

A STUDY TO IDENTIFY ESSENTIAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS  
NEEDED TO MANAGE CHAIN APPAREL SPECIALTY STORES  
IN REGIONAL SHOPPING CENTERS

by

Barbara Jean Ollhoff

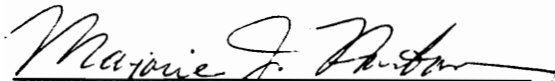
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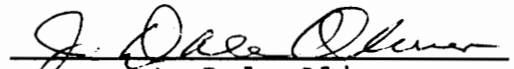
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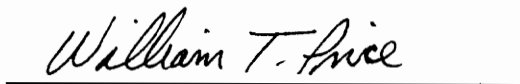
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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to identify the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for managers of chain apparel specialty stores located in regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area. A literature review indicated that there is little specific information available concerning skills needed by chain apparel specialty store managers.

In the 1980s, the apparel specialty retail industry was characterized by a number of firms expanding and diversifying their retail holdings and coming to dominate the industry. As a result the industry is composed of national retailers whose decision-making structures are highly centralized. This centralized structure has altered the skills necessary for chain store managers to perform specified job duties.

This qualitative study used the nominal group technique (NGT), structured interviews, and a field study to address the research problem. A nominal group method, involving

seven store managers, generated a list of 150 essential skills in eight specified job duty categories. This NGT essential skills list provided the framework for subsequent structured interviews with five district managers of chain apparel specialty stores. The store managers and district managers were then asked to priority rank the essential skills list and the lists were analyzed for congruency. The lists were also compared with daily time/activities logs completed by three store managers to determine if they actually used the specified skills. Triangulation was used to permit the researcher to be more confident of the data.

The essential technical skills identified by participating chain apparel specialty store managers and district managers include a knowledge of company policies, equipment usage, fashion-related product information, payroll procedures, and theft control. The dominant interpersonal skills were the ability to communicate, train, delegate, and role model specific behaviors for employees. The essential analytical skills include the ability to set high store standards, solve customer and employee problems, determine sales trends, and generate creative promotional ideas. Managers must have a combination of management and leadership skills and be able to "drive the business" with creativity, employee involvement and motivation strategies.

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This study required a significant amount of assistance from store managers and district managers in the Milwaukee area. I would like to thank these retailers for their time, their valuable suggestions, and comments.

Finally, this study is dedicated to my family and friends as well as my new friends from Blacksburg who have endured the dissertation process with me. Without their understanding, none of this would have been possible.

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**THE PROBLEM**

This chapter identifies the problem of the study. Specifically, the chapter will present the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the importance of the study, the delimitations and limitations of the study, and definitions of terms used in the study.

**Background of the Problem**

This study pertains to the essential skills necessary to manage chain apparel specialty stores located in regional shopping centers. The background of the problem discusses (a) the changes in apparel retailing, (b) the growth of chain apparel specialty stores, (c) the importance of good management, (d) the Katz management model, and (e) the need for this research study.

**Changes in Apparel Retailing**

Since World War II, department stores have been key retailers of fashion apparel. In 1987, department stores sold approximately 38% of all women's apparel and 18% of all men's and boys' apparel and accessories (Scher, 1987).

Department stores have traditionally served as anchor stores at shopping centers, have exerted significant community influence, were dominant advertisers, and have had

extensive management training programs. In the past decade, however, the following developments have combined to diminish the department stores' preeminent position: (a) the shopping mall area has replaced the department store as the primary destination for shoppers, (b) department stores have resorted to heavy off-price promotion to maintain sales volume, and (c) the department store identity has been blurred due to merchandise homogeneity caused by emphasis on designer and brand names that everyone, including discount stores, may sell (Levy, 1987).

In addition, department store property often has been undervalued real estate making it an ideal acquisition candidate during the last decade. Mergers and acquisitions of United States retailers reached \$20 billion in 1986, up from \$9.3 billion the previous year. In both number and dollar value of transactions, retail trade has ranked among the top 10 industry groups in merger and acquisition activity in the United States since 1981. Between 1984 and 1988, 23 department store consolidations occurred (Kerin & Varaiya, 1985; Klokis, 1987; Trachtenberg, 1989).

A special section of Chain Store Age Executive entitled "A Decade of Change 1978-1987" described the changes that have occurred in the retail industry over the last decade.

The last 10 years have produced a barrage of events that transformed the landscape of retailing as companies merge, acquire, divest, go private, go

public, go out of business. New formats emerge, expand, mature. Old formats evolve or decline. The last decade has been marked by social and technological shifts that have been as explosive as the end of World War II and the vast societal changes that followed. Relationships have changed between all key players in the retailing dynamic. ("A Decade," 1988, p. 55)

### **Growth of Chain Apparel Specialty Stores**

While department stores were struggling to maintain market share, specialty stores became the new driving force on the retail scene. "The disarray of the department store industry has prevented them from taking a lead in fashion, observers say. As a result, it has fallen to the large specialty chain to provide that leadership" ("The Limited's Approach," 1988, p. 28).

Specialty retailers became successful because (a) they responded to the pluralism of society and the resulting fragmentation of shoppers by fashion attitude, life-style and purchase motivation, (b) dominant assortments were assembled to encapsulate shopper needs within a narrow niche, (c) the point-of-sale environment was compelling, (d) they took risks in creating their own merchandise labels and exploiting new market niches, and (e) their approach was often entrepreneurial (Levy, 1987).

The majority of today's approximately 1.3 million retail establishments are specialty stores. Apparel and accessory specialty stores are the most numerous type of retail outlet, numbering about 120,000 and doing an annual

volume in excess of 50% of the total fashion sales volume of the United States. From a numerical standpoint most apparel specialty stores in this country are individually owned, have no branches, and are not units of chains (Packard, 1983).

Although the number of single unit specialty stores is substantial, they represent less than 10% of the total market in dollar sales of men's and women's apparel. The dominant share of business is done by multiunit specialty stores which are local, regional, or national chains. Companies with 11 or more specialty stores have more than 70% of the dollar volume apparel market share. The 26 largest women's apparel specialty companies operate 29,333 stores (Chain Store Guide, 1987; "The Limited's Approach," 1988).

While department stores were experiencing limited growth, many apparel specialty stores grew from family businesses to complex corporate chain store structures. The phenomenal growth of The Limited, from a single suburban store near Columbus, Ohio in 1963 to a chain with 3,381 stores, illustrates the structural change in apparel retailing. It was the first specialty store chain to break the \$4 billion volume level. Today The Limited, Inc. is a Fortune 500 company and the largest specialty store retailer in the world. Its formats include The Limited Stores,

Limited Express, Lerner Stores, Lane Bryant, Victoria's Secret, Henri Bendel and Abercrombie & Fitch (Schulz, 1989).

The story of phenomenal growth of chain apparel specialty stores through acquisitions and leasing new store space in regional shopping centers can be told again and again. Merry-Go Round Enterprises (MGRE), founded in the early 1970s, now operates 612 mall-based specialty stores located in 37 states. MGRE is one of the largest unisex apparel chains in the country with sales of \$298.9 million in fiscal 1989 and projected sales of \$502 million by fiscal 1991. MGRE stores include Merry-Go-Round, DJ's, DeJaiz, Attivo, Silvermans, Cignal, and Boggies Dinner. "The Company plans to grow its store base by opening new stores (30-50 new stores in fiscal 1991) and by acquiring locations from other specialty-apparel retailers that are experiencing financial difficulties" (Wintzer, 1989, p. 9). The Limited, Inc. and MGRE are typical examples of the nationalizing of apparel specialty stores during the last two decades.

To compete with specialty stores such as The Limited and MGRE, department stores are evolving into limited-line, soft goods-oriented specialty retailers. They are diversifying through acquisitions by creating new specialty store divisions. For example, department store giant J.C. Penney is investing in new specialty retail ventures such as Mixit shops for juniors. J.C. Penney also acquired Units

women's specialty shops and is expanding the chain nationally. Department store spinoffs such as Corporate Level by Carson's and Bullock's chain of large-size apparel stores are other examples of department store expansion into specialty store retailing (Bivins, 1988; Levy, 1987; "Nobody Building," 1985).

Department and specialty store corporations and conglomerates have the marketing expertise and buying power most independent apparel retailers lack. National chain stores, although under extremely competitive conditions, can win a larger share of the retail fashion dollar. For example, in April, 1989 MGRE acquired a chain of 124 stores and by August, 1989 had completely remerchandised those stores. During this time frame, sales per square foot of the 124 acquired stores increased from \$155 to \$260 and are projected to increase to an annual rate of \$325 in fiscal 1991 (Wintzer, 1989).

Moreover, large firms are equipped to absorb the financial losses that are often a part of the temperamental fashion business. An investment banking research report delineates risk factors in fashion retailing.

Although the Company [MGRE] has sophisticated systems and procedures in place to react to changes in fashion, a downturn in the fashion cycle could have a meaningful impact on earnings. We do not believe such a downturn is likely over the near term for the following reasons: (1) the entire fashion industry was in a slump from August

1987 until October 1988 and is now in a modest recovery, and (2) there are currently no "hot" items or fashion trends of any magnitude on the horizon. (Wintzer, 1989, p. 4)

Although large firms can usually cope with the unpredictable fashion business, seasonal variations in consumer fashion demand can be devastating to the small independent retailer that is undercapitalized.

Diversification has been a major retailing strategy during the last 20 years. Retail success has come from stealing market share from competitors, not from store growth. "Chain apparel specialty stores took shopping from the bland to the exhilarating. The Limited's visual merchandising and unique products set the pace for apparel sales. Specialty stores have come to dominate virtually every merchandise category" ("Currents of Change," 1988, p. 56).

Retailers must compete not only for market share but also for competent personnel. The specialty store is the most labor-intensive form of retailing with a payroll-to-sales ratio ranging from 23% to 27% (Bluestone, Hanna, Kuhn, & Moore, 1981). Specialty store chains, like the entire retail industry, are facing a labor squeeze especially as it applies to teenage workers who are the mainstay of the retail industry's part-time work force. Frequently, specialty stores have policies that encourage internal



promotion of key salespeople into management training. The challenge is to transform the salesperson's mindset toward retailing careers. Most part-time salespeople do not view retailing as a career option. Korchin (cited in Mason & Mayer, 1988), a specialty store personnel vice president, described the retail career dilemma:

The field of retailing has grown at an astonishing rate, expanding in every direction, utilizing the most advanced technologies, leadership techniques, and communications methods. Retailers are looked at by all as innovators--visionaries--the new captains of industry. Yet paradoxically, they have consistently failed in what should have been their simplest task, that of informing the student and the academic community that a career in retailing is rewarding, exciting, challenging, and very important - available. (p. 801)

An opinion poll of 370 retailers rated labor shortages as the third most important issue facing them now and in the future ("Retailer Poll," 1988). Good, Sissler, and Gentry (1988) stated that employee turnover in retailing is among the highest with a reported rate of 30%. They compared the turnover of department store management personnel with respect to retail work experience and found that no managers had over 10 years of experience and most (88%) had from 2 to 10 years of experience. Ninety-two percent of the respondents had been with a department store for 5 years or less.

Since retailing is a labor-intensive business, human capital is the most important resource in retailing.

Management at the local-store level can be as critical to a firm's success as the executives in the central headquarters. Bluestone et al. (1981) stressed the importance of good management to the success of individual establishments. "Good management is difficult to define and virtually impossible to measure, but to most retailers it is considered crucial in the struggle for survival" (p. 133).

### **The Importance of Good Management**

What do managers do, and why is good management crucial for retail survival? A traditional response is based on Henri Fayol's words of 1916, that managers plan, organize, coordinate, and control. Strong (1965) described the work of the manager when he said, "The manager, then, plans, organizes, motivates, directs, and controls. These are the broad aspects of the work. He adds foresight, order, purpose, integration of effort, and effectiveness to the contributions of others" (p. 5).

Mintzberg (1973) listed basic reasons why organizations need good managers. His major concepts are represented in the following list of reasons why effective management is essential to the operation of chain apparel specialty stores.

1. The prime purpose of the manager is to be sure that the store serves its basic purpose, the attainment of the financial performance goals for the store.

2. The manager designs and maintains the stability of the store's operation. As a leader, the manager must develop and sustain an atmosphere in which the necessary work gets done.
3. The manager must adapt the store in a controlled way to its changing environment. As monitor, the manager must be familiar with environmental trends and as entrepreneur and leader he/she provides direction.
4. The manager must be sure the store serves the ends of those individuals who control it. The manager acts as the focus for the organizational values. The manager must interpret values and inform subordinates of organizational preferences to guide them in their decision-making.
5. The manager serves as the key informational link between corporate headquarters and employees. Only the manager, because of his formal authority, can create a vital link between certain special sources of information and the store employees. "As liaison the manager creates the link, as monitor he receives the information, and as disseminator he transmits it to subordinates" (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 96).

Both an organization and a manager can create the organization's future. Likewise, both can create the manager's future. Administering, monitoring, communicating,

evaluating, decision making, resolving conflict, and other functions suggest a host of skills essential for good management. "Organizations are beginning to realize that management development should not be left to chance, that systematic development efforts will enable them to continue to have effective managers to place in key positions of responsibility" (McCauley, Lombardo, & Usher, 1989, p. 389).

### **Katz Management Model**

Which personal qualities are essential for good management? Two discernible approaches to research on this general question are the behavioral content or personality traits theory and the process characteristics or observable skills theory (Katz, 1974; Whitely, 1985). The Katz model is based on the idea that management's real concern should be for what a manager can do rather than on basic personality traits that are not easily altered. The Katz model uses the term skills because it implies an ability that can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and is revealed in performance rather than potential. "So the principal criterion of skillfulness must be effective action under varying conditions" (Katz, 1974, p. 91).

The Katz model, originally proposed in 1955, identifies three basic skills--technical, human, and conceptual that every successful manager should have in varying degrees. In 1974 the Harvard Business Review designated the Katz model

as a classic and made the following editorial comment: "The soundness of this approach is shown by the enduring popularity of the article--nearly 4,000 reprints were sold in the first six months of 1974" (Katz, 1974, p. 90). The Katz model continues to dominate the writings on managerial work to the present day (Griffin, 1987; Massie & Douglas, 1981; Reece & O'Grady, 1987; Rue & Byars, 1986).

Griffin (1987) refined the Katz model and changed the term human skills to interpersonal skills. Griffin also stated that analytical skills are more essential than conceptual skills for first-line managers. Since chain apparel specialty store managers are first-line managers, this study will use technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills as the essential skills categories.

Good managers in all industries have certain administrative skills in common. However, executives both inside and outside retailing suggest that within each industry there are management problems which require special expertise (Bluestone et al., 1981).

### **Need for Research in Retail Management**

The potential usefulness of current apparel retail research comes from a desire to teach a body of knowledge and skills that will assist apparel store managers in their work and also prepare students for careers in apparel specialty store management. Hollander (1986) encouraged a

historical perspective on retailing and said one historically observable trend definitely indicates a need to refocus retail education.

Collegiate work in retailing has for several decades appealed primarily to those who want to be department store buyers. A new breakdown in the 1982 Census of Retail Trade, however, shows that the conventional department stores have slipped from about eight percent of total retail trade to just about three percent. The replacement of single unit department stores by flagship and branch systems has also reduced the number of buyers needed. Now some major ownership groups (Federated, Macy, Dayton-Hudson, Batus) are beginning to consolidate divisions. Increased centralization along with declining market share means that many who want to enter retailing will have to look for careers outside buying for conventional department stores. (p. 8)

One alternative career path in retailing is chain apparel specialty store management. Data on skills essential for today's managers of chain apparel specialty stores are sketchy. More sophisticated record keeping and inventory management systems, plus greater emphasis on sales techniques and product knowledge mean the burden on specialty store managers is increasing and requires a different approach to the task (Bluestone et al., 1981). Samli (1989) identified deficits in retail research and listed the topic "Retail Administration and Personnel" as a substantially neglected retailing research area.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this research was to identify essential skills for managers of chain apparel specialty stores located in regional shopping centers. Chain apparel specialty store managers are studied in relationship to the following three skills categories: (a) technical skills, (b) interpersonal skills, and (c) analytical skills.

### **Research Questions**

1. What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential to perform specified job duties?
2. What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do district managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential for their store managers to perform specified job duties?
3. Are the essential technical, interpersonal and analytical skills identified by store and district managers congruent?
4. What technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills do store managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers utilize as they perform their job duties?

### **Importance of the Study**

Many students select fashion merchandising or retailing as a college major with the expectation of eventually becoming a department store fashion buyer because "they like to work with clothes and people" (Rogers & Gamans, 1983, p. 299). Most students have no idea of the vast numbers of careers that exist throughout retailing and especially within chain apparel specialty stores. Secondly, most students are unaware of the full range of talents, skills, and qualifications they must have for specialty store management.

Fashion and retail textbooks and career employment directories focus on job skills and management characteristics for the positions of buyer, store manager and store entrepreneur. These resources provide little information for students and specialty store employees interested in pursuing a career in chain apparel specialty store management.

The apparel specialty store industry has changed rapidly in recent years. Therefore, there is a need for current research that will provide information on the technical, interpersonal and analytical skills needed for chain apparel specialty store management. Naisbitt and Aburdene (1985), in their book Re-inventing the Corporation, addressed the profound mismatch between what the workplace



needs and what the schools are providing. They said management deficiencies in the workforce can cost industries financially through waste, lost productivity, reduced customer service and ultimately diminished competitiveness. If the gaps between marketing education and workplace skills are not addressed, severe shortages of qualified chain apparel specialty store managers may be expected.

One goal of this study is to draw attention to career opportunities in chain apparel specialty store management. The first step is identifying technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills that are essential to chain apparel specialty store management. With this knowledge, marketing educators can evaluate their curriculum and determine if program competencies are appropriate for training chain apparel specialty store managers.

A second goal of this study is to provide knowledge for designing managerial skills training and development programs for chain apparel specialty store managers who have similar needs as the sample participants of this study. Good et al. (1988) in their report on retail management turnover, stated, "Research that adds new knowledge to the retail work environment literature will aid both practitioners and managers of organizations by improving the job-search process, aiding in job redesign, and

understanding the psychological processes which are operative in employee-organization linkages" (p. 311).

#### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study contains the following delimitations:

1. Each apparel specialty store must be part of a chain store operation.
2. Each chain apparel specialty store must be located in a regional shopping center within the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area.
3. Each chain apparel specialty store must concentrate on selling women's apparel, men's apparel, or family apparel. Children's chain apparel specialty stores are excluded from the study because they are few in number and seldom located in regional shopping centers.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

This study contains the following limitations:

1. This study examines only one dimension of the chain apparel specialty store manager. The study employs a work content approach to discover technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills. It excludes the behavioral content approach or study of personality traits which is another important dimension that influences apparel specialty store management job performance.

2. The study identifies the essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills for apparel specialty store managers. No attempt was made to determine how well the manager performs these skills.
3. This study identifies essential skills for the specified chain apparel specialty store managers and cannot be generalized to the total population of chain apparel specialty store managers.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Retail Industry Definitions**

**Apparel stores.** The Standard Industrial Classification Manual (1989) defines this major group as retail stores primarily engaged in selling clothing of all kinds and related articles for personal wear and adornment. In the trade, however, retailers use the term apparel store to describe any specialty store that exhibits a degree of fashion awareness and that carries goods for men, women, and/or children (Stone & Samples 1985). In this study the term will apply to the following Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC): men's and boys' clothing and accessory stores (SIC #561), women's clothing stores (SIC #562), and family clothing stores (SIC #565). These three SIC groups represent approximately 68% of apparel and accessory store employment and employ approximately 70,000

managerial and administrative workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1987).

**Department store.** The Standard Industrial Classification Manual (1989) defines department stores as stores that (a) carry men's and women's apparel and either major household appliances or other home furnishings, (b) normally arrange merchandise in separate sections or departments with the accounting on a departmentalized basis, (c) integrate departments and functions under a single management, (d) usually have their own charge accounts, deliver merchandise, and maintain open stocks, and (e) normally have 50 employees or more. In this study, department store is used as a general term that includes conventional department stores such as Bloomingdale's, discount department stores such as K mart, and general merchandise department stores such as Sears, Roebuck & Company.

**Chain store.** A group of stores, usually a dozen or more, commonly owned and centrally merchandised and managed. The term chain store may also refer to a single store as a unit of such a group (Bennett, 1988; Ostrow & Smith, 1988).

**Specialty store chain.** A group of stores frequently located in shopping centers or in high-traffic urban shopping areas. Characteristics are: (a) concentrate on merchandise segment with homogeneous dimensions, (b) volume

buying with distribution in widely dispersed stores whose design and layout are the same to foster consumer recognition, (c) standardized business procedures and centralized policy making, and (d) centrally controlled merchandising, promotion and pricing (Rogers & Gamans, 1983).

**Manager, retail store (D.O.T. #185.167-046)**. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1977) defines a retail store manager as engaged in managing a store such as an apparel store. The manager performs the following duties personally or supervises employees performing the duties:

Plans and prepares work schedules and assigns employees to specific duties. Formulates pricing policies on merchandise according to requirements for profitability of store operations. Coordinates sales promotion activities and prepares, or directs workers preparing, merchandise displays and advertising copy. Supervises employees engaged in, or performs, sales work, taking of inventories, reconciling cash with sales receipts, keeping operating records, or preparing [a] daily record of transactions for accountant. Orders merchandise or prepares requisitions to replenish merchandise on hand. Insures compliance of employees with established security, sales, and record keeping procedures and practices. (p. 121)

**Retail chain store area supervisor (also called district manager) (D.O.T. #185.117-014)**. The Dictionary of Occupational Titles (1986) definition is:

One who directs and coordinates activities of subordinate managerial personnel involved in operating retail chain stores in an assigned area: Interviews and selects individuals to fill managerial vacancies. Maintains employment records for each manager. Terminates employment

of store managers whose performance does not meet company standards. Directs, through subordinate managerial personnel, compliance of workers with established company policies, procedures, and standards. . . . Reviews operational records and reports of store managers to project sales and to determine store profitability. Coordinates sales and promotional activities of store managers. (p. 18)

**Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).** MSA is defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget as "A county or group of contiguous counties with a total population of at least 100,000. The area must contain at least one city with a population of 50,000 or more. Outlying counties are included in a MSA based on their population densities and the volume of commuting to central counties" (Labor Market, 1988, p. v). In this study MSA refers to the Milwaukee, Wisconsin MSA which includes Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha counties.

**Regional shopping center.** The largest of the shopping malls in which (a) the leading tenant is one or more full-line department stores, (b) gross leasable space is 400,000 to 1,000,000 square feet (centers having over 750,000 square feet are regarded as super-regionals and are anchored by three or more department stores), (c) minimum trade population is 150,000 and radius of attraction is in the 10 to 15 mile range, and (d) the planned center has 50 to 150

smaller retail stores and related businesses to complement the department stores (Bennett, 1988; Ostrow & Smith, 1988).

### **Managerial Skills Defined**

The study of technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills provides a useful way of looking at and understanding the store managers' job duties and responsibilities. A review of related literature was used to develop working definitions of the three skills categories as they were applied in this study. For the purpose of this study, skills are defined as specific managerial behavior that is observable and may include a proficiency, ability, or dexterity. It implies an ability that can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and is revealed in performance rather than potential (Katz, 1974).

**Technical skills.** Technical skills are specialized knowledge and facility in the use of the tools and techniques that are specific to an occupation. Katz (1974) defined a technical skill as an "understanding of, and proficiency in, a specific kind of activity, particularly one involving methods, processes, procedures or techniques" (p. 91). For the purpose of this study, technical skills refers to the specialized knowledge and mechanical abilities associated with the performance of apparel specialty store managers' duties. Technical skills may include fashion and

retailing expertise, cash register and computer operations, fixturation, or pricing.

**Interpersonal skills.** Since management is often defined as getting things done through people, interpersonal skills are essential. Griffin (1987) defines interpersonal skills as "the ability to communicate with, understand, and motivate both individuals and groups" (p. 22). Human skills were defined by Katz (1974) as "the executive's ability to work effectively as a group member and to build cooperative effort within the team he leads" (p. 91). Rue and Byars (1986) stated, "Human relations skills refer to understanding human behavior and being able to work well with people" (p. 10). For the purpose of this study, interpersonal skills were defined as the ability to manage relationships with employees, peers, supervisors, and customers. Interpersonal skills may include communication, motivation, conflict management, or leadership.

**Analytical skills.** Analytical skills enable managers to determine possible strategies and to select the most appropriate strategy for the situation. Griffin (1987) interprets analytical skills as the "ability to identify the key variables in a situation, see how they are interrelated, and decide which ones should receive the most attention" (p. 23). Dulewicz (1989) defines analysis and judgment as seeking all relevant information, identifying problems,



relating relevant data and identifying causes, assimilating numerical data accurately and making sensible interpretations, working methodically and precisely, and not overlooking relevant detail. For the purpose of this study, analytical skills were defined as critical thinking, reasoning, and evaluation. Analytical skills may include the ability to solve problems, evaluate numerical data, or make necessary judgments for planning, managing, and controlling merchandise and store operation.

#### **Research Design Definitions**

**Case study.** A case study is an empirical inquiry that (a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, (b) has boundaries between phenomenon and context that are not clearly evident, and (c) uses multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 1989).

**Field study.** This research term connotes both observation and interview and to a lesser degree documentary analysis (Merriam, 1988).

**Nominal group technique (NGT).** NGT is a procedure used to facilitate a small group meeting which follows a prescribed sequence of problem-solving steps. The steps are (a) group members write their ideas on paper in silence, (b) group judgment is pooled via the round-robin procedure wherein member's ideas are recorded on a flip chart, (c) group discusses, verbally clarifies, and evaluates each of

the individual ideas written on the flip chart, and (d) individual judgments are aggregated by a mathematical voting procedure (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1986).

**Triangulation.** Methodological triangulation combines dissimilar methods such as interviews, observations, and physical evidence to study the same unit. The name derives from the navigational technique of using multiple reference points to locate an object's exact location (Duncan, 1989; Merriam, 1988). Multiple methods are utilized to identify convergent findings, and also inconsistent and contradictory findings in an effort to construct a holistic picture of the job skills essential for chain apparel specialty store managers.

#### Chapter Summary

A fundamental shift is taking place in the organization and operation of apparel retailing. Subtle changes have accumulated over the past 20 years. Mergers and acquisitions in the industry have created giant corporations that dominate apparel specialty store sales volume and alter the management structure of the company.

The question is, what skills are essential for managers of chain apparel specialty stores? Store management rests on three basic developmental skills which are technical, interpersonal, and analytical. This research on essential managerial skills will provide a useful way of looking at

and understanding job duties and responsibilities for chain apparel specialty store managers. With this information, marketing educators can evaluate curriculum content and determine the appropriateness of program competencies for training apparel specialty store managers.

This chapter reviews the nature of the problem and the rationale for the study. Included are the following components: (a) background of the problem, (b) statement of the problem, (c) research questions, (d) importance of the study, (e) delimitations of the study, (g) limitations of the study, and (g) definition of terms.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature includes four sections: retail related curriculum research, marketing education curriculum framework, apparel chain store development, and management theory.

#### **Retail Related Curriculum Research**

Marketing education on the secondary and postsecondary levels has had a strong retail focus. The first documented evidence of formalized education for retailing at the prebaccalaureate level is credited to Lucinda Wyman Prince in 1905. She initiated sales training for women working in Boston department stores. Prince convinced Boston merchants that trained saleswomen could out-perform those who had not received training. Thus, her trained people could increase store profits and employee and customer satisfaction (Lynch, 1983). Since the development of training programs by Prince, marketing education has emphasized training for entry-level jobs with retail employers.

Significant efforts have been made to research the competencies needed for successful employment in retailing. Retail competencies have been described as knowledge, understandings, skills, and attitudes necessary for the performance of specific job duties. In the 1960s, three

national studies by Crawford, Carmichael, and Samson identified competencies for entry-level and middle management employees in department stores.

Crawford (1963) researched broad competency areas in marketing which included the analysis of jobs within selected occupational clusters. Volume II of her four-volume study focused on department and variety stores. She identified critical tasks of selected retail workers, competencies required to perform the job tasks, and a common core of competencies for employees. Employees and their supervisors participated in a series of structured interviews which led to identification of critical tasks for 18 department store jobs. This research influenced retail curriculum design in secondary, postsecondary, and adult marketing education.

Carmichael (1968) concentrated on middle management personnel in retailing. He derived a taxonomy of 202 common and identifiable activities of retail middle managers in department stores, chain department stores, discount firms, and variety store chains. Conclusions from his study include:

1. The managerial competency [area] was reported as the most crucial of all competency areas. The activities that cluster around supervision, analysis, problem-solving, decision-making, communicating, human relations, and innovation were found to be

the most crucial activities contributing to the success of middle managers.

2. There are a set of common and identifiable activities crucial to the success of retail middle managers in different types of firms, by levels of management, and by job functions. The identifiable set of activities can be used as the basis for "mid-management" curriculum development.
3. The successful middle manager needs technical as well as managerial skills. The technical skill is of greatest importance at the lowest level of middle management. However, the managerial skill is also very important to the lowest level of middle management, for it is at this level that the number of contacts between managers and subordinates is greatest.
4. Because there are significant differences between the activities performed by middle managers in traditional (independent) department stores and mid-managers in discount, chain, and variety stores, "mid-management" curricula should not be based on the traditional department store model. The major differences between types of firms should be considered when developing a "mid-management" curriculum and providing individualized instruction for students planning careers in one type of firm. (pp. 166-167)

A third national study of department store middle management competencies was conducted by Samson. Samson (1969) interviewed a sample of 81 managers in 42 department stores in the East North Central region of the United States. The study provided insight into the characteristics, educational needs, duties, and projected needs for retail middle managers. The following job

description evolved from his study: "Middle management position involves considerable responsibility in planning and decision making; must be able to inspire and direct the work of others; must be able to manage merchandise control system and select, buy, promote, and analyze merchandise lines" (p. 58). This research indicated that middle managers have little involvement in the hiring and firing of subordinates. Samson also reported that middle managers spent the majority of their time performing the following tasks: merchandise selection, merchandise control, promotion, and customer service. Training was not a task item in the pilot study and was not added by respondents.

The work by Crawford, Carmichael, and Samson is important because the theoretical structure of the research and the competencies identified were incorporated into numerous marketing education studies conducted during the following decade. Berns, Burrow, and Wallace (1980) reviewed marketing education research studies conducted between 1969 and 1980. Most of the curriculum studies cited concentrated on middle management and department store job task analysis. Five of the studies cited were Ball, 1970; Patton, 1971; LaSalle, 1973; Fishco, 1976; and Williams, Burns, and Heath-Sipos, 1979. Ball, in four Midwest states, compared postsecondary marketing educators' and department store executives' perceptions of competencies needed by

department store middle management. Patton, using structured interviews with business persons, identified human relations, buying, salesmanship, sales management, math, accounting, psychology, and budget planning as most important in middle management training. LaSalle developed a community college retail curriculum for the state of Massachusetts based on an analysis of 30 competencies by executives and middle managers from large and small retail stores. Fishco surveyed top level managers and employment executives in 100 nationally recognized department stores. His study evaluated 81 informational topics and 29 broad competencies that might be included in community college retail education programs. Finally, Williams, Berns, and Heath-Sipos developed a standard task inventory process to be used in curriculum development activities. Their procedure was used later to validate tasks in 16 general merchandising department store occupations.

Berns et al. (1980) provided this summary of marketing education curriculum research: "Competency-based curriculum development has become a common practice within the profession. Competencies and tasks are most often identified by surveying supervisors and by studying persons employed directly in the occupations being studied to determine their opinions. Only limited attention has been given to methods of data collection other than surveys, card



sorts, or structured interviews" (p. 41). Berns et al. also indicated some duplication of effort and concentration of activity in selected occupational areas. It appears that middle management careers in department stores dominated marketing education research in the late 1960s and 1970s. No mention was made of career opportunities or competencies necessary for apparel specialty store management in any of the research cited.

#### **Marketing Education Curriculum Framework**

The United States Office of Education in 1968 created "OE Codes" that identified 19 industry-based instructional programs. In 1981 the United States Department of Education reclassified instructional programs and program definitions as CIP Codes (Classification of Instructional Programs). CIP Codes reflect the cluster concept. That is, each instructional program is identified with a number of job titles found in that industry. Students can prepare for a specific job or, more frequently, for a cluster of jobs at one or more levels of employment responsibility. The 1987 revised edition of CIP Codes serve as a standard reference for prebaccalaureate marketing education instructional programs (Ely, 1978; Nelson, 1987).

Fashion Merchandising, a marketing education program, is part of the Apparel and Accessories Marketing CIP cluster. Fashion Merchandising is defined in the CIP Codes

as an instructional program that prepares individuals to engage in the marketing of apparel and accessories, with particular emphasis given to fashion selling and buying, fashion cycles, fashion coordination, and specialized consulting services (Nelson, 1987). Management skills are still omitted from the current CIP code definition. Thus, fashion merchandising curricula may exclude managerial skills when identifying essential competencies.

In 1987, the National Curriculum Committee appointed by the National Council for Marketing Education identified five levels for curriculum planning: (a) Level 1 is entry-level, (b) Level 2 is career sustaining, (c) Level 3 is marketing specialist, (d) Level 4 is marketing supervisor, and (e) Level 5 is manager/entrepreneur. Store managers, Level 5, are fully responsible for the success or failure of a unit within an organization and need a comprehensive understanding of marketing and management competencies. The Committee stated that Level 5, manager/entrepreneur, "represents aspects of the marketing education curriculum appropriate for selected marketing classes but which may not address specific marketing competencies in the traditional sense" (National Curriculum, 1987, p. 5).

Utilizing the CIP Codes classification and the National Curriculum Committee Levels concept, the Interstate Distributive Education Curriculum Consortium (IDECC), now

known as Marketing Education Resource Center, Inc. (MarkEd), developed standard task or skill inventories for Apparel Retailing. The original tasks and skills were those identified in the Crawford (1963) studies. Now, MarkEd utilizes qualitative occupational research based on the DACUM procedure to update and validate tasks and skills. However, the skills inventories are only for Level 2 (career-sustaining), Level 3 (marketing specialist), and Level 4 (marketing supervisor). The Apparel Retailing inventories were published in 1987 and updated by MarkEd in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Education. The updated versions continue to concentrate only on Level 2, career-sustaining and Level 3, marketing specialist because the results were used for secondary marketing education. The lack of skills inventories for Level 5, management, continues to be a problem for postsecondary marketing education (Apparel Retail, 1987; Rogers, 1988).

Finally, a department store economic case study research project was undertaken at the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies and under the auspices of the United States Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Health, Education and Welfare. The research team used the generic term "department store" to refer to five different modes of retailing: department store chains, discount department store chains, holding companies, independent department

stores, and specialty stores. The study identified the following qualities of an exceptional manager: adaptability, leadership, flexibility, listening skills and observation skills. However, this research on management factors focused primarily on top level administrative positions rather than store manager positions (Bluestone et al., 1981).

### **Apparel Chain Store Development**

At the present time, there is very little specific information available concerning technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills needed for chain apparel specialty store managers. One reason for this lack of current information is the rapid growth of chain apparel specialty stores in the last decade. Bluestone et al. (1981) described the transformation of the retail store industry:

Surprisingly, the transformation of department stores [including specialty stores] from locally owned and operated "petite bourgeoisie" enterprises to billion-dollar international conglomerates is chock-full of the same kind of intrigue that characterized the development of small 19-century manufactories into the mammoth multinational industrial conglomerates that dominate today's economic landscape. It is at once a story of company competition, the pyramiding and collapse of financial empires, the innovation of space-age technology, and the reorganization of work and the labor process. The difference is that the revolution in retail trade is a matter of current events, not history. (p. vi)

The Limited, Inc. illustrates the rapid growth that has been typical in chain apparel specialty stores. In 1983, The Limited, Inc. had approximately 830 stores and employed 10,000 associates. By 1989, the number of store outlets had more than quadrupled to 3,650 and the number of associates had likewise grown to over 56,000 (The Limited, 1989). Many corporate chains, such as Paul Harris, The Limited, and Merry-Go-Round, are projecting continued growth of 20 to 30 new stores per year (Paul Harris, 1989; The Limited, 1989; Wintzer, 1989).

The new and existing apparel specialty stores frequently are located in regional shopping centers. One reason chain apparel specialty stores locate in regional shopping centers is the "Rule of Retail Compatibility" developed by Richard Nelson. The Rule states "Two compatible businesses located in close proximity will show an increase in business volume directly proportionate to the incidence of total customer interchange between them" (Mason & Mayer, 1987, p. 738). Apparel specialty stores and department stores are highly compatible which means that 10-20% of the total customers of both establishments are interchanged. In addition, chain apparel specialty stores frequently locate in regional shopping centers to take advantage of the traffic-drawing ability of the anchor tenants (Mason & Mayer, 1987).

There are more than 25,000 shopping centers in the United States. Shopping centers were projected to account for half of the retail business done in this country by 1990. Half of these centers are approximately 20 years old and are being renovated and expanded. Shopping center management is replacing weak tenants with stronger ones. They want major leases from companies with strong credit ratings and regional visibility. Therefore, management prefers tenant rosters that include the triple-A ratings of national chains (Mason & Mayer, 1987; Mason, Mayer, & Ezell, 1988).

New store growth in regional shopping centers indicates an increased demand for store managers. Career opportunities in apparel specialty store management have shifted from the small, independent retailer to large corporate chain organizations. Hinerfeld's retail projection for the year 2000 is compared with Ely's retail industry description in 1978 to illustrate the transformation of the retail industry during the last decade. Ely described the 1978 retail employment field with the following statement:

There are more retail stores in our country than any other type of business enterprise. Although large retail firms have increased their share of the market in recent years, retailing remains largely the domain of the small, independent entrepreneur. (Ely, 1978, p. 2)

Hinerfeld's (1989) projections for apparel retailing in the year 2000 are quite different. He states, "Weaker independent department and specialty stores will disappear, supplanted by a strong handful of department and specialty store chains" (p. 82). He also projects that large retailers will continue to grow larger and displace smaller independents. Today, 17 retail organizations, each with an apparel sales volume in excess of \$1 billion, account for more than 60% of the retail apparel market share. The dramatic change projected for the year 2000 is the final consolidation phase of retail distribution into 8 or 10 multi-billion-dollar mega-retailers at each channel of distribution (Hinerfeld, 1989; Weintraub, 1989).

Naisbitt and Aburdene (1985) believe community colleges have a special role in preparing the labor force for the new corporate age. They indicated that in the new information society where human resources are the company's competitive edge, retail stores are turning to community colleges for help in education and training.

Kast (cited in Boulton, 1982) says that the education and development of managers will be one of the nation's most important challenges over the next decades. "Meeting this challenge will require extensive cooperation between academic institutions and practicing professionals because it is vitally important that developments in theory and

practice do not take separate, divergent paths" (p. 22). Thus, sound management theory is often the result of field investigations of effective management practices.

### Management Theory

The words management and manager are so widely used that it would appear everyone knows exactly what they mean. Yet, there is considerable confusion concerning their exact meaning. Often the word management identifies a special group of people at the top of an organization, yet it is also used to describe middle management and first-line managers. In addition, words like manager, administrator, executive, entrepreneur, leader, supervisor, and boss are often used interchangeably. Katz (1974) assumed that a manager is "one who (a) directs the activities of other persons and (b) undertakes the responsibility for achieving certain objectives through these efforts" (p. 91). Massie and Douglas (1981) defined management as "the process by which a cooperative group directs the use of resources (money, people, and things) toward common goals" (p. 30).

Griffin (1987) offers a more complex definition of management and managers. "Management is the process of planning and decision making, organizing, leading, and controlling an organization's human, financial, physical, and information resources to achieve organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner" (pp. 8-9). Griffin then



defines a manager as someone who plans, makes decisions, organizes, leads, and controls human, financial, physical and information resources.

Kreitner (1989) defined management as "the process of working with and through others to achieve organizational objectives in a changing environment. Central to this process is the effective and efficient use of limited resources" (p. 9). Ettinger (1972), discussing a Japanese approach to management, wrote a more colorful definition of manager qualities:

Managers are like a gardener who, seeing before them a field, visualize what they want to grow and how to go about it. They will pay the price in strenuous effort and patiently applied time to make things grow, and will not be deterred by bad weather or other accidents of nature. They will not stop before they have succeeded. They will inspire others to work with them towards the common goal, not by force, but by communicating to others the purpose and value of their efforts for the organization. (pp. 29-30)

### **Management Levels**

Griffin (1987) refers to levels of management as how managers within an organization can be categorized.

Although there may actually be a number of levels, the most common view is that there are three basic levels: top, middle, and first-line managers (Griffin, 1987). Frequently management research has concentrated on top manager or middle manager levels (Bennis & Nanus, 1984; Katz, 1974;

Mintzberg, 1973). Little research is available on skills for first-line managers.

A store manager is a first-line managerial level. This is often the first position held by employees who frequently enter management from the ranks of retail salesperson. First-line managers spend a large proportion of their time supervising the work of subordinates. Technical, analytical, and interpersonal skills are identified as essential first-line managerial skills (Griffin, 1987; Katz, 1974; Rue & Byars, 1986).

Research on general managerial competencies can be a foundation for identifying specific first-line managerial skills. Dulewicz (1989) contends that competency lists generated by different organizations for similar levels of management have a high degree of commonality. His estimate is that 70% of the listed competencies are common across different organizations, and only 30% are organization-specific.

### **Managerial Functions, Roles, and Skills**

Three traditional approaches to management theory run through the management literature. The first approach is the concept of management functions which characterize the management process as a sequence of rational steps. The second managerial approach is a set of role prescriptions developed to guide managerial actions toward organizational

goal attainment. The third managerial approach identifies the skills managers exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively (Griffin, 1987; Katz, 1974; Kreitner, 1989; Massie & Douglas, 1981).

**Managerial functions.** The managerial functions approach originated with Henri Fayol in the early 1900s. Fayol argued that his own success was due not to his personal capacities, but to his system of management, consisting of five functions: planning, organization, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. In the 1930s, Gulick carried Fayol's functions one step farther and codified the functions in an acronym, POSDCORB. This acronym identified seven functions: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting (Massie & Douglas, 1981; Miner, 1978; Mintzberg, 1973).

Management functions remain widely accepted today as a description of what managers should do. Within the functional approach theory, however, there is a lack of complete agreement concerning those functions to be included in the list of management activities. For example, variations on the list of functions may include the seven POSDCORB functions plus related terms, such as supervising (command), communicating, investigating, evaluating, decision making, bargaining (negotiating), representing, motivating, and leading. Recent textbook models have often

varied sharply in the specific functions noted (Griffin, 1987; Kreitner, 1989; Massie & Douglas, 1981; Miner, 1978).

Griffin (1987) identified several limitations of the managerial functions approach. First of all, it is more appropriate for stable and simple organizations than for today's dynamic and complex organizations. Secondly, it often prescribes universal procedures that are not really appropriate in some settings. Another criticism of the functional approach is the lack of precision and mutually exclusive concepts in the definition of terms used to describe the various functions. "If a manager is observed doing a certain thing, would several different observers all put it in the same category--or might it not be that one would consider it controlling, another directing, and a third organizing?" (Miner, 1978, p. 51). The functional approach tends to foster a view of managerial work as highly homogeneous, with the same functions having roughly similar relevance for all positions.

**Managerial roles.** The managerial roles approach is concerned with answering the basic question, what do managers do? Mintzberg (1973) provided one of the first comprehensive studies of the nature of managerial work. He used structured observations to study managers. From his analysis, he concluded that managers assume 10 basic roles. He defined roles as "organized sets of behaviors identified

with a position" (Mintzberg, 1975, p. 54). These 10 basic roles are grouped into three categories: interpersonal (figurehead, leader, liaison), informational (monitor, disseminator, spokesman), and decisional (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator). Thus, the managerial roles approach describes what managers actually do, whereas the functional approach has historically described what managers should do (Massie & Douglas, 1981). Observation of managerial roles by Mintzberg led to a fresh approach to defining the work of managers. Mintzberg (1973) generated a list of characteristics of a manager's job. Eight of his characteristics are summarized in the following statements:

1. Managers' jobs are remarkably alike.
2. The differences that do exist in managers' work can be described largely in terms of the common roles and characteristics.
3. Much of the managers' work is challenging and nonprogrammed, although every manager has his or her share of regular, ordinary duties to perform.
4. The manager is both a generalist and a specialist. The job of managing involves specific roles and skills. However, skills are not systematically taught.
5. Much of a manager's power is derived from access to sources of information. The manager develops a data base that allows him or her to make more effective decisions than employees.

6. The manager's work pace is unrelenting and work activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and fragmentation. Seldom do managers complete one activity without interruption.
7. Managers work essentially with verbal information and intuitive processes.
8. Managerial work is enormously complex, far more than traditional literature would suggest. Managerial work can be improved significantly only when it is understood precisely.

The Mintzberg (1975) characterization and basic description of the typical manager is helpful in understanding what managers do. "The manager is overburdened with obligations; yet he cannot easily delegate his tasks. As a result, he is driven to overwork and is forced to do many tasks superficially. Brevity, fragmentation, and verbal communication characterize his work" (p. 54).

A study of 248 managers at different levels in diverse organizations extended Mintzberg's work on managerial roles and compared the behavior of successful and unsuccessful managers and effective and ineffective managers. Although the terms successful and effective are typically used interchangeably, this study clearly distinguished the two with the following operational definitions: "A manager's success was determined by how fast he or she had been promoted up the managerial ladder. Managerial effectiveness

was measured through subordinates' evaluation of their satisfaction, commitment, and subunit performance" (Kreitner, 1989, p. 20). The results indicated that successful managers were good at networking, had political savvy, and placed low priority on human resource management activities. Meanwhile, the typical effective manager spent most of his/her time on task-related communication and human resource management, and little time on networking (Kreitner, 1989).

**Skills.** Research by Katz (1974) on observable skills identified three basic skills that every successful manager must have in varying degrees--technical, human, and conceptual. His approach was the result of firsthand observations of administrators at work. Katz was concerned with the observable skills that an effective administrator demonstrates. The skills approach is "based not on what good executives are (their innate traits and characteristics), but rather on what they do (the kinds of skills which they exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively)" (p. 91). He defines the term skill as an ability which can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and which is evident in performance, not merely in potential.

Katz (1974) reviewed his original statements and refined a number of ideas based on his 20 years' experience. In retrospect, he changed his view on the developable nature

of conceptual skills. He says, "I am now far less sanguine about the degree to which this way of thinking can be developed on the job. Unless a person has learned to think this way early in life, it is unrealistic to expect a major change on reaching executive status. . .In this sense, then, conceptual skill should perhaps be viewed as an innate ability" (Katz, 1974, p. 101).

Griffin (1987) refined the managerial skills approach proposed by Katz and added diagnostic and analytical skills to the model. Rue and Byars (1986) described four basic skills of supervisors as technical, human relations, administrative, and decision-making/problem solving. Both authors agreed that technical, analytical (decision-making) and interpersonal (human) skills are the most important skills for first-line management.

Both the functional approach and the role approach to explaining the management process are valuable in understanding key managerial skills. Managerial functions are a useful categorization of a manager's tasks. The managerial roles approach emphasizes that the practice of management is less rational and systematic than the functional approach implies (Kreitner, 1989).

The managerial functions, roles, and skills needed by apparel specialty store managers are changing with the growth of the retail corporate chains. Kanter (1989) says



that in the new corporations, managers have only themselves to count on for success. She describes "postentrepreneurial" practices as the application of entrepreneurial creativity and flexibility within an established business. Postentrepreneurial corporations seek problem-solving, initiative-taking employees who will go the unexpected extra mile for the customer. "Thus rank, title, or official charter will be less important factors in success at the new managerial work than having the knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to mobilize people and motivate them to their best" (Kanter, 1989, p. 92).

#### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter is an overview of the retail related curriculum research, marketing education curriculum framework, apparel chain store growth, and management theory. Chain apparel specialty stores have undergone enormous and rapid changes in the last two decades. During this period, marketing education has emphasized research that focused on middle management jobs in department stores, variety stores, and discount stores, and ignored the growth of chain apparel specialty stores. It may be time to refocus retail education and the research underlying it.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

The research design and methods are presented here. This chapter examines the research design, site selection process, participant selection process, and procedures for data collection, management, and reduction.

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study. The qualitative research paradigm approaches the problem from a holistic perspective and is appropriate when the researcher is interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. Case studies are a preferred strategy when questions of a how and why nature are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. This method is also recommended when it is impossible to identify all the important variables ahead of time (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989).

Nonexperimental or descriptive research is undertaken when the aim is characterization of something as it is, and results are presented qualitatively, using words rather than numbers. The strength of the case study approach is the full variety of evidence that can include documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Yin, 1989).

The nature of the research questions, the amount of control, and the desired end product were issues that influenced the selection of the case study approach. These research questions established the general focus for the case study.

1. What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential to perform specified job duties?
2. What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do district managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential for their store managers to perform specified job duties?
3. Are the essential technical, interpersonal and analytical skills identified by store and district managers congruent?
4. What technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills do store managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers utilize as they perform their job duties?

#### **Site Selection Process**

Since generalization in a statistical sense is not the goal of qualitative case studies, nonprobability sampling is the method of choice. Purposeful or criterion-based sampling was the type of nonprobability sampling used for

this study. Criterion-based sampling was used to select a sample site based on convenience and typical case, whereby the researcher developed a profile of attributes possessed by an average case and then identified instances of this case. For this study, the investigator established the criteria necessary for a retailer to be included in the investigation, and then found sample retailers that matched the criteria (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Patton, 1980).

The criteria for site selection for this study were:

1. The retailer must be in the major group defined as Apparel and Accessory Stores, SIC #56, in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual (1989). Within Major Group #56, the store must be in one of three subindustry groups:
  - a. SIC #561--Men's and Boys' Clothing Stores: men's and boys' clothing stores, men's wearing apparel, and haberdashery stores;
  - b. SIC #562--Women's Clothing Stores: bridal shops, women's ready-to-wear, dress shops, and maternity shops; or
  - c. SIC #565--Family Clothing Stores: family clothing stores, jeans stores, and unisex clothing stores.
2. The apparel specialty store must be part of a regional or national chain of 11 or more stores.

3. The apparel specialty chain must have two or more stores located in selected regional shopping centers in a Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The participant sites selected for this study were chain apparel specialty stores located in six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The following criteria were used to select the Milwaukee MSA, the six regional shopping centers, and the chain apparel specialty stores located within the regional shopping centers.

The Milwaukee MSA includes Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties, with a combined population of approximately 1 million people. The Milwaukee MSA is frequently used as a test market for research and advertising. Test market cities are so designated because they have demographics and consumer purchasing patterns that are representative of the total United States population. Table 1 illustrates how some demographics in Milwaukee are similar to the other top 50 test markets in the United States (Daniell, 1989, p. 4D).

The top 50 markets in the United States are equally important when comparing retail sales volume. The 1987 Census of Retail Trade placed Milwaukee 25th among the 50 largest MSAs ranked by total retail sales. Annual retail sales for Milwaukee-Racine were \$9.8 billion in 1987, which

Table 1

Milwaukee Demographics Compared With the Other Top 50 Test Markets in the United States

Demographic	Test market cities	
	Milwaukee	Top 50 Markets
White collar workers	40.8%	41.6%
College graduates	17.4%	19.1%
Median age	40.0	40.5
Median household income	32,200	32,490

Note: From 1987 Scarborough Newspaper as cited in "How Marketers See Milwaukee" by T. Daniell, May 14, 1989, Milwaukee Journal, p. 4D.

were comparable to the retail sales for such cities as Kansas City, Portland, and Cincinnati (Bureau of the Census, 1989). Comparable consumer purchasing patterns and retail sales volume attract national chain apparel specialty stores to locate in similar MSAs. Therefore the Milwaukee MSA appears to represent a typical case study site.

Finally, this site was selected for convenience. The investigator has 22 years of personal and professional experience as a resident and fashion merchandising instructor at a technical college in the Milwaukee MSA. Knowledge of the retail shopping centers and resource people was helpful in the investigation.

Regional shopping centers were selected for this study because chain apparel specialty stores tend to congregate in these centers. Usually, there are 50 to 150 specialty stores in a regional shopping center. Each specialty store requires a store manager and thereby provides opportunities for management employment.

The criterion-based sample for this study was selected from managers employed in the six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. These centers are the largest shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. Bayshore Shopping Center, Brookfield Square, and Mayfair Mall are examples of shopping centers built in the 1950s and 1960s and recently renovated or expanded. The renovation and expansion

increased the square footage allocated to chain stores, especially apparel chain stores. Table 2 identifies the shopping centers' locations, ages, and number of stores.

In August, 1989, there was a total of 222 apparel specialty stores located in the six Milwaukee MSA regional shopping centers. Of the 222 apparel stores, 148 stores met the participant selection criteria. The 148 chain apparel stores in the six regional shopping centers represented 47 corporate chains. For example, The Limited is one corporate chain with a store located in each of five of the six regional shopping centers. Since stores enter and leave shopping centers on a continuous basis, the exact number of stores varies throughout the year. See Appendix A for an

#### **Participant Selection Process**

The participants in this study represent two groups, store managers and district managers. The first category was experienced chain apparel specialty store managers who worked in one of the six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. The second group, chain apparel specialty store district managers, have supervisory responsibilities over corporate chain stores in the six regional shopping centers. The district managers also have previous experience as store managers.



**Table 2**

The Six Regional Shopping Centers in the Milwaukee  
Metropolitan Area

Description of center				
Shopping Center	Location	Year opened	No. of stores	No. of apparel stores
Bayshore	Glendale	1954	100	26
Brookfield				
Square	Brookfield	1967	82	32
Mayfair Mall	Wauwatosa	1958	150	43
Northridge	Milwaukee	1972	130	41
Southridge	Greendale	1970	134	42
The Grand				
Avenue	Milwaukee	1982	168	38
		<b>Total</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>222</b>

Note. The number of stores and number of apparel stores was based on mall information as of August, 1989.

The participant selection process began with a retail panel of experts consisting of three district managers and two fashion merchandising instructors (See Appendix B for the Retail Panel of Experts). The panel members were asked to study a list of qualifying chain apparel specialty stores and nominate 10 stores and 5 alternate stores for the nominal group meeting (See Appendix C for Participating Store Selection Criteria and Worksheet). The panel members were instructed to use the following factors to influence their nomination decision.

1. The list of 10 nominated stores should include at least 2 men's and 3 family stores.
2. The store should be financially secure and have an established management team.
3. The store should be a growing retailer with an innovative management style.
4. No more than two nominated stores should be from the same parent corporation. To assist the panel members in determining this factor, the participant selection list of 47 stores (Appendix C) also included the names of the parent corporations.
5. The list of 10 stores should represent a cross section of product, size, and price categories, such as junior versus half sizes, leather garments versus suits, and mass versus trendy fashions.

The participating stores for this study met the above criteria and were nominated by at least three panel members. The district managers for the 10 selected stores were contacted, and the research goals, procedures, and company involvement were explained. Each district manager was asked to nominate one store manager to participate in the Phase I nominal group process of the study. The specification for the nominated manager was that she or he have at least two years of managerial experience and a record of good store performance. Nine of the 10 district managers were willing to nominate a store manager.

After nine district managers nominated store managers and approved participation, each nominee was invited to participate in the nominal group process. Follow-up telephone calls and letters to district managers and store managers were used to insure adequate participation (See Appendix D and E for confirmation letters). The goal was to have the participation of at least seven chain apparel specialty store managers. The goal for Phase I was realized.

Phase II of the research utilized the on-going sample selection process called sequential criterion-based sampling or theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). In this process the researcher jointly collects, codes, and analyzes the data and decides what data to

collect next and where to find the data. The data lead the investigator to the next document to be read, the next person to be interviewed, and so on.

Using criterion-based sampling, store managers and district managers for Phase II were chosen as they were needed rather than before the research began. After the NGT, five district managers that were originally contacted for store manager nominations were selected for structured interviews. In addition three of the seven NGT store managers were selected to participate in the field studies. The three store managers selected were from SIC classification #561, #562, #565.

In summary, the participating apparel stores were part of a regional or national chain having two or more stores in the six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. Furthermore, the apparel stores were recommended by retail experts and selected from the SIC group #561, #562, and #565. The participants in Phase I were experienced store managers and recommended by a district manager of an apparel specialty store chain. In Phase II, criterion-based sequential sampling was used to select district managers for interviews and store managers for the field study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The methodological goal of this study was to assemble a combination of data collection techniques that would identify essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills needed by chain apparel specialty store managers. Three data-collection techniques were included in this study. The three techniques are nominal group technique, structured interviews, and field study.

#### **Nominal Group Technique (NGT)**

The NGT is a brainstorming technique for problem solving based on the notion that the average person can think up twice as many ideas when working with a group than when working alone. In the nominal group process, people work in the presence of each other after first writing ideas independently rather than talking about them. The initial silent, idea generating stage of the NGT decreases individual inhibitions and premature evaluation. "Individual inhibitions and premature evaluation can result in a decrease in quality of group ideas in terms of creativity, originality, and practicality" (Delbecq, Van de Van, & Gustafson, 1986, p. 16). Although the NGT was originally developed for problem solving applications, it has been adapted by individuals in the training field as a needs assessment tool (Gepson, Martinko, & Belina, 1981; Scott & Deadrick, 1982).

The following characteristics of the NGT process facilitate decision-making performance.

1. Low variability among groups in member and leader behavior leads to consistency in decision making.
2. A balanced concern for social-emotional group maintenance roles and performance of task-instrumental roles offers both social reinforcement and task accomplishment reward to group members.
3. The silent independent generation of ideas, followed by further thought and listening during the round-robin procedure results in a high quantity of ideas.
4. Search behavior is proactive, characterized by extended periods in generating and clarifying alternative dimensions of the problem, tendencies for high task-centered group effort, and the generation of new social and task-related knowledge.
5. The structured process forces equality of participation among members in generating information on the problem. (Delbecq et al., 1986, pp. 34-35)

Developing job duty categories. Prior to the nominal group meeting, job duty categories for chain apparel specialty store managers were established. Retail textbooks, corporate training literature, and preliminary interviews with district managers were used to identify eight job duties and definitions for each job duty. The following Guba and Lincoln (1981) guidelines were used for job duty category development.

1. An important dimension is the number of people who mention something or the frequency with which something arises in the literature and/or interviews.
2. One's audience may determine what is important--some categories will appear to various audiences as more or less credible.
3. Some categories should be retained because of their uniqueness.

**Format.** Phase I of the research was the nominal group technique utilizing seven chain apparel specialty store managers. Delbecq et al. (1986) indicates that a group size of about seven is most effective for group interaction, idea generating, and consensus building. The NGT decision making process that was utilized for this study consists of four steps.

1. Silent generation of ideas in writing.
2. Round-robin feedback from group members to record each idea in a terse phrase on a flip chart.
3. Discussion of each recorded idea for clarification and evaluation.
4. Individual voting on priority ideas with the group decision being mathematically derived through rank-ordering. (Delbecq et al., 1986, p. 8)

The five-hour nominal group session began with an orientation to the research study. Handouts defining technical, interpersonal and analytical skills (See Appendix F) and describing the specified job duties of chain apparel specialty store managers (See Appendix G) were distributed

to the seven participants. A data form requesting participants' work-related background was also completed. The investigator was the facilitator for the NGT. Facilitators are neutral receivers of group ideas, controlling the group process through the management of information flow. An experienced fashion merchandising educator served as recorder during the round-robin step of the NGT.

**Preparation of the investigator.** To prepare for the NGT, the investigator first read the procedural book by Delbecq et al. (1986) entitled Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal Group and Delphi Processes. The book is written to help planners thoroughly understand the theory, research, and practical problems surrounding the NGT process. The detailed sample script from this book was adapted for this study.

Secondly, a pilot test was used to test the procedure script and the investigator's ability to apply the NGT research process as described by Delbecq et al. (1986). The pilot NGT session was video recorded. An experienced nominal group facilitator critiqued the investigator's delivery ability. In addition, recommendations were made to improve the NGT procedure script, and the analysis of participant responses.



**Location and setting.** The NGT occurred in a community meeting room at the Mayfair Mall. Mayfair Mall is the most centrally located of the six regional shopping centers.

**Recording the data.** After the NGT orientation, the procedure was as follows:

1. Eight Skills Identification Worksheets were distributed to each participant for use during the silent idea generating step of the NGT. Each worksheet listed at the top of the page one of the eight specified job duties as described in Appendix G. The remainder of the page was divided into three equal sections for participants to list the essential technical, interpersonal and analytical skills needed to perform that particular job duty (See Appendix H for Sample NGT Skills Identification Worksheet). The participants were given 40 minutes to silently list the essential skills associated with the eight job duty categories.
- 2.a. Three flip charts were placed at the front of the room. One flip chart was labeled technical, another interpersonal, and the third analytical. The participants began by presenting one of his or her technical skills from the customer service and credit worksheet to be recorded on the technical flip chart. This continued in a round-robin fashion, until all managers reported their technical customer service and

credit skills. Then the interpersonal customer service and credit skills, and finally the analytical customer service and credit skills were listed on the designated flip charts following the same procedure.

- 2.b. After all skills for customer service and credit were listed on the designated flip charts, the participants discussed and clarified the list of skills. Some skills from the three flip charts were combined because of redundancy of content.
- 2.c. The last step was to have each participant individually rank the skills in order of priority. Each manager, without interacting with others, listed on an index card his or her eight most critical skills from the total skills listed on the flip charts. Delbecq et al. (1986) states that as a rule of thumb, individuals can select five to nine priority items with some reliability of judgment. He also recommends, for research purposes, the selection of eight priority items when the original list is 20 items or more. The number of items listed for the eight job duties ranged from 19 for store layout and housekeeping to 41 for customer service and credit.
3. The procedure described in 2a-c was repeated for identifying the essential technical, interpersonal, and

analytical skills for the seven other job duties of a chain apparel specialty store manager.

4. The final step of the NGT was completed after the nominal group process. All index cards were collected and sorted so that the same skills were stacked together and recorded on a chart for each job duty. Then a value score was given to each ranked position. The value score is the total participant score times the frequency of response. The total participant score was determined by adding together the store managers' priority rankings for a given skill. Then, the total number of store managers that priority ranked a given skill (frequency of response) was multiplied times the above score. The value score was used to priority rank the essential skills for each job duty. In addition, for an item to be given "group consensus" status, four of the seven store managers must have identified the item as an essential skill.

The Phase I priority list of essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills generated during the NGT process was utilized for Phase II. The NGT skills list was utilized as an interview worksheet during interviews with district managers.

### **Structured Interviews**

Phase II consisted of two research techniques, structured interviews and field studies. The structured interview involved the collection of data through direct verbal interaction with district managers. The structured interview permitted the researcher to follow up on the essential skills identified in the NGT and thus obtain more data and achieve greater clarity. The interview technique is appropriate because the research interests were relatively clear and well-defined (Borg & Gall, 1979; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

**Format.** The individual structured interviews were with five district managers of chain apparel specialty stores. Since district managers are accountable for 5 to 10 store managers, they provided a broad perspective of the skills needed for store managers.

The essential skills list generated in the Phase I NGT process was used to structure the interviews with the district managers. The top 13 or 14 priority ranked skills from each of the eight specified job duties were organized into an eight-page interview worksheet, one page per job duty, such as customer service and credit (See Appendix I for District Managers' Structured Interview Worksheets). During the interview the district managers was instructed to study the essential skills list and select the eight most

essential skills for a store manager from each job duty category. Then the district manager prioritized those skills with one being the most essential skill for a store manager and eight being the lowest priority of the essential skills selected. These numbers became the values used to determine the district managers' priority ranking of the essential skills for specified chain apparel specialty store managers. While the district managers were prioritizing the essential skills on each worksheet, they simultaneously gave their rationale for the ranking of the skill.

In the structured interview, certain information was desired from all the respondents. The interview worksheet insured that the data required to meet the research objectives were obtained and the interview situation was standardized to some degree. This format allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand and still be reasonably objective (Borg & Gall, 1979; Merriam, 1988).

**Preparation of the investigator.** Pilot interviews with two district managers from outside the Milwaukee MSA tested the ability of the investigator to ask probing questions and obtain appropriate information. At the conclusion of the interview, the district managers were asked to critique the interviewer guide and make recommendations. Based on the pilot interview experience, a more detailed interview worksheet was created for use during the actual interviews.

**Location and setting.** In qualitative interviewing the researcher attempts to construct a situation that resembles those in which people naturally talk to each other about important things. The interviews should be relaxed and conversational (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Therefore, the district manager's office located in one of the participating stores was the setting for the interview.

**Recording the data.** Whenever possible, a tape recorder was used to record interviews. One participant was unwilling to be tape recorded during the interview. For this interview the investigator took detailed notes and later typed the key statements from the interview. Participants were assured of the anonymity of their interview comments. The four interview tapes were transcribed. Merriam (1988) suggests that verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best data base for analysis.

### **Field Study Research**

During Phase II, the field study research technique was also utilized. The field study included daily manager-generated time/activity logs and tape recorded diaries. The goal of field study research was to determine: (a) how the selected store managers actually spent their time, and (b) to identify which technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills they utilized on a daily basis.

**Format.** Field study participants were volunteers from the NGT session. Delbecq et al. (1986) stated, "NGT meetings tend to conclude with a perceived sense of closure, accomplishment, and interest in future phases of problem solving" (p. 34). This positive attitude toward the study set the stage for additional cooperation. The field studies were used to verify the skills lists acquired via the structured interviews and the nominal group process.

Using criterion-based sequential sampling techniques, the three participating store managers were selected from those who volunteered at the NGT session. One store manager was selected from each SIC subindustry group used for this study. The three managers exemplified subindustry groups SIC #561 - Men's and Boys' Clothing Stores, SIC #562 - Women's Clothing Stores, and SIC #565 - Family Clothing Stores.

**Location and setting.** Daily time/activities logs and tape recorded identification of skills provided a record of job duties performed during a one-week period of time. The managers used a combination of jotting down all their activities and talking into a tape recorder about the essential skills they were using throughout the day.

**Recording the data.** The daily time/activity log was recorded on a half-hour interval worksheet (See Appendix J for Field Study Memo to Store Managers and Time/Activity Log

Worksheet). In addition, the three store managers were given a battery operated microcassette tape recorder. Seven time/activity log sheets and seven tapes, each labeled with a day of the week, were given to each store manager. All the tapes were transcribed verbatim and the findings were returned to the store managers for review and verification. The investigator systematically classified, enumerated, and compared duties to discover the actual skills used by chain apparel specialty store managers during the specified week.

### Triangulation

Denzin (1978) broadly defined triangulation as the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. The researcher's accuracy of judgment can be improved by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon. In this study, triangulation was used to: (a) allow the researcher to be more confident of results, (b) uncover the deviant dimensions of the phenomenon, and (c) use divergent results from several methods to enrich the explanation of the research problem.

This study used a combination of NGT, structured interviews, and field study to examine the same dimensions of the research problem. The NGT data-gathering technique was included because it provided relatively objective, quantitative data from insiders about skills needed by chain apparel specialty store managers. It provided a context for



organizing and interpreting the data obtained through the other techniques.

Structured interviews with district managers in Phase II constituted a second part of the triangle. The interviews were included to provide qualitative information from supervisors about store managers' skills. The interviews contribute to the holistic picture of the essential skills required for chain apparel specialty store management because they allow the researcher to probe perceptions held by those interviewed. Thus, the researcher avoided overly simplistic and inadequate inferences from the NGT data.

Finally, the Phase II field study was used because it provided impressionistic data on the actual job duties and skills utilized by specific store managers. Impressionistic data contribute to the holistic picture of the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills displayed by the store manager.

The multiple methods used in this study resulted in different images of understanding. Cross-checking the essential skills with the district managers improved internal consistency. Eisner (1979) describes structural corroboration as a process of gathering data or information and using it to establish links that eventually create a

whole that is supported by the bits of evidence that constitute it.

### **Data Management and Reduction**

Data management and reduction paralleled data collection. Knowing which district managers to interview, what to ask, or where to conduct field studies was based on analysis of data as they were collected. Working hypotheses and intuition directed the investigator's attention to certain data and then to refining and/or verifying the data.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis included analysis during data collection and intense data analysis after data collection. The final product of this study was shaped by the information that was collected and the analysis that accompanied the entire process.

**Analysis during data collection.** Bogdan and Bilklen (1982) have suggestions for analyzing data as they are being collected. The researcher adapted these suggestions to this study as follows:

1. Develop analytical questions. Assess the relevance of the interview questions and determine which questions should be reformulated to direct the work.
2. Record the observer's comments frequently as the research progresses.
3. Write self memos about what is being learned. Memos will help the researcher reflect on key issues.

4. Try out ideas and themes on subjects.
5. Explore literature while in the field.

Yin (1989) calls such organized material the case study data base. Yin says:

Every case study project should strive to develop a formal, retrievable data base, so that in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written reports. In this manner, the data base will increase markedly the reliability of the entire case study (pp. 98-98).

Intense data analysis. Once the decision was made to discontinue the interview and field study process, the information was organized for intensive analysis. All gathered information about the case was brought together. The case study data base information was edited, redundancies sorted out, parts fitted together, and the case records organized for ready access.

Next, all the data that had been gathered together and organized topically were reviewed several times from beginning to end. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest unitizing the data. The units served as the basis for organizing the data according to the eight job duty categories. A unit could be a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph.

In summary, every attempt was made by the investigator to move back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation. Yin

(1989) says, "the ultimate goal is to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytical conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations" (p. 107).

### Ethical Concerns

When the investigator entered into the lives of store managers and district managers at the level of intrusion required for this qualitative case study, ethical problems could have arisen. Ethical dilemmas could have emerged during the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings. Common ethical concerns are the right to privacy, the notion of informed consent, and the issue of deception (Merriam, 1988).

The definition of what is right and acceptable is communicated in the choice of language, the constraints accepted, the security devised to protect information, the establishment of informed consent at entry, and the provision of genuine reciprocity with collaborating participants (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987). Diener and Crandall (1978) offer sound advice:

There is simply no ethical alternative to being as nonbiased, accurate, [and] honest as is interpersonally possible in all phases of research. In planning, conducting, analyzing, and reporting his work the scientist should strive for accuracy, and whenever possible, methodological controls should be built in to help (p. 162).

### **Accuracy of Transcripts**

All but one interview with district managers were taped and transcribed verbatim to insure accuracy. The verbatim transcripts were returned to the district managers so they could verify the data, make changes to clarify the data, or add relevant information. The discussion stages of the NGT session were also taped and transcribed.

At the completion of the field studies, the accumulated list of technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills identified from the daily logs and transcribed tapes were shared with the store managers. The managers verified their perception as to the accuracy of the list.

### **Accuracy of Content Analysis**

Internal validity is concerned with how one's findings match reality. One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured. "Assessing the isomorphism between data collected and the 'reality' from which they were derived is thus an inappropriate determinant of validity" (Merriam, 1988, p. 156). The investigator used three basic strategies suggested by Merriam to strengthen internal validity.

1. Triangulation--NGT, structured interviews, and field studies were multiple sources of data collection and multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings.
2. Member check--data were returned to the people from whom they were derived, with a request to check the accuracy of the results (See Appendix N for Research Verification Letters).
3. Peer examination--a college fashion merchandising instructor, who served as recorder for the NGT session, was asked to comment on the findings (See Appendix N for Research Verification Letter).

### Chapter Summary

The research design of this study is a qualitative case study. Three research techniques were selected to create a holistic impression of the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for chain apparel specialty store managers.

Phase I, the nominal group technique, was used to obtain data from seven chain apparel specialty store managers who were employed in the six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Statistical Area. Three of the NGT participants were included in the Phase II field study. The concurrent Phase II structured interviews with five chain apparel specialty store district managers were used to cross-check the NGT data. Pilot tests of the three research techniques helped the investigator refine data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed.

Data analysis consisted of analysis during data collection and intense data analysis after data collection. Special efforts were devised to insure accuracy of the transcripts and content analysis. The investigator was sensitive to ethical concerns that could have developed during data accumulation and/or reporting.

This chapter has presented the research design and methods used for this study. Included were the following components: (a) research design, (b) site selection process, (c) participant selection process, (d) data collection procedure, and (e) data management and reduction.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The research findings are presented in this chapter in the form of tables and narrative descriptions of essential skills. First, a profile of the participants' backgrounds is described. Second, essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills identified in the store managers' nominal group process and district managers' interviews are identified and compared. Finally, the skills used by selected store managers as they performed their job duties are identified.

#### **Profile of the Participants**

Seven chain apparel specialty store managers from regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA participated in the Phase I nominal group process. The store managers were nominated by their district managers based on their success as store managers. Four managers were employed in stores classified as SIC #565 Family Clothing Store, two in stores classified as SIC #562 Women's Clothing Stores, and one in a store classified as SIC #561 Men's and Boys' Clothing Stores. The participants had been in their current positions from one to six years, with an average of three years' experience as store managers. In total, they had 23



years of store managerial experience at their current chain apparel specialty stores.

The apparel specialty store chains employing the managers varied in size from a midwest regional chain of 140 stores to an international chain of over 840 stores. In composite, there are over 2220 stores in the seven managers' apparel specialty store chain divisions (See Appendix K for names of participating chain apparel specialty stores).

Three of the seven NGT store managers were selected to participate in the Phase II daily log field study. The three store managers selected were from SIC classification #561, #562, and #565. Table 3 profiles the personal and professional background of the chain apparel specialty store managers.

Five district managers with home offices in one of the six Milwaukee regional shopping centers were selected for the Phase II structured interviews. Three district managers were from SIC classification #565 (Family Clothing Stores) and two were from SIC #562 (Women's Clothing Stores).

The district managers had worked for their companies as district managers for 14 months to 16 years. Together they had 37.8 years experience as district managers with the given apparel specialty retailers. The district managers

Table 3

**Profile of Store Managers and District Managers**


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**Profile of Store Managers**

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Background	Ann	Chuck	Diann	Heidi	Kim	Kurt	Steve
SIC Number	565	565	565	562	562	565	561
a)Years Experience	2	6	1	3.5	3	4	3
a)Years Employed	2	6	7	3.5	5	4	6
Age	28	42	24	27	23	35	26
Years Education Beyond High School	2	5	1.5	4	0	2	3
Approximate number of stores in chain	500	140	840	143	150	147	300

---

a) Years of management experience and of employment at current employer only.

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**Profile of District Managers**


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Background	Bruce	Dave	Jenni	Nancy	Sue
SIC Number	562	565	562	565	565
Years Experience as District Manager	1	13	6	16	1.5
Number of stores in District	7	14	10	24	9

---

**Note.** Chuck, Kim, and Steve also participated in Phase 2 daily log field study stage of data gathering.

were responsible for supervising from 7 to 24 stores in their district (See Table 3 for profile of district managers).

### **Presentation of Findings**

The research findings are organized according to the four research questions. First, the Phase I store manager NGT priority rankings are charted and essential skills identified. Second, the Phase II structured interviews of district managers are priority ranked and essential skills charted and discussed. Third, the results of the nominal group process with store managers and structured interviews with district managers are compared for congruency. Fourth, the store managers' daily logs are analyzed to determine the essential skills used by store managers as they perform their daily duties.

#### **Question One**

Research question number one was: "What technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills do managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential to perform specified job duties?"

A group of seven chain apparel specialty store managers, charged with the identification of essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills, were the participants in Phase I of this research study. The essential skills identified in the nominal group process

were organized according to the eight specified duties. The skills are priority ranked according to a value score calculated for each, equal to the total participant score times the frequency of response.

Only the skills that appeared to be the most essential (according to the group value scores) are reported in this chapter. Table 4 lists the essential skills identified by the seven store managers during the nominal group process. The cut-off scores used to determine the essential skills varied from duty to duty because of the different value scores assigned to each duty. Each cut-off score was determined by: (a) a large drop from one value score to the next, and (b) the desire to include at least three essential skills in each job duty category (See Appendix L for the complete NGT essential skills list and priority rankings).

An examination of skills identified in Table 4 revealed 13 technical skills, 12 interpersonal skills, and 8 analytical skills as essential for chain apparel specialty store managers. Although the skills are identified as either technical, interpersonal, or analytical, participants sometimes identified skills as a combination of the three. For example, the skill "initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up" is classified as an interpersonal

Table 4

**Essential Skills Identified by Store Managers During the  
Nominal Group Process**

**Customer Service and Credit:** Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Define customer's problem and solve the problem	217	Analytical
2	Listen to customers	180	Interpersonal
3	Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorization, ticketing, and pricing	162	Technical
4	Maintain effective communications	120	Interpersonal
5	Use good reasoning and make sound decisions	110	Analytical

**Financial Planning and Control:** Any system or plan for checking reports, dates, or information. The conscious manipulation of such factors as budgets, sales volume, mark-up, mark-down, turnover, payroll, etc., to achieve a particular net profit. Also includes the timely processing of paper work.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up	150	Interpersonal
2	Communicate efficiently with supervisors	125	Interpersonal
3	Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals	92	Technical

(table continues)

**Merchandising:** Involves the timely buying and/or ordering, pricing, and transferring of merchandise.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items	240	Interpersonal
2	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair, risk-taking	180	Technical
3	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers	160	Analytical
4	Ensure accuracy for home office paper work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits	144	Technical
5	Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store	114	Interpersonal

**Personnel:** Programs, practices, and procedures dealing with scheduling, dress codes, incentives, recruiting and selection, training and development, compensation, evaluation, promotion, and termination of employees.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly	280	Interpersonal
2	Establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up	240	Technical
3	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff	180	Analytical
4	Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control and setting a good example	155	Analytical

(table continues)

**Promotion:** Promotion includes advertising, visual merchandising (display), public relations (including publicity), and special events (including fashion shows).

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
1	Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff	252	Analytical
2	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques	196	Technical
3	Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display	168	Technical
3	Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh and creative	168	Analytical

**Security:** Protecting the store against losses from employee theft, shoplifting, robbery, and other crimes against persons and property.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
1	Train and maintain an alert staff	222	Interpersonal
2	Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks	154	Technical
3	Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques	145	Technical
4	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems	125	Analytical

(table continues)

**Selling and Sales Management:** Involves analyzing the customer's needs, communicating product knowledge, and helping the customer to select a specific product. Includes meeting store and individual sales goals plus motivating and training employees to increase sales.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
1	Give customer service first priority	192	Technical
2	Role model selling ability	180	Interpersonal
3	Motivate employees to be competitive	144	Interpersonal
4	Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques	105	Technical
5	Know merchandise, fashions, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination	104	Technical

**Store Layout and Housekeeping:** Involves selling and nonselling areas including floor plans, fixturing, maintaining a clean and neat atmosphere, and maintaining supplies.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
1	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance	228	Technical
2	Role model housekeeping expectations	88	Interpersonal
3	Delegate weekly duties	80	Interpersonal

**Note. Value Score:** For each identified skill, the priority rankings of participants were added together to determine the participants score. The total number of participants that ranked a given skill was the frequency of response. The participants score was multiplied times the frequency of response to determine the value score. The highest potential value score was 392.



skill but technical and analytical skills may also be important in performing this skill.

Essential technical skills were identified in each of the eight job duty categories. Three of the 13 essential technical skills were concerned with selling and sales management. Merchandising, promotion, and security each had two essential technical skills associated with the given job duty. In the selling and sales management category, the technical skill "give customer service first priority" had the number one value ranking. Likewise, the technical skill "setting high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance" had the number one value ranking in the store layout and housekeeping category.

Essential interpersonal skills were identified in seven of the eight job categories. Although interpersonal promotional skills were identified, promotional skills did not receive as high a value ranking as analytical and technical skills in this duty category. The 12 essential interpersonal skills were equally divided among the other 7 job duty categories. The interpersonal skills related to "train and maintain an alert staff" (security category) and "maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items" (merchandising category) have the highest priority rankings in their respective categories.

The essential analytical skills were associated with five of the eight duty categories. Financial planning and control, selling and sales management, and store layout and housekeeping were the three duty categories that did not have high ranking scores for analytical skills. However, the analytical skills "define customer's problem and solve the problem" (customer service and credit category) and "establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff" (promotion category) were each ranked number one in their respective job categories.

In summary, the essential technical skills identified by chain apparel specialty store managers include a knowledge of company policies, equipment usage, fashion-related product information, payroll procedure, and theft control. The dominant interpersonal skills were the ability to communicate, train, delegate, and role model specific behavior for employees. The essential analytical skills include the ability to set high store standards, solve customer and employee problems, determine sales trends, and generate creative promotional ideas.

### Question Two

Research question number two was: "What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do district managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers

identify as essential for their store managers to perform specified job duties?"

The structured interviews were with five district managers of chain apparel specialty stores in the Milwaukee MSA. The skills lists, established as a result of the Phase I NGT, were used to structure the interviews. During the interviews, the district managers were instructed to study the skills list and select the eight most essential skills for a store manager from each job duty category (See Appendix I for the structured interviews list of skills) .

Table 5 presents the essential skills as identified by district managers. Only the skills with the highest group value scores are reported. The complete district managers' prioritized list is available in Appendix M. The cut-off scores used to determine the essential skills varied from duty to duty because of the different value scores with each duty. Each cut-off was determined by: (a) a large drop from one value score to the next, and (b) a desire to include at least two essential skills in each job duty category.

Based on the district managers' priority rankings, 12 of the 25 highest value scores were interpersonal. Seven skills were classified as priority analytical skills. Six technical skills were also in the top priority rankings.

High value scores for technical skills were in only four of the eight job duty categories. These four

Table 5

**Essential Store Manager Skills Identified by the District Managers During the Structured Interviews**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Customer Service and Credit Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority	112	Interpersonal
2	Listen to customers	84	Interpersonal
3	Define customer's problem and solve the problem	80	Analytical

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Financial Planning and Control Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Engage in time management and planning	125	Analytical
2	Prioritize duties	96	Analytical
3	Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals	92	Interpersonal

**Note. Value Score:** For each identified skill, the priority rankings of participants were added together to determine the participants score. The total number of participants that ranked a given skill was the frequency of response. The participants score was multiplied times the frequency of response to determine the value score. The highest potential value score was 200.

(table continues)

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Merchandising Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, color	110	Technical
2	Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise	88	Interpersonal
3	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers	84	Analytical
4	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair, risk-taking	76	Technical
5	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items	72	Interpersonal

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Personnel Activities Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly	180	Interpersonal
2	Create team atmosphere	155	Interpersonal
3	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff	140	Analytical
4	Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others	105	Interpersonal

(table continues)

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Promotion Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs	100	Technical
2	Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas	95	Interpersonal
3	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques	92	Technical

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Security Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Promote good customer service to deter theft	120	Interpersonal
1	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems	120	Analytical
2	Maintain security through proper floor coverage	112	Analytical

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Selling and Sales Management Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Give customer service first priority	200	Technical
2	Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales	150	Interpersonal

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Store Layout and Housekeeping Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
1	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance	140	Technical
2	Establish and enforce store standards	130	Interpersonal

categories were merchandising, promotion, selling and sales management, and store layout and housekeeping. Technical skills had the number one priority ranking in these four job duty categories. The technical skills that had the number one priority ranking were: "follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color" (merchandising category); "create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs" (promotion category); "give customer service first priority" (selling and sales management category); and "set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance" (store layout and housekeeping category). The number one priority sales skill selected by all five district managers was "give customer service first priority."

High value scores for interpersonal skills were in all eight job categories. Three of the number one priority ranked skills were interpersonal. The three top-ranked interpersonal skills were: "maintain commitment to customer service as a priority" (customer service and credit category); "provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly" (personnel category); and "promote good customer service to deter theft" (security category).

Analytical skills had high value scores in five of the eight job categories. Number one priority analytical skills

were "engage in time management and planning" (financial planning and control category) and "recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems" (security category). The personnel activity "communicate expectations and establish standards for staff" had the highest analytical value score.

In addition to prioritizing the essential skills during the structured interviews, the district managers also explained their rationale for the rankings of the items. A discussion of the views expressed by district managers follows. The information helps explain the priority rankings of the skills in Table 5. The interview information was organized according to the eight job duty categories.

**Customer service and credit.** Three district managers selected "maintain commitment to customer service as a priority" as their number one priority ranking. The general response was that the interpersonal skills associated with a "commitment to customer service" are very important. One district manager stated: "If you don't have that, you're probably not going to be the store manager." Another district manager explained how maintaining good customer service skills should increase business for the store:

Good customer service is the fine line between reaching a maximum potential, getting the most dollars out of the customer's pocketbook, and at



the same time, making sure that they have an enjoyable rewarding experience in your store. It's a combination of being aggressive, but also at the same time being extremely courteous and pleasant to work with. Sometimes that's hard to do, but that's the key.

The interpersonal skill, "listen to customers," was also selected by four of the five district managers as an essential skill. The manager must be able to: "Separate in the conversation what the customer is really trying to tell you. You can then arrive at a workable or a mutual end to solve the customer's problem." There is a time when the manager should say nothing. One manager described the challenge of effective listening:

The hardest skill to learn and probably the easiest area which we all have to get better on is listening to the customer. If we don't listen to the customer, obviously we're not going to hear what she or he has to say. Listen to the customer would be obvious for determining a customer problem or need.

The analytical skill, "define customer's problem and solve the problem," was also selected as an essential skill by four of the district managers. "The manager must be able to determine when did this happen and act appropriately."

**Financial planning and control.** District managers expect managers to have the essential skills necessary to run a business. A manager must be able to control expenses:

We're really looking at the control of payroll, miscellaneous expenses, which would be supplies, utilities, repair, maintenance. . .things that are affected by the store management team. It's been

my experience that a chain store manager would be held accountable for those types of things financially. Primarily payroll control.

All five district managers ranked "engage in time management and planning" as an essential skill. Although they agreed that it is an important skill and essential to achieving goals, some did not feel that this skill was the most important skill in this particular job duty category. One district manager said that managers must work on time management constantly:

Managers must be able to do more than one thing at a time. Students tend to focus on one subject. Managers may have 20 things to get done so they must be able to delegate. They cannot get everything done by themselves.

Three of the five managers ranked "prioritize duties" as their first or second choice in this category. The basic consensus was that managers must focus on the priorities of the company and develop the game plan to achieve those priorities. "Everything starts with operation or organization and time management, if you're going to get any of this done" stated one district manager. The manager must decide what the basic job duties are and which financial decisions make the most money for the store:

What comes first, markdowns or checking in stock? Obviously, markdowns would come first because that would generate more sales. All decisions are made on increasing sales as far as prioritizing your job responsibilities.

Four managers ranked the interpersonal skill "set goals and keep everyone informed of goals" as essential. The observation was that this skill is closely related to the two skills described above. One manager said, "Once you know what needs to be done and you have the right priorities, then setting goals to achieve that is essential to accomplishing them." Managers should set sales and store duty goals on a daily and weekly basis. Managers should then share these goals with their assistants and sales staff:

Nothing is accomplished without goals. Everybody has to be in tune with what your goals are if you're looking to be as successful as you possibly can. No one gets anywhere without goals.

**Merchandising.** The technical skill "follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color" was an essential skill selected by all five district managers. The consensus was that chain apparel specialty stores have guidelines regarding the appearance of the store. Usually, the home office specifies which key items should be featured up front, what merchandise needs to be emphasized, and what they want to sell in quantities. The technical skills needed to follow this floor set procedure are very important. In addition, the manager must "Merchandise and finesse things to make the store even more

appealing to the customers." One manager described this skill as

kind of like copying off the blackboard. Anybody can do that. What separates the mechanical part from the creative part is their ability to be creative in the visual presentation, make the visual presentation exciting. That's really what separates a good merchandiser from a less talented merchandiser.

"Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise" is an essential interpersonal skill picked by four district managers. The consensus was that the manager's attitude influences the employees' attitudes. If the manager makes it fun to sell the merchandise, the staff will be excited about the merchandise. If the manager trains employees to be excited about all kinds of merchandise, regardless of their personal preference, this will greatly affect the profitability of the store. It can result in more profitable selling:

We highly encourage our associates to wear the merchandise and to be knowledgeable about the merchandise. Every time somebody in the store has an outfit on, we usually sell at least one that day. . . . If your staff is enthusiastic and can tell customers about new merchandise coming in or what's going to be available to them, you'll have a lot of customers coming back to see the exciting merchandise.

The ability to "determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers" is an essential analytical skill listed by four district managers. In most chain store environments, the manager has very limited control over the

actual merchandise that is received. However, stock must be adjusted according to the customers in a given location.

"That's what makes the difference between somebody who can run a store, who drives the business," stated one district manager. The merchandise that is in the store is money that the company has invested. If the manager does not recognize the hot items fast enough or take proper markdowns on slow items, the inventory will not be turned over:

It's important that if you have racks or something on your wall or something on display that hasn't sold, you haven't sold one piece, it's time you change it. Just putting something in another area can mean a lot. If you have a key sweater, maybe a hand knit, and you put it on display in the back of your store and nobody can really recognize it, change it. Put it in the front window, put it on your two-way, move your merchandise around. You might be able to sell it faster that way.

"Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking" was the fourth highest priority ranked skill. Merchandising was described as an analytical ability combined with a flare for visual creativity. The district managers look for indicators that a manager has, not only the analytical skills to determine merchandise needs for that store, but also the skills to create a visually exciting presentation. Even though the company requires each store to have certain things in certain places, it was stated that the creativity of the manager in a particular store always comes through:

Their personality does always show through by their layering techniques, what we call the frosting. The fun and exciting things should be highlighted on the front racks or in a key position. If you get a sweater in and you know it's your customer, take a risk--put it on that front fixture. See if you can sell it. . . . Just changing and having the customers see different things, especially in the front of your store, is very important.

Most managers communicate at least once a week with their district managers. Therefore, the interpersonal skill "maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items" was ranked high as an essential skill. Managers must communicate merchandise needs correctly so the proper merchandise can be pulled and transferred to the store. It was said that communicating with supervisors can be very important in fine tuning the merchandising mix that a store receives from the distributor or planner in the organization. One district manager said:

Most organizations have built a system where home office allocates the goods to the stores. But, if you have a good store-level communication to the buyers, you can affect your merchandise mix that way. That will, also, result in increased sales and profitability.

**Personnel.** The five district managers ranked the interpersonal skill "provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly" among their top priorities for a manager. Consistency in new employee training is important so that everybody is trained the same way. Consistency means that the staff knows what

the manager's priorities are, how their performance will be evaluated, and what they need to do for the store.

Consistent training and regular appraisal of employees can help employees grow, build camaraderie, and keep everyone working to meet the manager's expectations. One district manager discussed the relationship between training and good communication skills:

The key is communicating--period. Communicating performance regularly is crucial to improving a staff, to growing their skills to the next level. Training, of course, ties in with that. It's a very important function.

All five managers also selected the interpersonal skill "create team atmosphere" as an essential skill. It was frequently mentioned that motivation and team spirit are important. If there is a team atmosphere, noted the district managers, the people hired will stay longer which creates an opportunity for greater training. One district manager stated that managers should let associates know how important they are to the manager and to the store:

We always say that our sales people are the most important people in our store. They're the people who see all your customers. They're the ones who talk to the most customers. You need to create a team atmosphere so that everybody's working toward the same goals and accomplishments, and that's to make the store the very best it can be in sales and in profitability. When you create a team atmosphere, your people work harder. They need to know that they're a part of an important plan in an important store.

"Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff" was an analytical skill selected by all five district managers. One interviewee explained that having high standards and leadership skills enables a manager to achieve the standards set for the store. Standards start at the top. One manager said, "You have to be a good example-setter with high standards." Employees must know what is expected of them in order to achieve the desired store productivity:

If your staff doesn't know what's expected of them, don't expect them to perform in the manner that you want them to. If they don't know that your priority is customer sales or your priority is merchandise presentation, they're not going to do what you want them to do.

The interpersonal skill, "encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others" was again selected by all five district managers. The key words mentioned by the district managers were "encouragement" and "respect." District managers encourage their managers to give recognition for outstanding staff performance and initiative. They said appreciation and recognition for work well done will create camaraderie. "It's very important that everyone feels they're a part of that store because the motivation level will increase dramatically," stated one district manager. The interviewees also responded that how employees are treated and the respect they receive can be a



strong influence on employee longevity. In summary, a manager stated: "You need to have a little respect for these people. They might have some really good ideas. If they're not encouraged to talk about their ideas, you're going to stifle your whole store."

**Promotion.** Displays can be an important element in promoting a store, attracting customers into the store and getting customers excited about buying merchandise. For that reason, the five district managers selected the technical skill "create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs" as a priority skill. One manager said that she "likes when a manager is on the edge of things and is creative and willing to take chances." In general, they said, managers are quite limited in the freedom they have in displaying merchandise. All companies have guidelines, some more strict than others. The creative part comes in how the manager interprets those guidelines:

You do the mechanical part of the display work, but there can be a lot of variations in the fine tuning of the presentation, color coordination, fabric coordination, and what you do with the manikin displays. It can really make a difference in the final picture that you present to the customer, though the mechanical part of the presentation will essentially be the same.

The consensus among the managers was that staff involvement is an important factor in the success of the store. Therefore, the technical skill "motivate staff to

get involved in promotions and try new ideas" received a high priority ranking. One person commented that promotion activities start at the managerial level, but the manager must motivate the staff to be a part of the promotion in order to accomplish the performance goals. This person said, "Managers must always be willing to try something new and make employees feel good about the merchandise-- associates give 90% of all ideas." A district manager recognized the bottom line consequences when he said, "If your staff's behind you, you'll have a successful store."

The district managers described the chain apparel specialty store as having individual cultures or merchandising styles. They said that it is extremely important to have consistency between all stores in the chain. For this reason the technical skill "internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques" was selected as a priority skill by four of the district managers. A manager must be aware of what clothing has been bought for the store and how buyers like to see it displayed because everything was bought for a reason. One person said, "You need to incorporate into your store how the buyers want the merchandise displayed." Since retail chains are trying to give a certain message to the consumer, they want managers with creativity and new ideas as well as the ability to follow a specified program by the home office.

**Security.** If the staff is involved with every customer in the store, then the opportunity to steal is minimized. The challenge is to create a minimum opportunity environment. The district managers indicated that the best way to accomplish this goal is through the interpersonal skill "promote good customer service to deter theft." The consensus of opinion was that if customers are being served, they are not going to steal from the store. One manager stated, "The number one deterrent for theft is good customer service."

The five district managers ranked the analytical skill "recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems" as an essential skill. Internal theft is sometimes greater than external theft. It was said that a manager can be too trusting and not sensitive enough to an employee's personal problems or frustrations with the store. The manager must know what to look for, how to minimize problems, and how to address those problems. Controlling theft "is very important in controlling the operation costs."

There was consensus that the analytical skill "maintain security through proper floor coverage" is a high priority skill. A district manager said, "If your sales associates are not with customers, or if they're all in one area, you're going to leave the opportunity for somebody to

steal." A district manager stated that today there are so many new ways to steal that it is difficult to remain current. Therefore, good security goes back to: "Customer service awareness and really providing an environment that is going to deter shoplifting. So floor zoning or floor coverage is crucial."

**Selling and sales management.** The only skill that was selected as the number one priority by all five district managers was "give customer service first priority." Their rationale was simple and unanimous: "Sales begin with good customer service." If the team believes in customer service and the focus is on customer service, the results will be increased sales.

The interpersonal skill "develop a proactive staff that initiates sales" was also a priority skill identified by four district managers. The consensus was that a staff should be trained to be aggressive and skillful in generating additional sales. Managers must talk with employees and get them involved: "Employees must claim ownership in the store and take pride in their work. Managers must ask for feedback to make the business better." The staff must understand that the number one reason why they are employed is to get sales. One district manager said, "Get your staff hungry for sales."

Store layout and housekeeping. "Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance" is a technical skill ranked high by all five district managers. This technical skill requires an understanding of the importance of cleanliness and merchandise organization. Merchandise organization standards could include returning merchandise to the floor in perfect condition, colorizing, sizing, and facing merchandise on racks, and placing merchandise correctly on hangers or in bins. Cleanliness is vacuuming, dusting, cleaning glass, organizing the backroom, and removing trash. Several district managers indicated that when the store opens each day the managers need the technical ability to go outside the store and appraise its appearance. Then, they should walk through the store and ensure that merchandise is stocked properly and all areas have been dusted. Any problems must be communicated to the sales associates. One district manager said:

If you keep on top of your store on a daily basis, your store will be more clean and more organized. You'll have to spend less time doing it. I like it when a staff comes in the morning and they know exactly what needs to be done. They grab the Windex and the paper towels and they do the mirrors or they fill in the stock.

The five district managers priority ranked the interpersonal skill "establish and enforce store standards" as an essential skill. A manager must be aware of the expectations the company has regarding standards for store

maintenance. They must also make it clear to the sales associates what those standards are and how to enforce them. An interviewee stated that follow through and enforcing store standards will keep the staff disciplined in performing their duties or keeping the store resized, stocked, and cleaned. She said:

A clean, neat store, very clean and very organized, could make up for a lot of flaws in your merchandising. A store that's easy to shop, a customer is not going to know that this isn't exactly where it should be or this is out of place. But overall, if you have a clean and exciting, inviting store with a lot of change always going on, your customers will come in and enjoy shopping there.

**District managers' overall viewpoints.** At the conclusion of the district managers' interview sessions, interviewees were asked to summarize their viewpoints on the essential skills for chain apparel specialty store management. The consensus was that essential technical skills are influenced by the type of computerized registers used by the store. Payroll, inventory, employee documentation, item checks with other stores and transfers can all be transacted through a computerized register. With computers and facsimile machines, information is being sent and received more efficiently and timely.

Chain store management uses technology to control store operation and improve productivity. It was stated that the success of a store often depends on the manager's ability,

creativity, and personality. While that is true today and will always be true to an extent, companies are now putting more controls on store managers to ensure that they follow proper guidelines and procedures. One district manager described the change:

Retail is going to be using technology in order to monitor performance and actually dissect how each store is performing in order to put certain controls that will ensure that all stores are consistent in what they're doing.

During the interview summary statements, little reference was made to analytical skills. The emphasis was more on people skills. One district manager, however, did note that managers need basic analytical skills to effectively analyze the business numerically:

I'm looking for someone who knows how to drive the business. Someone who can change those numbers on paper. They must affect the business from a merchandising standpoint and a personnel standpoint through hiring, motivational skills, and what it's going to take to drive the business as opposed to just running the store day in and day out. . . . It's got to be somebody who's willing to take a chance and can be creative and not take the attitude "Well, that's the way it's always been so we're just going to continue to do that." Even if their business is up 30 or 40%, they're not going to settle for that, it's not okay.

The district managers perceived the interpersonal skills as the most challenging and difficult skills. The personnel part of the job is "90% of their success, their barriers, their headaches, or their joys." In today's

highly competitive environment, the successful manager must be able to interpret and implement someone else's directions. In addition, they said the manager must be resourceful in achieving outstanding results. The manager is responsible for hiring the sales staff, motivating the personnel, and training. The manager's own sales ability, professionalism, and the handling of other people and problem situations all grow out of strong interpersonal skills. Other key words used to describe the successful manager were creative, aggressive and able to set high standards. A district manager described the skills of a superior store manager in this way:

They are the people that go the "extra mile" to get the extra dollar in their register. Are they satisfied with just running an existing business versus the concept of building or maximizing the potential of the business? It's really two different mentalities. That is the difference, in my opinion, of today's successful management people versus people who are really non-promotables. They might be adequate store managers, but "adequate" is probably the best word that is going to be used for them. They're not superior people.

### **Question Three**

The third research question was: "Are the essential technical, interpersonal and analytical skills identified by store and district managers congruent?"

Store managers who participated in the NGT and district managers who participated in the structured interviews were



asked to priority rank the eight most essential skills for each job duty category. The value scores, determined by adding the participants scores and multiplying the score times the frequency of response, were used to determine priority rankings. The essential skills identified in the cumulated top eight priority rankings by store managers and by district managers were organized into congruency tables according to the job duty categories. The first section of each table lists the congruent skills, that is those in the top eight priority rankings of both store managers and district managers. The middle section lists skills that were only in the store managers' top eight priority rankings. The bottom section identifies skills that were only in the district managers' top eight priority rankings.

**Customer service and credit.** Store managers and district managers agreed on five of the eight essential customer service skills identified during the nominal group process (See Table 6). The interpersonal skills "maintain effective communications" and "listen to customers" had comparable rankings by both groups. However, the interpersonal skill "maintain commitment to customer service as a priority" differed greatly in priority ranking. District managers ranked it as number one while store managers ranked it number eight. This could be an important difference in perception between the two groups. It appears

**Table 6**  
**Customer Service Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers.

<b>Store Managers</b>		<b>District Managers</b>		<b>Skill Type</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>		
1	217	3	80	A	Define customer's problem and solve the problem
2	180	2	84	I	Listen to customers
3	162	6	39	T	Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, pricing
4	120	5	54	I	Maintain effective communications
8	26	1	112	I	Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

5	110	9	27	A	Use good reasoning and make sound decisions
6	40	12	6	T	Know register/computer operation and basic math
7	30	8	30	I	Demonstrate tact and patience

Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

11	18	4	63	I	Extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, put customer at ease
9	24	6	39	A	Choose best response to meet customer's needs
12	14	7	36	A	Follow through on assurances and promises

**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical.

as if store managers who are on the "firing line" in stores every day might think of skills having immediate, micro-level applications. Whereas, district managers, with the vantage point of being away from the store environment, might think more globally, or macro-level.

The technical skill, "know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, and pricing," also indicated a gap in congruency. District managers said that they view this technical skill as a basic expectation for all store managers and, therefore, ranked it low on their priority list. Store managers, who are more involved with interpreting policies on a daily basis, rated this skill third on their priority rankings. Once again there was a store managers' micro-level versus district managers' macro-level interpretation of essential skills.

The specific analytical skill statement preferred by store managers and district managers was different, but the skills are quite similar. Store managers ranked the skill "use good reasoning and make sound decisions" as their fifth priority. District managers ranked this skill tenth and instead selected "choose best response to meet customer's needs" as their sixth priority. The skills are interrelated because in choosing the best response, the manager must be able to reason and make sound decisions.

The interpersonal skill "demonstrate tact and patience" was priority ranked number seven by store managers and ninth by district managers. This skill is similar to the district managers' fourth ranked priority skill "extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, put customer at ease." Both interpersonal skills reinforce the number one priority skill involving commitment to customer service.

Financial planning and control. The store managers and district managers agreed on six of the eight essential skills (See Table 7). However, the rankings of the interpersonal skill "communicate efficiently with supervisors" were dissimilar. Whereas the store managers' ranking was the number two priority, the district managers' ranking was number eight. The district managers indicated that other analytical and interpersonal skills were of a higher priority.

The incongruency between store managers' and district managers' priority rankings was related to the selection of technical versus analytical skills. Store managers included two technical skills that were not included in the district managers' top eight priority rankings. Store managers ranked the technical skill "maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals" as number three. They also ranked the technical skill "perform basic retail

Table 7

**Financial Planning and Control Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<u>Store Managers</u>		<u>District Managers</u>		<u>Skill Type</u>	<u>Essential Skills</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>		
1	150	4	76	I	Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up
2	125	8	44	I	Communicate efficiently with supervisors
4	64	1	125	A	Engage in time management and planning
5	57	3	92	I	Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals
7	45	5	72	A	Know and understand factors that affect your business
8	39	6	57	A	Increase sales volume by developing positive morale and motivation

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

3	92	9	42	T	Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals
6	51	12	0	T	Perform basic retail math

Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

9	36	2	96	A	Prioritize duties
11	22	7	52	A	Schedule personnel to maximize sales

**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical

math" as number six compared to the district managers who unanimously excluded it from their top priority rankings.

No technical skills were on the district managers' top eight priority rankings. Instead, they included the two analytical skills "prioritize duties" and "schedule personnel to maximize sales" as part of their top eight essential skills list.

**Merchandising.** Once again there is congruency on six of the eight skills viewed as essential for chain apparel specialty store managers (See Table 8). The merchandising category had a higher number of technical skills on the congruency list. There is a similarity of priority ranking of the technical skills "creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking," "know store merchandise," and "know statistics and market trends."

The technical skill "ensure accuracy for home office paper work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits" had a priority ranking of number 4 by the store managers but a low priority ranking of 11 by the district managers. On the other hand, the district managers ranked the technical skill "follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color" as their number one merchandising skill. The store managers gave this skill the low priority ranking of 11.

**Table 8**  
**Merchandising Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<u>Store Managers</u>		<u>District Managers</u>		<u>Skill</u>	<u>Essential Skills</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value</u> <u>Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value</u> <u>Score</u>		
1	240	5	72	I	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items
2	180	4	76	T	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair, risk-taking
3	160	3	84	A	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers
6	72	6	54	T	Know store merchandise
7	54	7	52	T	Know statistics and market trends
8	48	6	54	I	Display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, floor changes

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

4	144	11	1	T	Ensure accuracy for home office paper work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits
5	114	8	36	I	Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store

(table continues)

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Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

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11	27	1	110	T	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color
13	20	2	88	I	Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise

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**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A= Analytical



Likewise, a major incongruency exists with the interpersonal skill "encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise." This merchandising skill was ranked number 2 by the district managers; however, it received a low priority ranking of number 13 by the store managers. Table 8 depicts the Merchandising Essential Skills Congruency Chart.

**Personnel.** Five essential personnel skills have similar priority rankings by both the store managers and the district managers (See Table 9). Both groups ranked the interpersonal skill "provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly" as the number one personnel activity skill. They both, also, ranked the analytical skill "communicate expectations and establish standards for staff" as number three.

Major inconsistencies emerged on two essential skills priority rankings and value scores. The skill ranked number two by store managers was the technical skill "establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up." It received a value score of 240 by store managers. The district managers ranked this skill as number 12 and gave it a value score of 1. The second discrepancy involved the interpersonal skill "encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others." District managers

**Table 9**  
**Personnel Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<u>Store Managers</u>		<u>District Managers</u>		<u>Skill Type</u>	<u>Essential Skills</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>		
1	280	1	180	I	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly
3	180	3	140	A	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff
4	155	5	51	A	Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and setting a good example
7	68	2	155	I	Create team atmosphere
7	60	6	36	A	Generate a variety of motivational ideas

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

2	240	12	1	T	Establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up
5	95	8	12	T	Know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing
6	95	9	6	A	Face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise)

(table continues)

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Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

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10	12	6	36	A	Evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation
10	12	4	105	I	Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others
11	6	7	33	A	Engage in creative problem solving using relevant facts

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**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical

ranked it number 4 with a value score of 105, while store managers ranked it number 10 with a low value score of 12.

Six of the 11 essential personnel skills are analytical, three are interpersonal, and two are technical. Once again the technical skills were selected by the store managers rather than the district managers.

**Promotion.** There was congruency on only half of the identified essential promotion skills (See Table 10). Seven of the 12 essential skills listed by either the store managers or district managers were technical, three were interpersonal, and two were analytical. The majority of the promotional skills related to visual merchandising techniques and fashion coordination and special events.

A significant difference of perception occurred between the number one rankings by the two groups. While store managers ranked the analytical skill "establish high visual merchandising expectations with staff" as their number one priority, the district managers' ranking for that item was number 11. On the other hand, the district managers' number one ranking was the technical skill "create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs" which received a number eight ranking by the store managers.

District managers chose the interpersonal skill "motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas" as their number two priority. Store managers

Table 10

**Promotion Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<u>Store Managers</u>		<u>District Managers</u>		<u>Skill Type</u>	<u>Essential Skills</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>		
2	196	3	92	T	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques
3	168	4	72	T	Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative
4	100	5	60	I	Be creative, imaginative and willing to take chances
6	76	8	45	A	Determine best fashion statement on a timely basis

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

1	252	11	18	A	Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff
3	168	12	7	T	Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display
5	80	13	1	I	Produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image
7	68	9	24	T	Be aware of color coordination and fashion trends

(table continues)

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Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

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8	57	1	100	T	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs
10	33	2	95	I	Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas
11	18	6	51	T	Know area marketing trends
9	39	7	48	T	Follow corporate floor setup plan

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**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical.

selected the interpersonal skill "produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image" as their fifth priority. Both groups agreed that the interpersonal skill "be creative, imaginative and willing to take chances" was an essential promotion skill.

**Security.** The 12 identified essential skills in the category of security had an equal number of technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills (See Table 11). However, store managers tended to identify more interpersonal and technical skills while district managers selected more analytical skills. Both groups ranked the technical skills "maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques" and "know security laws, store policies, and procedures" as essential skills.

Again, a significant difference of preference surfaced between the two groups regarding their first and second priority rankings. District managers' number one security skill was the interpersonal skill "promote good customer service to deter theft." Store managers ranked this skill number 10. Likewise, the second ranked priority by district managers was the analytical skill "maintain security through proper floor coverage", which was ranked 12th by store managers.

Store managers rated the technical skill "accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag

Table 11

**Security Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<u>Store Managers</u>		<u>District Managers</u>		<u>Skill Type</u>	<u>Essential Skills</u>
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Value Score</u>		
1	222	5	70	I	Train and maintain an alert staff
3	145	3	90	T	Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques
4	125	1	120	A	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems
6	96	4	72	T	Know security laws, store policies and procedures

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

2	154	11	1	T	Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks
5	100	8	10	T	Understand value of property and responsibilities assumed by the manager
7	80	10	5	I	Control sales situation with emotional stability and "tough poise"
8	75	10	5	I	Display professionalism in handling theft situations

(table continues)



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**Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.**

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10	20	1	120	I	Promote good customer service to deter theft
12	6	2	112	A	Maintain security through proper floor coverage
12	6	6	56	A	Stress theft prevention
9	57	7	30	A	Design anti-theft awareness training programs

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**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical

checks" as their second highest priority skill. However, on the district managers' rankings, this skill received a low ranking of 11.

**Selling and sales management.** Both groups agreed that the number one ranked selling skill is "give customer service first priority" (See Table 12). The high priority ranking for customer service as a selling skill corresponds with the district managers' number one priority ranking of the skill "maintain commitment to customer service as a priority" in the customer service and credit job duty category.

Store managers and district managers selected variations of the interpersonal sales management skills theme as their second and third priority rankings. The second ranked skill by store managers, "role model selling ability," is closely linked to the district managers second ranked skill, "develop a proactive staff that initiates sales." Likewise, district managers selected "demonstrate enthusiastic behavior" and store managers chose a comparable skill, "motivate employees to be competitive," as their third priority ranking.

The fourth ranked essential skills selected by both groups are also similar. Both groups chose a technical skill related to the selling process. The district managers selected the general skill "follow selling steps." The

**Table 12**  
**Selling and Sales Management Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

<b>Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers</b>					
<b>Store Managers</b>		<b>District Managers</b>		<b>Skill Type</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>		
1	192	1	200	T	Give customer service first priority
2	180	8	24	I	Role model selling ability
3	144	5	39	I	Motivate employees to be competitive
6	76	7	30	T	Empower sales professionals by involving staff at all level

<b>Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.</b>					
4	105	11	10	T	Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques
5	104	9	16	T	Know merchandise, fashion, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination
7	75	13	4	A	Teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge
8	72	12	7	I	Develop team selling skills

<b>Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.</b>					
13	6	2	150	I	Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales
10	45	3	56	I	Demonstrate enthusiastic behavior
9	51	4	54	T	Follow selling steps
11	40	6	33	A	Be aware of sales figures, goals, and trends

**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical

store managers preferred a specific selling step which is "determine customer needs through good questioning techniques."

Store layout and housekeeping. Store managers and district managers agreed on their number one store layout and housekeeping priority (See Table 13). Both groups selected the technical skill "set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance."

The second priority rankings are different, but both focus on the importance of store standards. Store managers chose "role model housekeeping standards." District managers selected a more general skill, "establish and enforce store standards."

Incongruity in priority ranking occurred when store managers selected technical and analytical skills and district managers selected interpersonal skills. Store managers' priority ranked the technical skills "organize the back stock" and "know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations." The analytical skill "make efficient use of backroom" also received a higher priority ranking by store managers than district managers.

District managers, on the other hand, ranked the interpersonal skills "communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement" as number 4 and "train staff to resize and restock" as number 7. Store managers

Table 13

**Store Layout and Housekeeping Essential Skills Congruency Chart**

Essential skills identified in the top eight priority rankings by both store managers and district managers

<b>Store Managers</b>		<b>District Managers</b>		<b>Skill Type</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Value Score</b>		
1	228	1	140	T	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance
2	88	8	30	I	Role model housekeeping standards
3	80	6	92	I	Delegate weekly duties
4	63	2	130	I	Establish and enforce store standards
6	54	3	92	T	Prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store
8	30	5	60	A	Decide best use of space based on sales volume

Essential skills identified only by store managers in their top eight priority rankings.

5	56	9	24	T	Organize the back stock
7	48	12	5	A	Make efficient use of backroom
8	30	13	0	T	Know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations

Essential skills identified only by district managers in their top eight priority rankings.

10	26	4	84	I	Communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement
11	12	7	52	I	Train staff to resize and restock

**Note.** T = Technical, I = Interpersonal, A = Analytical

ranked these same skills as numbers 10 and 11. Table 13 provides more detailed information regarding the congruency of store layout and housekeeping skills.

#### Question Four

Research question number four was: "What technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills do store managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers utilize as they perform their job duties?"

The Phase II field study research used the managerial skills approach to verify the essential skills list created during the nominal group session and district managers' interviews. The skills approach is based not on the innate traits and characteristics of managers, but rather on the kinds of skills which they exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively (Katz, 1974). The goal of the field study research was to determine: (a) how the selected store managers actually spent their time, and (b) which actual technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills they used during a one-week time period.

Three store managers from the NGT session were invited to participate in the Phase II field study research. The field study included daily manager-generated time/activity logs and tape-recorded diaries of their activities during a one-week time period. Diaries were completed during a one-week period consisting of five work days in the month of

May. Daily time/activity logs were kept on a half-hour basis. Daily activities were recorded on a microcassette tape recorder, and the tapes were transcribed verbatim. The store managers' activities were matched with the NGT skills list to determine if managers were actually using the essential skills they specified in the NGT session.

During the one-week period, the participating store managers utilized the majority of the skills specified in the NGT session. The skills that absorbed the major share of the managers' time were in the areas of sales and sales management, customer service, merchandising, and personnel. Skills related to financial planning and control, store layout, and housekeeping were also used on a regular basis throughout the week. However, financial planning and housekeeping activities absorbed only a small amount of the managers' time, frequently at the beginning and end of each day. Little reference was made during this particular week to skills associated with security and promotions.

Although every effort was made to select a week that was typical for chain apparel specialty store operations, the researcher acknowledges that some skills may not have been mentioned or implied during the given week. Some skills, especially those related to promotion and security, may be essential but used only as the need or situation occurs. The time/activities logs were used to validate the

overall skills list generated during the NGT, and not to imply that any given skill was more essential than any another skill.

**Customer service.** The managers were consistently on the selling floor at least 70% of each day. While on the selling floor, each manager used interpersonal skills which demonstrated a managerial commitment to customer service. To strengthen employee commitment to customer service, each manager used technical skills associated with staff training that focused on customer service. The interpersonal skill "maintain effective communications" was used to train sales associates on customer service procedures and to discuss customer service ideas with district managers. Finally, the interpersonal skill "role model for employees" was frequently mentioned as the managers' primary responsibility when they were on the selling floor.

In one store manager's diary the entries for the entire week were concerned with improving customer service. The phrase, customer service, was mentioned 15 times in this diary. The manager held five-minute meetings with sales associates at the beginning of each day to discuss customer service goals. He communicated with the district manager and other store managers about how to improve store customer service. When working the selling floor, he called himself a "customer service lead" and described it as a role model



that makes sure that all customers are greeted with smiles, acknowledged, given prompt attention and thanked by name.

After studying the daily logs and activities transcripts, the researcher matched the managers' activities with the NGT essential skills list (See Appendix L for NGT essential skills list). The following customer service skills were mentioned or implied in the daily logs. The amount of time spent on each skill varied with each store and day. Only technical and interpersonal customer service skills were identified in the daily activities logs.

The NGT customer service technical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, and pricing;

know register/computer operation and basic math;  
and

offer consistent service and train staff on guidelines.

The NGT customer service interpersonal skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

maintain effective communications;

maintain commitment to customer service as a priority;

role model for employees; and

extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, put customer at ease.

Financial planning and control. Nearly all the skills identified on the NGT list of skills were utilized by the three store managers in the specified week. The managers regularly used "things to do" lists to organize the day and to delegate responsibilities to sales associates. They spent at least an hour each day on the technical skills associated with auditing paper work and reading and staying informed through regular and electronic mail.

Many of the skills utilized were concerned with the need to increase store productivity and the pressure to reach daily sales goals. In order to improve sales figures they had to control payroll, build positive morale, motivate employees, manage inventory properly, and lead by example.

The managers also talked about training assistant managers in how to do paperwork and delegating responsibilities to sales associates. The daily sales audit usually included a report on the number of employee hours per week and dollars spent for payroll. From that information, the managers would calculate productivity and selling costs. Each manager spent some time during each day communicating productivity and sales goals to each employee.

The NGT financial planning and control technical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals;

perform basic retail math;  
document and justify written reports;  
audit paper work daily;  
read and stay informed through mail and electronic  
(phone) mail updates.

The NGT financial planning and control interpersonal skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up;  
communicate efficiently with supervisors;  
set goals and keep everyone informed of goals;  
increase sales volume by positive morale and motivation; and  
leadership by example.

The NGT financial planning and control analytical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

engage in time management and planning;  
know and understand factors that affect your business;  
prioritize duties;  
schedule personnel to maximize sales; and  
use inventory and merchandise practices that generate peak traffic.

Merchandising. It appears that a major share of a manager's responsibility involved new shipments of merchandise. One manager indicated that his store receives 60 cartons of merchandise per week. Daily the managers were

concerned with the technical skills associated with remerchandising basic stock, markdowns, restocking and checking-in merchandise. They also displayed a sense of urgency in getting new stock on to the floor and making the necessary floor moves.

The managers in the NGT selected the technical skill "creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking," as their number two priority ranking. The diaries made no reference to creativity and individual flair, but instead reflected the technical skill "follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color." The diaries talked about the pressures associated with a store visit from the district or regional managers. The emphasis was on merchandising techniques that met corporate expectations and followed proper procedure rather than those activities that displayed creativity.

The NGT merchandising technical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

remerchandise basic stock and markdowns;

ensure accuracy for home office paper work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits;

know store merchandise;

follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color;

use computers [registers] for reports and transfers; and

know shipping and receiving.

The NGT merchandising interpersonal skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers [plus regional managers and home office] on fast and slow selling items;

train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store;

display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, and floor changes; and

encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise.

The NGT merchandising analytical skill mentioned or implied in the daily logs was:

determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers.

**Personnel.** The highest concentration of analytical skills was mentioned or implied in this job duty category. The managers frequently talked about techniques to improve employee training, motivation, and communication. Two of the store managers spent a substantial portion of their week training new assistant managers or sales associates. The managers were also involved with cross training their more experienced assistant managers and creating a team atmosphere.

One manager discussed personnel activities associated with hiring a new assistant manager. The new assistant manager had arrived one hour late on her first day of work. She claimed her alarm did not work and she overslept. On the same day, another assistant manager also came in late. The manager described their tardiness as depressing. He said, "I guess that you would say that I am using personnel skills and trying to keep my composure and not fly off the handle at them." When the assistant finally arrived, he talked with her about standards associated with attendance, store expectations, sales goals, and the training process. He also explained the interpersonal skills necessary to cope with himself, other assistant managers, sales associates and work on a day-to-day basis. In addition, he completed the paper work necessary to document a new employee. Filing the proper paper work included the application form, the federal W-4 forms, the Immigration Act forms, and an employee background check.

Fifteen of the 21 personnel skills from the NGT skills list were mentioned or implied in the daily logs. Personnel technical skills were primarily concerned with selecting, training, promoting, and evaluating employees. The four technical skills mentioned or implied were:

establish training program which include cross training and follow-up;

know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing;

maintain accurate and timely documentation of staff files; and

know company performance standards.

The three interpersonal skills mentioned or implied from the NGT personnel job duty category were concerned with developing good employee communication. The interpersonal skills were:

provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly;

encourage staff input and new ideas; and

get along with others.

The eight analytical personnel skills were concerned with evaluating, motivating, and role modeling. The NGT personnel analytical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

communicate expectations and establish standards for staff;

demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and setting a good example;

face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise);

create team atmosphere;

generate a variety of motivational ideas;

evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation;

evaluate applications and resumes; and

know manager's and sales people's goals.

**Promotion.** Only three promotional skills from the NGT essential skills list were mentioned or implied in the daily logs. The two technical skills were:

internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques; and

follow corporate floor setup plans.

In the morning, the managers received messages from the home office via the cash registers. The promotional information received via the registers indicated price reductions for specified merchandise. The managers had to find the specified merchandise, place it on the appropriate racks or tables, and correctly tag and promote the sale merchandise.

One morning a manager received 20 pages of permanent markdown information, plus point of sale markdown and one-third off markdowns. The manager had to move sale merchandise from wall-mounted displays to round fixtures. The manager was also given specific directions by the district manager as to the proper floor changes. That same day the regional manager visited the store and "she had a few other things that she wanted to see a little bit different, so we made the couple of changes that she wanted." Although some reference was made to changing displays and layering techniques, more time was spent following specified company floor set plans.



The only interpersonal promotional skill mentioned was "motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas." One manager mentioned that traffic improved when they have a two-for-the-price-of-one price promotion. Sales associates are expected to sell multiple pieces of merchandise with each transaction. During the promotion, employee "multiples" improved since more customers were buying the "two-for" items.

One retailer was having a contest for all store assistant managers. One manager indicated that the company frequently had contests to stimulate employee motivation. Since the store business was slow, the assistant manager had to try new ideas and get sales associates excited about earning contest points. She called another store that was more successful with the contest to get ideas. Then, she revised the contest for assistant managers so that associates could play, too. This company also had promotions to motivate staff to provide "100%" customer service.

**Security.** There was almost no reference to skills associated with loss prevention and security. Only one store had theft problems mentioned in the daily activity logs. This store manager used the interpersonal skills connected with training and maintaining an alert staff and displayed professionalism in handling the theft situations.

During the previous week, while the manager had been on vacation, there was an attempt to shoplift at the store. The manager was pleased that the sales associates knew how to stop the theft before it had happened. Another theft problem involved a skirt that had been found on the floor that was not store merchandise. A switch had occurred whereby store merchandise had been taken and a skirt was left from another store. The sales associate that found the skirt did not report the problem immediately. The manager had to impress upon the employee the importance of immediate action.

The analytical security skills involving the ability to recognize shortage indicators were mentioned in relationship to inventory control. When merchandise arrived at the stores, it was counted and matched with the shipping receipts. The managers indicated that it is important that transaction summaries from the home office match with the actual merchandise received. If the store is billed for merchandise it never received, the manager has an inventory shrinkage problem.

**Selling and sales management.** The majority of the store managers' day involved selling and sales management activities. The managers described their time on the selling floor as a combination of working with customers, supervising employees, teaching and role modeling selling

techniques and motivating the sales people. To accomplish these activities, they simultaneously used technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills.

Technical skills associated with selling were described as quite simple. Usually, the customers like the merchandise and only need assistance with locating the right size, color, and/or coordinating items. Even the register procedure has been simplified with electronic prompters that lead the sales associate through the operation. The NGT selling and sales management technical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

- give customer service first priority;

- empower sales professionals by involving staff at all levels;

- supervise the sales floor, register area, and backroom; and

- maintain proper floor coverage.

The interpersonal skills were the major challenges in this job duty category. The store manager must have high sales goals, plus teach and role model selling standards. They are also constantly concerned with employee motivation and the impact of employee attitude on daily sales volume and customer service. One manager described the selling challenge.

A lot of times people [sales associates] come in and they'll have a bad attitude or just basically are a little tired from their weekend. Sunday is

a good selling day for us, so I have to make them be in a positive attitude and get them cheered up a little bit, just talk to them, find out how their weekend was, things like that and keep them going. Then, we start working with customers. . . . I know part of my job duties is to work with customers, obviously to get the sales. But, I also supervise the employees, making sure that they're working with the customers enough and trying to get every sale that they can . . . to make sure we keep the salespeople motivated is a high priority.

The NGT selling and sales management interpersonal skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

role model selling ability;  
 motivate employees to be competitive; and  
 demonstrate enthusiastic behavior.

The analytical selling and sales management skills involved designing employee training schedules and working with staff to achieve specified sales and customer service goals. One manager described the analytical skills used while training a new sales associate:

I suggested ideas for her, different ways for her to say things that would be comfortable for her in selling. I worked with her on her selling with customers. . . . I still had to, obviously, give her more guidance and give her sayings and phrases that would help her in her sales.

The NGT selling and sales management analytical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge;  
 be aware of sales figures, goals, and trends;

communicate personal and team goals; and use suggestion selling.

Store layout and housekeeping. All three managers discussed on a daily basis the importance of maintaining a clean and neat atmosphere in both the selling and nonselling areas. Two stores had visits by the district manager and/or other corporate management. The managers wanted everything to be perfect when their store is visited by management.

One manager explained the preparation process:

One important thing is to make sure that the tables are perfect, that they're very shopable, so we went through and made sure that they were very straight, very neat, and very organized. . . . It's very important, not only when he's [Director of Stores] coming, but on a daily basis to be going through and straightening when you have a slow period because it keeps the store much more shopable. . . . You want it [the store] to look as fresh as possible during the middle of the day as it did at 10:00 in the morning when you opened.

The managers indicated that the technical skills associated with organizing the back room stock and supplies can be important to security and efficient operation of the store. The managers want the back stock neat and clean so the staff can check for merchandise quickly and, therefore, better service customers. The NGT store layout and housekeeping technical skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance;

organize the back stock;

prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store; and

organize supplies for easy retrieval.

Role model, delegate, enforce, train, and communicate are the interpersonal skills associated with this job duty. All of the managers spent time walking the floors and discussing floor moves with their staff and district managers. One manager described a necessary floor move made by her staff the week before while she was on vacation. The district manager told her that the move went smoothly. She said, "So that tells me that they're [sales associates] able to master the concept of what you need to do to make changes on the floor and make them right." The interpersonal skills mentioned or implied in the daily logs were:

role model housekeeping standards;

delegate weekly duties;

establish and enforce store standards; and

communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement.

Analytical skills related to floor space allocation and efficient use of limited backroom storage areas. The managers discussed the importance of quickly moving new merchandise from the backroom to an appropriate floor location. One manager said, "We need to keep up on our

stock because it's very important to get our merchandise out on a timely basis, and feature key items in a good location so that they're very visible to the customer." The two analytical skills mentioned or implied in the daily log were:

make efficient use of backroom; and  
decide best use of space based on sales volume.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter consists of a case report describing the research findings of the study. First, a background profile of the participants was presented in order to provide the reader with a general description of the participating store managers and district managers. Secondly, the research findings were organized according to the four research questions. The findings for each research question was grouped according to the eight specified job duty categories.

This qualitative study used a combination of the nominal group technique (NGT), structured interviews, and field study to address the research problem. The nominal group meeting with seven store managers generated a list of 150 essential skills in the eight specified job duty categories. This NGT essential skills list provided the framework for subsequent structured interviews with five district managers. The store managers and district managers

were asked to prioritize the essential skills list and the lists were analyzed for congruency. The lists were also compared with three store managers' daily activities logs to determine if the managers actually used the specified skills.

This study indicated the following essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers: training, delegating, communicating, solving customer and employee problems, setting high standards, determining sale trends, and generating creative merchandising ideas. In addition, the manager must be skilled in interpreting company policies and procedures, analyzing fashion-related product knowledge, applying theft control procedures and using various types of equipment. The managers spent the majority of their day on the sales floor and needed the skills necessary to improve sales figures, control payroll and inventory, build positive employee morale, and be a good role model.

District managers want store managers to have a combination of management and leadership skills. They indicated that the store managers should be able to "drive the business" with creativity, employee involvement and motivational strategies.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, EMERGING THEMES, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the study is presented in this chapter, including a discussion of the findings, emerging themes, implications for education and training, and recommendations for further research. The research findings are organized according to the four research questions.

#### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for managers of chain apparel specialty stores located in regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. Very little specific information has been available concerning skills needed by chain apparel specialty store managers.

In the 1980s, the apparel specialty retail industry was characterized by a number of firms expanding and diversifying their retail holdings and coming to dominate the industry. As a result the industry is composed of national firms whose decision-making structures are highly centralized. The centralized structure and competitive nature of the apparel specialty stores concentrated in regional shopping centers have transformed the marketing of men's and women's apparel ("A Decade," 1988). Likewise, based on the literature review, increased centralization and

competition appear to have altered the responsibilities of apparel specialty store managers in regional shopping centers (Bluestone et al., 1981).

This study represents an attempt to conduct an in-depth investigation of the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for managers of chain apparel specialty stores. It is hoped that the results of this study will assist educators, trainers, and retail management personnel as they design teaching and training strategies for students and employees interested in apparel specialty store management.

The research design chosen for this study was a qualitative research paradigm. Since generalization in a statistical sense is not the goal of qualitative research, criterion-based sampling was used to select the site and research participants. The criterion-based sample for this study was selected from chain apparel specialty store managers and district managers employed in the six regional shopping centers in the Milwaukee MSA. The seven store managers and five district managers that participated in the research were from SIC #561 (men's clothing stores), SIC #562 (women's clothing stores), and SIC #565 (family clothing stores).

Three data-collection techniques were used in this study. Phase I of the research involved use of the nominal

group technique utilizing seven chain apparel specialty store managers. The Phase I priority lists of essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills generated during the NGT process were utilized for the Phase II research.

Phase II consisted of two research techniques, structured interviews and field studies. The structured interviews were with five district managers of chain apparel specialty stores. The structured interviews permitted the investigator to cross-check the essential skills identified by the NGT and to look for congruency of opinion between store managers and district managers. The field studies consisted of time/activity logs and tape recorded diaries of three store managers who were participants in the nominal group meeting. The field studies were used to verify the skills lists acquired via the nominal group process and structured interviews.

The cross triangulation of data obtained from the NGT, interviews, and field studies helped the researcher to be more confident of the results. The multiple viewpoints resulted in greater accuracy in judging the results. Finally, triangulation captured a more complete and holistic portrayal of the essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers.

Based on a review of chain apparel specialty store training literature, job duty categories were determined to serve as the framework for the study. The eight predetermined chain apparel specialty store managerial job duties were: (a) customer service and credit, (b) financial planning and control, (c) merchandising, (d) personnel, (e) promotion, (f) security, (g) selling and sales management, and (h) store layout and housekeeping. The summary of findings are according to the four research questions and the eight job duties as they apply to each question.

### **Summary and Discussion of Findings**

#### **Question One**

Research question number one was: "What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential to perform specified job duties?"

**Findings.** During the nominal group session, the seven store managers generated 150 responses to the above question (See Appendix L for NGT list of essential skills). Priority rankings by the store managers were used to identify the most essential skills for participating chain apparel specialty store managers. Only the skills that appeared to be most essential (according to the group value scores) were reported as findings.

The essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills for chain apparel specialty store managers were listed according to the eight job duty categories. The essential technical skills were:

**Customer Service and Credit**

Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorization, ticketing, and pricing.

**Financial Planning**

Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals.

**Merchandising**

Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking.

Ensure accuracy for home office paper work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits.

**Personnel**

Establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up.

**Promotion**

Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques.

Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display.

**Security**

Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks.

Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Give customer service first priority.

Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques.

Know merchandise, fashion, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination.

### **Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance.

The following list identifies the essential interpersonal skills for chain apparel specialty store managers:

### **Customer Service**

Listen to customers.

Maintain effective communications.

### **Financial Planning and Control**

Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up.

Communicate efficiently with supervisors.

### **Merchandising**

Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items.

Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store.

### **Personnel**

Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly.

### **Promotion**

None.

**Security**

Train and maintain an alert staff.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Role model selling ability.

Motivate employees to be competitive.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Role model housekeeping standards.

Delegate weekly duties.

The following list identifies the essential analytical skills for chain apparel specialty store managers:

**Customer Service**

Define customer's problem and solve the problem.

Use good reasoning and make sound decisions.

**Financial Planning and Control**

None.

**Merchandising**

Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers.

**Personnel**

Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff.

Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and setting a good example.

**Promotion**

Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff.

Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative.

**Security**

Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems.

**Selling and Sales Management**

None.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

None.

**Discussion.** The NGT essential skills list is an almost equal blend of technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills. The highest percentage of skills was technical, representing 38.5% of the total list. The second highest percentage of skills was analytical, representing 32% of the total skills list. Interpersonal skills were 29.5% of the total skills list. Support for these findings comes from Mintzberg (1973) who described managerial work as enormously complex and requiring the skills needed to work with verbal information and intuitive processes.

Top priority technical skills were in all eight job duty categories. This agrees with the Carmichael (1968) study findings which indicate that retail middle managers need technical as well as managerial skills. The skills associated with training, cross training, and training follow-up were the highest-ranked technical skills. Other essential technical skills for the participating chain



apparel specialty store managers were a knowledge of company policies, equipment usage, fashion-related product information, and payroll procedures. Accuracy in processing paper-work and the ability to follow security procedures were also identified as important technical skills for the participating store managers. In addition, the specified managers must be able to interpret this knowledge to their employees and/or customers.

Interpersonal skills received priority ranking in all job duty categories except promotion. The highest-ranked interpersonal skill was the ability to provide employees with consistent training, information updates, and assessing performance regularly. Interpersonal skills involving communications, delegating, and role modeling were also essential for the specified chain apparel specialty store managers. The participating store manager must be able to communicate goals and performance standards to employees, to communicate sales trends to the home office, and to effectively communicate with customers and supervisors. The Carmichael (1968) study also concluded that communication and human relations were crucial activities contributing to the success of retail middle managers.

Analytical skills had high priority rankings in only five of the eight job duty categories. High priority ranked analytical skills were not identified in the financial

planning and control, selling and sales management, and store layout and housekeeping job duty categories. The participants placed a priority on the ability to establish high expectations and standards for personnel and use effective and creative promotional ideas. In addition, the participants identified the ability to use good reasoning and make sound decisions in areas such as solving customer problems, recognizing employee problems, identifying security shortage indicators, and determining daily sales trends as essential analytical skills. The findings of this study agreed with the research into department store middle management by Samson (1969) which described the middle management position as involving considerable responsibility in planning, decision making, inspiring and directing the work of others.

The essential chain apparel specialty store managerial skills identified during the nominal group meeting reinforce the managerial functions approach that originated with Henri Fayol in the early 1900s. The early work of Fayol has evolved into a contemporary list of management functions that includes planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting (Massie & Douglas, 1981; Miner, 1978; Mintzberg, 1973). The participants identified essential technical, interpersonal, and

analytical skills related to each of these managerial functions.

### **Question Two**

Research question number two was: "What technical, interpersonal and analytical skills do district managers of chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers identify as essential for their store managers to perform specified job duties?"

**Findings.** During the structured interviews, the five district managers were given a list of 108 essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. The skills list worksheets were a random listing of the highest priority ranked skills from the nominal group session with store managers (See Appendix I for district managers' worksheets). The list consisted of 13 or 14 skills for each of the eight job duty categories. During the interview, a district manager was instructed to study the skills list worksheets for each job duty category and priority rank the eight most essential skills for a chain apparel specialty store manager. Only the skills with the highest value scores were reported as findings.

The district managers' summary of findings of essential skills included 6 technical, 12 interpersonal, and 7 analytical skills. The following list summarizes the participating district managers' priority ranking of

essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. The district managers' list of six essential technical skills are organized according to job duty categories. The technical skills are:

**Customer Service and Credit**

None.

**Financial Planning and Control**

None.

**Merchandising**

Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color.

Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking.

**Personnel**

None.

**Promotion**

Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs.

Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques.

**Security**

None.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Give customer service first priority.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance.

The 12 essential interpersonal skills for chain apparel specialty store managers as identified by district managers are:

**Customer Service and Credit**

Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority.

Listen to customers.

**Financial Planning and Control**

Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals.

**Merchandising**

Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise.

Initiate phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items.

**Personnel**

Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly.

Create team atmosphere.

Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others.

**Promotion**

Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas.

**Security**

Promote good customer service to deter theft.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Establish and enforce store standards.

The seven essential analytical skills for chain apparel specialty stores as identified by district managers are:

**Customer Service and Credit**

Define customer's problem and solve the problem.

**Financial Planning and Control**

Engage in time management and planning.

Prioritize duties.

**Merchandising**

Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers.

**Personnel**

Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff.

**Promotion**

None.

**Security**

Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems.

Maintain security through proper floor coverage.

**Selling and Sales Management**

None.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

None.

**Discussion.** The district managers tended to attribute higher priority rankings to interpersonal skills. Of the 25 essential skills identified, 48% were interpersonal, 28% analytical, and 24% technical. The district managers frequently talked about their emphasis on interpersonal skills, especially those related to customer service and employee training.

The district managers' profile of an effective chain apparel specialty store manager is someone who has a combination of management and leadership skills. The manager must be able to demonstrate the technical skills associated with customer service, store maintenance, and creative and appropriate merchandising techniques. But, the leadership skills associated with being a role model for employees and demonstrating professionalism in the performance of all job duties are equally important. This blend of management and leadership skills is supported by Strong (1965) who described a manager as one who adds foresight, order, purpose, integration of effort, and effectiveness to contributions of others.

The participating district managers want a store manager who understands and enforces company standards and policies. Generally, chain apparel specialty stores have guidelines, some more strict than others, that may limit the merchandising and promotion creativity of the manager.

Previous research (Mintzberg, 1973) stated that managers serve as the key informational link between corporate headquarters and employees.

The district managers look for creativity in the manager's ability to interpret and apply guidelines. The manager must be able to apply the fundamentals of fixturing and merchandising. But, there are usually many variations in the fine tuning of the presentation, such as color or fabric coordination. Though the fundamentals are the same from store to store, it is the manager's creativity that makes a difference in the final store image presented to the customers.

The district managers emphasized the importance of customer service skills. The manager must train the staff to be proactive in initiating sales. Good customer service is described as the ability to maximize sales, and at the same time, make sure the customers have an enjoyable, rewarding experience in the store. A manager must train the staff to be aggressive in getting business for the store and still be extremely courteous and pleasant to customers and other employees. The ability to build a team atmosphere is also an essential interpersonal skill for store managers.

Finally, the participating district managers want store managers who can "drive the business." Managers should be able to influence the business from a merchandising and



personnel standpoint. The manager's attitude, enthusiasm, creativity and motivational skills will all make a difference in the success of the store. The manager must not only implement company directions but also be resourceful in achieving outstanding results for the store. The successful manager today must have the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills needed to build and maximize the potential business of their particular store. Previous research on middle management personnel in retailing (Carmichael, 1968) has also found that activities clustered around supervision, analysis, problem-solving, decision-making, communicating, human relations, and innovation were found to be the most crucial activities contributing to the success of middle managers.

### **Question Three**

Research question number three was: "Are the essential technical, interpersonal and analytical skills identified by store and district managers congruent?"

**Findings.** The findings for this question are divided into two separate lists. In the first list, the top eight priority skills ranked by store managers and district managers were matched for congruency. The second list was the incongruent skills, that is, those skills that were either in the store managers' or district managers' top

eight priority rankings but not on both lists. The two lists are organized according to job duty categories.

Store managers and district managers were in agreement on 40 of the 65 priority ranked essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. The 12 technical skills that both store managers and district managers priority ranked as essential are:

**Customer Service**

Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorization, ticketing, pricing.

**Financial Planning and Control**

None.

**Merchandising**

Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking.

Know store merchandise.

Know statistics and market trends.

**Personnel**

None.

**Promotion**

Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques.

Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative.

**Security**

Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques.

Know security laws, store policies and procedures.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Give customer service first priority.

Empower sales professionals by involving staff at all levels.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance.

Prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store.

The 17 interpersonal skills priority ranked as essential by both store managers and district managers are:

**Customer Service**

Listen to customers.

Maintain effective communications.

Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority.

**Financial Planning and Control**

Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up.

Communicate efficiently with supervisors.

Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals.

**Merchandising**

Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items.

Display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, floor changes.

**Personnel**

Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly.

Create team atmosphere.

**Promotion**

Be creative, imaginative and willing to take chances.

**Security**

Train and maintain an alert staff.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Role model selling ability.

Motivate employees to be competitive.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Role model housekeeping standards.

Delegate weekly duties.

Establish and enforce store standards.

The following 11 analytical skills were priority ranked as essential by both store managers and district managers:

**Customer Service**

Define customer's problem and solve the problem.

**Financial Planning and Control**

Engage in time management and planning.

Know and understand factors that effect your business.

Increase sales volume by developing positive morale and motivation.

**Merchandising**

Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers.

**Personnel**

Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff.

Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and setting a good example.

Generate a variety of motivational ideas.

**Promotion**

Determine best fashion statement on a timely basis.

**Security**

Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems.

**Selling and Sales Management**

None.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Decide best use of space based on sales volume.

The store managers and district managers disagreed on 25 of the 65 top eight priority ranked skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. Store managers selected 14 technical skills as essential, compared to the 5 technical skills selected by district managers. District managers placed a higher priority ranking on 9 interpersonal and 10 analytical skills while store managers chose 6 different interpersonal and 7 analytical skills.

The following list illustrates the incongruency in the priority rankings by the store managers and district managers regarding the essential technical skills for chain apparel specialty store managers:

<b>Store Managers</b>	<b>District Managers</b>
<b><u>Customer Service</u></b>	
Know register/computer operation and basic math.	None.
<b><u>Financial Planning and Control</u></b>	
Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals.	None.
Perform basic retail math.	
<b><u>Merchandising</u></b>	
Ensure accuracy for home office paper-work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits.	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color.
<b><u>Personnel</u></b>	
Establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up.	None.
Know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing.	
<b><u>Promotion</u></b>	
Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display.	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs.
	Knowledge of area marketing trends.

Be aware of color coordination and fashion trends.

Follow corporate floor setup plans.

### **Security**

Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks.

None.

Understand value of property and responsibilities assumed by the manager.

### **Selling and Sales Management**

Determine customer needs though good questioning techniques.

Follow selling steps.

Know merchandise, fashion, price, fit and wardrobe coordination.

### **Store Layout and Housekeeping**

Organize the back stock.

None.

Know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations.

The following list is the priority ranked interpersonal skills identified by either store managers or district managers, but not both. The incongruent interpersonal skills were:

**Store Managers****District Managers****Customer Service**

Demonstrate tact and patience.

Extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, and put customer at ease.

**Financial Planning and Control**

None.

None.

**Merchandising**

Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store.

Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise.

**Personnel**

None.

Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others.

**Promotion**

Produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image.

Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas.

**Security**

Control sales situation with emotional stability and "tough poise".

Promote good customer service to deter theft.

Display professionalism in handling theft situations.

**Selling and Sales Management**

Develop team selling skills.

Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales.



Demonstrate enthusiastic behavior.

### Store Layout and Housekeeping

None.

Communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement.

Train staff to resize and restock.

Store managers and district managers were incongruent on their priority ranking of the following essential analytical skills for chain apparel specialty store managers.

#### **Store Managers**

#### **District Managers**

### Customer Service

Use good reasoning and make sound decisions.

Choose best response to meet customer's needs.

Follow through on assurances and promises.

### Financial Planning and Control

None.

Prioritize duties.

Schedule personnel to maximize sales.

### Merchandising

None.

None.

### Personnel

Face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise).

Evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation.

Engage in creative problem solving using relevant facts.

### Promotion

Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff.

None.

### Security

None.

Maintain security through proper floor coverage.

Stress theft prevention.

Design anti-theft awareness training programs.

### Selling and Sales Management

Teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge.

Be aware of sales figures, goals, and trends.

### Store Layout and Housekeeping

Make efficient use of backroom.

None.

**Discussion.** Store managers and district managers were congruent on 62% of the priority ranked essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. During the interviews, the district managers indicated that many of the skills listed on the interview worksheet were important and in some cases they had difficulty priority ranking the skills.

District managers were asked if any additional skills should be added to the list generated by store managers during the nominal group session. They each said that the list was very complete and had no new skills to add to the list. Generally, it appeared that the district managers had communicated to their store managers the skills that were essential for managing a chain apparel specialty store.

Incongruencies between the seven store managers' and the five district managers' priority ranking of essential skills should be noted. For example, the participating store managers' essential skills priority ranking emphasized technical skills such as store operation, product knowledge, company rules, and paperwork. The district managers considered these as "basic" requirements of the job. Instead, district managers frequently talked about wanting store managers who have the analytical skills to "drive the business" with creativity, employee involvement, and maximum use of motivational skills. This study implies that chain apparel specialty store managers may need a combination of the identified essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills to be promotable.

#### Question Four

Research question number four was: "What technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills do store managers of

selected chain apparel specialty stores in regional shopping centers utilize as they perform their job duties?"

**Findings.** The field study phase of this study used the managerial skills approach to verify the essential skills list created during the nominal group sessions and district managers' interviews. The managerial skills approach identifies the skills managers actually exhibit in carrying out their jobs effectively (Griffin, 1987; Katz, 1974; Kreitner, 1989). Like the Katz (1974) skills management model, research question four was concerned with the observable skills that an effective manager demonstrated as they performed their job duties.

Three store managers from the nominal group session kept time/activity logs for a one-week time period. The purpose of the logs was to compare the list of essential skills generated during the NGT with the actual job duties performed by the specified store managers. In all job duty categories except promotion and security the managers were actually using the majority of the skills they specified during the nominal group session.

The major share of the store managers daily activities were concerned with sales and sales management, customer service, and personnel training. The managers were consistently on the sales floor at least 70% of their day. They described their time on the selling floor as a

combination of working with customers, supervising employees, teaching and role modeling selling techniques, and generating motivational ideas for the sales staff.

Many of the skills associated with financial planning and control were concerned with the need to increase store productivity and the pressure to reach daily sales goals. In order to improve sales figures, a store manager had to use skills related to controlling payroll, building positive morale and motivation, managing inventory properly, and leading by example.

Daily, the managers used skills necessary to merchandise and promote new shipments of merchandise. The managers seemed more concerned with the technical skills needed to merchandise basic stock, calculate markdowns, handle restocking and checking-in merchandise than displaying creativity, individual flair, and risk-taking. The emphasis was on merchandising techniques that met corporate expectations and followed proper procedure rather than on creativity skills.

The managers discussed on a daily basis the importance of maintaining a clean and neat atmosphere in both the selling and nonselling areas. All of the managers spent time communicating floor moves with their staff and district managers. Housekeeping skills were identified as an important phase of the store opening and closing procedure.

The technical skills most frequently used by the three store managers during a one-week time period involved customer service, selling, proper processing of paper-work, stocking and restocking merchandise, and maintaining housekeeping standards. Interpersonal skills frequently mentioned in the time/activity logs included motivating employees, role modeling, training, team building, listening and communications. Analytical skills were concerned with hiring and evaluating employees and establishing appropriate training programs. The managers were also regularly analyzing sales trends and creating sales goals and incentive programs to improve customer service and sales volume.

**Discussion.** The daily time/activity logs did demonstrate that the essential skills identified during the nominal group session were actually used by the three store managers as they performed their job duties. The majority of skills in all job duty categories except promotion and security were mentioned or implied some time during the week of the field study research.

#### **Emerging Themes**

Based on the interpretations of the findings and the literature review, the following emerging themes are offered for consideration. The reader is reminded that this is a qualitative case study with findings gathered from a small

number of chain apparel specialty stores in the Milwaukee MSA. The emerging themes represent the researchers interpretation of key findings from the study and should be used for awareness and discussion purposes only.

1. Store managers, who are first-line supervisors, tended to identify essential skills related to daily store operations. District managers, with the vantage point of being away from the day-to-day operations of the store, tended to think more globally when making their priority rankings. Thus, it appears that store managers selected skills with micro-level applications, while the participating district managers were looking for store managers with macro-level skills. This gap in micro-level versus macro-level essential skills perception could be an important factor in the promotability of a store manager. It may also serve as a barrier to effective communications between store managers and district managers.

2. If a program is designed to prepare students or employees for careers in chain apparel specialty store management, changes in program content may be necessary. For example, since district managers indicated that chain apparel specialty stores do little advertising, except for national advertising campaigns, skills related to advertising were not mentioned as essential for store managers. Skills related to buying and credit procedures

were also identified as not being essential for participants in this study. Yet, fashion merchandising and retail management programs sometimes offer entire courses devoted to advertising, buying and credit procedures. The skills needed to manage sales, ensure good customer service, and train employees effectively were frequently mentioned as essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. If an academic program is concerned with training students or employees for chain apparel specialty store management, more attention may need to be given to these areas.

3. The findings in this study indicated that the skills related to the merchandising and promotion job duty categories were related skills that often overlapped in content and application. Many times store managers and district managers viewed them as the same job duty. The essential skills in both categories concentrated on visual merchandising and the ability to follow corporate guidelines and still creatively merchandise stock and create exciting displays. Both job duty categories also require a knowledge of fashion, color, equipment usage, and marketing trends. These two job duty categories had a high concentration of technical skills that could be taught in an academic setting.

4. In this study, store managers gave priority ranking to almost three times as many technical skills as district



managers while district managers placed a higher priority ranking on interpersonal and analytical skills. District managers indicated that interpersonal and analytical skills associated with personnel management represents 90% of the store manager's successes, barriers, headaches, and/or joys. District managers frequently talked about wanting store managers who have the analytical skills to "drive the business" with creativity, employee involvement, and maximum use of motivational skills. Educators might consider how fashion merchandising and retail management programs can effectively teach these interpersonal and analytical skills.

5. In this study, the conflict between district managers who say that store managers must be creative in merchandising and store operations versus corporate home offices that put controls on stores to ensure that managers follow proper guidelines and procedures was mentioned frequently. It was said that the success of a store often depends on the manager's ability, creativity, and personality. The successful manager was described as someone with the ability to interpret and implement someone else's directions and still be resourceful in achieving outstanding results. However, a strong emphasis on consistency in store operations and the use of computer generated performance controls may serve as a barrier to creative expression and risk-taking by store managers.

### **Implications for Education and Training**

The goal of this study was to create awareness of essential skills for chain apparel specialty store managers. Fashion and retail textbooks and career directories often focus on job skills for positions such as buyers, department store management trainees, and retail entrepreneurs. This qualitative case study should be helpful in creating awareness of changes in apparel retailing job skills. The implications for education and training are to generate discussion as to curriculum content and training program design.

1. In light of the growth of chain apparel specialty stores and the decline of department stores throughout the United States, fashion merchandising and retail management educators should be aware of essential skills for chain apparel specialty store management. The skills lists in this study may serve as a guide for fashion merchandising and retail management educators. Educators and trainers can begin by analyzing the list of essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills generated during the NGT session. From the NGT list, they may be able determine which skills might be appropriate for their particular curriculum or training programs. Next, a review of the congruencies and incongruencies between store managers and district managers perceptions of essential skills may give

the reader a more holistic view of skills that might be essential for chain apparel specialty store managers.

2. The congruency table that compared store managers' and district managers' priority rankings of essential skills could be an important guide in developing apparel specialty store management training programs. Educators and retail trainers may consider offering skill-building seminars on some of the topics that this study considered essential for the specified chain apparel specialty store managers. Based on this study, seminar topics to consider may include delegation, problem solving, effective listening and communications, time management, goal setting, creative merchandising and promotion, analysis of market and fashion trends, employee training and performance evaluations, team building, visual merchandising techniques, security laws and procedures, customer service priorities and practices, and effective sales techniques.

#### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations for further research are offered.

1. The reader is reminded that this study is not based on a random sample from which statistical inferences can be drawn. However, this qualitative study identified essential skills for specified chain apparel specialty store managers

that might be validated through a quantitative study with a larger representative sample of the population. The research could be duplicated with other apparel specialty store chains and in other regions of the country.

2. The study treated the eight job duty categories as equally important duties. Both the store managers and district managers wanted to prioritize not only the essential skills for each category but also the categories themselves. Further research should allow for priority ranking of the job duty categories.

3. Some of the specified skills may be learned on the job while other skills could be learned through academic training in retail management or fashion merchandising programs. For example, the skill "know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, and pricing" is a technical skill that could likely be learned on the job. However, the technical skill "maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals" could be taught in an academic setting. Additional research is needed to determine which skills should be included in a retail management or fashion merchandising curriculum and which skills should be learned on the job.

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**A P P E N D I C E S**

**APPENDIX A**

**Index of Chain Apparel Specialty Stores  
That Meet the Study Participant Criteria**

**Index of Chain Apparel Specialty Stores  
That Meet the Study Participant Criteria**

WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORES (SIC #562)

**Six regional shopping centers  
in Milwaukee MSA**

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>BF</u>	<u>GA</u>	<u>MF</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>SR</u>	<u>Total</u>
Au Coton				X	X	X	3
August Max Women		X	X	X		X	4
Brauns/Gigi		X		X			2
Brooks Fashions		X	X			X	3
Caren Charles	X			X	X	X	4
Casual Corner	X	X	X	X		X	5
Chapman's II	X			X			2
Contempo Casuals		X			X	X	3
Deb Shop					X	X	2
Foxmoor		X			X	X	3
Gantos		X			X	X	3
The ID	X	X	X		X	X	5
Jean Nicole			X		X	X	3
Just Petites			X	X			2
Lane Bryant		X	X		X	X	4
Lerner		X		X			2
Lerner Woman		X			X		2
The Limited	X	X	X		X	X	5
Limited Express	X	X	X		X	X	5
Madison's	X			X	X	X	4
Marianne		X			X	X	3
Mark Henri	X		X				2
Paul Harris				X	X	X	3
Petite Sophisticate	X	X		X	X	X	5
Seifert's	X			X			2
Sizemore Casuals	X			X			2
Susie's Casual		X				X	2
Units			X	X	X		3
Ups 'N Downs		X			X	X	3
Woman's World Shops					X	X	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>93</b>

(30 corporate chains)

**Note:** BF is Bayshore Shopping Center  
 BS is Brookfield Square Shopping Center  
 GA is The Grand Ave  
 MF is Mayfair Shopping Center  
 NR is Northridge Shopping Center  
 SR is Southridge Shopping Center

## MEN'S CLOTHING STORES (SIC #561)

Six regional shopping centers  
in Milwaukee MSA

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>BF</u>	<u>GA</u>	<u>MF</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>SR</u>	<u>Total</u>
Bachrach's			x	x	x	x	4
Chess King		x	x		x	x	4
D.J.'s Fashion Center for Men/Attivo		x		x		x	3
J. Riggings	x			x	x	x	4
Webster Men's Wear					x	x	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>

(5 corporate chains)

## FAMILY CLOTHING STORES (SIC #565)

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>BS</u>	<u>BF</u>	<u>GA</u>	<u>MF</u>	<u>NR</u>	<u>SR</u>	<u>Total</u>
American Eagle	x	x			x	x	4
Baskin	x	x	x				3
Benetton Super Store	x		x	x			3
Berman's		x	x	x	x	x	5
County Seat	x	x		x	x	x	5
Designs Exclusively by Levi Strauss				x	x	x	3
Eddie Bauer				x	x		2
Florence Tanners					x	x	2
The Gap		x	x		x	x	4
Merry Go Round			x		x		2
Redwood and Ross		x	x				2
Richman Brothers		x			x	x	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>38</b>

(12 corporate chains)

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>148</b>
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(47 corporate chains)

## Note:

BF is Bayshore Shopping Center  
 BS is Brookfield Square Shopping Center  
 GA is The Grand Ave  
 MF is Mayfair Shopping Center  
 NR is Northridge Shopping Center  
 SR is Southridge Shopping Center

APPENDIX B

Retail Panel of Experts

Keri Christianson  
District Manager  
Paul Harris/Pasta

Betsy Goodnow  
District Manager  
Units

Brian Son  
District Manager  
Bachrach's Men's Store

Julie Loeding  
Fashion Merchandising Instructor  
Waukesha County Technical College  
Former Marketing Director for  
Northridge and Southridge Shopping Center

Judy Witt/Traecy  
Fashion Merchandising Instructor  
Waukesha County Technical College



**APPENDIX C**  
**Participating Store Selection**  
**Criteria and Worksheets**

**Selection of Stores for Research**

Directions: Review the attached list and from the list select 10 chain apparel specialty stores. Also select 5 alternate stores to replace any stores that may be unable to participate in this research study. Use the following criteria to influence your selections. Your stores selection must include at least 2 men's stores and 3 men's/women's store.

**Factors that may influence your decision**

1. Will an apparel chain with 4 or 5 stores located in the six regional shopping centers have more experienced managers to nominate for participate in the research study?
2. Is the store financially secure with an established management team?
3. Is the store a growing retailer with an innovative management style?
4. Are there no more than two stores from the same parent corporation? (See attached list)
5. Does the list of ten stores represent a cross section of product, sizes, and price categories, such as junior vs. half sizes, leather garments vs. suits, mass vs. trendy fashions?

**List of 10 Stores**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Five Alternate Stores**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Milwaukee Six Regional Shopping Centers  
Apparel Specialty Store Mall Directory**

**WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORES (SIC #562)**

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Parent Corporation</u>
Au Coton	3	Au Coton
August Max Women	4	U.S. Shoe Corp
Brauns/Gigi	2	Brauns
Brooks Fashions	3	Dylex, Ltd
Caren Charles	4	U.S. Shoe Corp
Casual Corner	5	U.S. Shoe Corp
Chapman's II	2	Chapman, Inc.
Contempo Casuals	3	Carter Hawley Hale
Deb Shop	2	Deb Shops, Inc
Foxmoor	3	Dylex Ltd
Gantos	3	Gantos, Inc
The ID	5	Pranges
Just Petites	2	Maurices
Jean Nicole	3	Petrie Stores Corp
Lane Bryant	4	The Limited, Inc
Lerner	2	The Limited, Inc
Lerner Woman	2	The Limited, Inc
The Limited	5	The Limited, Inc
Limited Express	5	The Limited, Inc
Madison's	4	Madison, Inc
Marianne	3	Petrie Stores Corp
Mark Henri	2	Grafton Group, Ltd
Paul Harris/Pasta	3	Paul Harris Stores
Petite Sophisticate	5	U.S. Shoe Corp
Seifert's	2	Grafton Group
Sizemore Casuals	2	Sizemore Casuals
Susie's Casual	2	F.W. Woolworth
Units	3	J.C. Penneys
Ups 'N Downs	3	U.S. Shoe Corp
Woman's World Shops	2	Woman's World
Total	93	

**MEN'S CLOTHING STORES (SIC #561)**

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Parent Corporation</u>
Bachrach's	4	Bachrach, Inc.
Chess King	4	Melville Corp
D.J.'s Fashion Center for Men/Attivo	3	Merry-Go-Round
J. Riggings	4	Edison Brothers
Webster Men's Wear	2	Webster
Total	17	

## FAMILY CLOTHING STORES SIC #565)

<u>Name of Store</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Parent Corporation</u>
American Eagle	4	Retail Ventures, Inc
Baskin	3	Hartmarx Corp
Benetton Super Store	3	Benetton
Berman's	5	Melville Corp.
County Seat	5	Carson Pirie Scott
Designs Exclusively by Levi Strauss	3	Designs, Inc
Eddie Bauer	2	Spiegel
Florence Tanners	2	Florence Tanners
The Gap	4	The Gap, Inc
Merry Go Round	2	Merry-Go-Round
Redwood and Ross	2	Redwood and Ross
Richman Brothers	3	F.W. Woolworths
Total	38	
Grand Total	148	

APPENDIX D

District Managers' NGT Confirmation Letter

April 12, 1990

[Inside Address]

Dear

Thank you for your willingness to allow (name) to participate in my marketing education doctoral dissertation research study. (Name) will be a member of a panel that will identify the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for chain apparel specialty store management.

As we discussed, the meeting will be held at Mayfair Mall on Thursday, April 19 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I greatly appreciate your cooperation in this phase of the skills identification process. With your assistance and that of other apparel retailers in the Milwaukee area, we can develop educational programs for store managers that are responsive to the retail community's needs.

For your information, an abstract of my dissertation is enclosed. I will send you a copy of the research results and recommendations when the study is completed. Feel free to call me at (414) 691-5317 if you have additional questions or if I can be of service to you or your company. I look forward to (name)'s contributions.

Sincerely,

Barbara Ollhoff  
Doctoral Candidate  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Marketing/Fashion Merchandising Instructor

Enc:

APPENDIX E  
Store Managers' NGT Confirmation Letter

April 10, 1990

[Inside Address]

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to assist in my marketing education doctoral dissertation research study. I am committed to the belief that an up-to-date relevant, apparel management training program must meet the needs of students as they graduate and move into the workforce. The success of such programs relies heavily on the strong guidance and support of retail leaders such as yourself.

As we discussed, you will be a member of a panel of experienced chain apparel specialty store managers charged with the responsibility of identifying the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills essential for chain apparel specialty store management. Your input is **critical** to the development of fashion merchandising curriculums that are responsive to the retail community's needs.

I look forward to meeting you next **Thursday, April 19**. Our meeting will be held at the Mayfair Mall Community Room. Park on the Northeast side of Mayfair Mall (Marshall Fields end) and enter near Desmonds Formalwear. Once inside the side corridor of the mall, turn right by the Garden Suites-East entrance and proceed down the steps and through the door.

We will begin with a continental breakfast **promptly** at 8:30 a.m. We will conclude no later than 1:00 p.m. It is essential that you plan to participate in the entire session. Beverages and lunch will also be provided.

An abstract of the dissertation study is enclosed for your reference. No preparation is required for our research meeting. Feel free to call me at 691-3868 (home) or 691-5317 (work), if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Barbara Ollhoff  
Doctoral Candidate  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Marketing/Fashion Merchandising Instructor

## APPENDIX F

**Defining Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills**

The study of technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills provides a useful way of looking at and understanding the store managers' job duties and responsibilities. A review of related literature was used to develop working definitions of the three skills categories as they will be applied in this study.

**Skills.** Specific managerial behavior that is observable and may include a proficiency, ability, or dexterity. It implies an ability that can be developed, not necessarily inborn, and is revealed in performance rather than potential.

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**Technical skills.** These skills are the specialized knowledge and mechanical abilities associated with the performance of your job duties. Technical skills may include fashion and retailing expertise, cash register and computer operations, fixturization, or pricing.

**Interpersonal skills.** These skills are based on the ability to manage relationships with employees, peers, supervisors, and customers. Interpersonal skills may include communication, motivation, conflict management, or leadership.

**Analytical skills.** These skills require critical thinking, reasoning, and evaluation. Analytical skills may include the ability to solve problems, evaluate numerical data, or make necessary judgments for planning, managing, and controlling merchandise and store operation.

## APPENDIX G

**Chain Apparel Specialty Store Manager**  
**Job Description and Duties**

Chain apparel specialty store managers are concerned, directly or indirectly, with every activity bearing on the store's operation. The manager has one primary goal--to operate the store at a profit. Eight major duties are involved in the operation of the store: customer service and credit, financial planning and control, merchandising, personnel, promotion, security, selling and sales management, store layout and housekeeping.

**Job Duties**

**Customer Service and Credit:** Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

**Financial Planning and Control:** Any system or plan for checking reports, dates, or information. The conscious manipulation of such factors as budgets, sales volume, mark-up, mark-down, turnover, payroll, etc., to achieve a particular net profit. Also includes the timely processing of paper-work.

**Merchandising:** Involves the timely buying and/or ordering, pricing, and transferring of merchandise.

**Personnel:** Programs, practices, and procedures dealing with scheduling, dress codes, incentives, recruiting and selection, training and development, compensation, evaluation, promotion, and termination of employees.

**Promotion:** Promotion includes advertising, visual merchandising (display), public relations (including publicity), and special events (including fashion shows).

**Security:** Protecting the store against losses from employee theft, shoplifting, robbery, and other crimes against persons and property.

**Selling and Sales Management:** Involves analyzing the customer's needs, communicating product knowledge, and helping the customer to select a specific product. Includes meeting store and individual sales goals plus motivating and training employees to increase sales.

**Store Layout and Housekeeping:** Involves selling and nonselling areas including floor plans, fixturation, maintaining clean and neat atmosphere, and maintaining supplies.



APPENDIX H

Sample NGT Skills Identification Worksheet

Duty - Customer Service and Credit: Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

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Essential Technical skills

Essential Interpersonal Skills

Essential Analytical Skills

**APPENDIX I**

**District Managers'  
Structured Interview Worksheets**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Customer Service and Credit:** Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

=====

Rank	Skills	Category
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**(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager**

**Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)**

_____	Choose best response to meet customer's needs	Analytical
_____	Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority	Interpersonal
_____	Maintain effective communications	Interpersonal
_____	Approach duties with confident	Interpersonal
_____	Define customer's problem and solve the problem	Analytical
_____	Demonstrate tact and patience	Interpersonal
_____	Follow through on assurances and promises	Analytical
_____	Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, pricing	Technical
_____	Know register/computer operation and basic math	Technical
_____	Listen to customers	Interpersonal
_____	Use good reasoning and make sound decisions	Analytical
_____	Role model for employees	Interpersonal
_____	Extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, put customer at ease	Interpersonal

**List any other customer service and credit skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Financial Planning and Control:** Any system or plan for checking reports, dates, or information. The conscious manipulation of such factors as budgets, sales volume, mark-up, mark-down, turnover, payroll, etc., to achieve a particular net profit. Also includes the timely processing of paper-work.

Rank	Skills	Category
<b>(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager)</b>		
<b>Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)</b>		
_____	Prioritize duties	Analytical
_____	Communications efficiently with supervisors	Interpersonal
_____	Increase sales volume by developing positive morale and motivation	Interpersonal
_____	Use inventory and merchandise practices that generate peak traffic	Analytical
_____	Know and understand factors that effect your business	Analytical
_____	Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals	Technical
_____	Perform basic retail math	Technical
_____	Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up	Interpersonal
_____	Schedule personnel to maximize sales	Analytical
_____	Solve problems	Analytical
_____	Able to set goals and keep everyone informed of goals	Interpersonal
_____	Engage in time management and planning	Analytical
_____	Document and justify write reports	Technical

**List any other financial planning and control skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Merchandising:** Involves the timely buying and/or ordering, pricing, and transferring of merchandise.

Rank	Skill	Category
<b>(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)</b>		
_____	Ensure accuracy for home office paper-work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits	Technical
_____	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk taking	Technical
_____	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers	Analytical
_____	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color	Technical
_____	Know store merchandise	Technical
_____	Know statistics and market trends	Technical
_____	Engage in long and short term planning and goal setting	Analytical
_____	Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise	Interpersonal
_____	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items	Interpersonal
_____	Display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, and floor changes	Interpersonal
_____	Know fabric content, fashion style, and other product information	Technical
_____	Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store	Interpersonal
_____	Use of numbers to evaluate and reason	Analytical

**List any other merchandising skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Personnel:** Programs, practices, and procedures dealing with scheduling, dress codes, incentives, recruiting and selection, training and development, compensation, evaluation, promotion, and termination of employees.

=====

Rank	Skills	Category
------	--------	----------

=====

**(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager**

**Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)**

_____	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly	Interpersonal
_____	Create team atmosphere	Interpersonal
_____	Engage in creative problem solving using relevant facts	Analytical
_____	Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and a good example	Analytical
_____	Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others	Interpersonal
_____	Establish training program which include cross training and follow-up	Technical
_____	Evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation	Analytical
_____	Generate a variety of motivational ideas	Analytical
_____	Get along with others	Interpersonal
_____	Know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing	Technical
_____	Maintain accurate and timely documentation of staff files	Technical
_____	Engage in long range planning for staff needs	Analytical
_____	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff	Analytical
_____	Face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise)	Analytical

**List any other personnel activity skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Promotion:** Promotion includes advertising, visual merchandising (display), public relations (including publicity), and special events (including fashion shows).

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Category</b>
<b>(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)</b>		
_____	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques	Technical
_____	Be aware of color coordination and fashion trends	Technical
_____	Be creative, imaginative, and willing to take chances	Interpersonal
_____	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs	Technical
_____	Determine best fashion statement on a timely basis	Analytical
_____	Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff	Analytical
_____	Follow corporate floor setup plans	Technical
_____	Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative	Analytical
_____	Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display	Technical
_____	Know area marketing trends	Technical
_____	Know key traffic areas	Technical
_____	Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas	Interpersonal
_____	Produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image	Interpersonal

**List any other promotional skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Security:** Protecting the store against losses from employee theft, shoplifting, robbery, and other crimes against persons and property.

Rank	Skills	Category
<b>(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)</b>		
_____	Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks	Technical
_____	Maintain security through proper floor coverage	Analytical
_____	Awareness of shoplifters and their techniques	Technical
_____	Control sales situation with emotional stability and "tough poise"	Interpersonal
_____	Design anti-theft awareness training programs	Analytical
_____	Explain relationship between store security, store's productivity, and staff raises	Interpersonal
_____	Use good judgement to think through a crisis situation and select the best course of action	Analytical
_____	Know security laws, store policies, and procedures	Technical
_____	Display professionalism in handling theft situation	Interpersonal
_____	Promote good customer service to deter theft	Interpersonal
_____	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems	Analytical
_____	Stress theft prevention	Analytical
_____	Train and maintain an alert staff	Interpersonal
_____	Understand value of property and responsibilities assumed by the manager	Technical

**List any other security skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**



**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Selling and Sales Management:** Involves analyzing the customer's needs, communicating product knowledge, and helping the customer to select a specific product. Includes meeting store and individual sales goals plus motivating and training employees to increase sales.

=====

Rank	Skills	Category
------	--------	----------

=====

**(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager**

**Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)**

_____	Analyze customer needs and wants	Analytical
_____	Be aware of sales figures, goals, and trends	Analytical
_____	Give customer service first priority	Technical
_____	Demonstrate enthusiastic behavior	Interpersonal
_____	Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques	Technical
_____	Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales	Interpersonal
_____	Empower sales professionals by involve staff at all levels	Technical
_____	Follow selling steps	Technical
_____	Know merchandise, fashion, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination	Technical
_____	Supervise the sales floor, register area, and backroom	Technical
_____	Motivate employees to be competitive	Interpersonal
_____	Role model selling ability	Interpersonal
_____	Teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge	Analytical
_____	Develop team selling skills	Interpersonal

**List any other selling and sales management skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Store Layout and Housekeeping:** Involves selling and nonselling areas including floor plans, fixturization, maintaining clean and neat atmosphere, and maintaining supplies.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Skills</b>	<b>Category</b>
<b>(Select the 8 most essential skills for a chain store manager Prioritize the 8 with 1 = most essential to 8 = less essential)</b>		
_____	Communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement	Interpersonal
_____	Decide best use of space based on sales volume	Analytical
_____	Delegate weekly duties	Interpersonal
_____	Make efficient use of backroom	Analytical
_____	Establish and enforce store standards	Interpersonal
_____	Know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations	Technical
_____	Know supply order procedure and deadlines	Technical
_____	Know who to contact for repairs	Technical
_____	Organize the back stock	Technical
_____	Organize supplies for easy retrieval	Technical
_____	Prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store	Technical
_____	Role model housekeeping standards	Interpersonal
_____	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance	Technical
_____	Train staff to resize and restock	Interpersonal

**List any other store layout and housekeeping skills that are essential for chain apparel specialty store management**

**APPENDIX J**

**Field Study**

**Memo to Store Managers**

**and Time/Activity Log Worksheet**

**Memo to Time/Activity Log Participating Store Managers****How Do You Spend Your Time?**

This one week time/activity log will create a clear picture of the essential skills of a chain apparel specialty store manager. You have identified the technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills that are essential for performing your job duties as a manager. Now we want an analysis of the way you spend you time.

The Daily Time/Activity Log and portable tape recorder are designed to help you do just that. Please use a combination of jotting down all your activities and talking into the tape recorder about the essential skills you used through out the day.

Thank you for supporting this research study. If you have any questions, call Barbara Ollhoff

Days - 691-5317

Evenings and weekends - 691-3868

## Field Study

Daily Time/Activity Log

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Activities	Essential Skills Used
9:00-9:30a.m.	_____	_____
9:30-10:00	_____	_____
10:00-10:30	_____	_____
10:30-11:00	_____	_____
11:00-11:30	_____	_____
11:30-12:00	_____	_____
12:00-12:30p.m	_____	_____
12:30-1:00	_____	_____
1:00-1:30	_____	_____
1:30-2:00	_____	_____
2:00-2:30	_____	_____
2:30-3:00	_____	_____
3:00-3:30	_____	_____
3:30-4:00	_____	_____
4:00-4:30	_____	_____
4:30-5:00	_____	_____
5:00-5:30	_____	_____
5:30-6:00	_____	_____
6:00-6:30	_____	_____
6:30-7:00	_____	_____
7:00-7:30	_____	_____
7:30-8:00	_____	_____
8:00-8:30	_____	_____
8:30-9:00	_____	_____
9:00-9:30	_____	_____

List any other activities outside the normal work day (use reverse side).

## APPENDIX K

Research Study List of Participating  
Chain Apparel Specialty Store Managers  
and District Managers from the Milwaukee MSA

NGT Participating Chain Apparel Specialty Store Manager  
(\*also participated in the Phase II field studies)

American Eagle  
Brookfield Square Mall

Berman's The Leather Experts  
The Grand Avenue

Eddie Bauer\*  
Mayfair Mall

Gantos  
Northridge Shopping Center

The Gap  
Brookfield Square Mall

The Id\*  
Brookfield Square Mall

J. Riggins\*  
Mayfair Mall

Structured Interview Participating District Managers

August Max Woman  
Mayfair Mall

Berman's The Leather Experts  
Southridge Shopping Center

The Gap  
Southridge Shopping Center

The Id  
Brookfield Square Mall

Richman Brothers  
Brookfield Square Mall

## APPENDIX L

### Nominal Group Technique Priority Ranking for Eight Job Duty Categories

#### Table Definitions

**Value Score:** For each identified skill, the priority rankings of participants were added together to determine the participants score. The total number of participants that ranked a given skill was the frequency of response. The participants score was multiplied times the frequency of response to determine the value score. The highest potential value score was 392.

**\*Group Consensus:** Four of seven managers identified item as an essential skill.

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Customer Service and Credit:** Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Define customer's problem and solve the problem	217	Analytical
*2	Listen to customers	180	Interpersonal
*3	Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorizations, ticketing, and pricing	162	Technical
*4	Maintain effective communications	120	Interpersonal
*5	Use good reasoning and make sound decisions	110	Analytical
*6	Know register/computer operation and basic math	40	Technical
7	Demonstrate tact and patience	30	Interpersonal
8	Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority	26	Interpersonal
9	Choose best response to meet customer's needs	24	Analytical
10	Approach duties with confidence	20	Interpersonal
*10	Role model for employees	20	Interpersonal
11	Extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, put customer at ease	18	Interpersonal
12	Follow through on assurances and promises	14	Analytical
13	Suggest exchange rather than return and offer alternatives	7	Technical
14	Think as a customer based on personal shopping experience	7	Analytical
15	Demonstrate common sense	5	Analytical
16	Offer consistent service and train staff on guidelines	4	Technical
17	Prioritize steps of a return	3	Analytical
18	Be open minded	2	Interpersonal
19	Avoid prejudging customers with returns	1	Interpersonal
19	Educate customers	1	Interpersonal
20	Understand and file paper-work	0	Technical
20	Return stock to floor ASAP	0	Technical
20	Discern worn merchandise	0	Analytical



**Financial Planning and Control:** Any system or plan for checking reports, dates, or information. The conscious manipulation of such factors as budgets, sales volume, mark-up, mark-down, turnover, payroll, etc., to achieve a particular net profit. Also includes the timely processing of paper-work.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value	Score	Skill
*1	Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up	150		Interpersonal
*2	Communicate efficiently with supervisors	125		Interpersonal
*3	Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals	92		Technical
*4	Engage in time management and planning	64		Analytical
5	Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals	57		Interpersonal
6	Perform basic retail math	51		Technical
7	Know and understand factors that affect your business	45		Analytical
8	Increase sales volume by developing positive morale and motivation	39		Interpersonal
9	Prioritize duties	36		Analytical
10	Solve problems	26		Analytical
11	Schedule personnel to maximize sales	22		Analytical
12	Document and justify written reports	18		Technical
13	Use inventory and merchandise practices that generate peak traffic	18		Analytical
14	Evaluation and follow through	16		Analytical
14	Daily creative merchandising	16		Analytical
14	Operational awareness	16		Analytical
14	Planned maintenance and overall cost control	16		Analytical
15	Leadership by example	7		Interpersonal
16	Self pride and responsibility	5		Interpersonal
17	Know basic computer and calculator operations	2		Technical
18	Audit paper-work daily	1		Technical
18	Make decisions	1		Analytical
19	Read and stay informed through mail and electronic (phone) mail updates	0		Technical

**Merchandising:** Involves the timely buying and/or ordering, pricing, and transferring of merchandise.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items	240	Interpersonal
*2	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk taking	180	Technical
*3	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers	160	Analytical
*4	Ensure accuracy for home office paper-work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits	144	Technical
*5	Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store	114	Interpersonal
6	Know store merchandise	72	Technical
7	Know statistics and market trends	54	Technical
8	Display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, and floor changes	48	Interpersonal
9	Know fabric content, fashion, style, and other product information	42	Technical
10	Use of numbers to evaluate and reason	36	Analytical
11	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color	27	Technical
12	Engage in long and short term planning and goal setting	21	Analytical
13	Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise	20	Interpersonal
14	Know fixtures, props, lighting, signing	1	Technical
14	Use computer for reports and transfers	1	Technical
14	Know shipping, receiving, postal carriers, and UPS	1	Technical

**Personnel:** Programs, practices, and procedures dealing with scheduling, dress codes, incentives, recruiting and selection, training and development, compensation, evaluation, promotion, and termination of employees.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly	280	Interpersonal
*2	Establish training programs which include cross training and follow-up	240	Technical
*3	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff	180	Analytical
*4	Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and setting a good example	155	Analytical
*5	Know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing	95	Technical
*6	Face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise)	95	Analytical
*6	Create team atmosphere	68	Interpersonal
*7	Generate a variety of motivational ideas	60	Analytical
8	Engage in long range planning for staff needs	30	Analytical
9	Maintain accurate and timely documentation of staff files	14	Technical
10	Evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation	12	Analytical
10	Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others	12	Interpersonal
11	Get along with others	6	Interpersonal
11	Engage in creative problem solving using relevant facts	6	Analytical
12	Flexible in meeting employee needs, by recognizing employee individuality	2	Analytical
13	Develop staff strength charts	1	Technical
14	Use of computers for scheduling, payroll and salary maintenance	0	Technical
14	Know company performance standards	0	Technical
14	Evaluate applications and resumes	0	Analytical
14	Know company scheduling guidelines	0	Technical

**Promotion:** Promotion includes advertising, visual merchandising (display), public relations (including publicity), and special events (including fashion shows).

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff	252	Analytical
*2	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques	196	Technical
*3	Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display	168	Technical
*3	Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative	168	Analytical
*4	Be creative, imaginative, and willing to take chances	100	Interpersonal
*5	Produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image	80	Interpersonal
*6	Determine best fashion statement on a timely basis	76	Analytical
*7	Be aware of color coordination and fashion trends	68	Technical
8	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs	57	Technical
9	Follow corporate floor setup plans	39	Technical
10	Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas	33	Interpersonal
11	Know area marketing trends	18	Technical
12	Know key traffic areas	8	Technical

**Security:** Protecting the store against losses from employee theft, shoplifting, robbery, and other crimes against persons and property.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Train and maintain an alert staff	222	Interpersonal
*2	Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks	154	Technical
*3	Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques	145	Technical
*4	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems	125	Analytical
*5	Understand value of property and responsibilities assumed by the manager	100	Technical
*6	Know security laws, store policies, and procedures	96	Technical
*7	Control sales situation with emotional stability and "tough poise"	80	Interpersonal
*8	Display professionalism in handling theft situations	75	Interpersonal
9	Design anti-theft awareness training programs	57	Analytical
10	Promote good customer service to deter theft	20	Interpersonal
11	Explain relationship between store security, store productivity, and staff raises	8	Interpersonal
12	Use good judgement to think through a crisis situation and select the best course of action	6	Analytical
12	Stress theft prevention	6	Analytical
12	Maintain security through proper floor coverage	6	Analytical
13	Use security control procedures in fitting rooms	5	Technical
14	Know security sensitive areas	3	Technical
15	Use eye contact and be aware of customer's hands to deter theft	2	Interpersonal
16	Know security hardware and equipment	1	Technical

**Selling and Sales Management:** Involves analyzing the customer's needs, communicating product knowledge, and helping the customer to select a specific product. Includes meeting store and individual sales goals plus motivating and training employees to increase sales.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
1	Give customer service first priority	192	Technical
*2	Role model selling ability	180	Interpersonal
*3	Motivate employees to be competitive	144	Interpersonal
*4	Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques	105	Technical
*5	Know merchandise, fashion, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination	104	Technical
*6	Empower sales professionals by involving staff at all levels	76	Technical
*7	Teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge	75	Analytical
*8	Develop team selling skills	72	Interpersonal
9	Follow selling steps	51	Technical
10	Demonstrate enthusiastic behavior	45	Interpersonal
*11	Be aware of sales figures, goals, and trends	40	Analytical
12	Analyze customer needs and wants	28	Analytical
13	Supervise the sales floor, register area, and backroom	6	Technical
13	Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales	6	Interpersonal
14	Communicate personal and team goals	5	Analytical
15	Maintain proper floor coverage	2	Technical
16	Use suggestion selling	1	Analytical
16	Read customer shopping intentions relative to shoplifting	1	Analytical

**Store Layout and Housekeeping:** Involves selling and nonselling areas including floor plans, fixturation, maintaining clean and neat atmosphere, and maintaining supplies.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance	228	Technical
*2	Role model housekeeping standards	88	Interpersonal
*3	Delegate weekly duties	80	Interpersonal
4	Establish and enforce store standards	63	Interpersonal
*5	Organize the back stock	56	Technical
6	Prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store	54	Technical
7	Make efficient use of backroom	48	Analytical
8	Know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations	30	Technical
8	Decide best use of space based on sales volume	30	Analytical
*9	Know who to contact for repairs	28	Technical
10	Communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement	26	Interpersonal
11	Train staff to resize and restock	12	Interpersonal
12	Organize supplies for easy retrieval	10	Technical
13	Know supply order procedure and deadlines	8	Technical
14	Inventory supplies for ease in refilling orders	5	Analytical
15	Test alarm systems and procedures	4	Technical
16	Interpret floor layout and grid plans	2	Analytical
17	Keep store user friendly with sizes and color blocking	0	Interpersonal

**Note.** The highest value score for Store Layout and Housekeeping category was 288. (One manager left the NGT session early)

**APPENDIX M**  
**District Managers'**  
**Priority Rankings**  
**for Eight Job Duty Categories**

**Table Definitions**

**Value Score:** For each identified skill, the priority rankings of participants were added together to determine the participants score. The total number of participants that ranked a given skill was the frequency of response. The participants score was multiplied times the frequency of response to determine the value score. The highest potential value score was 200.

**\*Group Consensus:** Three of five district managers identified item as an essential skill



**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Customer Service and Credit:** Involves handling customer returns, layaway, alterations, bank and store credit cards, and the resolution of customer problems.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Maintain commitment to customer service as a priority	112	Interpersonal
*2	Listen to customers	84	Interpersonal
*3	Define customer's problem and solve the problem	80	Analytical
*4	Extend a warm greeting, maintain eye contact, and put customer at ease	63	Interpersonal
*5	Maintain effective communications	54	Interpersonal
*6	Choose best response to meet customer's needs	39	Analytical
*6	Know and interpret company policies on returns, authorization, ticketing, and pricing	39	Technical
*7	Follow through on assurances and promises	36	Analytical
*8	Demonstrate tact and patience	30	Interpersonal
*9	Use good reasoning and make sound decisions	27	Analytical
10	Approach duties with confidence	16	Interpersonal
11	Role model for employees	14	Interpersonal
12	Know register/computer operation and basic math	6	Technical

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Financial Planning and Control:** Any system or plan for checking reports, dates, or information. The conscious manipulation of such factors as budgets, sales volume, mark-up, mark-down, turnover, payroll, etc., to achieve a particular net profit. Also includes the timely processing of paper-work.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Engage in time management and planning	125	Analytical
*2	Prioritize duties	96	Analytical
*3	Set goals and keep everyone informed of goals	92	Interpersonal
*4	Initiate proper training to allow delegation with follow-up	76	Interpersonal
*5	Know and understand factors that effect your business	72	Analytical
*6	Increase sales volume by developing positive morale and motivation	57	Interpersonal
*7	Schedule personnel to maximize sales	52	Analytical
*8	Communicate efficiently with supervisors	44	Interpersonal
*9	Maintain payroll control as related to personal and daily sales goals	42	Technical
*10	Solve problems	18	Analytical
11	Use inventory and merchandise practices that generate peak traffic	16	Analytical
12	Document and justify written reports	0	Technical
12	Perform basic retail math	0	Technical

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Merchandising:** Involves the timely buying and/or ordering, pricing, and transferring of merchandise.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Follow proper floor set procedure considering composition, fashion, and color	110	Technical
*2	Encourage staff to be enthusiastic about all kinds of merchandise	88	Interpersonal
*3	Determine sales trends and recognize fast and slow sellers	84	Analytical
*4	Creatively remerchandise basic stock and markdowns using individual flair and risk-taking	76	Technical
*5	Maintain phone communication with buyers and district managers on fast and slow selling items	72	Interpersonal
*6	Know store merchandise	54	Technical
*6	Display a sense of urgency regarding stock on floor, markdowns, and floor changes	54	Interpersonal
*7	Know statistics and market trends	52	Technical
*8	Train, delegate, direct, and empower staff in merchandising store	36	Interpersonal
*9	Know fabric content, fashion, style, and other product knowledge	30	Technical
10	Use of numbers to evaluate and reason	5	Analytical
11	Ensure accuracy for home office paper-work of prices, markdowns, transfers, and audits	1	Technical
11	Engage in long and short term planning and goal setting	1	Analytical

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Personnel:** Programs, practices, and procedures dealing with scheduling, dress codes, incentives, recruiting and selection, training and development, compensation, evaluation, promotion, and termination of employees.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Provide consistent training, information updates, and assess performance regularly	180	Interpersonal
*2	Create team atmosphere	155	Interpersonal
*3	Communicate expectations and establish standards for staff	140	Analytical
*4	Encourage staff input and new ideas with openness and respect for others	105	Interpersonal
*5	Demonstrate professionalism by being objective, in control, and a good example	51	Analytical
*6	Evaluate staff and use staff self evaluation	36	Analytical
*6	Generate a variety of motivational ideas	36	Analytical
*7	Engage in creative problem solving using relevant facts	33	Analytical
8	Know laws and company rules regarding hiring and firing	12	Technical
9	Face problem situations with conviction and composure (tough poise)	6	Analytical
10	Engage in long range planning for staff needs	3	Analytical
11	Maintain accurate and timely documentation of staff files	2	Technical
12	Establish training program which include cross training and follow-up	1	Technical
13	Get along with others	0	Interpersonal

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Promotion:** Promotion includes advertising, visual merchandising (display), public relations (including publicity), and special events (including fashion shows).

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Create exciting displays that are realistic for customer wardrobe needs	100	Technical
*2	Motivate staff to get involved in promotions and try new ideas	95	Interpersonal
*3	Internalize company style for visual merchandising techniques	92	Technical
*4	Generate new ideas that are flexible, fresh, and creative	72	Analytical
*5	Be creative, imaginative, and willing to take chances	60	Interpersonal
*6	Know area marketing trends	51	Technical
*7	Follow corporate floor setup plans	48	Technical
*8	Determine best fashion statement on a timely basis	45	Analytical
*9	Be aware of color coordination and fashion trends	24	Technical
10	Know key traffic areas	20	Technical
*11	Establish high visual merchandising expectations for staff	18	Analytical
12	Know appropriate hardware and props for merchandise display	7	Technical
13	Produce fashion shows and work with special events coordinators to present best store image	1	Interpersonal

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Security:** Protecting the store against losses from employee theft, shoplifting, robbery, and other crimes against persons and property.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Promote good customer service to deter theft	120	Interpersonal
*1	Recognize shortage indicators and potential employee problems	120	Analytical
*2	Maintain security through proper floor coverage	112	Analytical
*3	Maintain awareness of shoplifters and their techniques	90	Technical
*4	Know security laws and store policies, and procedures	72	Technical
*5	Train and maintain an alert staff	70	Interpersonal
*6	Stress theft prevention	56	Analytical
7	Design anti-theft awareness training programs	30	Analytical
8	Understand value of property and responsibilities assumed by the manager	10	Technical
9	Use good judgement to think through a crisis situation and select the best course of action	6	Analytical
10	Control sales situation with emotional stability and "tough poise"	5	Interpersonal
10	Display professionalism in handling theft situation	5	Interpersonal
11	Accurately document staff sales and maintain consistent coat and bag checks	1	Technical
12	Explain relationship between store security, store's productivity, and staff raises	0	Interpersonal

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Selling and Sales Management:** Involves analyzing the customer's needs, communicating product knowledge, and helping the customer to select a specific product. Includes meeting store and individual sales goals plus motivating and training employees to increase sales.

Rank	Essential Skills	Value Score	Skill
*1	Give customer service first priority	200	Technical
*2	Develop a proactive staff that initiates sales	150	Interpersonal
*3	Demonstrate enthusiastic behavior	56	Interpersonal
*4	Follow selling steps	54	Technical
*5	Motivate employees to be competitive	39	Interpersonal
*6	Be aware of sales figures, goals and trends	33	Analytical
*7	Empower sales professionals by involve staff at all levels	30	Technical
*8	Role model selling ability	24	Interpersonal
9	Analyze customer needs and wants	16	Analytical
9	Know merchandise, fashions, price, fit, and wardrobe coordination	16	Technical
*10	Supervise the sales floor, register area, and backroom	12	Technical
11	Determine customer needs through good questioning techniques	10	Technical
12	Develop team selling skills	7	Interpersonal
13	Teach staff managerial job skills and product knowledge	4	Analytical

**Technical, Interpersonal, and Analytical Skills  
Essential for Chain Apparel Specialty Store Management**

**Store Layout and Housekeeping:** Involves selling and nonselling areas including floor plans, fixturization, maintaining clean and neat atmosphere, and maintaining supplies.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>Value Score</b>	<b>Skill</b>
*1	Set high standards in the areas of cleanliness and daily maintenance	140	Technical
*2	Establish and enforce store standards	130	Interpersonal
*3	Prioritize merchandise in relationship to areas of store	92	Technical
*4	Communicate floor moves and nonselling tasks to build team involvement	84	Interpersonal
*5	Decide best use of space based on sales volume	60	Analytical
*6	Delegate weekly duties	54	Interpersonal
*7	Train staff to resize and restock	52	Interpersonal
*8	Role model housekeeping standards	30	Interpersonal
*9	Organize the back stock	24	Technical
*10	Know supply order procedure and deadlines	15	Technical
11	Organize supplies for easy retrieval	6	Technical
12	Make efficient use of backroom	5	Analytical
13	Know and enforce safety measures and fire regulations	0	Technical
13	Know who to contact for repairs	0	Technical



**Appendix N**

**Research Verification Letters**

# J. RIGGINGS

MAYFAIR SHOPPING CENTER □ WAUWATOSA, WI 53226 □ 414/771-7908

March 24, 1991

To Whom It May Concern:

This will verify that I, Steve Roozen, have read Barbara Ollhoff's analysis of the field study portion of her doctoral research. I was a participant in Barbara's NGT and field study phase of her research. I have read her findings and conclusions and agree that the information accurately reflects the recorded daily activity logs.

I think Barbara's analysis correctly reflects the essential technical, interpersonal, and analytical skills that relate to my daily managerial activities. Although we didn't mention security and promotions frequently, they are also very important to our daily duties. We probably didn't mention security as much because it is an everyday battle we would rather do without. The research was very interesting. Upon review, it has helped me realize further the necessary skills which I need to pass on to my assistants.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Roozen  
Store Manager



March 20, 1991

To Whom It May Concern:

This will verify that I, the undersigned, have reviewed Barbara Ollhoff's analysis of the field study portion of her doctoral research. As a participant in the field study phase of the research, I have read the findings and conclusions and agree that the information accurately reflects the recorded daily activity logs.

Customer service and the managerial and employee commitment to it are essential to any retailer who hopes to survive in the 90s and beyond. The research project certainly emphasizes this and the skills needed to ensure its implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chuck Gray". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

Chuck Gray  
District Manager

# AUGUST MAX WOMAN

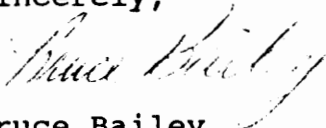
March 27, 1991

To Whom It May Concern:

This will verify that I have reviewed Barbara Ollhoff's analysis of the structured interview portion of her doctoral research. After participating in the structured interview phase of the research, I read the findings and conclusions and verify that Barbara accurately reported what I said.

Having been a district manager of chain apparel specialty stores for 18 years, I concur that Barbara's findings and conclusions are in keeping with my experience.

Sincerely,



Bruce Bailey  
District Manager

# Prange specialty stores group, inc.

id

Peck and Peck

Christmas and Things

Prange Trading Company

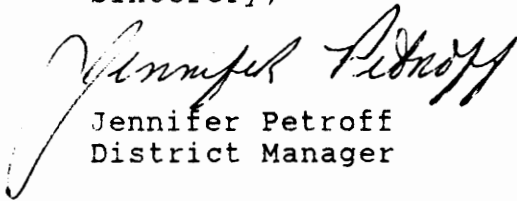
March 22, 1991

To Whom It May Concern:

This will verify that I, the undersigned, have reviewed Barbara Ollhoff's analysis of the structured interview portion of her doctoral research, I have read the findings and conclusions and verify that Barbara accurately reported what I said.

It is my belief that Barbara has a full understanding of the techniques and skills required to successfully manage specialty store chains.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Petroff  
District Manager

**Milwaukee Area Technical College**

**MILWAUKEE CAMPUS**  
700 West State Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233  
414-278-6600

**NORTH CAMPUS**  
5555 West Highland Road  
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092  
414-242-6500

**SOUTH CAMPUS**  
6665 South Howell Avenue  
Oak Creek, Wisconsin 53154  
414-762-2500

**WEST CAMPUS**  
1200 South 71st Street  
West Allis, Wisconsin 53214  
414-476-3040

March 4, 1991

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I recently received the research documentation and the corresponding manuscript from Ms. Barbara Ollhoff, a doctoral candidate at the Virginia Polytechnical Institute.

I have reviewed the materials and can confirm that the activities which transpired during the NGT session at Mayfair Mall followed the procedures for the nominal group session as specified in Chapter 3. I have read the findings and can verify that Barbara has accurately reported what I heard, saw and recorded during the nominal group session. I have randomly checked the data for accuracy, including the area of value scores, and find the materials to be correct.

Sincerely,



Karen K. Zwissler  
Instructor, Fashion Merchandising  
Chairperson, Marketing Department

**VITA**  
**Barbara J. Ollhoff**

**WORK EXPERIENCE**

**Waukesha County Technical College** - 1969 to 1991  
Pewaukee, Wisconsin  
Marketing/Fashion Merchandising Instructor

**Tweeds, Inc.** - 1989 to 1991  
Salem, Virginia  
Telemarketing and customer service fashion product  
knowledge training consultant

**Milwaukee Journal Wisconsin Magazine** - 1990 to 1991  
Freelance photo stylist and fashion editor

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND AWARDS**

**National Awards**

-American Vocational Association - Region 3 Vocational  
Teacher of the Year - 1988

-The Freedom Foundation, Valley Forge - Leavey Award for  
Excellence in Private Enterprise Education - 1986

**State and Local Awards**

-Vocational Teacher of the Year for Wisconsin Vocational  
Association and Wisconsin Education Association - 1987

-American Business Women's Association, Waukesha Chapter  
Woman of the Year - 1986 and President - 1987

-Waukesha County Technical College Instructor of the Year -  
1986

-Wisconsin Vocational Association Exemplary Education  
Service Award--Fashion Merchandising Program - 1985.

-Wisconsin Marketing Educators Instructor of the Year - 1978

**ACADEMIC TRAINING**

**University of Wisconsin - Madison** - 1974  
Masters of Science in Continuing, Adult, and Vocational  
Education with emphasis in Marketing

**University of Wisconsin - Whitewater** - 1969  
Bachelor of Science in Business and Marketing Education

*Barbara Ollhoff*