responsibility for undertakings” and Question #6, “Communicate effectively with others” tied for the highest ratings at 2.8710. Question #12, “Have good work attendance” was third with a rating of 2.8387. Then, Questions #7, “Display social skills and conduct acceptable to others” and Question #23, “Have a positive self-concept and to be self confident” tied with a rating of 2.7420.
Extent to Which Programs Currently Address Competencies

In response to the question “To what extent do you believe that your program currently addresses these non-technical employment qualities?”, 17 teachers (55%) perceived that their programs currently addressed “Most of them.” Seven teachers (23%) responded that their programs “Moderately addressed them.” Three teachers (10%) believed that they “Completely addressed them” and two (6%) perceived them to address a “Few of them.” No teachers perceived that their programs “Did not seem to address them” or that “These qualities cannot be taught; People either have them or do not have them,” and 2 teachers (6%) left this item blank. See Figure 16.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Graduates’ Possession of These Competencies

Teachers were asked to what extent they believed that graduates possessed these non-technical employment qualities upon entering the workforce? Their responses were as follows: “Possessed all of them,” 1 (3%), “Possessed most of them,” 5 (16%), “Possessed an average amount of them,” 17 (55%), “Possessed a few of them,” 5 (16%), “Did not seem to possess them,” 1 (3%), and gave no response, 2 (7%). These percentages are shown in Figure 17.

Teachers were asked whether they would expect the employer to teach these qualities on the job when an individual did not possess them. Twenty-four teachers (77%) would not expect an employer to teach these qualities. Five teachers (16%) would expect employers to teach these qualities and two teachers left this question blank (7%). No teachers perceived that these qualities could not be taught; that people either had them or did not have them. See Figure 18.

Teachers’ Perceptions Regarding Graduates and Feedback

Teachers were asked to what extent they believed that their graduates sought feedback regarding their non-technical employment qualities after they were hired?
Twelve teachers (39%) believed that their students “Rarely seek feedback” and ten (32%) believed that they “Seek feedback only after there are problems.” Four teachers (13%) believed their students “Regularly seek feedback” and one (3%) believed that they “Never seek feedback.” An additional four teachers (13%) did not complete this question. See Figure 19.

**Figure 16.** Extent to which programs currently address non-technical employment competencies according to teachers.
Figure 17. Teachers' perceptions of graduates' possession of non-technical employment qualities.

Figure 18. Expectation of teachers that employers would teach non-technical employment competencies on the job if an individual did not possess them.
Table 7.

Ratings of Program Teachers as to Importance of Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed on the Job

* Note. Scale: 0 = Not Important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Highly Important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>show a sense of responsibility for undertakings</td>
<td>2.8710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>communicate effectively with others</td>
<td>2.8710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>have good work attendance</td>
<td>2.8387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>display social skills and conduct acceptable to others</td>
<td>2.7420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>have a positive self-concept and to be self confident</td>
<td>2.7420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>be mentally capable to perform job activities</td>
<td>2.7097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors</td>
<td>2.6774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>arrive for work on time</td>
<td>2.6774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>complete work in a thorough manner</td>
<td>2.5483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>follow instructions as they are given</td>
<td>2.5161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed</td>
<td>2.4839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed</td>
<td>2.4516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>cooperate with supervisors</td>
<td>2.4194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>cooperate with other workers</td>
<td>2.4194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>be of good moral character</td>
<td>2.3226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>show initiative to perform on the job</td>
<td>2.3226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>take criticism when shown what has been done wrong</td>
<td>2.3226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>have a personal appearance suitable for the job</td>
<td>2.2903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>show tact in relationships with others</td>
<td>2.2580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>use time to the best advantage of the company</td>
<td>2.1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>be physically suitable and in good health for the job</td>
<td>2.1613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>have interests in addition to work</td>
<td>2.1290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>have imagination which allows for creative performance</td>
<td>2.0645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>be motivated toward greater achievements</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Continues
Table 7, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>have a pleasant personality</td>
<td>1.9677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>have school records showing acceptable grades</td>
<td>1.1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>have been at the top of the class</td>
<td>0.7097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19. Teachers’ perceptions regarding graduates and feedback.

**Teachers’ Responses to Open-Ended Questions**

Teachers were then asked to complete two open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of specific non-task employment qualities needed to keep jobs. Section B asked them to state which one non-technical employment quality they perceived to be the most important for keeping a job. Almost all teachers, 20 (65%) responded with
words like “self-confidence” or “positive self-concept.” Five teachers (16%) used the terms “responsibility” and “dependability,” and five (16%) wrote “enthusiasm” or “motivation.” Three (10%) listed some form of communication, such as “ability to listen” or “ability to introduce themselves to people they don’t know.” The specific skills of “good problem-solving strategies,” “reasoning,” “cooperation with others,” and “on time consistently” were listed singly and independent of other comments. See Table 8.

The second question asked teachers to respond to what they perceived to be those non-technical employment qualities that made employers want to terminate an employee. Teachers were more specific in their responses to this question. The largest number of responses used words to indicate a lack of “promptness” or “being on time,” “good work attendance,” or “reliability.”. Teachers also indicated a lack of ability to

Table 8.

**Teachers’ Perceptions as to Which One Quality Students Must Possess Prior to Leaving a Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence; Positive Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility; Dependability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm; Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to introduce themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“follow directions or instructions” and a lack of “problem-solving” or “conflict resolution skills” among these responses. A more general sense of “attitude” was listed next, with a number of concerns that “personal issues” interfered too heavily with work commitments. These were specified as personal or family illnesses, car problems, drug
and alcohol issues of the individual or family members, and child care problems.

“Ability to get along with others and/or a supervisor” and “effective communication skills” were mentioned only three times. See Table 9.

Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Teachers Believe Employees are Terminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attendance issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of promptness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tardiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor work attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unreliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of ability to follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of problem-solving or conflict-resolution skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal issues interfere too heavily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal and family illnesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Car problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Drug and alcohol issues of self or family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child care problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, teachers were asked an open-ended question as to why they thought graduates leave employment. Their responses fell into four broad categories: “Personal Issues,” “Further Education Needs,” “Job Growth” and “Poor Work Expectations.”

Among those issues considered personal, teachers perceived that graduates left employment primarily because of their families needs. Child care was repeatedly written as a problem, as was the word family “crises.” Lack of financial security and family abuse issues were also noted several times under this question.
Graduates were also perceived to be leaving employment for further education or training. One teacher wrote that “most of our students continue in community college.”

The category, “Job Growth,” included reasons for leaving such as higher pay, better job, career change or improvement, better challenge. “Poor work expectations” represented the perception that graduates left because of unrealistic job expectations, the expectation that jobs would be fun or easy and meet all of their needs, or that employment in general failed to meet the expectation of graduates. “Lack of self-management skills” and being “fired” were each mentioned only once. See Table 10.

Table 10.

**Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Reason Graduates Leave Employment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers' Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family’s needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of financial security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family abuse issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Further Education Needs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continued college or training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Growth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Higher pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career change or improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Better challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor Work Expectations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unrealistic job expectations; employment failed to meet their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unrealistic expectations of self on job</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Characteristics of Employer Respondents

Twenty-seven employers responded to the survey. Among them, 7 (26%) described their businesses as Semi-Professional/Professional and another 7 described them as Business or Management businesses. Six (22%) indicated that their business was one of Semi-skilled labor. Food Service was represented by 4 employers (15%) and Clerical/Office, Unskilled and Aid or Caretaking businesses were represented by 1 employer each.

Twelve employers (44%) worked in companies with 50 or fewer employees. Nine employers (33%) had 51-200 employees and 6 (22%) had greater than 200 employees.

The employers were asked to write in the percentage of their time spent supervising Clerical/Office staff. Five employers indicated that no percentage of their time was spent supervising. Two respondents left this item blank. All other employer respondents indicated that at least 2% or more of their time was spent supervising Clerical/Office staff.

Perceptions of Employers Regarding Non-Technical Employment Qualities Needed

Employers perceived that it was most important to “Be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors,” Item #4 (3.0000). They also want employees to “Be mentally capable to perform job activities,” Item #3 (2.9630) and to “Have good work attendance,” Item #12 (2.9259). Item #5, “Show a sense of responsibility for undertakings” and Item #6, “Communicate effectively with others” received ratings of 2.8888 and 2.8519, respectively. Both Item #14, “Complete work in a thorough manner” and Item #20, “Cooperate with other workers,” received the
same rating of 2.8148. See Table 11. A comparison of responses from each respondent group and its respective rating appears in Table 12.

Table 11.

**Ratings of Program Employers as to Importance of Competencies Needed on the Job**

*Note.* Scale: 0 = Not Important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Highly Important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>be mentally capable to perform job activities</td>
<td>2.9630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>have good work attendance</td>
<td>2.9259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>show a sense of responsibility for undertakings</td>
<td>2.8888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>communicate effectively with others</td>
<td>2.8519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>complete work in a thorough manner</td>
<td>2.8148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>cooperate with other workers</td>
<td>2.8148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>use time to the best advantage of the company</td>
<td>2.7777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>cooperate with supervisors</td>
<td>2.7407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>arrive for work on time</td>
<td>2.7407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>display social skills and conduct acceptable to others</td>
<td>2.6666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>follow instructions as they are given</td>
<td>2.6666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>show initiative to perform on the job</td>
<td>2.6296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>take criticism when shown what has been done wrong</td>
<td>2.5926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>be of good moral character</td>
<td>2.4815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>show tact in relationships with others</td>
<td>2.4074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>be physically suitable and in good health for the job</td>
<td>2.4074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed</td>
<td>2.2593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed</td>
<td>2.2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>have a personal appearance suitable for the job</td>
<td>2.2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>have a pleasant personality</td>
<td>2.1852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Continues
Table 11, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Rating*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>have imagination which allows for creative performance</td>
<td>2.1111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>have a positive self-concept and to be self confident</td>
<td>2.0741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>be motivated toward greater achievements</td>
<td>1.9630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>have interests in addition to work</td>
<td>1.7037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>have school records showing acceptable grades</td>
<td>1.2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>have been at the top of the class</td>
<td>0.8519</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12.

Average Ratings and Comparative Rankings of All Participants

Scale: 0 = Not Important, 1 = Somewhat Important, 2 = Very Important, 3 = Highly Important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Ratings and Comparative Rankings (in parentheses) of All Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors</td>
<td>3.0000 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be mentally capable to perform job activities</td>
<td>2.9630 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have good work attendance</td>
<td>2.9259 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show a sense of responsibility for undertakings</td>
<td>2.8888 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicate effectively with others</td>
<td>2.8519 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complete work in a thorough manner</td>
<td>2.8148 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Continues
Table 12, Continued  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>All Graduates</th>
<th>Clerical/Office Graduates</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cooperate with other workers</td>
<td>2.8148 (7)</td>
<td>2.7094 (11)</td>
<td>2.7179 (10)</td>
<td>2.4194 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use time to the best advantage of the company</td>
<td>2.7777 (8)</td>
<td>2.7265 (10)</td>
<td>2.6923 (13)</td>
<td>2.1935 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperate with supervisors</td>
<td>2.7407 (9)</td>
<td>2.7607 (9)</td>
<td>2.7051 (12)</td>
<td>2.4194 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrive for work on time</td>
<td>2.7407 (10)</td>
<td>2.8803 (3)</td>
<td>2.8205 (6)</td>
<td>2.6774 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>display social skills and conduct acceptable to others</td>
<td>2.6666 (11)</td>
<td>2.6894 (14)</td>
<td>2.6538 (15)</td>
<td>2.7420 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow instructions as they are given</td>
<td>2.6666 (12)</td>
<td>2.8006 (8)</td>
<td>2.8333 (5)</td>
<td>2.5161 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show initiative to perform on the job</td>
<td>2.6296 (13)</td>
<td>2.6666 (15)</td>
<td>2.5512 (19)</td>
<td>2.3226 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take criticism when shown what has been done wrong</td>
<td>2.5926 (14)</td>
<td>2.5555 (19)</td>
<td>2.5770 (17)</td>
<td>2.3226 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be of good moral character</td>
<td>2.4815 (15)</td>
<td>2.6923 (13)</td>
<td>2.6666 (14)</td>
<td>2.3226 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show tact in relationships with others</td>
<td>2.4074 (16)</td>
<td>2.6182 (18)</td>
<td>2.5897 (16)</td>
<td>2.2580 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be physically suitable and in good health for the job</td>
<td>2.4074 (17)</td>
<td>2.4615 (20)</td>
<td>2.3974 (22)</td>
<td>2.1613 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed</td>
<td>2.2593 (18)</td>
<td>2.4473 (21)</td>
<td>2.4231 (21)</td>
<td>2.4516 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed</td>
<td>2.2222 (19)</td>
<td>2.6381 (17)</td>
<td>2.7308 (9)</td>
<td>2.4839 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a personal appearance suitable for the job</td>
<td>2.2222 (20)</td>
<td>2.6638 (16)</td>
<td>2.5770 (18)</td>
<td>2.2903 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a pleasant personality</td>
<td>2.1852 (21)</td>
<td>2.4444 (22)</td>
<td>2.4359 (20)</td>
<td>1.9677 (25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12, Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Average Ratings and Comparative Rankings (in parentheses) of All Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have imagination which allows for creative performance</td>
<td>2.1111 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a positive self-concept and to be self confident</td>
<td>2.0741 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be motivated toward greater achievements</td>
<td>1.9630 (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have interests in addition to work</td>
<td>1.7037 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have school records showing acceptable grades</td>
<td>1.2222 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have been at the top of the class</td>
<td>0.8519 (27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Extent to Which Programs Currently Address Competencies**

Employers were asked to respond to several of the same questions asked of both program graduates and teachers. The first question asked them to indicate to what extent they believed that the programs currently address these non-technical employment qualities. Thirteen (48%) either left this item blank or wrote that they were unable to comment on the programs because they were not aware that their employees were involved in any particular program prior to employment. Among those that did respond, 3 employers (11%) perceive that the programs “Completely address them”; 4 (15%) that programs “Address most of them”; another 3 (11%) that programs “Moderately address them”; and 2 (7%) that programs “Address a few of them.” One employer (4%) perceived that the programs “Do not seem to address them,” and one employer believed that “These qualities cannot be taught; People either have them or do
not have them.” These percentages are shown in Figure 20. A comparison of responses from each respondent group is shown in Figure 21.

Employers’ Perceptions of Graduates’ Possession of These Competencies

In response to the question “To what extent do you believe that the graduate that came to work for you possessed these non-technical employment qualities,” again, the majority of employers (48%) left this item blank or indicated that they could not respond. Only 1 employer (4%) believed that the graduate possessed “All of these qualities.” Five employers (19%) believed that the graduates possessed “Most of them” upon entering the workforce. Six (22%) believed that the graduates possessed an “Average amount of them” and 2 (7%) believed they possessed a “Few of them.” No employers (0%) indicated that the graduates came to work possessing None of them. See Figure 22. A comparison of all respondent groups regarding this question is shown in Figure 23.
Ten employers (37%) perceived that it was the responsibility of the employer to teach these qualities one job if an individual did not possess them. Six (22%) responded that they would not expect an employer to teach them on the job. Four employers (15%) indicated that they believed these qualities “Cannot be taught; people either have them or do not have them,” and 7 (26%) employers left this item blank. See Figure 24. A comparison of all respondent groups is shown in Figure 25.
Employers' Perceptions Regarding Graduates and Feedback

Employers were also asked to what extent they believed that graduates sought feedback regarding their non-technical employment qualities after they were hired. Again, 10 employers (37%) either left this question blank or explained that they were unable to respond because they did not know which employee had graduated from the survey’s program. Among the others, however, another 10 (37%) believed that graduates “Rarely” sought feedback. Three (11%) indicated that graduates “Never” sought feedback. Two (7%) though graduates “Regularly” sought feedback and another 2 believed that they sought feedback “Only after there were problems.” These percentages are shown in Figure 26. A comparison of all respondents regarding graduates and feedback is shown in Figure 27.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possession Level</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Clerical/Office</th>
<th>All Graduates</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possessed all of them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed most of them</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed an average amount</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed a few of them</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not seem to possess them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response/Unable to Respond</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 23. Comparison of respondents regarding graduates' possession of non-technical employment competencies.
Employers' Responses to the Open-Ended Questions

Employers were asked to respond to an open-ended question regarding which one quality they wished every graduate would possess upon completing a preparatory program. Their responses fell into few categories because each employer seemed to have a different idea about which quality was most important. Both “Communication Skills” and “Honesty with Employer” were written in on each of three surveys. Employers also wrote that they wanted employees who were able “To take criticism constructively and not personally.” Employers wanted a “Sense of Professionalism and Polish” which seemed to include “Personal appearance on the job” and a “Willingness to take responsibility,” “Initiative,” or “Strive for excellence” rather than “just get by.” Employers want dependable employees and those with confidence in themselves and their ability to do good work. See Table 13.
Figure 25. Comparison of all respondents regarding expectation that employers would teach non-technical employment competencies on the job if an individual did not possess them.
Figure 26. Employers’ perceptions regarding graduates and feedback.

Figure 27. Comparison of all respondents regarding graduates and feedback.
Table 13.

Employers’ Perceptions as to Which One Quality Graduates Must Possess Prior to Leaving a Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to get along with co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to accept criticism; Lack of defensiveness when corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good moral character; Honesty with employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of professionalism and polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Willingness to take responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strive for excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dependability and Sense of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence in ability to work well and do good work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employers were also asked what non-technical employment qualities employees lack that makes them want to terminate their employment. To this question, employers most frequently responded with some inability in an employee’s social skills. This might be because employees had difficulty getting along with or working well with others; they lacked basic communication skills; or in some other way were not suited to work with the public. “Poor work completion” was another concern of employers. Employees who did not follow directions was the most common response in this category, although employers were also concerned about employees who did not
Table 14.

Reasons Employers Wish to Terminate Employees

Employer Responses

- Lack of good social skills
  - Inability to get along or work well with others
  - Lack of basic verbal and written communication skills
  - Lack of cooperation with supervisors
  - Ill-suited to work with public
- Poor work completion
  - Not following directions
  - Not paying attention to detail
  - Poor time management or deadline completion
- Lack of dependability
  - Tardiness
  - Poor work attendance
- Inappropriate dress or personal appearance; Sloppy or casual
- Lack of motivation or initiative
- Poor attitude or work ethic

complete work on time or managed their time poorly. Employers wanted employees who were dependable; those who came to work on time, had good attendance and completed work on time. Many employers listed more than one response to this question. "Personal appearance" was often added to the employers' lists as were "Lack of motivation or initiative" and a "Poor work attitude or ethic." See Table 14.

This survey also asked employers why they believed employees left their employment. Three employers left this item blank. Among the other responses, few seemed asked to leave and employers perceived that most left for personal reasons. When asked to leave, the reasons were because of over-staffing, seasonal or temporary
assignments. Two employers indicated that the employee was not suited for the job or unable to perform the tasks and duties assigned, and one employer stated that the employee would not cooperate with that employer. One employer also stated that the last employee left because of theft. Among the reasons perceived to be personal, employers responded that they believed employees “Found better jobs” or “Jobs elsewhere,” “Returned to school,” “Had family issues” or “Stress.” See Table 15.

Table 15.

Reasons Employers Perceive Employees Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers' Responses</th>
<th>Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>Job change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal or temporary</td>
<td>Returned to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-staffed</td>
<td>Family issues, pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill-suited to job or</td>
<td>Stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unable to perform tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assigned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

The data reported consisted of the responses of graduates, clerical/office graduates, teachers and employers regarding their perceptions of non-technical employment qualities needed on the job. In addition, several questions required open-ended responses and these were reported also. Specific characteristics of the respondent populations were reported whenever those data were gather. Additional comments and observations related to this data can be found in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS, GENERAL OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE AND FURTHER STUDY

Summary

The Problem

This research was undertaken to explore and compare the perceptions of graduates, teachers and selected employers of 16 of the 17 Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon between June of 1992 and July of 1994 regarding non-technical employment qualities. These perceptions were examined by first asking each group studied to rate 27 competencies as to their importance on the job; to rate the extent to which programs currently address these competencies; to rate whether graduates possessed these competencies upon entering the workforce; to rate the extent to which graduates sought feedback; and, to suggest whether employers should teach these competencies on the job. Secondly, the groups studied were each asked three open-ended questions: (1) Which one quality must an employee possess prior to entering the workforce; (2) What do they believe is the reason employees are terminated; and, (3) What do they believe is the reason graduates leave employment? This study was particularly interested in graduates who began work in the Clerical/Office field.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature highlighted four areas: (1) An historical perspective on the current Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker programs in Oregon; (2) Displaced homemaker characteristics and re-entry needs compared with those of the under- or un-employed; (3) Desired business and industry entry-level competencies,
with emphasis on clerical/office occupations; and (4) The use of survey questionnaires as a valid methodology.

First, the historical perspective traced the development of the Carl D. Perkins programs for single parents and displaced homemakers in Oregon. The State-wide goals and autonomous nature of the Oregon programs were outlined and the typical participant was profiled.

Secondly, the psychological and socio-economic issues of single parents and displaced homemakers were explored and compared with re-entry issues of the un- and under-employed. The vulnerability of single parent/displaced homemakers resulting from these issues was emphasized because of their need for immediate financial support, their economic and marketable disadvantages, their desire to remain homemakers, and the trauma to other members of the family.

Thirdly, the desired competencies by employers in business and industry were reviewed. Employers divided necessary skills into three categories: basic academic skills (reading, writing, mathematics and computation), technical skills (competence specific to a job) and interpersonal or “work-readiness” skills. Eight broad categories were interpreted to represent interpersonal or “work readiness” skills: Attitude, Communication Skills or Human Relations Skills, Motivation or Initiative, Cooperation with Others, Reliability, Integrity, Truth-Telling and a Desire to Learn. Competencies desired by clerical/office employers were distinguished.

The fourth area highlighted was the use of survey questionnaires as a valid methodology in support of the research design of this study. The goal of descriptive research was detailed outlining the process and terminology. This study used a survey approach and that design was explored in greater detail. The preparation and use of questionnaires was reviewed and the specific formats considered. The methods used for administration and for increasing results were outlined.
The Subjects

The populations studied in this research were three: (1) Individuals between the ages of 16 and 65 who graduated between July 1992 and June 1994 from 16 of the 17 Oregon Carl D. Perkins federally funded self-sufficiency programs. A sub-population of those graduates who indicated that their first job was in the clerical/office field were also studied; (2) Full- and part-time instructors who were currently teaching in the same federally funded programs; and, (3) From information given by graduates, work-site directors or supervisors who had employed graduates from these same federally funded programs.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of their class lists, a mailing was prepared and sent to program directors for labeling. This produced 351 graduate and 31 teacher subjects. The graduate subjects included 77 clerical/office graduate subjects. From the graduate responses and follow-up telephone calls, a list of employers was prepared and two mailings were sent to them. This produced 27 employer subjects.

The Procedure

Graduates and teachers from 16 of the 17 Carl Perkins federally funded programs throughout Oregon were studied in addition to the graduates’ first employers. For this reason, a mailed survey instrument was determined to be the most effective method to gather data.

The Luft (1978) “Non-Technical Employment Qualities Survey Instrument” was chosen as the basic survey instrument for rating the competencies desired. An additional eight sections were added to each survey in order to gain qualitative information to compare the ranked competencies. A page of statistical data was added to the graduate survey.

Evidence of validation was gathered by a group of students corresponding to the student respondents and the delphi method was used for each of the teacher and
employer respondent groups. Additional changes were made and the graduate survey was field tested in one of the current Carl Perkins funded classes. This process is described on page 49 in Chapter III.

**Barriers**

A recurring barrier was the confidential list of graduating participants protected by each program. This prevented direct access to students and redefined the survey as a direct mailing. It further prevented the coding of response sheets for follow-up purposes. The inability to access the students directly blocked all traditional forms of follow-up. No individual follow-ups could be completed without redistribution of the entire mailing. The exception to this was those participants that signed and completed a usable consent form for direct follow-up. This constituted about one-half of the returned student surveys. Because the selection of employers for the survey was dependent upon the responses of the graduates, accessibility to this population was inhibited by inaccessibility to students.

Discussions were held with Virginia Lesser, Director of Statistics at Oregon State University’s Kidder Hall Survey Research Center and with Dr. Tom Evans, Research Professor regarding return rates and follow-up letters. Further reading was conducted about surveying low return rates. Each plan for a follow-up contact was limited, however, by the inaccessibility of the individual name. Students who did not give consent or who did not return their surveys were unknown. Attempts to follow-up without knowledge of their identity became cumbersome and were outside the purview of the researcher.

Further studies and discussions with direct market researcher, Delvin Cornutt of DRC Research in Salem, Oregon suggested that all avenues had been properly explored.
Analysis of the Data

The ratings on all three surveys were averaged and ranked. These rankings were summarized for each survey group and then cross-tabulated with each of the other survey groups. Responses to the additional rating sections were counted and compared among the three groups. Responses to the three open-ended questions were analyzed through open coding and compared to create categories and subcategories showing their comparative relationships.

A summary of the characteristics of each studied population was reported and profiles of the graduate and clerical/office respondents were developed.

Findings

Respondent Profile

The typical graduate respondent in this survey was a white, single-parent, female between the ages of 30 and 39. She was divorced with "Some College" and likely to be currently employed in the Clerical/Office field. Her income was between $1000 and $2000 dollars each month, although this income was supplemented by some form of public assistance, most typically food stamps and Adult Family Services medical assistance. This demographic profile of survey respondents does not necessarily represent the total demographics of the single parent/displaced homemaker programs in the State of Oregon, but reflects several of their characteristics described in Chapter II.

Graduates in this study most frequently indicated that they had had some college education. Because Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs often gave college credit for completion of their courses, it is unknown whether graduates were referring to completion of a Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program or other, more
mainstream credits from a college. For this reason, the category “Some College” was deleted from further discussion.

The second largest group of respondents in this category had completed high school or a GED and this more closely agreed with the characteristics of single parents/displaced homemakers nationwide, as described in Chapter II.

**Comparative Rankings by Subjects**

Rankings of the importance of non-technical employment qualities on the employer responses did not differ greatly from the order suggested in the review of the literature. The importance placed on these qualities by employers indicated the top 10 ranked qualities were highly important, the qualities ranked 15 through 25 were moderately important, the quality ranked 26th was minimally important and the last quality was not important.

The employers’ top ranking supported Goldberg & Loos’ (1981) suggestion that above all else, employers want employees with integrity and truthfulness. Also evidenced in the employers’ responses were the desired qualities of “cooperation with others,” (both customers and employees), “good work attendance” and “efficient use of time” as suggested by Gaustad (1988), Goldberg & Loos (1981) and Maxfield (1988). “Effective communication with others” was part of Goldberg & Loos’ findings and was supported by the employers’ responses in this study. However, Goldberg & Loos also found that employers wanted “good personal habits” and the employers’ responses in this section of the study suggested that personal appearance was only “moderately” important. Scholastic records (Akeyo, 1985) and acceptable grades (Luft, 1978) were not supported in the responses of this study’s employers and more closely matched the findings of Banta, Phillippi & Lyons (1991) wherein grade point average was considered not important.
It was moderately important for employers in this study that employees “take criticism when shown what has been done wrong” and “be of good moral character”; two characteristics that did not present themselves in the review of the literature.

The graduates and sub-category, Clerical/Office graduates in this study tended to rank as “highly important” the same non-technical employment qualities as did the employers, although not in the same order. The Clerical/Office graduates’ rankings agreed more closely with those of the employers than did any other respondent group.

The greatest disparity between the perceptions of All Graduates and employers was “arrive for work on time.” The employers ranked this quality 10th, whereas the graduates ranked it 3rd. The qualities “cooperates with other workers” and “uses time to best advantage of the company” were ranked 7th and 8th by employers and 11th and 10th respectively by graduates. Conversely, employers ranked “follow instructions as they are given” 12th and the graduates ranked this quality 8th. The Clerical/Office graduates ranked this quality 5th. The other great disparity among the responses of the Clerical/Office graduates was “have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed.” Employers ranked this quality 19th, whereas the Clerical/Office graduates ranked this 9th.

There was substantial disparity in perceptions of the importance of non-technical employment qualities between the responses of the employers and the teachers than between the employers and the graduates. (See Table 12, Page 85 in Chapter IV.) While the teachers’ responses ranked “good work attendance” third as did the employers, the teachers’ first and second rankings corresponded to those ranked by employers to be fourth and fifth.

The greatest disparity between the employer and teacher responses was their ranking for “positive self-concept and self-confidence.” The teachers ranked this 5th, whereas employers perceived this to have a moderately low level of importance and ranked it 23rd. Additionally, disparity existed between their rankings for “cooperates
with other workers” and “uses time to the best advantage of the company,” ranked 7th and 8th respectively by the employers and 14th and 20th by the teachers. The teachers perceived “social skills and conduct acceptable to others” and “career and vocational interests in the area employed” to be more important, 4th and 11th respectively, than did the employers who ranked these qualities 11th and 19th.

Banta, Phillips & Lyons (1991) found that the number of employees and the organizational size bore no observable difference in the qualities desired by employers. This study agreed with those findings.

Extent to Which Programs Address Competencies

The graduates and teachers, and those employers who were able to respond to this question, agreed that the Programs addressed “Most” of these competencies in class. The largest number of employers did not respond to this question and indicated that they were unable to answer because they were not aware of any particular program in which their employees had participated.

The next highest response from both the employers that responded and the graduates agreed that the programs addressed these competencies “Completely.” However, the teachers disagreed and responses indicated that their next highest choice was that the programs “Moderately” addressed these competencies. Fewer than 2% in each respondent group believed that these competencies could not be taught; that people either had them or did not have them. The responses from the sub-category, Clerical/Office agreed most closely with those of All Graduates.

Perceptions of Graduates’ Possession of These Competencies

The responses regarding perceptions of the extent to which graduates possessed these competencies after graduating from their programs did not agree across the respondent groups. Once again, the majority of employers indicated that they were
unable to answer this question because they lacked knowledge of any particular program from which their employees had graduated. Among those who believed they were able to respond, the most common response was that graduates possessed an “Average” number of these competencies, although that was followed closely in number of responses that graduates possessed “Most” of these competencies.

Graduates and the sub-group, Clerical/Office graduates agreed that they possessed “Most” of them upon graduation. The second highest perception by both of these groups was the response, possesses “All of these competencies.”

The responses of the teachers agreed more closely with those of the employers. Teachers perceived that graduates possessed an “Average” number of these competencies upon graduation. However, the second most frequent response by teachers was a split between the same number of teachers perceiving that students graduated possessing “Most” of these competencies and “Few” of these competencies.

This question also asked whether individuals believed that it was the job of the employer to teach these competencies on the job when they were absent in the employee. Although another large percentage of employers left this item blank, an even greater number responded that, “Yes,” they expected the employer to teach these competencies on the job. In contrast, all other respondent groups agreed that, “No,” they would not expect the employer to teach these competencies on the job if they were absent upon employment. Only the teachers had no responses that indicated these competencies “cannot be taught; people either have them or do not have them.”

Between 10% and 15% of the respondents in all other groups believed that these competencies could not be taught.

**Perceptions Regarding Graduates and Feedback Sought**

There was disagreement among the respondent groups as to the extent they believed graduates sought feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities.
Employers perceived that it was rare that employees sought feedback, although an equal number of employers left this item blank. Teachers also agreed with employers and responded that they believed it would be rare that graduates would seek feedback, although a close second response was that they would seek feedback only if their were problems. The employers' second response was that graduates would never seek feedback. Graduates and the Clerical/Office graduates, however, perceived that they would regularly seek feedback and indicated so with twice the number of respondents agreeing in each of these groups than their next highest choice.

**Comparative Responses to Open-Ended Questions**

All respondents were asked three open-ended questions. They were first asked which one non-technical employment quality they believed every graduate must possess before leaving a preparatory program? The most common response from each respondent group was "self-confidence and self-esteem," although this was the fifth quality listed by employers. "Communication skills" were agreed upon by every group but the teachers. Only one teacher included communication skills in a response. The graduates and Clerical/Office graduates used the term "Self-management skills" to describe what the employers termed "Sense of professionalism and polish." These included qualities like "attendance, dependability and punctuality" for the graduates and "initiative, responsibility, and appearance" for the employers. The teachers agreed more closely with the employers' responses and perceived that graduates must possess self-confidence, dependability, motivation and communication. In the latter, they distinguished two abilities: The "ability to listen" and the "ability to introduce themselves," whereas the employers identified communication skills as the "ability to get along with co-workers, to accepted criticism and to follow directions."

Respondents in all groups were then asked what non-technical employment qualities they perceived employees lack that make employers want to terminate their
employment? “Tardiness” and “attendance issues” were listed by each respondent
group, as was a “poor or bad attitude.” “Lacking the ability to get along with others”
and “lacking good communication skills” were also listed by each group, although the
teachers referred to this skill more specifically as “lacking problem-solving or conflict-
resolution skills” and the employers added four specific qualities under this category;
“inability to get along or work well with others”; “lack of basic verbal and written
communication skills”; “lack of cooperation with supervisors” and “ill-suitedness to
work with public.” “Lack of motivation” was listed by each group except the teachers.

Although the employers ranked “honesty” as the most important quality sought
by them, they did not list “lack of honesty” as a reason for termination. The All
Graduates group, however, listed this as their third most frequent response. The
employers listed “inappropriate dress or personal appearance, sloppiness and
casualness,” as their fourth most frequent reason for termination, however, they ranked
“personal appearance suitable for the job” 20th of the 27 ranked items in Section A.
Only the teachers consistently listed personal issues that would interfere with work
performance of the graduates as reasons they perceived employees were terminated.

The last open-ended question asked of the respondent groups was their
perception of why graduates left employment. The three respondent groups were in
high agreement with this question. In some form, they all responded that graduates left
employment because of seasonal work or lay-offs and/or personal/family issues. The
latter included pregnancy, relocation and medical reasons. The All Graduates
respondents, teachers and employers also listed “a return to school” as a reason for
leaving. The Clerical/Office respondents and the teachers agreed that job improvement
and upward mobility were two other big reasons for leaving employment.

The teachers frequently listed poor work expectations as reasons for leaving.
These included unrealistic expectations about the job and employment, and unrealistic
expectations of themselves in that job. The employers referred to this as being “ill-suited for the job.”

Specific Observations

The following specific observations are based on the findings of this study:

Employers and teachers disagreed regarding the rank order of non-technical employment competencies needed on the job. Those qualities perceived to be the three most important by the teachers are the third-, fourth- and fifth-ranked qualities of the employers. There were greater disparities among the other qualities ranked. This was especially true for the quality of positive self-esteem and self-concept, rated fifth by the teachers and twenty-third by the employers.

Employers and teachers disagreed with graduates perceptions regarding their possession of these competencies. While graduates perceived that they possessed most or all of them, employers and teachers perceived that graduates possessed only an average amount of them.

Employers and teachers further disagreed with graduates’ perceptions as to the amount of feedback sought by graduates. Graduates perceived that they regularly sought feedback, whereas the employers and teachers perceived that students rarely sought feedback.

Employers disagreed with teachers and graduates regarding their expectation that employers would teach these competencies when employees lacked them. The employers perceived that they would expect employers to teach these qualities, whereas the graduates and teachers would not expect employers to teach them.

If each of the above observed areas of disagreement is true, effective education can only occur if some effort is made to bring the perceptions of employers, graduates and teachers into greater agreement.

There was general agreement in all other areas studied.
General Observations

The SCANS Report (Lankard, 1990) stressed the importance of teaching employability skills in the schools. The Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs in Oregon seemed to agree and address them in their classes. The results of this study demonstrated that the graduates, teachers and their selected employers generally agreed on the non-technical employment qualities needed for employment. However, where disagreements existed, further discussion is warranted.

It was noted in the graduate return responses that many students in the Clerical/Office field began their first work experience within the programs from which they graduated. For many of these graduates, this was their only work experience beyond the class. This factor may have affected not only their responses, but also their sense of themselves in the work place. Their work may have been seen as an extension of school and the safe environment of their program. Because of the small staffs in most programs and a dual role often played by instructors as both director and instructor, graduates in these situations were likely to have been supervised by a former instructor. Where graduates indicated employment within the program from which they graduated, their instructors were not resurveyed because of the inherent conflict of their teacher/employer roles.

Students were influenced by the individual instructor philosophies within each program. Students and teachers from some programs used the same language and phrases. This suggested that individual teachers had great influence on the perceptions and beliefs of students regarding employers and work. For this reason, it is imperative that teachers not presume knowledge about employer attitudes, but rather be in close contact with those employers who hire their students.

In a follow-up discussion with Program Directors, those that also taught made a distinction between the terms “job” (temporary work) used on the survey and a “career”
long-term work and benefits.) It is unknown to what extent this affected the responses of the graduates.

A large number of graduates indicated that they had had “Some College.” While students often left programs and completed their GED or some other form of training, it was also noted that some programs offer college credit upon completion. “Some college” did not distinguish this factor and it is unknown how many students without a GED or high school diploma may have included themselves in the “Some College” category.

Employers were not consistent with what they said they wanted and how they ranked items. “Honesty” was ranked first among the qualities employers sought, however employers did not indicate “lack of honesty” as a reason for termination. They also indicated “lack of appropriate dress or professional polish” as frequent reasons for dismissal, but ranked this quality 20th of the 27 items ranked in Section A.

Clerical/Office graduates had a better idea of what employers wanted than did graduates in general or their teachers. This may have been due to Clerical/Office graduates having had some employment experience, whereas the larger All Graduates group included graduates who had not been employed.

Programs were designed to address barriers that could prohibit job search and retention and, therefore, teachers may have appeared to have been less aware of the desired competencies than they were. Teachers ranked “positive self-esteem” as a fundamental competency more than any other group. This may have been due to the philosophy and foundation of the programs’ design and personal commitment of the teachers involved in these programs. Also, teachers had contact with the returning student at the beginning stages of re-entry into school and the workforce, and may have been more acutely aware of the need to develop self-esteem and self-confidence in order to take any further steps in the job market.
There was often disparity between the specific behavior that indicated one had a competency and the belief that an individual had the behavior. The results indicated that employers and teachers disagreed with the perceptions of graduates regarding the extent to which they possessed the needed competencies prior to entering the workforce. This result, together with the results indicating that employers and teachers disagreed with the perceptions of graduates regarding the extent to which they sought and received feedback, suggested that more specific behaviors related to these competencies need to be addressed. The ability to get and use feedback was shown by Singer (1987) to increase effectiveness and it is important that these behaviors be addressed more closely.

Employers disagreed with graduates and instructors as to whether they expected the employers would teach competencies when they were lacking in an employee. While the employers perceived that they would expect themselves to teach these qualities when employees lacked them, it was the perception of the teachers and graduates that they would not expect the employers to do so. The responses of both the teachers’ group and the graduates’ groups perceived this at a ratio of more than 2:1, suggesting that they perceived these as skills necessary prior to beginning work. The employers, on the other hand, may have perceived it as their responsibility because if an employee did not possess them and was a good worker, as observed by Goldberg & Loos (1981), Herschbach (1988), Maxfield (1988) and Taylor, et al. (1990), they may have been willing to take on the responsibility in order to keep a good employee.

Teachers were more aware of the specific life conditions of their students than employers were of their employees. It was a focus of the programs to provide support for personal issues in order to assist students in overcoming them or coping with them in order to build self-esteem, complete the program and re-enter the workforce.
The lives of graduates did not necessarily improve financially as a result of completing the program. Graduates relied on income from several funding sources in order to maintain a livelihood.

Recommendations for Change

Although the responses of all groups were generally in agreement, three recommendations for change are suggested from the results of this study:

1. Program directors may wish to examine and redesign their curriculum to more directly address the qualities ranked highest by employers.

2. Program directors may wish to include trainings that more specifically teach students how and when to seek and receive timely feedback in order to better evaluate their performance on the job.

3. Program directors may wish to examine ways in which to be in more direct contact with local employers in order to gather responses from them regarding the qualities they desire when hiring their graduates.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. In order to maintain confidentiality and elicit greater cooperation from the students, replicative studies should be included within the programs and conducted by introducing the process in the graduating classroom together with other follow-up evaluative materials.

2. Attempts should be made to obtain the responses of first employers on a regular basis in order to better follow and address the qualities needed in the changing market.

3. Further study should be conducted regarding those students who remain
and work in the programs from which they graduate to explore any differences in their responses or perceptions.

4. Further study should be conducted to determine the extent to which student perceptions are influenced by the particular programs from which they graduate.

5. Additional studies should be conducted with very specific non-technical employment behaviors to determine to what extent lack of these qualities plays a role in training and termination.

6. Additional studies should be conducted to more closely examine the specific circumstances under which employees leave and what specific, if any, behaviors could be taught to avoid termination.

7. Replicative studies should be conducted to more closely examine the perceptions of graduates who seek other areas of employment.

8. Additional studies should be conducted to determine why individuals are not employed. Such a study might include how they continue to financially support themselves and their families.

9. Additional studies should be conducted to explore the low return rates from non-white, middle-age, and middle-class participants.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of employers, teachers and graduates of the Oregon Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs regarding non-technical employment qualities. The Luft “Non-Technical Employment Qualities Survey Instrument” and open-ended questions were used to elicit personal responses from members of each group for the purpose of comparing the results.
This chapter included a summary of the overall study. The findings for each research question were summarized and the barriers which impeded the research were addressed.

Conclusions were drawn and general observations were made regarding the respondents and their responses in this study. While the results of this study imply that the graduates, teachers and the selected employers generally agree on the non-technical employment qualities needed for employment, a wider distribution of employer responses specific to graduate employment is warranted. It was also observed that where disagreement between teachers and employers exists, this may occur because each has contact with the student at a different stage in the student’s career and employment development. The teachers were observed to have a keener sense of the personal issues involved in the students’ lives than were the employers.

The recommendations for change focused on curriculum development that might address the disagreements suggested in the study between the respondent groups. Several recommendations for further study were suggested that involved attempts to increase our knowledge of the issues raised in this study for single parent/displaced homemakers.


Drossell, G. (1980). Validation of topics and comparisons of three presentation modes for the writing subtest of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination. (Research report No. ED 194 810). Florida State University, Tallahassee, College of Education.


Thompson, H. (1994) (Personal communication, September 16, 1994)


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Survey Instruments Sent to Graduates, Teachers and Selected Employers

(Reduced for reproduction.)
Survey Instrument Sent to Graduates

SURVEY OF SINGLE PARENT/DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS

Please answer the following questions. Your candid responses would be appreciated.

A. Please rate each item stated below by circling its level of importance for program graduates seeking employment.

The term "graduate" refers to any student who has completed a Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program in Oregon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Highly Important</th>
<th>2 Moderately Important</th>
<th>1 Minimally Important</th>
<th>0 Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

How important is it for an employee to:

1. have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed.  
2. have imagination which allows for creative performance.  
3. be mentally capable to perform job activities.  
4. be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors.  
5. show a sense of responsibility for undertakings.  
6. communicate effectively with others.  
7. display social skills and conduct acceptable to others.  
8. be of good moral character.  
9. cooperate with supervisors.  
10. have been at the top of the class.  
11. show initiative to perform on the job.  
12. have good work attendance.  
13. take criticism when shown what has been done wrong.  
14. complete work in a thorough manner.  
15. be motivated toward greater achievements.  
16. show tact in relationships with others.  
17. be physically suitable and in good health for the job.  
18. have a pleasant personality.  
19. use time to the best advantage of the company.
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. cooperate with other workers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. have interests in addition to work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. have a personal appearance suitable for the job.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. have a positive self-concept and to be self confident.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. have school records showing acceptable grades.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. follow instructions as they are given.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. arrive for work on time.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B.** What one non-technical employment quality do you believe every graduate must possess before leaving a preparatory program?

**C.** What non-technical employment qualities do you believe employees lack that makes employers want to terminate their employment?

**D.** Why did you leave your last job?

**E.** To what extent do you believe that the program you graduated from addressed these non-technical employment qualities? Please check one that best describes your belief.

- Completely addressed them.
- Addressed most of them.
- Moderately addressed them.
- Addressed a few of them.
- Did not seem to address them.

These qualities cannot be taught. People either have them or do not have them.
F. To what extent do you believe that you possessed these non-technical employment qualities when you began work after graduating from your program?

- Possessed all of them. □
- Possessed most of them. □
- Possessed an average amount of them. □
- Possessed a few of them. □
- Did not seem to possess them. □

G. If an individual does not possess these non-technical employment qualities, would you expect your employer to teach them on the job?

- Yes □
- No □
- These qualities cannot be taught. □
- People either have them or do not have them. □

H. To what extent do you believe that you seek feedback regarding these non-technical employment qualities at your employment?

- Regularly seek feedback. □
- Rarely seek feedback. □
- Seek feedback only after there are problems. □
- Never seek feedback. □
The following information will be used for statistical purposes. Your identity will **not** be shared with anyone in the study.

**From which Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program did you graduate?**

- Central Oregon
- Chemeketa
- Clackamas
- Lane
- Mt. Hood
- PCC-Cascade
- PCC-Rock Creek
- RCC-Jackson Co.
- UCAN
- SW Oregon
- RCC-Grants Pass
- Linn-Benton
- Pathways
- Columbia Gorge
- Clatsop
- Tillamook
- Treasure Valley

**Please place a check to the Right of the one category that best describes your situation.**

- Single Parent
- Displaced Homemaker
- Other

**Primary ethnic heritage:**

- White
- American Indian
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic

**Age:**

- Under 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60+

**Current Marital Status:**

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed

**Highest Grade Completed:**

- No Diploma - High School
- Less than High School or GED
- Technical Certification
- Apprenticeship
- College Degree

**Have you been employed since graduating from the Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker program?**

- Yes
- No
If you have been employed, with whom and where were you first employed after graduation from the Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Are you currently employed?  Yes [ ]  No [ ]

Most recent job category:

- Never employed [ ]
- Clerical/Office [ ]
- Unskilled [ ]
- Business or Management [ ]
- Aide or Caretaking [ ]
- Semi-skilled [ ]
- Food Service [ ]
- Semi-Professional or Professional [ ]

Sources of Income: (Check all that apply)

- Salary [ ]
- AFS Cash Grant [ ]
- Unemployment [ ]
- Alimony [ ]
- AFS Medical [ ]
- Social Security [ ]
- Child Support [ ]
- Food Stamps [ ]
- Pension [ ]
- Housing Subsidy [ ]
- Other AFS [ ]
- Disability [ ]
- Other (Please specify) [ ]

Monthly Household Income:

- $0 [ ]
- $1-200 [ ]
- $201-400 [ ]
- $401-600 [ ]
- $601-800 [ ]
- $801-1000 [ ]
- $1001-2000 [ ]
- Over $2000 [ ]

Thank you for your time and assistance.
**Consent Form**

If you are willing to respond to a follow-up telephone interview, please sign your name below. Completion of the survey is not dependent upon your willingness to be contacted later. Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

I am willing to be called for a follow-up interview if necessary. [ ]

________________________________________________________________________

Your signature indicates that you have read the above and agree to be contacted by telephone for a follow-up interview if necessary.

Phone number where you can be contacted:

Daytime: ___________ Evening: ___________

________________________________________________________________________

I am not willing to be called for a follow-up interview. I understand there is no penalty for choosing not to participate in a follow-up call. [ ]

*Thank you so much for your help.*
SURVEY INSTRUMENT SENT TO INSTRUCTORS

SURVEY OF SINGLE PARENT/DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS INSTRUCTORS

Please answer the following questions. Your candid responses would be appreciated.

A. Please rate each item stated below by circling its level of importance for program graduates seeking employment.

The term "graduate" refers to any student who has completed a Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program in Oregon.

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<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Minimally Important</td>
<td>Moderately Important</td>
<td>Highly Important</td>
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</table>

How important is it for an employee to:

1. have career and vocational interests in the area in which employed.
2. have imagination which allows for creative performance.
3. be mentally capable to perform job activities.
4. be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors.
5. show a sense of responsibility for undertakings.
6. communicate effectively with others.
7. display social skills and conduct acceptable to others.
8. be of good moral character.
9. cooperate with supervisors.
10. have been at the top of the class.
11. show initiative to perform on the job.
12. have good work attendance.
13. take criticism when shown what has been done wrong.
14. complete work in a thorough manner.
15. be motivated toward greater achievements.
16. show tact in relationships with others.
17. be physically suitable and in good health for the job.
18. have a pleasant personality.
19. use time to the best advantage of the company.
20. cooperate with other workers.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
21. have interests in addition to work.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
22. have a personal appearance suitable for the job.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
23. have a positive self-concept and to be self confident.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
24. have school records showing acceptable grades.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
25. show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
26. follow instructions as they are given.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  
27. arrive for work on time.  | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3  

B. What one non-technical employment quality do you wish every graduate would possess before leaving your Program?

C. What non-technical employment qualities do you believe employees lack that makes employers want to terminate their employment?

D. To what extent do you believe that your program currently addresses these non-technical employment qualities? Please check one that best describes your belief.

- Completely addresses them.  
- Addresses most of them.  
- Moderately addresses them.  
- Address a few of them.  
- Does not seem to address them.  
- These qualities cannot be taught. People either have them or do not have them.
### E. To what extent do you believe your graduates possessed these non-technical employment qualities upon entering the work force?

- Possessed all of them. [ ]
- Possessed most of them. [ ]
- Possessed an average amount of them. [ ]
- Possessed a few of them. [ ]
- Did not seem to possess them. [ ]

### F. If an individual did not possess these non-technical employment qualities, would you expect the employer to teach them on the job?

- Yes [ ]
- No [ ]
- These qualities cannot be taught. [ ]
- People either have them or do not have them. [ ]

### G. To what extent do you believe that your graduates seek feedback regarding their non-technical employment qualities after they are hired?

- Regularly seek feedback. [ ]
- Rarely seek feedback. [ ]
- Seek feedback only after there are problems. [ ]
- Never seek feedback. [ ]

### H. To the best of your knowledge, why do graduates from your program leave their employment?

### I. What is the population of your service area? Please check one.

- Fewer than 25,000 [ ]
- 25,001-100,000 [ ]
- More than 100,000 [ ]
J. Current employment in the program?
   Full-time [ ]  Part-time [ ]

*Luft survey modified and used with permission.

Consent Form

If you are willing to respond to a follow-up telephone interview, please sign your name below. Completion of the survey is not dependent upon your willingness to be contacted later. Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

I am willing to be called for a follow-up interview if necessary. [ ]

Your signature indicates that you have read the above and agree to be contacted by telephone for a follow-up interview if necessary.

Phone number where you can be contacted:
   Daytime: __________________ Evening: __________________

I am not willing to be called for a follow-up interview. I understand there is no penalty for choosing not to participate in a follow-up call. [ ]

Thank you so much for your help.
NON-TECHNICAL EMPLOYMENT QUALITIES SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR
EMPLOYERS*

Please answer the following questions. Your candid responses would be appreciated.

A. Please rate by circling the level of importance for each item stated below and on the following pages as you view its necessity for program graduates seeking entry employment in the clerical fields.

All items are non-technical employment qualities.

The term "graduate" refers to any student who has graduated from the Carl Perkins Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program in Oregon. The term "person" refers to any employee.

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How important is it for an employee to:

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<td>2. have imagination which allows for creative performance.</td>
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<td>3. be mentally capable to perform job activities.</td>
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<td>4. be honest with the employer, public, peers and supervisors.</td>
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<td>5. show a sense of responsibility for undertakings.</td>
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<td>6. communicate effectively with others.</td>
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<td>7. display social skills and conduct acceptable to others.</td>
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<td>8. be of good moral character.</td>
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<td>9. cooperate with supervisors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. have been at the top of the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. show initiative to perform on the job.</td>
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<td>12. have good work attendance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. take criticism when shown what has been done wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. complete work in a thorough manner.</td>
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* Modified and used with permission.
15. be motivated toward greater achievements. | 0 1 2 3
16. show tact in relationships with others. | 0 1 2 3
17. be physically suitable and in good health for the job. | 0 1 2 3
18. have a pleasant personality. | 0 1 2 3
19. use time to the best advantage of the company. | 0 1 2 3
20. cooperate with other workers. | 0 1 2 3
21. have interests in addition to work. | 0 1 2 3
22. have a personal appearance suitable for the job. | 0 1 2 3
23. have a positive self-concept and to be self confident. | 0 1 2 3
24. have school records showing acceptable grades. | 0 1 2 3
25. show enthusiasm for the tasks to be performed. | 0 1 2 3
26. follow instructions as they are given. | 0 1 2 3
27. arrive for work on time. | 0 1 2 3

B. To what extent do you believe that the programs currently address these non-technical employment qualities? Please check one that best describes your belief.

- Completely address them. O
- Address most of them. O
- Moderately address them. O
- Address a few of them. O
- Does not seem to address them. O
- These qualities cannot be taught. People either have them or do not have them. O
C. To what extent do you believe the graduate that came to work for you possessed these non-technical employment qualities?

- Possessed all of them.
- Possessed most of them.
- Possessed an average amount of them.
- Possessed a few of them.
- Did not seem to possess them.

D. If an individual did not possess these non-technical employment qualities, would you expect the employer to teach them on the job?

- Yes
- No
- These qualities cannot be taught.
- People either have them or do not have them.

E. To what extent do you believe that graduates who become employed with you seek feedback regarding their non-technical employment qualities after they are hired?

- Regularly seek feedback.
- Rarely seek feedback.
- Seek feedback only after there are problems.
- Never seek feedback.

F. What one non-technical employment quality do you wish every graduate would possess upon completing a preparatory program?

G. What non-technical employment qualities do employees lack that makes you want to terminate their employment?
H. To the best of your knowledge, why did the last person leave your employment?

I. What percentage of your time is spent supervising Clerical/Office Staff? ________

J. Which best describes your business?
   - Clerical/Office □  - Business or Management □
   - Unskilled □  - Semi-skilled □
   - Aide or Caretaking □  - Semi-Professional or Professional □
   - Food Service □

K. What is the size of your company?
   - 50 or fewer employees □  - 51-200 employees □  - More than 201 employees □

Thank you for your time and energy in completing this study.
Consent Form

If you are willing to respond to a follow-up telephone interview, please sign your name below. Completion of the survey is not dependent upon your willingness to be contacted later. Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

I am willing to be called for a follow-up interview if necessary. □

Your signature indicates that you have read the above and agree to be contacted by telephone for a follow-up interview if necessary.

Phone number where you can be contacted:

Daytime: Evening: □

I am not willing to be called for a follow-up interview. I understand there is no penalty for choosing not to participate in a follow-up call.

Thank you so much for your assistance with this survey.
Appendix B: Cover Letter That Accompanied Each Survey
Dear Former Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Program Participant,

You are invited to help us in a research project about the Single Parent/Displaced Homemakers in Oregon. The purpose of this project is to gather your perceptions about which non-technical employment qualities are most needed to keep a job.

Non-technical employment qualities are work habits other than basic skills (reading, writing, math) and technical skills (filing, typing, screening calls). They are personal behaviors (grooming, attitudes, demeanor) not normally associated with technical competence.

Because you were a participant yourself, your answers are the most valuable. I am interested in your perceptions. I am not evaluating the program you were a part of.

Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty if you do not wish to participate. You may withdraw consent at any time.

Participation is confidential. Because the nature of this survey asks questions and impressions, ALL INFORMATION YOU GIVE WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. No names of persons, places or responses will be shared that might identify you in any way.

The surveys have a number in the upper corner. This number corresponds to the type of survey being sent to you and in no way indicates who returned the survey. Your identity will be kept in strictest confidence at all times.

If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview should it be necessary, please sign your name on the second line of the Consent Form where indicated and return it with your survey. The information you share during this conversation will not be used in any way that will identify you in the study.

This follow-up telephone interview is separate and also voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to be called.

Questions about this research should be directed to Dr. Charles Carpenter, Professor of Education at Oregon State University at 503-737-5961 or GwenEllyn Anderson, research investigator at 503-585-2856.

Thank you, sincerely. Your prompt reply will be appreciated.

GwenEllyn Anderson.
Dear Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Instructor,

You are invited to help us in a research project about the Single Parent/Displaced Homemakers in Oregon. The purpose of this project is to gather your perceptions about which non-technical employment qualities are most needed to keep a job.

Non-technical employment qualities are work habits other than basic skills (reading, writing, math) and technical skills (filing, typing, screening calls). They are personal behaviors (grooming, attitudes, demeanor) not normally associated with technical competence.

Because you are an Instructor, your answers are the most valuable. I am interested in your perceptions. I am not evaluating the program you are a part of.

Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty if you do not wish to participate. You may withdraw consent at any time.

Participation is confidential. Because the nature of this survey asks questions and impressions, ALL INFORMATION YOU GIVE WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. No names of persons, places or responses will be shared that might identify you in any way.

Each survey has a letter in the upper corner. This number corresponds to the type of survey being sent to you and in no way indicates who returned the survey. Your identity will be kept in strictest confidence at all times.

If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview should it be necessary, please sign your name on the second line of the Consent Form where indicated and return it with your survey. The information you share during this conversation will not be used in any way that will identify you in the study. This follow-up telephone interview is separate and also voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to be called.

Questions about this research should be directed to Dr. Charles Carpenter, Professor of Education at Oregon State University at 503-737-5961 or GwenEllyn Anderson, research investigator at 503-585-2856.

Thank you, sincerely. Your prompt reply will be appreciated.

GwenEllyn Anderson.
Dear Employer,

You have been listed as an employer of a graduate from one of Oregon’s Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs and I am looking for your responses to a research project about employees.

The purpose of this study is to gather your perceptions regarding which non-technical employment qualities are most needed to keep a job. Non-technical employment qualities are work habits other than basic skills (reading, writing, math) and technical skills (filing, typing, screening calls). They are personal behaviors (grooming, attitudes, demeanor) not normally associated with technical competence.

Your perceptions are most valued. I am interested in your perceptions. Although some questions are asked about the graduates from these programs, this study does not evaluate any individual or program. The identities of your particular employees are unknown to me and, likewise, your identity will be kept confidential.

Participation is confidential. Because the nature of this survey asks questions and impressions, ALL INFORMATION YOU GIVE WILL BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. No names of persons, places or responses will be shared that might identify you in any way.

Participation is voluntary. There is no penalty if you do not wish to participate. You may withdraw consent at any time.

Each survey has a letter in the upper corner. This letter corresponds to the type of survey being sent to you and in no way identifies you.

If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview should it be necessary, please sign your name on the line of the Consent Form where indicated and return it with your survey. This follow-up telephone interview is separate and also voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to be called.

Questions about this research should be directed to Dr. Charles Carpenter, Professor of Education at Oregon State University at 503-737-5961 or GwenEllyn Anderson, research investigator at 503-585-2856.

- Please complete as much of the form as you can even if you are unaware of employment by any particular graduate from these programs or direct this survey to the person who would have supervised one of these graduates.

Thank you, sincerely. Your prompt attention to this will be appreciated.

GwenEllyn Anderson.
Appendix C: Cover Letter Sent to Directors Explaining the Study and Outlining the Requested Labels
Dear «director’s name»,

As I mention in my telephone «phone/voice», my work with The New Workforce Services at Chemeketa Community College has prompted my interest in a doctoral study of Oregon Single Parent and Displaced Homemakers regarding their perceptions of the non-technical employment qualities needed to keep jobs. The perceptions of the study’s participants will be compared with those of employers and instructors to suggest to what extent the perceptions of potential employees match those of employers. Although some questions ask about the programs from which the participants graduated, the study does not evaluate your program.

Please run labels as soon as possible for students who graduated from your program, from July 1, 1992 through June 30, 1994. This list should include all Single Parents and Displaced Homemakers funded by your Carl Perkins grant. If you are a site that provides services from multiple funding streams, such as JOBS, Teen Parents, Dislocated Workers, etc., please exclude these names.

If you will run the labels during this next week, I will call to ask how many surveys to send you. If it is more convenient for you, please feel free to call me and leave a message regarding the number you need. The surveys, a cover letter and return envelope will be prepared by me and enclosed in a stamped envelope. When they arrive, it is anticipated that you will only have to add the labels and send them out. In this way, no mailing lists will be shared and confidentiality will be maintained.

I will also be asking for the number of full- and part-time instructors on your staff in order to survey them also. Their surveys will be sent along with the others and marked, “Instructor Survey.”

Thank you so much for your help. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me at 585-2856 (home) or 399-2387 (work). This study has been approved by the Graduate Department of Oregon State University and is being supervised by Dr. Charles Carpenter, 737-5961.

I plan to attend the spring meeting in Ashland and look forward to meeting you there.

Sincerely,

GwenEllyn Anderson
Mental Health Counselor, The New Workforce
Chemeketa Community College