

**Welfare Reform: Employers' Perceptions
of Factors Associated with Virginia's Initiative for
Employment Not Welfare**

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Vocational and Technical Education

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April 8, 1998
Blacksburg, Virginia

Key words: Employers' Perceptions, Welfare Recipients, Welfare Reform

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(ABSTRACT)

Welfare reform has been an issue in America for many years. The need to make positive changes to the welfare system escalated to the point that federal legislation was passed in 1996. This legislation mandated that each state establish welfare-to-work programs and require that welfare recipients to begin to work or face loss of benefits after two years. Virginia responded to this mandate through its Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW), which requires welfare recipients to seek work opportunities.

The purpose of this study was to examine employers' perceptions of factors contributing to their participation in VIEW and factors they felt affected welfare recipients' entry into the workforce. The theoretical framework of this study is based on two theories of organizational change: the innovations and diffusion of innovations models. Interviews were conducted with twelve people who were in a decision making roles in businesses that participated in VIEW. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What factors encourage employers to participate in Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)?
2. What factors affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce?

Interviews with employers were recorded, transcribed, and coded using the Nud.ist qualitative research software program.

Twelve factors were identified: mass media, social services agencies, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), other information sources, employability skills, qualifications, work experience, education and training, child care, lack of funds for transportation and appropriate clothing, welfare policies, and a support system or monitoring plan. The first four factors affected employers' decisions to be a part of VIEW; the others were factors they felt affected workforce entry.

This study confirms portions of the review of literature relative to research regarding factors that affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. Two major conclusions emerged from the findings: the majority of employers interviewed suggested that welfare policies and child care significantly affected the employment of welfare recipients.

Further study is needed to determine what changes are needed in welfare policies and preparation for those entering the workforce. Research should involve welfare recipients, employers, social services personnel, and job training providers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude is extended to all individuals who supported me in this endeavor.

I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee: Drs. Daisy . Stewart, Susan Asselin, Sidney E. Crumwell Jr., Jimmie Fortune, and Constance Kratzer for their guidance, ideas, and support throughout the program. Dr. Stewart advised and supported me from the first day we met and this continued throughout my studies. She always made time in her busy schedule for counseling sessions. I want to thank her for her firm stance and concern about me becoming the best professional that I can be. She will always be my role model and mentor. Dr. Stewart has my utmost respect and admiration for her skills and knowledge. My gratitude also goes to Dr. Susan Asselin who provided guidance and always asked thought-provoking questions. I would like to thank Dr. Crumwell for the support rendered during one of most crucial times in my research endeavor. Dr. Fortune's research support in this study and in the classes he taught was incredible, as well as his wealth of knowledge. His frankness will always be remembered. Dr. Kratzer's expertise has been very helpful in focusing and directing my study. To the late Dr. Nevin Frantz, thanks for believing and being supportive of my research study to the end. And thanks to Dr. Thomas Garman for his support as one of the initial members of my committee.

I particularly want to thank the Social Service directors who responded to my request for help and the employers who participated in this study. Special thanks goes to my colleagues, Jewel Evans Hairston and Shelia Tucker. Their unselfish listening ears and assistance will never be forgotten. Portia Champion and Odessa Thomas will always be appreciated for the Saturday morning telephone calls of encouragement and support during my studies at Virginia Tech. I am especially appreciative for their assistance and encouragement.

I am eternally grateful to my son Byron Ian who generously shared his educational resources with me, which caused us to evolve into the educational team we became. I am deeply grateful to my mother for her continued encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This study sought an understanding of the perceptions of selected Virginia employers about Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW), a welfare-to-work program. Employers' perceptions about VIEW may be important to Virginia policy makers and vocational educators if these perceptions provide useful information to help prepare people for the world of work. Knowing employers' ideas may help with planning, developing, implementing, and improving job training and educational programs for welfare recipients.

This study's foundation is built upon the premise that employers will not be likely to sacrifice profits to help with humanitarian initiatives and social problems. Employers may believe that poverty programs interfere with the "free market" and have a direct impact on their ability to obtain profits (Iitzkowitz, 1991). The rationale for this belief is that previous welfare policies may have prevented welfare recipients from working full-time. America's economy is capitalistic in nature; the goal of American businesses is to make money. Businesses cannot be expected to take a loss in revenue to improve social conditions in America just because they are asked to do so or because they believe participating in VIEW is a good idea. In addition, persons faced with unemployment are usually those with limited education, skills, training, and/or work experience. It is unlikely that an employer will hire a person who does not bring the necessary skills to a job just to help the welfare reform initiative.

Welfare recipients frequently have a low literacy level and are harder to place than other unemployed individuals. They often lack the education, skills, and training required to be employed in a job that will provide an income exceeding assistance received through welfare. These are factors that may prevent employers from hiring the recipients.

Relevance

The results of this study could provide useful information for those seeking to help welfare recipients make the transition to employment. Employers provide jobs, which form the economic base that people use to provide financially for their families. O'Connell (1982) stated that "an individual's welfare or well-being is assumed to be determined by the goods and services consumed" (p.12), suggesting that a job or some form of income is needed to make economic survival possible. According to Jencks and Peterson (1991), the present welfare system traps many single mothers into making a stark choice between unskilled, low-paying work or welfare benefits.

A new federal law called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act was signed on August 22, 1996 and went into effect on October 1 of that same year. According to this law, each state is mandated to establish welfare-to-work programs and require recipients of cash welfare benefits to work after two years, or face loss of benefits. "It requires that 50% of the families receiving welfare payments must be in work programs by the fiscal year 2002" (Merry, 1996, p.8). The law also abolishes the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program which was enacted in 1988 to provide education and training services to welfare recipients (National Alliance of Business, 1996). Jencks and Peterson (1991) stated that the system that was in place before the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act rarely helped welfare

recipients gain new skills. Further, it did not encourage them or help them to relocate, if necessary, to take advantage of decent jobs and housing.

Jencks and Peterson (1991) cited Van Haitsma as saying that neighborhoods that have few legitimate employment opportunities, inadequate job information networks, and poor schools not only give rise to a weak labor force, but they also raise the likelihood that people will turn to illegal or deviant activities for income, thereby further weakening their attachment to the legitimate labor market. “Changes in employment and poverty are likely to appear much sooner following changes in the economy than changes in family formation because the latter not only represent a more indirect relationship to the economy but a more complex and subtle process of human experience as well” (Jencks & Peterson, 1991, p. 467). In addition, Jencks and Peterson (1991) cited Van Haitsma who delineated the relationship between the social environment and experiences in the labor market by describing those persons with weak attachments to the labor force whose social context maintained or further weakened those attachments. Jencks and Peterson (1991) further described labor force attachments as a structural concept set in a theoretical framework that explains the vulnerability of certain groups to joblessness. “In other words, the concept signifies the marginal position of some people in the labor force because of limited job opportunities or limited access to the informal job network systems” (p. 472). They further stated that from a theoretical standpoint there are two major sources of weak labor force attachment: macrostructural processes in the larger society, particularly the economy, for example employment opportunities, wage rates, and job information; and the individual’s social environment, for instance poverty (Jencks & Peterson, 1991).

Problem Statement

Reform is needed to make positive changes in the nation’s welfare system. It is presumed that these change will promote economic stability and sufficiency of welfare recipients through education and adequate employment, thereby empowering recipients to strive for self-sufficiency in today’s society. This need contributed to the passage of new legislation to help welfare recipients become self-sufficient by securing jobs. A large number of individuals who are on welfare need to move from the welfare rolls to the workforce. For this to take place, employers must be involved. This study examined employers’ perceptions of factors related to their participation in VIEW and identified factors that they feel affect welfare recipients’ entry into the workforce.

Research Questions

The study sought an understanding of selected employers’ perceptions related to these questions:

1. What factors encourage employers to participate in Virginia’s Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)?
2. What factors affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce?

Significance of the Study

The study explored factors VIEW employers’ felt affected welfare recipients entry into the workforce. Implications drawn from answers to the research questions may help local social service agencies, postsecondary vocational education programs, employment agencies, and other interested groups to develop programs that may prepare participants for gainful employment. The results also may help agencies determine what

changes need to take place to help both the welfare recipients and the employers to make welfare reform successful.

Definitions

Virginia's Independence Program (VIP)--A comprehensive welfare-to-work program in Virginia that is helping welfare recipients make the transition from dependence on welfare benefits to economic self-sufficiency.

Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)--The work component of the welfare-to-work-program that Virginia is implementing to help welfare recipients enter the workforce.

Limitation of the Study

The study included a limited number of employers in two selected counties and one city in Virginia that have implemented the VIEW program for at least one year. This restricted the ability to generalize the findings to other locations and employers.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on two theories of organizational change. Most relevant to this study are the innovations and diffusion of innovations models. These theories postulate that innovations will be adopted through the problem-solving and decision-making processes. When problems exist they are sometime categorized as being in a frozen state and have to be unfrozen before change can take place. Problem solving fosters change and takes place through several phases. Upon the attainment of change the social system returns to stability, a stage referred to as refreezing (Havelock, 1995). The diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers,1995) is based on the premise that the diffusion of an innovation takes place through five steps: (a) knowledge, (b) persuasion, (c) decision, (d) implementation, and (e) confirmation. Based upon these steps, a social system can adopt or reject a decision. According to Rogers, a mutual understanding is anticipated when the decision is made.

Virginia's Reform of Welfare

Virginia's legislature began a welfare-to-work program before the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 was passed. This program sought to facilitate the recipients' transition from dependence on welfare benefits to economic self-sufficiency through a state effort called Virginia's Independence Program.

In 1994, as a result of growing concerns of citizens, administrators, and legislators in the Commonwealth, the Virginia General Assembly enacted the Virginia Independence Program (VIP) and, in 1995, enhanced the program. VIP is now one of the most comprehensive statewide welfare reform initiatives in the nation. It replaces the current system of welfare with one that provides temporary employment-based assistance in order to provide a "hand-up" instead of a "hand-out" approach to public assistance. The program is based on principles of compassion, self-reliance, and personal responsibility and is dependent on the involvement of all sectors of the community for its achievement. It will instill the work ethic while providing training, skills and employment opportunities necessary to become self-sufficient (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995b, p. i).

One component of this program is a welfare-to-work program called Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW). This component requires welfare recipients to seek work opportunities. "In 1994, the Virginia General Assembly implemented the Welfare Reform Demonstration Project. This project focused on

identifying unsubsidized jobs in the community that enable families to meet their daily needs without dependence on public support” (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995b, p. 3).

Virginia began implementation of its welfare reform initiative in 1995. The General Assembly of Virginia enacted legislation that amended and reenacted a code that addressed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In this code, specifications were laid out to govern the eligibility and provisions of persons who will qualify for benefits under welfare reform in Virginia (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995a).

The profile of Virginia’s AFDC recipients shows that nearly all are single, female parents, one-half of whom have not completed high school. “A welfare recipient’s tenure on welfare is usually about 2 1/2 years, but the majority have returned to welfare at least once, and up to 25% are second or third generation recipients. Fifty percent of the AFDC population continues in the system for two or more years, and 42% of all AFDC payments go to women who were 19 or younger when they first became mothers” (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995b, p. 2).

In 1990, Virginia implemented the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills training program (JOBS) statewide. The program currently serves over 21,000 AFDC recipients annually. The program focuses on providing education, training, and supportive services to help participants obtain employment, including higher wage jobs. For the 19,996 participants entering employment since 1990, the average starting wage was \$4.77 per hour, a level that pushes families off welfare in Virginia, but makes long-term self-sufficiency very difficult (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995b, p. 2).

Virginia sought to use the JOBS training program as the foundation of its welfare reform effort. Growing out of the JOBS program was Virginia’s Independence Program (VIP), which is the name given to the comprehensive welfare reform program. The welfare-to-work phase of VIP is called the Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW). The goal of this program was to “provide Virginia families living in poverty with the opportunity to obtain work experience” (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995a, p. 4). The Department of Social Services is the state agency that is coordinating VIEW. The state Department of Social Services is required to assist local departments of social services “in improving the delivery of services . . . through the utilization of public, private and non-profit organizations, to the extent permissible under federal law. Job training shall be facilitated by the Governor’s Employment and Training Department. Job finding and job matching leading to independent employment shall be facilitated by the Virginia Employment Commission and the Department of Economic Development” (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995a, p. 6).

Virginia has requirements wherein people who qualify for benefits must go to work after 90 days. This time is allocated to allow recipients to prepare for the job search. Welfare recipients have an option of participating in unsubsidized, subsidized, or part-time work. If recipients are not able to find work through one of the aforementioned sources, they are required to participate in a community work experience placement setting for six months. There are four employment categories that are available to recipients:

1. Private-sector. This option is available to recipients who are job ready. Through this option they move quickly into employment.

2. Government-subsidized. Through a program known as Full Employment, AFDC and food stamps are used to subsidize employment in the private sector.
3. Part-time or temporary. This option emphasizes the value of work and provides job skills and employment history while reserving time for client education and training.
4. Community work. The Social Services Department and local departments work with other state, regional, and local agencies and governments in developing job placements. Placements are made to foster skill development and serve a public function (Commonwealth of Virginia, 1995b).

The community work experience was connected to the JOBS programs. Under the new federal welfare reform law, “the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program enacted in 1988 to provide education and training services to welfare recipients has been abolished” (National Alliance of Business, 1997a, p.1). Nevertheless, this part of the program, in the researcher’s opinion, will be funded through the block grant funding that has been made available to Virginia.

Currently, Virginia is experiencing a decline in the number of people on its welfare roll. In December 1996, AFDC cases had declined 14% statewide compared to December 1995. The numbers dropped from 66,296 to about 56,700. In the VIEW localities, there was a 20% decrease--from 16,950 to about 13,609. Since June 1995, the number of AFDC payment cases declined 19% statewide (Virginia Department of Social Services, 1997a).

Skepticism about the viability of welfare reform is compounded by apprehensions about the availability of jobs in some areas of the state. “The federal government has exempted nine Virginia counties with particularly high unemployment rates, mostly in the southwestern portion of the state” (Vobejda, 1997, p. A 12). Scott Oostyk, deputy director of Virginia’s Department of Health and Human Services, said they “are not going to cut anybody off if there is no work available” (Vobejda, 1997, p. A 12).

According to Virginia’s Independence Program Monthly Report for December 1996, statewide there were “7,397 participants enrolled in VIEW. There were 4,934 participants in work activity since program implementation July 1, 1995” (Virginia Department of Social Services, 1997a, p. 5).

Issues Related to Moving People from Welfare Rolls to the Workforce

Current research has identified some issues that will help welfare recipients move from the welfare rolls into the workforce. One approach to transitioning these people into jobs is through employer participation and community involvement. Perhaps hiring welfare recipients could be viewed as a way to improve and help a local community. The rewards or benefits from this type of hiring will be experienced through additional sales tax, reduced crime rate, and community pride. When focusing on the ways that providing employment can help improve the community, one corporate employer said she would “. . . hire a worker and pay the worker entry level wages of \$8 or \$9 an hour, and the worker could be upgraded easily to get \$10 to \$12 an hour, said Karen Harvey, senior technical recruiter at Troy System. ‘It might be easier to hire somebody else, but that’s not what we’re going to do. We want to see these folks make it’.” (Finn, 1996, p. Va 1).

Since job training is perceived to be an important element in the program, the extent to which employers will become involved with the training and education of employees is going to be critical to the success of any program. Employers will need to

have a positive view about company-sponsored job training for employees. Many employers believe that federal and state governments are looking in the wrong direction when they see job training as the most important solution. At least one employer suggests "For unskilled or semiskilled work, it's not trained people that businesses need; it's dependable, hard workers. Of course, I'd prefer a dependable worker who's already trained if you've got one, but if necessary, just give me an unskilled but dependable person of character, and I'll take care of the rest" (Barclay, 1995, p. A 14).

Wage rates established for entry-level workers and the salary scale put in place for employees who have received job training will be another incentive for employers to hire job training recipients. Some welfare recipients could earn between \$8 and \$9 an hour which yields a yearly income of around \$21,500. What this means is that any person earning this amount annually will become self-sufficient and will be able to live a decent life without welfare benefits. However, it is speculated that most low skill jobs will pay welfare recipients the minimum wage which is currently \$4.75. Some employers will be paying between \$5.75 and \$6.00 an hour (Finn, 1996). "It's pretty hard to support a family of two or three on \$5.50 or \$6.00 an hour," according to Assistant Labor Secretary Douglas Ross of the Employment and Training Administration (Andelman, 1995, p. 38).

Employers may seek out vocational education to provide the necessary job training that will be required for employment. "Employers who are familiar or involved with vocational education programs and work experiences view them as valuable and successful, whereas those employers who are not involved express negative attitudes toward young workers in general and toward the academic preparation of those workers" (Muraskin, 1994, p. 169).

The new reform law would restrict the circumstances under which education and training program participants can use, or count, activities that could satisfy the federal work participation rates. Some education and training programs may or may not satisfy the work requirements that are mentioned in the new law. (Idea Central, 1996). This will limit the number of welfare recipients who can participate in vocational education and want to use those programs to satisfy the work requirement (American Vocational Association, 1996).

Some corporations are making commitments to welfare reform. For example, in Northern Virginia's Fairfax County, the American Management Systems Corporation (AMS) decided that it would seek out and hire welfare recipients who were making the transition from welfare to work by hiring both clearly skilled candidates and entry-level workers who could become mail carriers and administrative assistants (Finn, 1996). "We do a lot of community outreach, and this is one more way to give back to the community in the localities where we are located," said Judy Tinelli, vice president of human resources for AMS. "Also, it's a tight labor market, and we need good people who are fascinated by our business" (Finn, 1996, p. Va 1).

This study focused on selected employers' perceptions about participation in welfare reform and their ideas about factors affecting the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. The knowledge gleaned from the employers about their perceptions may help policymakers, social service agencies, and educators develop better social policies and programs targeting welfare recipients.

Summary

The federal act and state welfare reform program seek to improve the welfare system through providing job opportunities for recipients. For this to work, employers in Virginia will have to be major team players. This study identified factors that VIEW employers felt affected welfare recipients' entry into the workforce.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature provided information relative to this study in five supporting areas: descriptive data for the locations involved in this study, welfare reform in America, theoretical framework, factors that encourage employers' participation in welfare-to-work programs, and factors that affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. A summary of the chapter also is included.

Descriptive Data

Data reported in Virginia's Independence Program Monthly Report for March 1997 (Virginia Department of Social Services, 1997b) as shown in Table 1, provide a profile of welfare recipients in the three governmental units from which employers were selected. To maintain anonymity, they will be called Stewart and Quitman counties and the city of Cuthbert.

In an interview in July 1997, the VIEW coordinator in Quitman County provided additional demographic information for that locality. Female-headed households represented the largest number of families on welfare, with male-headed households second and grandparent-headed families third. Individuals whose ages ranged from five years to seventeen years represented the largest number of welfare recipients, with those aged 21 to 44 years second, and those from birth to four years ranking third. The age groups are categories that Quitman County uses to represent the ages of persons who are actually being impacted by welfare benefits. Twenty-nine of the adult welfare recipients (42%) had some high school education and 23 (33%) had completed high school. Ninety-one percent of the welfare recipients were white, 8% were black, and about 1% were other races. Sixty-five percent of the children were born to parents who were married and 35% were not. Similar demographic data on welfare recipients in Stewart County and the city of Cuthbert were not available.

According to a representative of the Virginia Employment Commission, the provisional census for 1997 indicated that Stewart County had a population of 28,500 and was 477.8 square miles in area. The population of Quitman County was 16,600 and it was 455.9 square miles in area. The city Cuthbert had a population of 6,800 and was 8.1 square miles in area.

Services Provided

In Virginia's welfare reform system, each county and city is allowed considerable flexibility in determining what services are provided as welfare recipients enter the workforce. Because of this there is not one consistent, statewide set of policies but rather different interpretations of the policies in each governmental unit. According to the social services VIEW coordinator in one of the localities in this study, Virginia's welfare reform policies can be adapted with state approval as long as funds are spent for allowable uses

Stewart County provides several services to its VIEW participants to help make the transition from welfare rolls to the workforce less stressful. These services include financial assistance for child care, gas allowance, car repair, uniforms or other job related clothing items, dental work, energy, food, and job readiness programs through the adult education center. Many of these services are provided in conjunction with other agencies through referrals.

Table 1
Demographic Data for Stewart and Quitman Counties and the City of Cuthbert

Item	Locality		
	Stewart County	Quitman County	City of Cuthbert
Total Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) cases	341	157	162
Mandatory cases for transition to employment	209	97	98
% of TANF cases that are mandatory	61%	62%	60%
Total enrollment in VIEW	171	94	93
% of mandatory cases in VIEW	82%	97%	95%
Participants in work activities	133	73	70
% of VIEW enrollment in work activities	78%	78%	75%
Participants employed	131	66	67
% of VIEW enrollment employed	77%	72%	70%
Average hourly wage	\$4.97	\$5.06	\$4.66
Average wage for full-time employees	\$5.02	\$5.27	4.67
Average wage for part-time employees	\$4.56	\$4.66	\$4.64
Average monthly earnings	\$693.00	\$665.00	\$641.00
Unemployment rate, January 1998	4.8%	6.3%	2.9%

Note. The source for this information is the Virginia Department of Social Services, 1997b, except the unemployment rates which were obtained from a representative of the Virginia Employment Commission.

Quitman County's services include job skills or job development, in conjunction with the private industry council, and financial support services. Referrals are made to the appropriate agencies to have the services performed. Social services will share the cost of necessities such as gasoline, car repairs, an initial car insurance premium, and uniforms.

The city of Cuthbert also provides services for its welfare recipients. Often educational services are provided for job training through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Community college education is available if the program is one that does not require more than two years. Child care services are provided through centers or private providers that have been approved by the state. Payment for transportation if the mode of transportation is by a public or private conveyer or reimbursable to the client. Assistance for clothing can be provided if it is used to acquire or maintain employment. In some instances, tools related to the job can be provided.

Welfare Reform in America

“The nation's major cash assistance program to poor families, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), provides cash benefits to needy families with children who lack support from one or both of their parents because of unemployment, incapacity, absence, or death. Funded with federal and state dollars, the program operates as an individual entitlement, that is, everyone who meets the eligibility requirements is entitled to receive benefits” (United States General Accounting Office, 1995, p. 1). Welfare reform is the process of making positive changes to the nation's welfare system to promote economic stability and self reliance through education, jobs, and adequate employment, thereby empowering recipients to strive for self-sufficiency. Welfare recipients need a reform that will foster a way for them to become productive citizens. Welfare reform should provide incentives to keep families together and help fathers to stay home, so their families can survive at a subsistence level.

In this review of the existing literature, emphasis was placed on employers' participation in VIEW and factors that affect welfare recipients' entry into the workforce. Knowledge of this information may help generate ways to move individuals from the welfare rolls to the workforce. Identifying the impact of factors such as employability skills, child care, transportation, adequate wages, and job training will give some insight into how to provide more occupational opportunities for welfare recipients.

A 1994 *New York Times* article provided information about recipients of AFDC during the 1980s. The article's indicated that most of the recipients of AFDC were single mothers with minor children. This was based on the fact that aid was most often available to mothers with children under age 18. In 23 states, households in which fathers are part of the family are not eligible to receive benefits. In 1983, families headed by women were estimated to be almost half of the families receiving benefits. According to 1991 data, while Blacks were only 12% of the population, they made up 38.8 % of the AFDC caseloads in 1991 (Welfare as we've known it, 1994).

For unskilled and less educated people, job opportunities have constantly declined. If a labor market does exist, it is one of temporary and part-time work. Global economic competition and automation have further affected job opportunities. For instance, it is opinionated that in 1993, 30% of men 25 to 34 years old earned less than enough money to prevent a family of four from falling below the poverty line (Holmes, 1995, p. A12). Caputo's (1989) research suggested, that “between 1959 and 1980, major northern cities consistently lost employers in industries with lower education requisites

for their employees. The most severe losses in these industries occurred after 1970” (1989, p. 85).

Research conducted by Gueron, Pauly, and Lougy to evaluate welfare-to-work programs, was based on random assignment field experiments in which a process similar to a lottery was used. The participants were placed in a program group (experimental) or in a control group. The control group was not eligible for special program services, but all were eligible for other employment and training services in the community. A sample size was not mentioned. The study found on the surface, the basic approach of welfare-to-work programs would appear to be simple and direct. That is, these programs should increase participants’ employment and earnings and thereby reduce welfare expenditures. But, in reality, many forces shape employment and welfare behavior, making successful intervention a complex challenge (Gueron, Pauly, & Lougy, 1991).

Harris (1996) reported findings from a 20-year longitudinal study of African-American teenage mothers who lived in the inner city of Baltimore. Findings indicated that during most of the 20 years about half of the mothers on welfare reported that they had jobs and 62% left the program after they got work. A sample size was not reported. Harris (1996) suggested that “it is clear from the research that policy makers focused on the wrong questions when they devised the welfare bill. Rather than asking why recipients do not work, they should have asked why the work that recipients do does not help them to leave welfare permanently or help to lift their families out of poverty” (p. B7). This question has to be answered in order for welfare reform initiatives to be successful.

Data reported by Mead (1992) were taken from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and other government resources. This study found between 1973 and 1977, 3,400 evaluation studies on social policy were conducted for federal agencies. Research spending by federal poverty-related programs increased from about \$30 million in 1965 to around \$300 million in 1980. This spending was responsible for half of the growth in social science funding over those years (Mead, 1992). Findings from these studies gave support to welfare reform and suggested that long-term dependency was a serious problem. Additionally, findings suggested that workfare programs generally had positive impacts on employment and earnings and they saved money for government. The effects were greatest for the more disadvantaged clients.

Just as important was what research did not show: the findings failed to demonstrate that the barriers often cited in earlier years were sufficient to account for nonwork on welfare. Dependency or poverty was evidently not due predominantly to disincentives, low wages, lack of jobs, racial bias, and so on, though each of these played a minor role. A few witnesses in hearings still contended that a literal lack of opportunity could explain nonwork, but most members of Congress, to judge from their statements, now found such arguments unpersuasive (Mead, 1992, p. 198).

Research reported by Sanger (1980) is based upon several research studies. Those studies for the most part used analytical approaches and longitudinal studies to secure the data. According to Sanger (1980) studies done in the middle 1970s by “Rainwater and Rein (1976) and Hausman and Freidman (1975) pointed out that even among those 3% to 4% of the participants in the New Jersey Income Maintenance

experiment who did not work, health problems, not distaste for work, determined their employment status. Most of those who have studied periods of unemployment among low income workers have found that most of them ultimately return to work” (Sanger, 1980, p. 55).

Oliker presented research based on documentary and secondary source research on the histories of evaluation research and of the 1988 workfare reform. The data were analyzed in three steps: (a) standard tools of historical reconstruction, (b) units of policy discourse, and (c) sociological perspectives. This study found that in the late 1980s, debate over workfare and experimental evaluation research became a positive influence on policy. The social experiments applied to the workfare debate did not involve a pilot version of the Family Support Act, but rather, a diverse series of demonstration projects authorized by President Reagan under the auspices of the Work Incentive (WIN) program. Findings from this research were reported as early as 1984 (Oliker, 1994).

In 1983, a welfare-to-work initiative called the Employment Service Program (ESP) was implemented in Virginia. In order to decide its effectiveness a follow-up study was conducted. The study was based on a random assignment field experiment process. Participants were placed in the ESP program (experimental) group or in a control group. The experimental group participants were placed in group job search, unpaid work experience, and some education or job skills training, but only slightly more than controls received on their own. The control group involved people who did not receive services from the ESP welfare-to-work program, but were eligible for other employment services in the community and some basic welfare benefits. The net cost was \$430 per individual in the experimental group. This program was required for AFDC applicants and recipients with children 6 or older. Eleven of 124 welfare agencies in Virginia were involved and the follow-up of the study extended 33 months. The outcomes measured were employment, earnings, length of time receiving benefits, and amount of payments. There were no significant impacts on any outcome measures. Nevertheless, the ESP study examined the characteristics, costs, and impacts of the program. The study suggested that the average earnings of the experimental group members for the first year were \$69 more than the control group. The earnings difference for the second year was \$280 and for the third year was \$268. The experimental group earned 5% more than the control group for the first year, 14% more for the second year, and 11% more for the third year. Though there were income increases for the experimental group, they did not significantly improve participants’ living conditions because of policies which reduced welfare payments (Gueron, Pauly & Lougy, 1991).

Gueron (1996) cited her work with Pauly (1991) in which they discussed a series of large scale, rigorous evaluations of the 1980s’ WIN and WIN demonstration programs. The studies were conducted using a randomly selected control group and people participating in GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence). The evaluation of the WIN and WIN demonstration programs focused on the cost-effectiveness of the programs. There were positive, modest changes relative to the program’s cost effectiveness. The evaluation study of WIN showed that “relatively low-cost job-search-first programs increased people’s success in getting unsubsidized work and ultimately saved taxpayers money, but that many people remained on welfare and those who went to work usually got low-paying jobs” (p. 551). The findings suggested the most significant information relative to the cost-effectiveness of the programs, as Gueron further stated, came from

different approaches used in the research studies. Only two studies had information that was relevant to the effectiveness of the different approaches; those studies were The California JOBS program (called the Greater Avenues for Independence, or GAIN, program), and the ongoing JOBS evaluation sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Gueron, 1996). The approaches that were most effective were approaches that emphasized getting people in the job market quickly.

Gueron (1996) also cited Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman (1994) who tracked 37,000 people in six California counties for three years. This study “showed that GAIN was most successful in Riverside County, CA, where people in GAIN earned 49% more than those in a randomly selected control group and received 15% less in welfare payments, thereby returning to the taxpayers almost \$3 for every \$1 spent to run the program” (p. 551). JOBS evaluations were simultaneously implemented in three sites using two JOBS strategies and placing people using one of the two approaches at random. The first strategy (“labor force attachment”) moved people quickly into the labor market, even at low wages, while the second approach involved basic education, training, or work experience. Evaluators concluded that both strategies were well implemented and were more effective than programs in other states (Gueron, 1996).

Caputo’s (1989) research conducted with welfare recipients who participated in welfare-to-work programs and with recipients who did not participate in welfare-to-work programs showed that by 1986, 23 states had adopted community work-experience programs. An ongoing comprehensive evaluation of work and welfare initiatives by the Manpower Development Research Corporation (MDRC) showed mixed results with modest positive employment gains for program participants compared with nonparticipants, some welfare savings, and greater increases in employment for women receiving AFDC than for men in two-parent households (Caputo, 1989).

Several research studies were used to help shape the Family Support Act. “A series of well-researched experimental projects supported the Family Support Act proposition that selected groups of welfare-dependent mothers should be placed in training and work programs so they eventually could earn enough to support their families” (Chilman, 1992, p. 353). The studies were spin-offs of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981. “In 1982, MDRC began a 5-year experiment to examine a number of these projects. This study involved a series of large-scale evaluations in eight states and small studies in three additional states. These states and localities cooperated with MDRC researchers by agreeing to studies of randomly assigned experimental and control groups” (Chilman, 1992, p. 353).

The content of the experimental program varied at each research site, but community work, job searches, education, on-the-job-training, and work experience were included in most of the programs. There were employment differences noticed when money earned by welfare recipients was compared among the control and the experimental groups. The experimental group had income gains that were larger than those of the control group (Chilman, 1992).

The Gueron (1991) study revealed a larger payoff in training and job placement for long-term welfare recipients than for job-ready recipients. This was mainly because the job-ready group would most likely find employment without the program interventions. Therefore, job-training efforts were directed toward the long-term welfare recipient.

The fact that it cost more up front to run mandatory work programs than to pay cash benefits is a major reason why welfare has not been transformed: Congress and the states have not been willing to spend the money. This is also the main reason why the 1995 and 1996 bills called for a time limit with no subsidies at the end, thus no ultimate safety net for children (Gueron, 1996, p.550).

Through the years, the welfare system in the United States has evolved into what it is today. The changes to the system were influenced heavily by the results of studies done prior to the 1988 Act. Almost six years later, welfare reform surfaced again. "In late 1994 the United States Chamber of Commerce polled its members to get an idea of what their priorities were for the mostly Republican Congress. Welfare reform was ranked second of the 64 issues cited" (Andelman, 1995, p. 36). The new welfare reform law has been cited as having the following restrictions:

The states are given more leeway, but the new programme, called Transition Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), contains two key restrictions. First, it requires states to make many of their welfare recipients do some kind of work. Second, most recipients will be cut off after two years, and there is a lifetime limit of five years (Workfare: The new slavery, 1996, p. 33).

Welfare-to-work programs that were not tested did not appear to have reduced the welfare rolls, but instead cost money. Past evaluation concluded that, in strictly budgetary terms, ignoring the value of the work performed, sending welfare recipients checks was cheaper than providing them with a nonmarket way to earn it. It costs money to develop, manage, and monitor worksites and to provide child care to people while working (Gueron, 1996).

Findings from the Minority Female Single Parent demonstration (MFSP) (Gueron, Pauly, & Lougy, 1991) suggested that the results from four service providers were mixed. MFSP was a study that involved providers of services, service delivery, and intensive education and training for low-income minority women. During the 10 to 12 months after program enrollment, some people were still in programs, forgoing work and "investing" in education and training in hopes of future returns. The experimental group's employment earnings already exceeded those of the control group at one site and had caught up with controls at the other three. MFSP research suggested that the difference in success at the various sites was job skills training that was integrated with remedial education and open to all (regardless of educational skills). Other key factors were and higher-quality services, stronger links to employers, local labor market conditions, and availability of high-quality on-site child care. They noted that it was impossible to isolate the influence of any one of these factors because of the study design, the limited number of sites, and the short-term nature of the findings (Gueron, Pauly, & Lougy, 1991).

Other studies have been done with single mothers. "Longitudinal studies of single mothers on welfare, based on several national data sets, indicate that without education or job training, women who work their way off welfare experience no growth in wages despite years of continuous participation in the labor force" (Harris, 1996, p. B 7). Based on research findings such as these, the new welfare reform initiative should take into consideration the progress that has been made in previous welfare-to-work programs.

Theoretical Framework

Virginia employers will be faced with some tough decisions about whether to hire welfare recipients who may be lacking in job skills and work experience. Additionally, they will have to make decisions about providing job training or forming partnerships with some type of training program to ensure the applicants selected for employment will be assets to the industry. The foundation upon which these decisions will be made will be explained through the application of the theoretical framework of this study. This study is based on two theories of Organizational Change. Most relevant to this study are the innovation and diffusion of innovations models which are described in this section.

Havelock (1995) theorized that innovation deals with a problem-solving process that involves two steps: “arousal (of concern) and response (action to relieve the concern)” (pp. 2-3). For example, social pressures influenced federal constituencies to introduce a bill in Congress to change the welfare system. This action would be considered the arousal step and passing the new welfare reform law would be considered the response step. Havelock drew upon the Kurt Lewin model for change: “A stimulus, internal or external, leads to a response” (Havelock, 1995, p. 3).

Lewin believed that the initial posture of most social systems to change is “frozen.” Therefore, the initial task of those who wish to bring about change is to unfreeze the system, to create an environment in which ties are at least temporarily loosened and barriers made temporarily permeable. . . .

The second step in Lewin’s change model is “moving” which might involve three rather different types of change inputs: (1) change involving internal elements only, i.e. changing relationships, reallocating resources, changing internal linkages and barriers, (2) changes that come from outside in a more-or-less random fashion about either intent or planning; and (3) planned changes, brought about by the deliberate action of persons from inside or outside the system (or both). . . .

The final step in Lewin’s simple model is “refreezing” or returning to stability while the new elements are incorporated. (Havelock, 1995, pp. 47-49).

Lewin’s model maybe applied to employers in Virginia who may have developed ideas about the new welfare reform law that went into effect on October 1, 1996. Some of them are knowledgeable about the Virginia’s Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW) program while others may be unfamiliar with VIEW. For example, some employers have hired VIEW participants but may have continuing doubts about the employees becoming good workers. Before employers become committed to VIEW, they have to adopt decisions that will support the objectives of VIEW. Because these employers may have pre-existing ideas about welfare reform in the United States and in Virginia in particular, they will be forced to make decisions that will cause them to deal with the second step of the innovation problem-solving process, which in this case would involve hiring welfare recipients.

Based on Lewin’s theory, hiring welfare recipients would be considered to be an initial sign of accepting the change that is to take place in the social system. In the event employers find that welfare recipients do make good employees, they will be more amenable to paying wages that will cause welfare recipients to become self-sufficient. Moving welfare recipients from the welfare rolls to the workforce may be done for humanitarian concerns, to be in compliance with the welfare initiative, or to receive tax

credits. Returning to business as usual after hiring welfare recipients can be viewed as “refreezing,” which involves moving the company into stability again.

Rogers (1995) defines diffusion as the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system in that the messages are concerned with new ideas. “Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (Rogers, 1995, pp. 5-6). The diffusion of innovations model postulates a coming together of innovation and communication in the decision-making process. Employers are faced with new information about welfare reform since drastic changes are being implemented. Employers who participate in VIEW will need to communicate with social services personnel, employees, and other employers regarding these new ideas about the welfare reform initiative as applicable to VIEW. As explained above, communication is a key concept in the diffusion of innovations process.

Rogers referred to diffusion as a special type of communication in which the messages are about a new idea. Because of the newness of the idea, some degree of uncertainty is involved in diffusion. Rogers also suggested that diffusion is a kind of social change, defined as the process by which alteration occurs in the structure and function of a social system. He stated that when new ideas are invented, diffused, adopted, or rejected, certain consequences, such as social change, can occur.

Rogers’ diffusion of innovations model built upon the thought that “an innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. . . . If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation” (Rogers, 1995, p.11). As applied to the current study, an employer may have been aware of an innovation such as VIEW for some time but not have adopted or rejected it. Rogers reasoned that communication channels are viable in the diffusion of innovations model because “Communication is the process by which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. . . . The essence of the diffusion process is the information exchange through which one individual communicates a new idea to one or several others” (Rogers, 1995, pp. 17-18).

Rogers conceptualized five main steps in the innovation-decision process: (a) knowledge, (b) persuasion, (c) decision, (d) implementation, and (e) confirmation. Based on Rogers’ diffusion of innovations model an innovation can be either adopted or rejected. If an innovation has been adopted and if additional negative information is received about it, the innovation may be rejected.

The diffusion of innovation model can be applied to a social system.

“A social system is defined as a set of interrelated units that are engaged in joint problem-solving to accomplish a common goal. The members or units of a social system may be individuals, informal groups, organization, and/or subsystems.

These units seek to solve common problems in order to reach a mutual goal. This sharing of a common objective binds the system together” (Rogers, 1995, pp. 23-24).

The social system also has influence on the diffusion of new ideas and the rationale that causes an individual member of a system, or the entire social system, to decide to adopt or reject an innovation.

To summarize, the diffusion of innovations model postulates a coming together of innovation and communication in the decision making process. Decision-making

involves a problem-solving process wherein an arousal and a response action facilitate the communication needed to bring about change in the social system. Diffusion, which is the process by which innovation is communicated through certain channels, gives rise to participants creating and sharing information with one another to reach a mutual understanding about a decision. Diffusion involves ideas which have some uncertainty because of their newness (Rogers, 1995). Nevertheless, an individual can reduce the degree of uncertainty by obtaining information. In the current study, the perceptions of employers about welfare reform will have an impact on their decisions to participate in the VIEW program.

Factors that Encourage Employers' Participation in Welfare-to-Work Programs

This section addresses factors that encourage employers' participation in welfare-to-work programs. Literature regarding incentives related to hiring welfare recipients has been summarized. Major factors are: (a) skills and training, and (b) tax breaks and wage subsidies.

Skills and Training

Employers are seeking people who are serious about wanting to work, and they are also concerned about employees' work habits and attitudes. Information presented in interviews from a group of employers (What do employers want, 1997) suggested that employers are seeking employees who have a work ethic, know how to conduct themselves, have an ability to read for information, are self-starters, know how to seek out knowledge through creativity, can provide new ideas, have the basic skills and the ability to learn new things, know how to communicate effectively and be team players, understand how to transfer skills from one place to another, and have a willingness to learn. The interviews also indicated that employers are willing to train employees to perform the technical and specific job skills needed (What do employers want, 1997).

There are job training programs currently being used by employers to help welfare recipients make adjustments to the work environment. Estimation has it "The Marriott Corp., thought to be the company that has hired the most welfare recipients, has put 600 workers through a six-week training program targeting this population" (Barr & Harris, 1997, p. A1).

The federal government also supports training programs. Barr and Harris (1997) reported that a federal worker-trainee program started in 1968 would be the plan used for hiring welfare recipients in the current welfare reform effort. This program allowed a trainee to become a career civil service worker after three years. Nevertheless it recruited only 120 workers in 1996 and wages started at about \$13,000.

One employer had this to say about his company's efforts to provide job training for some of its employees. "Torinus [John Torinus, owner of Serigraph printing company] was exploding with frustration over the recruits he had hired from regular high school courses. 'We had illiterates--people who couldn't read blueprints, people who couldn't do simple decimals!' Torinus protested. 'So we have an in-house school, which began as a remedial school to get people up to skill.' But that was a drag on his company" (Smith, 1995, p.181).

Smith (1995) indicated that businesses in America spend about \$30 billion a year on training employees and another \$30 billion on remedial education for high school graduates who have not acquired basic work skills. Though businesses are spending this

sum of money on training and education, they really believe it is the responsibility of the schools to educate the students. Money spent on students while in school could be spent to educate students through apprenticeship programs, which would provide the skills needed to enter the workforce. Business leaders think that schools should educate students before they enter the workforce, because it is expensive to provide education for people once they are on the job. In their view schools, not companies, are funded to educate students (Smith, 1995).

Another viewpoint about job training and its importance to the Motorola company was reported by Smith (1995).

Motorola provides every one of its 107,000 employees at least one workweek in class per year--no small achievement for a \$12 billion company. Its ultimate goal is to raise the required level gradually to one month of training per year for everyone. Overall, former Motorola CEO George Fisher estimated in mid-1993 that Motorola was investing \$200 million a year in training--“and I say ‘invest’ and not ‘spend,’ ” Fisher emphasized, because he saw training not as a cost to be avoided but as an investment in the company’s growth (Smith, 1995, p. 335).

Itzkowitz (1991) quoted Robert L. Martin of the National Chamber of Commerce, who argued that the shift of training programs from the federal government to the states, and from the states into the hands of employers, is “supported by the business community because the management and delivery of public training programs is placed in the hands of local employers” (p. 284). Moreover, “to date, not a single shred of evidence in the welfare literature suggests former welfare recipients of low skill training ‘advance’ to anything but more poverty” (Itzkowitz, 1991, p. 285). Itzkowitz concluded by saying that “training the poor for employment and providing needed services is not inherently bad. Underfunded programs, however, which require participation under the threat of suspension of benefits and which end in continuing poverty, are akin to workhouses for the poor” (1991, p. 288).

Itzkowitz (1991) also cited Pierce A. Quinlin of the National Alliance of Business who suggested that business involvement in welfare reform has widened due to the growing concern about the future pool of workers: “Many businesses are looking hard for reliable, trained workers, and aren’t finding as many as they need” (p.284). Quinlin, according to Itzkowitz (1991), further suggested that

Not only does the private sector have a strong interest in effective employment and in training programs for welfare recipients, but it has important roles to play designing and overseeing those programs, for several reasons. They include: jobs that exist in the private sector, employers have knowledge of needed skills and local market trends, employers have the resources to conduct training, and business is: “neutral and can motivate and coordinate various agencies and officials” (p. 284).

Research presented a report by Nightingale and Haveman (1995) was based on experimental programs that were instituted in several states. Most of the data sources mentioned referred to research conducted by Gueron & Pauly (1991). Nightingale and Haveman (1995) mentioned that “individuals with high levels of education are more likely to receive training from their employers than those with lower levels of education” (p. 142). “Firm-provided education and training, on the other hand, appears quite

effective in increasing an individual's earnings and lowering his or her probability of unemployment" (Nightingale & Haveman, 1995, p. 151).

Research presented by Martin and Tolson (1985) was conducted using employers of Virginia to determine the job skills that will be needed to meet the changing employment trends in Virginia. The data for this study came from 250 personal interviews with employers from 115 private firms and public agencies around the state of Virginia. Martin and Tolson (1985) stated that employers are seeking persons with interpersonal skills as well as technical skills.

Employers today do not expect to hire ready-made employees who can start a job without missing a beat so much as they want good, solid workers who can take advantage of specialized on-the-job training and retraining. In addition to computer skills, it is training in the most basic areas--communicating, relating to others, and reasoning--that employers demand. How these skills are acquired, whether they are traits a person is born with, learns in the home, or should be taught in school, is open to debate. Nonetheless, they are required in the world of work today and in the foreseeable future (p. 156).

Tax Breaks and Wage Subsidies

Congressman Charles Rangel, Democratic Representative from New York, stated that it was being proposed in the 105th Congress that employers receive \$5,000 per employee as a tax break for hiring welfare recipients. This is based "on the first \$10,000 of wages paid to long-term (18 consecutive months) welfare recipients who are hired" (National Alliance of Business, 1997b, p. 5). If the \$5,000 per employee is not significant enough to encourage adoption, then rejection may be the decision and employers will not hire welfare recipients. As of this date, action has not been taken on the proposed tax break.

There has been concern about subsidizing private employers to hire welfare recipients. The results on this issue have been mixed. There are instances where subsidized on-the-job training programs have increased earnings and resulted in higher paying jobs, but these programs have ordinarily generated limited interest among employers (Wallace, 1996).

States are finding different ways to create enough work activities to accommodate those recipients who are unable to find jobs. States also are encouraging employers to hire welfare recipients by offering incentives including wage subsidies and tax credits and paying employer premiums for workers' compensation and unemployment insurance (National Alliance of Business, 1997b, p. 4).

Support From Social Agencies

Gary Stangler, Missouri's social services director, said Missouri experimented with paying Kansas City employers wage subsidies to hire adults on welfare. Many employers said that even more than wage supplements or other financial incentives were needed. They wanted the state to supply a case manager to help deal with problems that arise when companies hire from the welfare rolls (Vobejda, 1996).

According to an article in *US News World Report* (Take this job, 1996) the belief is, that employers are not going to hire welfare recipients even with the subsidies. State, county, and city governments have tried job subsidies before, and the result, it turns out, is that they seem to reduce welfare mothers' chances of finding work. The article also

cited Lawrence Katz, a Harvard economist and former Clinton appointee, who noted that “simply sending women out to employers to announce they are welfare recipients bearing wage vouchers is not a good idea. To the employer it comes across as, ‘Hi, I’m a lemon--give me a job!’ ” (Take this job, 1996, p. 45). Employers who accept subsidies will be “required to make longer commitments to workers, keeping them on the payroll for 400 hours before they can collect the credit, up from 120 in the old plan” which was implemented under Carter’s administration (Ullmann, 1996, p. 49).

Studies done by the National Commission for Employment Policy showed that more than half of subsidized welfare recipients would have gotten the same jobs without the tax break offered the employers. It is speculated that unscrupulous employers could “churn” the credit by replacing workers when tax credits ran out (Ullman, 1996). “Tax credits for new jobs have a checkered history of lining the pockets of low-wage businesses without doing much to boost job prospects of disadvantaged workers” (Ullman, 1996, p. 49). Furthermore, businesses may not be willing to take a chance on hiring an applicant with little work history if the payoff is delayed. The new tax credit plan requires job seekers to identify themselves as welfare recipients before they get hired. On the other hand, big companies offer few unskilled jobs suitable for people on welfare. The best programs like VIEW tend to be local partnerships between smaller companies and state agencies (Ullman, 1996). Additionally, “employers view poverty programs as intrusions into the ‘free market’ as economic meddling by the state and a direct attack on their ability to obtain profits” (Itzkowitz, 1991, p. 276).

According to an article in *U.S. News & World Report* (Take this job, 1996), there is reason to believe “employers are not that interested in hiring subsidized workers” (p. 45). Employers can use welfare-to-work employees only to fill new positions, so those with an existing vacancy or companies that are downsizing cannot hire from a welfare to work program. When businesses do have a new entry-level position, a welfare mother is often their last employment choice. The article further stated that there is little reason to think wage subsidies will lead employers to hire large numbers of welfare mothers in the inner city. (Take this job, 1996).

There is an estimated need of two million jobs for people who will be leaving the welfare rolls. “Yet, despite promises of tax breaks and other incentives to push those efforts along, progress has been slow” (Barr & Harris, 1997, p. A1). Other alternatives are being discussed as possible ways of placing these individuals in jobs. For example, some welfare recipients could be encouraged to enter the child care profession. Through loans from the Small Business Administration, qualified welfare recipients could borrow money to establish some type of child day care facility.

Welfare Policies

It may become necessary to enact federal policy that would put more pressure on the business sector to become actively involved in the employment of welfare recipients. Appropriately, the bridge for doing this is already in place. Based on research conducted by Caputo (1993), the government should adopt an industrial policy which would bring about coordinated government involvement in the economy. “With passage of the Employment Act of 1946, the federal government formalized its reliance on the private sector to act as the engine of the economy to spur productivity and create jobs” (Caputo, 1993, p. 522). Caputo, also stated that

The government needs to focus on improving the economy in ways that increase

the autonomy and self-determination of those on the lower end of the economic scale. Such endeavors demand an active government, one that uses both macroeconomic policies and microeconomic management for the public good, one that has the analytic capabilities with which to direct the nation toward global competitiveness while reducing domestic poverty (Caputo, 1993, p. 525).

Caputo's study examined the relationships among the value of AFDC payments, unemployment rates, and family relationships in black and white poor families between 1973 and 1988. The study found that more American families became poor while AFDC payments were reduced in value. It showed that a decline in poverty went along with decreasing unemployment rates throughout the 1980s. The study used aggregated 1973-88 data published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The study presented data on mean poverty and unemployment rates for each of three periods 1973-88, 1973-80, and 1981-88 for all persons below poverty. The study also used Pearson's r correlation coefficient to show the trends in the value of AFDC monthly payments per recipients, in unemployment rates, and the numbers and percentages of all persons below poverty throughout each period in addition to the direction and strength of association between the numbers and percentages of all persons below poverty and AFDC payment.

Itzkowitz (1991) indicated that poor people usually contend that events outside their control have influenced their poverty and expect the government to give them support. Employers, however, argue that the poor cause their own poverty because they lack motivation and perseverance and should be propelled toward work activities. Employers believe that where government work programs are available to assist welfare recipients, they should be flexible and adjust to local labor markets and wages. They also believe that state and local delivery agents should maintain maximum control over the programs (Itzkowitz, 1991).

Nightingale and Haveman (1995) concluded that "the only way to entice firms to hire more workers than they otherwise would is to make it profitable for them to do so. That is, the larger the windfall profits to the firm, the greater will be both the increase in employment and the cost per new job created" (p. 143). Welfare-to-work will most likely be successful if labor market policies create incentives for the unemployed to search more intensively for work, or by reducing the wage rate at which unemployed workers are willing to accept employment. Reemployment literature indicates that this type of policy can have, at best, a marginal effect on employment (Nightingale & Haveman, 1995).

Factors that Affect the Entry of Welfare Recipients into the Workforce

In this section factors that will affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce will be discussed. The major factors are: (a) job training, (b) job availability, (c) policy issues, (d) welfare-to-work programs, and (e) factors that relate to workforce participation.

Job Training

According to the National Alliance of Business (1997b), it is believed if welfare recipients have appropriate levels of education and skills, employers will be eager to hire them, particularly in the current labor market. They also speculated that public-private partnerships are the keys to successful welfare-to-work. The editor of *The Economist*

stated that employers must turn workfare into more of an apprenticeship program, with adequate government training, if it is to succeed (Workfare in New York, 1996).

Education usually leads to increased employment and earnings. The National Alliance of Business (1997b) cited a study of former welfare recipients conducted by Danziger and Koussoudji. This study reported that workers with less than a high school diploma earned an average wage of \$4.78 per hour, while those who had a high school diploma or more earned \$6.07 as an average hourly wage. Jobs in 2005 will require more education and training. Only 14% of jobs will be available for people with less than a high school diploma, while 35% of jobs will require a high school diploma. The other 51% of jobs will require at least some postsecondary education (National Alliance of Business, 1997b).

People with low education levels can be effective in jobs that require technological skills. According to Wilson (1987) “lower education requisite” jobs and “higher education requisite” jobs do not address the question of the actual relevance of levels of education to real job performance. Many jobs identified as higher education jobs because of the average level of education of the workforce may not really require skills gained through higher education. Therefore, welfare recipients who are given the proper training will be able to work in jobs requiring technological skills. Wilson also stated that the new high technology is user friendly and can be operated in most cases by people who have mastered the “3Rs.” (Wilson, 1987).

When welfare recipients are required to participate in job training programs, they face other factors. They may be placed in low cost program, such as a job search or a non-profit Community Work Experience program, or in a wage subsidy program such as on-the-job training (Itzkowitz, 1991). Therefore, because “employers derive subsidies from on-the-job training, the General Accounting Office concluded on-the-job-training programs chiefly benefit employers” (Itzkowitz, 1991, p. 283). This is based on the perception that employers will get cheap labor. Itzkowitz asked “Who then benefits from a welfare to work program, where participants often are not adequately trained, are required to participate or risk being cut off from their portion of welfare payment, and often end up in low paying jobs with little hope of ending their poverty? The answer is obvious: employers” (Itzkowitz, 1991, p. 283). According to Itzkowitz, there is reason to believe “benefits to employers from welfare reform are no accident” (p. 284).

Employers' perceptions of welfare reform may be related to their involvement with training and education of employees. There are probably conditions under which employers will hire low-skilled workers, but there are also some situations that will prevent employers from participating in a welfare-to-work program.

According to a panel of experts who participated in a satellite conference sponsored by Cornell University, their conviction is that the training needs of welfare recipients are: child care, job readiness and placement, GED (general education development), parenting education, and nutrition education (Swanson, 1996). The satellite conference stressed that child care is important to helping welfare recipients get into the job market. It would be a favorable feature if onsite child care centers were available at places of employment.

Employability skills. Job readiness and job placement skills will assist recipients in searching for jobs, knowing where to look for jobs, getting to work on time, and dressing for employability. Additional helpful skills will be budgeting, paying taxes,

keeping the job, and improving interpersonal relationships. Job readiness training for most welfare recipients will be a necessity. To what extent employers will become involved in the training process is not yet clear. The researcher speculates that employers will seek knowledge about existing job training programs before adopting the idea of providing the job training themselves. Nevertheless, employers will continue to be interested in the training of prospective employees. They are already cognizant of the value well-trained employees will bring with them to the business. If employers decide to hire welfare recipients, the likelihood of them becoming very involved in the training of these workers will be substantial. "Managers at activist companies say they are committed to helping the ex-welfare recipients they hire succeed by providing them with continued training, financial advancement, and perhaps most important, encouragement" (Finn, 1996, p. Va 1). Research based information made this knowledge available relative to employability skills "To train their workers in new job skills, employers use a variety of strategies. Self-instruction, short, in-house training courses, training provided by the manufacturers of new equipment, and courses in community colleges or other outside facilities are all ways in which workers acquire new skills" (Martin & Tolson, 1985, p. 20). To do this employers will need to help these employees remove some additional barriers. Vobejda described barriers that will interfere with welfare recipients moving into the workforce:

Communities like St. Louis are finding through programs already in place that many welfare recipients lack the kinds of basic resources, training and practical experience that help middle-class workers weather the challenges of the workplace, everything from a credit card to use when the car battery dies to the "soft skills" that communicate a positive attitude and help employees deal with day-to-day office politics and workplace conflicts. "The hardest part is attendance and habits," said Dick Harig, co-owner of a St. Louis business school that trains welfare recipients. "We're not psychologists, we can't change their behavior, but we work on attitude over and over." For employees with years in the labor force, these "soft skills" are taken for granted. Nevertheless, without them, a worker can be quickly undone in today's complex economy, where jobs require far more human interaction and personal skills than the more industrial jobs of past decades (Vobejda, 1996, p. A1, A12).

The CEO at Motorola summed it up well, " 'If you believe that your employees are a cherished asset and are with you for a long period of time--and we believe virtually in lifetime employment,' Fisher said, 'then you've got to admit that it's essential that we retrain, reeducate our people regularly through their careers' " (Smith, 1995, p. 335).

Barclay's (1995) indicated a view that some employers believe there are people who are not suitable for employment. While most people have no mental and physical impairments that would prevent them from becoming productive workers, their work ethic may be poor. They may not get to work on time or work up to the required production level when they are on the job. Therefore these people usually move from job to job rather than moving upward. Many of them have bad attitudes, come to work intoxicated, or do not respect authority, according to some employers (Barclay, 1995).

Some employers want the state to create a special category for welfare recipients who have never had a job and who need to get off the system. "Employers want a change in employment laws, free range to do drug testing, and a change in disability laws to

exclude drug and alcohol abuse as a legally-protected illness for six months” (Barclay, 1995, p. A14). Given these conditions, employers will reconsider taking a chance on hiring someone who has no work record and who probably comes from an environment that is believed to result in a high-risk employee.

Specific skills. Research data support the thinking of employers about roles they can play in helping applicants acquire the necessary skills to become productive workers. Employers expect to provide a certain amount of on-the-job training, but they prefer to hire people who already have the skills they need. For instance, an employer may be willing to train a employee to use a particular type of word processing program but will expect applicants to have some experience with electronic word processing in general. Additionally both the job applicant and employer can benefit from the job applicant having the required skills before going into the workforce (Martin & Tolson, 1985).

Lack of funds for training. Budget cuts are causing some concern about the availability of money to provide job training for people leaving welfare rolls. Conceptually, “Federal union leaders have expressed concern that agencies which have scaled back employee training because of budget shortfalls, will not have enough money to provide suitable training for the former welfare recipients” (Harris & Barr, 1997, p. A18).

Some employers are becoming frustrated with having to spend extra training dollars on remedial education. They prefer to spend these dollars on internal skills training to keep up with different technologies (What do employers want, 1997).

Job Availability

Overall job availability in the middle 1990s continued to increase while the number of jobs available to high school graduates and the amount of pay have decreased (Smith, 1995). Bruce Reed, a White House senior domestic policy aide expressed a similar idea, “The issue is not the availability of jobs--the economy is adding 200,000 jobs a month, he said--but giving people the skills to fill them” (Harris & Barr, 1997, p. A18).

In today’s labor market, small businesses will be providing more of the jobs that will be available for welfare recipients. But, because they do not have the resources to create training programs of their own, communities are going to have to band together to prepare people for work. In return, company presidents must be persuaded to take risks on entry-level workers (Associated Press, 1997).

Corporate America may be taking a leadership role in providing jobs for welfare recipients. Several corporations are stepping forward to help (Finn, 1996). Most often the jobs that are provided are entry-level; the wages will be low, perhaps minimum wage or slightly above. Nevertheless, companies view their efforts as a way of reaching out and helping the community. Although some risk may be involved, these employers are willing to accept the risk to help citizens of their local communities.

Applicants in Virginia are receiving jobs such as administrative assistants and mail carriers. Entry-level jobs in hotels, the food service industry, and small businesses are other job options for welfare recipients. “The great majority of [women] job participants train for and obtain employment in just two occupational categories: service work and clerical and sales. Of course, low wages are attached to those two occupational categories. Only one to five percent of women, depending upon how you measure it, are trained in nontraditional jobs” (Pearce, 1994, p. 91).

Economists generally agree that, in a 134 million-worker economy, adding two million or even three million jobs should not be difficult. They point to the expansion of the American labor market to accommodate the massive baby boom generation, the wave of immigrants, and the large-scale entry of women into the work force in recent decades as evidence of the economy's flexibility and potential to absorb new people. "If you look at the experience of the American labor market," said Gary Burtless, an economist at the Brookings Institution, "there is empirical evidence that we have the capacity to develop job opportunities for even very unskilled workers" (Vobejda, 1996, A2). Burtless cited employment growth in new job areas such as dry cleaning and house cleaning services and projected that additional such jobs will be available as welfare recipients create a new supply of cheap labor. Low paying occupations have accounted for more than half of the 10 million jobs created in the last four years. In spite of job availability, however, unemployment rates for unskilled workers are five times that of college graduates, which indicates that it will be difficult for welfare recipients to find and maintain employment (Vobejda, 1996). Gary Stangler, Missouri's social services director, expressed a viewpoint that "the state's welfare-to-work programs have already proven how difficult it is to make work permanent for the welfare population. 'The whole next wave of thinking is job retention,' he said, 'compared to job retention, job placement is relatively easy'" (Vobejda, 1996, p. A2).

While low-skill jobs may exist in the labor force, there is a growing concern about the availability of jobs in the inner cities where most welfare recipients live. What this means is that welfare recipients must relocate to secure jobs. Because low income people often need a family support system, there is a fear that requiring recipients to move will cause problems such as recipients quitting their jobs. "In one Kansas City welfare-to-work program emblematic of the problem, more than half of those placed in jobs left within 16 months" (Vobejda, 1996, p. A2). This problem can be minimized by providing transportation from the inner cities to job locations, a practice which may need to be continued until the participant's income exceeds the poverty level.

It is commonly known that if jobs are available, welfare recipients will be able to work. However, there might be other reasons the recipients will not be able to take the jobs that are available. Mead (1992) stated that "barriers to opportunities do exist in American society. People who have to work at low-paid jobs because of limited skills or education are necessarily worse off than those with higher-paid jobs. That is why the progressive debate about how to improve jobs or equalize rewards remains important" (p.132).

Some sources say that businesses are facing labor shortages and are anxious to hire welfare recipients who are ready to work. Nevertheless, because businesses have choices they will not hire people who are not qualified. Nor would welfare recipients benefit from being hired for jobs they cannot perform or advance in (National Alliance of Business, 1997b). Work-readiness training must address the real-world workforce. Because businesses need skilled workers, they are not going to lower their standards to hire unskilled workers (National Alliance of Business, 1997b). In other words, "the welfare-to-work initiative must take on the dimensions of a labor market challenge, not a social issue, if it is to succeed. . . . The greatest barrier to work for welfare recipients is skill deficits, with child care and transportation posing barriers as well" (National Alliance of Business, 1997b, p. 4). The obstacles to welfare recipients getting jobs will

be due to one or all of these factors, but they can overcome these barriers with education and training. It also is going to be a challenge to put low-skilled people to work because they are confronted with such factors as poor literacy, lack of work experience, and social, emotional, and substance abuse problems among others (National Alliance of Business, 1997b).

Labor market conditions influence welfare dynamics in two ways: (a) they affect the ability of recipients to find work and leave welfare, and (b) they impact the characteristics of the remaining public assistance caseload. Therefore, when labor demand is strong, relatively job-ready individuals will find employment and never receive public assistance. If they do receive public assistance, they will not receive it very long before they move into the labor market (Gueron, Pauly, & Lougy, 1991).

Research done by Sanger (1980) suggested that “the combination of program parameters and the jobs components appears to be most consistent with what current research has been suggesting are necessary components of a reformed system” (p. 57). Research data support the conclusion that jobs are not readily available for low-skilled workers. Therefore, jobs have been added or created each time welfare reform has occurred (Sanger, 1980).

Qualifications. Some companies are using inventory tests to try to establish a reliable and competent labor force at the minimum wage level. “There is a very definite trend, particularly among the largest employers, to avoid hiring mistakes, not to burden their own intake process by blanket advertising for people, a very costly process and not perfect. What they will do is to take a pool of 15 or 20 temps from us and, when they want to increase their permanent workforce, take five or six from that pool” (Andelman, 1995, p. 37).

Employers are beginning to take advantage of the new welfare reform policy to build a pool of applicants for hard to fill entry level positions. Some employers are being very creative in organizing their programs to accommodate welfare recipients.

“We are very pleased to find people ready, willing and able to work,” said Andrew Blair, chief executive of Colonial Parking, which hired three welfare recipients in one month. “We are a pure service business, and we are constantly on the look out for people who have some skill and a desire to learn. We have a program called Colonial University to help people acquire the skills they need to get ahead, whether inside or outside the company,” Blair said. “But one of the things we’re proud of here is how many employees stay with us. That’s unusual for this industry, and one of the reasons we can hold on to people is a good benefits package and the chance to move up in the company” (Finn, 1996, p. Va1).

Based on the actions taken by most employers it is clear that they “will not employ the hard to employ if they can get better qualified individuals. Women, particularly single parents, , also are considered to be hard to employ because many lack skills necessary for worthwhile occupations” (Caputo, 1989, p. 88). According to Caputo (1989) several obstacles work against employing the hard to employ in jobs whose wages are sufficient to lift families above the poverty level:

1. Functional illiteracy will be an obstacle that will prevent employers from hiring welfare recipients.
2. Monetary reward for some jobs is too low.

3. Higher levels of aggregate unemployment have become a consistent component of the American economy.

4. The percentage of low-income American families has increased (p. 89).

In his book, *When Work Disappears*, sociologist William Julius Wilson reported that “only 16% of Chicago businesses ever recruit from welfare programs” (1996, p. 47). Big businesses are being accused of not hiring welfare recipients as rapidly as policymakers projected. They want to make it known that they have to face economic issues the same way any company would today and make business decisions based on their economic conditions (Associated Press, 1997).

A survey of employers was designed by Holzer (1996) to enhance understanding of the demand side of the labor market and the barriers that less-educated workers currently face. The survey also looked at the nature and characteristics of the jobs less-educated workers filled, the employers who hired them, how these factors influenced which workers were hired, and what they were paid. In this study, Holzer focused particularly on the market for less-educated workers, especially minorities, in recent years. The survey respondent was the person identified as being responsible for new hiring. The sample firms were drawn from two sources: the current or most recent employer reported by respondents in the corresponding household survey for each city and listing of employers in each area draws primarily from telephone directories and provided by Survey Sampling Inc. (SSI). The household-based sample were employers who had to have hired an employee in the past three years into the same occupation that was held by the household respondent who generated the employer name. The sample size for the household generated was 1,006; the SSI generated was 2,214. The findings suggested that young male high school graduates and dropouts of all races earned 20 to 30% less per hour than comparable workers did in the early 1970s, and they worked less frequently as well. “A large body of economic research shows that, among other things, there was a marked shift in employer hiring away from less-educated toward more-educated workers during this time period. The reasons for this shift are not totally clear, though technological advances and rising import competition seem to be among them” (Holzer, 1996, p.2). “The decline in jobs for less-educated workers has been particularly striking in the area of blue-collar employment, especially in the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing jobs are giving way to jobs in the trade and service sectors” (Holzer, 1996, p. 3).

Wage levels. It is no surprise that welfare recipients most often are people with little training and low educational levels, but the welfare reform movement requires that they find jobs. People with less education and lower net earnings generally pay more for goods and services in proportion to their income and resources than others. In addition, “These are the people who have experienced an even greater decrease in the inflation-adjusted hourly wage rate” (Andelman, 1995, p. 36).

According to Caputo (1989), “in 1973 13.1% (6.9 million) of the 52.4 million employed persons in the United States earned low wages (defined as \$11,104 or less in 1986 dollar terms)” (p. 86). There has been a decline in the pool of newly created jobs formerly available for those with minimal skills. This decline was due to an increase in the percentage of jobs requiring a higher skill level (Caputo, 1989). Clearly low wages are synonymous with people having low skills. Wage levels will determine whether welfare recipients will be able to support a family without welfare benefits.

For a woman employed in a low-wage job what this usually means is that wage increases will barely keep pace with inflation and therefore will not allow her to move above the poverty level. “Women know that taking a job which pays poorly and offers no benefits means cycling back onto AFDC in the future” (Churchill, 1995, p.28). Conceptually, “Women who must pay for child care out of their meager wages may increase the economic insecurity of their families” (Harris, 1996, p. B7).

While education is a factor that will help welfare recipients get into the workforce, it does not guarantee a good paying job. According to Nightingale and Haveman (1995), it is much harder to engineer the elimination of all of the poorly paid jobs. So long as those jobs exist, some people will hold them. If the job holders happen to be single parents with dependent children, their families are likely to be poor. They further stated that “work programs and training obligations can yield small but meaningful benefits to the dependent poor, but such programs are not likely to yield large enough benefits to reduce child poverty significantly” (p. 102).

Policy Issues

There are some individuals who believe the federal welfare reform bill that was passed in 1996 has strict quotas, and vague rules (Litvin, 1997).

Under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, states must submit and start implementing a welfare plan by July 1 of this year. They must put 25 percent of all one-parent welfare families into “work activities” in fiscal 1997. (The work participation rate is calculated as an average of the rates for each month between July 1997 and July 1998.) The following year, 30 percent of all heads of one-parent household on welfare, including minors must carry out work activities. By 2002, 50 percent must work. States that can't toe those lines will see cuts in their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, (TANF) the new federal welfare block grants. The law limits these in any case, allotting \$81.9 billion for 50 states and four territories over five years (Litvin, 1997, p. 30).

According to Churchill's (1995) research policymakers have completely ignored the welfare recipients' experiences and their lack of voice in policy decisions. This has left welfare recipients without the ability to navigate their way out of the system. Churchill (1995) did a study in Hartford, Connecticut, to find out how welfare recipients felt about welfare-to-work programs. The study involved written questionnaires, participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. Eight non-randomly selected groups of AFDC recipients, mostly women, were the subjects of the study. Data were gathered during fifteen months of participant observation in welfare-to-work program in Hartford, Connecticut. The findings revealed that “the women conceptualize poverty and the welfare system. They claim a causal relationship between racism and the decay of urban neighborhoods, lack of employment opportunities and increased drug use, crime and violence in America's cities” (Churchill, 1995, p. 26). Churchill's study cited the following as a factor which hinders the effort to move welfare recipients into the workforce:

AFDC recipients remain voiceless in the welfare reform policy arena. . . . As long as poor women lack the power to speak for themselves and to take part in the process of formulating policies that affect them, their sisters and their families, those policies are bound to have dire consequences for the economically oppressed (Churchill, 1995, p. 29).

Churchill's (1995) qualitative research findings proposed the following endorsement for welfare reform policies:

Social scientists whose work has direct relevance for public policy have a responsibility to assist in bringing the voices of the disenfranchised to the fore. . . . Those engaged in poverty research must find ways to insert themselves into the public policy debate and disseminate their findings to a broader audience (p. 28).

Churchill further stated that as long as welfare recipients do not participate with politicians, policymakers, and taxpayers' in public policy discussions, we will not be able to move toward a common understanding of welfare (1995). Welfare recipients will have to contend with policies that determine what is considered ethically appropriate. "American social welfare programs such as AFDC rest on the unstated operating principle of less eligibility; that is, poor people cannot be given what they need economically because that would allow them to have a standard of living higher than those of the lowest salaried worker" (Caputo, 1993, p. 521).

Caputo (1989) had ideas about some factors that can help move welfare recipients into the workforce. He stated that government policies will foster a good beginning. The main objective, as he saw it, was to reverse the government policies of the 1980s. Caputo further suggested that "the federal government can assist the working poor and the hard to employ to overcome systemic hardships by pursuing specific policies in four main areas: making work pay, removing employment obstacles, finding and creating jobs, and linking welfare reform with strategies for finding jobs" (1989, p. 91).

Welfare-to-Work Programs

Churchill's (1995) research cited some problems faced by welfare recipients in welfare-to-work training programs. They viewed these programs as sending women into low-wage, service jobs by subsidizing businesses through paying workers' wages for a few months, thus placing women into jobs that pay no benefits and terminate after the trial period. "Businesses also receive tax breaks for hiring training program graduates. The claim that the welfare system can be reformed by putting all recipients to work only sets recipients up for failure and subsequent blame, particularly in light of the current jobless economic recovery" (Churchill, 1995, p.10).

Churchill (1995) designated the forces behind the welfare reform revolution as the citizen-taxpayers placing pressure on the politicians to make change to the system. Churchill's findings further showed that citizen-taxpayers are

Unaware of the ways in which the regulations governing both welfare and welfare-to-work programs hinder recipients from successfully making the transition to employment. And because of the tendency to locate the causes of poverty within the individual, citizen-taxpayers continue to propose work as the solution to welfare during a recession that has caused profound alterations in the job and wage structures of the national economy (p.27).

Another finding mentioned in Churchill's study was that most training programs prepare women for low-wage employment in traditionally female occupations (e.g., clerical, child care, health care). "The average placement wage for Job Connection welfare-to-work program participants hovers around \$6.50 per hour, which will not lift a family of three out of poverty" (1995, p. 28).

Welfare recipients who participated in welfare-to-work programs reported that they liked their jobs but “felt their employing agency was getting a better deal than they were” (Block & Noakes, 1988, p. 46). Additionally, research indicated mandatory unpaid work did not develop people’s skill and did not prompt people to move quickly into unsubsidized jobs or discourage them from applying for welfare benefits (Gueron, 1996).

Work experience. Block and Noakes (1988) interviewed welfare recipients participating in work experience programs to evaluate participants’ feelings and perceptions about the work obligation. The results indicated that those interviewed generally liked their jobs and felt it was fair that they were obligated to work for their benefits. The findings also suggested that they learned no new skills during the work assignments. Block and Noakes indicated that from this work experience participants gained some “soft skills” such as work ethics, interpersonal skills, and a sense of responsibility. Employers reported that participants were equally or more productive than regularly hired new employees. “MDRC [Manpower Development Research Corporation] quotes one of their fieldworkers, that ‘these workfare programs did not create the work ethic; they found it’ ” (Block & Noakes, 1988, p. 46). These authors also stated that “It is true that social-psychological studies show that satisfactory jobs do improve the psychological well-being of parents and their children, but they also show that bad jobs are detrimental” (Block & Noakes, 1988, p. 51).

Factors that Relate to Workforce Participation

Fein’s (1994) research was based upon studies that involved evaluations of other studies where collectively thousands of participants were involved and millions of dollars were spent. These studies used random-assignment methods, non-experiments methods, and experimental designs to gather the data.

Fein (1994) cited several strategies that states can use to avoid pitfalls encountered in getting welfare recipients into the workforce. Fein’s research focused on the effect welfare reform programs had on clients and a cost-benefit study analyzing the net cost-effectiveness of the intervention. The evaluations relied to a great extent on data from state automated systems, such as welfare employment and training, child care, unemployment insurance, and other databases. The strategies cited by Fein were:

1. Time limits
2. Financial incentives such as increasing earnings for participants
3. Employment and training-- establishing workfare programs and providing training
4. Supportive services such as extending transitional child care past 12 months
5. Child support
6. Responsible behavior such as reducing or eliminating AFDC grant increases for additional children.
7. Two-parent family rules such as eliminating the work history requirement (Fein, 1994, p. 26).

States can use these strategies while developing a model to use in getting welfare recipients into the workforce on a permanent basis. These strategies are components that states should consider in their planning process. Those not discussed previously are discussed briefly here.

Child support. States should strengthen the laws relative to the child support collection process. States should according to Fein (1994), “establish other child support assurance programs” (p. 26).

Time limits. The time limit is a factor because states will need to determine how soon within the two-year time frame they will have the model in place to expedite the welfare reform initiative.

Two-parent family rules. Under the two-parent rule, parents could possibly qualify for some financial assistance, but not Medicaid. Nevertheless, each family is evaluated based on this rule in compliance with the merit and needs of the family and situation. In some instances, one parent could be exempted from work requirements to care for the children, while the other spouse worked telephone conversation with a representative from the Macon County, Alabama Human Resources Department). In keeping with the two-parent family rules, according to Fein (1994) states should abandon work history requirements and increase the number of hours welfare recipients can work before losing benefits; states may also make stepfathers eligible for AFDC.

Other factors related to workforce participation, in addition to those mentioned by Fein are child care, transportation, substance abuse, and criminal records. An evaluation of the impact welfare reform programs have on families can be done through analyzing the effects of these strategies or factors on welfare recipients.

Child care. Welfare recipients who lose food stamps under the new law might not be able to afford child care or transportation to work, making them erratic employees. This will cause them to be perceived as persons with poor employability-skills. Federal child care subsidies are available to these people on a complicated sliding scale, and in most instances there are already long waiting lists to receive the service (Grimsley, 1996).

According to the Census Bureau, working mothers spent average of \$74 a week, or about 8 percent of their monthly income, on child care in 1993. A total of 9.9 million children under the age of five were in need of child care in 1993 because their mothers worked. Child care was most often arranged through family members, 41 percent; organized child care facilities accounted for 30 percent and family day care settings accounted for 17 percent. Families who had two or more children under school age paid \$110 per week for child care which is equivalent to about 11 percent of their family income. However, poor families paid a much larger portion of their incomes on child care in 1993. They paid about 18 percent (Associated Press, 1995, p. A9).

In Virginia money spent for child care comes from a combination of sources, including federal, state, and local funds. “Virginia officials said they are studying whether any changes created by the state’s welfare initiative can be diverted into expanded child-care programs for all low-income families” (Finn, 1996, p. B5). Gabe and Falk (1995) stated that “mothers who receive welfare face a financial disincentive associated with going to work other than the reduced benefits that accompany increased earnings. The cost of working, especially the costs of child care, may deter some mothers on AFDC from taking a job” (p.CRS-4). Gabe and Falk further stated that “little is known about how states provide AFDC child care, or how child care is provided under Transitional Child Care and other federal programs” (p.CRS-4).

Havemann (1997) stated a viewpoint that states are unlikely to increase direct payments to the poor, therefore, they should increase the money to expand child care, transportation, job training and other efforts aimed at moving welfare recipients into jobs. “The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the \$20 billion available in the welfare act for child care falls \$1.4 billion short of the projected need over six years. But this does not take into consideration the vast need for child care subsidies by poor families who are already working at the minimum wage or only slightly above, child advocates say” (Havemann & Vobjeda, 1996, p. A2). “AFDC parents need to be assured of adequate child care and other supportive services in order to participate in welfare-to-work programs. They also need transitional health and child care assistance so that they are not in the position of risking the well-being of their children when they accept employment and move off the welfare rolls” (National Coalition on Women, 1986, p.4).

Welfare recipients are gaining employment in areas where women traditionally have not worked. Jeter (1997) asked, “if your kid gets sick at school, how does the school get word to the mother on the construction site.” Jeter continued, “In the summer, construction workers can work from sunup to sundown. How is a mother going to find day care for such bizarre hours?” (p. B3). Some welfare-to-work programs in the past have provided child care. “Teenage mothers’ need for child care was viewed as so important that all 5 of the evaluated programs as well as the 13 programs we visited attempted to provide it, either directly or through reimbursement. Some programs provided child care directly in the schools, in the residential facilities, at the job training sites or in the community” (GAO, 1995, p. 9). Child care is a vital component to the success of any welfare reform program relative to welfare recipients being able to leave home and seek employment. States could strengthen the laws relative to the child support collection process to help fund the child care budgets.

Transportation. Brice (1996) inferred that for welfare recipients to become self-sufficient they need to secure a job that “pays wages that double entry-level wages of \$5 to \$6 an hour.” Brice further indicated that welfare recipients need to “receive help with transportation, child and medical care, and housing” (p. A10). Bridges to Work is a program created by President Clinton to provide transportation to entry-level jobs in the suburbs for thousands of welfare recipients who will be forced off public assistance over next several years, according to Evans (1996). Evans continued to say that “lack of transportation is one of the biggest problems for public assistance recipients who want to work” (p. A 23). “To remedy the shortage of jobs and transportation in rural areas, state and local officials are laying plans to help impoverished families relocate as part of welfare overhaul efforts” (Jeter & Havemann, p. A18).

Munns (1987) indicated that legislation governing food stamps in 1985 provided an opportunity to experiment with welfare reform through employment and training. The Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service regulations for this program demanded that food stamp participants (welfare recipients) be placed in a training program. They required that food stamp and training participants’ expenses, such as transportation and child care, were to be reimbursed up to \$25 per month on a fifty-fifty basis by the federal and state governments.

Substance abuse. According to Barclay (1995), employers indicated that it is hard to find persons who care, are eager to work and just need an opportunity to do so. Often from a selection of three applicants “One is on downers and one is on speed, so you reject

them and focus on the third. She passes the drug test, and you hire her. You find a drinking straw by her trash can that's cut in a way to snort drugs. She is not going to work out" (p. 14). Some employers are concerned about substance abuse posing a problem for the business and other workers to the extent it could cost the company money through workers' compensation and medical expenses and cause unsafe working conditions. Andelman (1995) stated that the US Chamber of Commerce and other organizations that represent the interests of business want to see Congress and President Clinton include in legislation a mandatory drug test component to the welfare reform incentive. According to Booth (1996), one county in Florida is requiring welfare recipients who apply for certain medical benefits to submit to a urine screening for illegal drug use. If recipients fail the test they are denied services. "Legal challenges to drug-testing requirements are almost certain, for the new welfare law appears to contradict other legislation, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, which states that persons cannot be denied benefits because they are drug or alcohol abusers" (Booth, 1996, p. A3).

Criminal record. A welfare recipient with a criminal record in some instances will be penalized for having such a record. In Georgia, "Denial or elimination or assistance to those convicted of drug felonies and designated serious violent felonies (murder of felony murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy and aggravated sexual battery); and the Two-Strikes-and-You're-Out: failure to comply with mandatory work activities or to other requirements will lead to a 25 percent reduction in benefits for first offense, and termination of assistance for second offense" (Morrison, 1996, pp. 1, 12).

Summary

Research described in this chapter supports the purpose and research questions of this study. Studies were cited that supported skills, training, tax credits, and wage subsidies as factors that could encourage employers' participation in welfare-to-work programs. Research data also supported the idea that jobs for low-skilled workers are not readily available, and that barriers hinder these workers from receiving the jobs that are available. Examples of these barriers are lack of education, child care, and employability skills. Welfare policies are indicated by some research to be barriers to workforce entry for welfare recipients.

The review of literature indicated that research about employers' adoption or rejection of welfare reform is very limited. The review of literature did provide some supporting data that helped to shape the framework of the study by bringing to the forefront the concerns and issues that are expected to have significance for employers.

The framework of this study is embedded in Organizational Change Theory, which postulates that change occurs through problem-solving and decision-making processes. Employers will experience the change process when making a decision to hire welfare recipients. Some employers may believe that welfare recipients do not have the work experience, job skills, and training needed to perform a job productively. This would lead employers to assume that complying with the new welfare reform law could cause them to have lower profits. Employers will seek to receive more positive information before making a decision on whether to participate in welfare reform programs.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design, selection of subjects, procedure for data collection, and analysis and interpretation of data. The methodology used in this study was guided by the research questions. This study examined employers' perceptions of factors related to their participation in VIEW and identified factors that they felt affected welfare recipients' entry into the workforce.

The methodology for this research was a survey of employers who participated in VIEW. Issues are dominant concerns in this type of research. The researcher posed a list of questions as a guide. The methodology supported the data collection that answered these research questions:

1. What factors encourage employers to participate in Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)?
2. What factors affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce?

Research Design

This study involved a qualitative methodology. Stake (1995) suggested that "Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists. . . . Understanding (a description of things happening) also has a psychological ring which explanation has not" (p. 37). In seeking answers to the research questions, qualitative research was more appropriate to provide answers to the relevant issues that were identified for the study. This survey scrutinized unique relationships present in the perceptions of VIEW employers about welfare reform in Virginia. Data were gathered through interviews which took place on location, in the office of the company's chief executive officer (CEO) or personnel director. Each employer interviewed had different perceptions about VIEW, but there were also many commonalities among them.

Selection of Respondents

The subjects for this study consisted of Virginia employers participating in the VIEW program. These employers were selected from one of Virginia's Welfare Reform Economic Development Districts in rural Southwest Virginia, which was among the first districts phased in in 1995 (Metcalf, 1996).

From rural Southwest Virginia, two counties and one city were chosen, each of which had forty or more participating VIEW employers. In order to obtain a diverse selection of respondents, employers in Stewart and Quitman counties and the city of Cuthbert were interviewed. These location names are pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. Besides having forty or more VIEW employers, these counties and city were chosen because of their proximity to the Virginia Tech campus.

According to Don Lillywhite, Virginia Employment Commission, Cuthbert is an independent city. Virginia is the only state that has cities that are not a part of the county where the city is located. Approximately forty cities of this kind exist in Virginia, and the city of Cuthbert is one of those. In 1996 Cuthbert had a population of less than 10,000 people. It is considered an independent city because it has its own school system, local government, and tax generating authority. In other words, the city of Cuthbert has its own infrastructure and is not a part of the infrastructure of Stewart or Quitman counties,

even though it is located within or adjacent to both counties. Thus Cuthbert is referred to as a city in this study even though its size would not fit the typical definition of a city.

The Social Service Department in each of the two counties and one city was telephoned. When requested, the researcher also followed-up with a written correspondence for documentation. The contacts were made to request a list of employers participating in VIEW in rural Southwest Virginia. Each employer had hired welfare recipients between the phase-in period of July 1, 1995, to January 1, 1996, and the time the study was conducted. Respondents for this study were selected from the lists provided. The selection characteristics were:

1. Employers from the two counties and one city selected.
2. Employers who participate or have participated in VIEW.
3. Employers who represent a range of business characteristics.

A total of twelve private-sector employers were selected from the two counties and one city as respondents for this study. This study focused on employers from food service, health care, manufacturing, and retail sales businesses. Information was collected based on the review of literature and the research questions, which guided the interview. The research questions provided a focused atmosphere in which to conduct the interviews with the employers.

The name of an appropriate contact person in each business was obtained from the Social Service Department. The personnel director or CEO was contacted by telephone to see if there was an interest in participating in the study and set up an appointment for the interview. . If the response was not favorable, an alternate employer was contacted. The researcher followed-up with thank-you letters after the interviews. Businesses' and participants' names were kept confidential and not reported in the study.

Procedure for Data Collection

The procedure for data collection was personal interviews. No instrument was identified through the literature review to measure the perceptions sought in this study. Therefore an interview instrument was developed that captured answers to the research questions. The formulation of the interview questions was be done using category questions. "These are questions which allow the investigator to account for all of the formal characteristics of the topic under discussion" (McCracken, 1988, p. 36). The questions developed were in keeping with the philosophy of Stake, who said "I choose to use issues as conceptual structure--and issue questions as primary research questions--in order to force attention to complexity and contextuality. I also use them because identification of issues draws attention to problems and concerns" (Stake, 1995, p.16). Further, the researcher developed an issue-based interview form using the model described by Stake (1995). Each employer was interviewed following a general outline of questions (based on the literature and research questions) that the researcher wanted to have answered. . A data-gathering form modeled after the one developed by Stake (1995) was used. This form had spaces for recording the name of the employer, date, time, and description of the business and for taking notes on the responses to the questions. The interview questions can be seen in Appendix A. A field test of the instrument and interview process was conducted with three employers (two small and one large) under conditions anticipated in the final study, before proceeding to gather the data. These preliminary interviews were exploratory in nature, used for finalizing the instrument and to increase the researcher's skills in this type of data collection.

Afterward, the transcripts of the interviews were critiqued by selected committee members for feedback before proceeding with the final data collection.

The level of confidence in the results of this study was increased by comparing sources of information. These sources consisted of transcripts of audio-tape interviews, notes from the interviews, the review of literature, and interviews with the VIEW coordinators in each county and city.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

“Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilation. Analysis essentially means taking something apart” (Stake, 1995, p.71). The data in the study were compiled using a categorical aggregation analytic strategy. Categorical aggregation is the process of piecing together bits of information gathered about an issue and organizing it into an orderly research interpretation. A coding procedure was used to mark or denote recurring topics. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to computer files. Nud.ist, a qualitative research computer program, was used in the data coding process. The data were organized and sorted gathered to facilitate progress and coherence based on each issue. An electronic file that was used for recording and storing data. The data were analyzed using analytic categories in keeping with McCracken (1988) philosophy. The results are reported using assertions and petite generalizations. As mentioned earlier, the survey was conducted to find answers to questions about an issue; therefore, being able to generalize to the larger population has limited validity. “The real business of case study is particularization, not generalizations” (Stake, 1995, p. 8). In the instance where generalizations are used, they are most often called petite generalizations or assertions. Grand generalizations are used sometimes but are usually used in a modified existence (Stake, 1995). However, some general knowledge can be gained from each respondent that may broaden one's knowledge about the issues being studied. The findings from the study are being reported based on procedures described by Stake (1995) and McCracken (1988).

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This chapter contains the demographic profiles of the businesses and respondents and an analysis and interpretations of the personal interview transcripts. It examines employers' perceptions of factors related to their participation in Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW--a welfare to work program) and identifies factors that they believe would affect welfare recipients' entries into the workforce. Implications of this study provide an understanding of the perceptions regarding VIEW of twelve selected employers from rural southwest Virginia.

The twelve respondents were all private-sector employers; eight were female and four were male. The employers' work environments ranged from simple furnishings and tile floors to well decorated offices with executive business furnishings, wall to wall-carpeted floors, and plants. The businesses represented various products, services, and sales that included discount retail sales, nursing and rehabilitation, home health care, long-term health care, garment production, textiles manufacturing, home heating oil and gasoline sales, fast-food service, and grocery and retail sales.

The number of employees at the locations ranged from 20 to 600, while years the businesses had been in operation in the area ranged from three to 70 years. The number of years the respondents had been in their present positions in their companies ranged from seven months to 19 years, and years the respondents had been with the business ranged from seven months to 22 years.

The settings for the two fast-food businesses ranged from being very busy with many customers being served to having no customers present. The time of day that the interviews were conducted accounted for much of the disparity. Respondents from food services employed 20 and 25 employees. Both businesses had been in operation for about 20 years. The managers had been in their present positions for eight and 16 years, and they had been with the business about the same number of years, eight and 20 years, respectively.

The settings of the four health care businesses ranged from quiet to active, and they were beautifully furnished and carpeted. Respondents from these businesses employed from 40 to 130 employees. The businesses had been in operation from three to 22 years. Persons in the management positions had the titles of administrator, director of nursing, executive director, and office manager. The number of years the respondents had been in their present positions ranged from two to 19 years. Respondents' total years with the businesses ranged from two to 22 years.

Settings of the three manufacturing businesses varied from being plain with simple furnishings to having a more office-like atmosphere with a computer and file cabinets. The respondents from these businesses employed from 72 to 600 employees. The businesses had been in operation from three to 30 years. Respondents' position titles were vice president, plant manager, and human resource manager. The respondents had been in their present positions for seven months to 16 years and had been with the business for the same range of time.

The settings of the three retail sales businesses ranged from being very businesslike with beautiful furnishings, computers, file cabinets, carpets, and flowers, to having simple break rooms and cafeteria-style settings. Some settings were quiet, and others were busy. The retail sales businesses employed from 20 to 68 employees. The

number of years the businesses had been in operation ranged from 17 to 70 years. Respondents' titles included customer service manager, director of human resources and personnel, and store manager. The number of years the respondents had been in their present positions ranged from two to six years, and their total years with the businesses ranged from seven to 18 years.

Profile Synopses of Employers

The following section is designed to present employer profiles. This information will enhance the reader's understanding of each employer's philosophy as it relates to the research questions of this study. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain the anonymity of the respondents and businesses.

Profile Synopsis #1: Floretta Brown Fast Foods

The environment of this business was quiet; several employees but no customers were present at the time of the interview. The interview had been scheduled to prevent it from interfering with peak business operations. The interview was held in the public area of the business. This business employs approximately 20 to 25 people, and it had been in operation for 20 years. The female respondent was the manager and had been in this position and with the business for eight years. Floretta Brown's Fast Foods is a franchise of a regional chain and is located in the city of Cuthbert. There were 10 VIEW participants hired at this location last year, out of a total of 100 employees hired. The manager expects to hire from 10 to 20 VIEW participants within the next year. Jobs available with this business could range from cashier or cook to management. A VIEW participant with this business could work through the company to advance to a higher job level.

Profile Synopsis # 2 : Pearlie's Restaurant

The interview for this business was held in the public area of the restaurant. Customers were busy placing orders for breakfast, eating, and chatting among themselves. This was a fast-food service business, and its breakfast menu was a favorite of the local constituency. Twenty-four people were employed at this business. The business had been in operation for 21 years with 16 of those at this location. The female respondent was manager of the business and had been employed with the business for 20 years. Pearlie's Restaurant is located in the city of Cuthbert. This business did not hire any VIEW participants last year, nor did it hire any other new employees last year. Jobs available include cashier and cook. Persons hired for these two positions perform other tasks as the need dictates.

Profile Synopsis #3: Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center

The interview was held in the executive director's office. The work environment here was very clean, odor free, and well-decorated with beautifully coordinated colors, furnishings, and carpeting. This business had a home-like atmosphere. The center provides skilled therapy, rehabilitation, and post-acute care services to its residents. Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center is a 120-bed facility located in the city of Cuthbert. The total number of employees at this location was 120. This business had been in operation for 16 years. The female respondent was the executive director, who had been in this type of position for 12 years and with this specific business for four years. The executive director did not know how many VIEW participants had been hired last year, but recalled that a total of 40 employees were hired during that time. She

indicated a possibility of 15 to 20 VIEW participants being hired within the next year. Jobs available at this facility include certified nursing assistants, dietary assistants, and housekeepers.

Profile Synopsis # 4: FreddieCare of Georgetown

The environment for this interview was the office of the administrator of this long-term care facility. The facility was carpeted throughout and was neat and clean with no noticeable odors. The business provides long-term care, skilled nursing, and intermediate care to its residents. FreddieCare of Georgetown is 60-bed facility, and a total of 68 people are employed at this location. This business operates regionally and has been in operation in this location for eight years. The female respondent had been in the position of administrator and with the business for 16 years. FreddieCare of Georgetown is located in Stewart County. It hired 8 to 10 VIEW participants last year, out of a total of 10-12 employees hired. The administrator estimated that they will possibly hire 8 to 10 VIEW participants next year. Jobs available include dietary aides, cooks, laundry workers, housekeepers, cleaning staff, and nurses .

Profile Synopsis # 5: Hudson HealthCare

The environment in which this interview was held was a meeting room setting with chairs neatly arranged and relatively new carpeting. The services provided by this business were home care services such as part-time, full-time, or live-in services by sensitive and compassionate caregivers with a variety of health care skills. There were 40 to 50 people employed at this location. The business had been in operation in this location for three years and also operates in other regions of the United States. The female respondent was office manager, and she had been in this position and with the business for two years. Hudson HealthCare is located in the city of Cuthbert. This facility hired 20 VIEW participants last year, and a total of 30 employees were hired. The office manager could not anticipate how many VIEW participants would be hired within the next year. The primary job available at Hudson HealthCare is being a nurse aide.

Profile Synopsis # 6: Norma's Nursing Home

This interview was conducted in a professional, well-organized office environment with attractive furnishings. This business provides intermediate and long-term care and rehabilitative services to its residents. Norma's Nursing Home is a 135-bed facility which has 130 employees. This business has been in operation for 32 years. The female respondent holds the position of director of nursing. She has been in this position for 19 years and with the business for 32 years. Norma's Nursing Home is located in the city of Cuthbert. This facility hired 6 to 8 VIEW participants last year, of a total of 80 to 100 employees hired. There is a possibility of 6 to 12 VIEW participants being hired next year. Jobs available at Norma's Nursing Home include work in housekeeping, dietary, maintenance, and nursing.

Profile Synopsis # 7: Julius Clothing Manufacturing

The setting for this interview was the vice president's office which was simply decorated with plain furnishings and vinyl floor covering. The business manufactures shirts and sweatshirts at this location, which had a total of 110 employees. The business has been in operation for 16 years. The male respondent's position in the business was vice president, and he had been in this position and with the business for 16 years. Julius Clothing Manufacturing is located in the city of Cuthbert. Julius Clothing Manufacturing hired 2 VIEW participants, out of a total of 3 employees hired last year. This business

does not anticipate hiring anyone within the next year. Jobs available include sewing machine operators, and inspectors.

Profile Synopsis # 8: Raymond's Textiles

The environment in which this interview took place had a business-like atmosphere. The office was light in color and had simple furnishings. Included were a computer, file cabinets, and other items of office decor. The business was a textile plant which wove cotton into a fabric used to make shirts. The total number of employees at this location was 600. This business has been in operation for 30 years. The male respondent held the position of human resource manager and had been in this position and with the business for seven months. Raymond's Textiles is located in the city of Cuthbert. This business did not hire any VIEW participants last year, and a total of fewer than 20 employees were hired. It is anticipated that approximately 15 to 20 people will be hired within the next year. Jobs VIEW participants could possibly receive are entry level positions such as material handlers, housekeepers for the operations area, cleaning personnel, and knitters.

Profile Synopsis #9: Williams and Shorter

The interview was conducted in the office of the plant manager. The work environment was modest with plain, simple furnishings, and no plants or other decorations. Products of this business were finished garments, including name brand blue jeans. This business has been in operation for three years. The male respondent was the plant manager, who has been in a similar position for nine years in the textile manufacturing industry, with another textile company for six years and with this industry for three years. Williams and Shorter is located in Quitman County. This business hired 12 VIEW participants last year of approximately 50 employees hired. The manager expects to hire about 20 people within the next year. Jobs available for VIEW participants in this business are pressing and inspecting garments.

Profile Synopsis #10: Bell's Discount Retail Store

The interview was conducted in the cafeteria of a retail store. Customers were busily passing through the cafeteria line for their breakfast meal and verbalizing warm, friendly morning greetings. The company's products and services were discount merchandise and quickly-served foods. The total number of employees at this location was 68. This business had been in operation for 70 years. The male respondent was the store manager. He has been in this position for three years and with the business for 18 years. Bell's Discount Retail Store is located in the city of Cuthbert. Four VIEW participants were hired last year of a total of 25 employees hired. The manager anticipated that 10 to 15 VIEW participants would be hired within the next year. Jobs available for VIEW participants are in stocking, operations, and checkout.

Profile Synopsis # 11: Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores

The work environment of this business was very business like, including file cabinets, a computer, and attractive furnishings, flowers, and carpeting. The major products sold by this business are home heating oil, gasoline, and convenience food items. Twenty employees work at the present location. The business had been in operation for 35 to 40 years. The female respondent's position in the firm is the director of human resources and personnel. She had been in this position for six years and with the business for about 10 years. Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores is located in the city of Cuthbert. Six VIEW participants were hired last year from a total of 60

employees hired. The employer expects to hire 2 or 3 VIEW participants within the next year. Jobs available to VIEW participants include working as truck drivers, maintenance workers, office clerks, deli managers, deli workers, and cooks.

Profile Synopsis # 12: Tom Tom's Grocery Store

Tom Tom's Grocery Store is a large supermarket located in Stewart County. This interview was held in the employees' breakroom which was furnished with a table and two benches and had a cement floor. This area was surrounded with boxes that held merchandise for sale. The total number of employees at this location was 62. The business has been in operation in this area for approximately 17 years. The female respondent held the position of customer service manager. She had been in this position for two years and with the business a total of seven years. Tom Tom's Grocery Store is located in Stewart County. This business hired 7 VIEW participants last year. There were 25 or more employees hired last year. It is anticipated that 7 or more VIEW participants will be hired within the next year. Jobs available for VIEW participants through this business are cashiers and grocery baggers

Presentation of the Findings

The intent of this section is to provide answers to each of the research questions. The interviewees' responses were examined to determine the extent to which themes emerged related to employers' perceptions of factors associated with VIEW. Analysis of these interviews results in a total of twelve themes. The presentation of findings is organized into two sections: (a) factors that encouraged employers' participation (four themes); (b) factors that affected the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce (eight themes). Each theme evolved from the comments of the respondents and selected quotations are presented herein as examples. A summary is placed at the end of the findings.

Factors Encouraging Employers' Participation

Analysis of the transcripts reveals four primary factors that influenced employers to participate in VIEW: mass media, social services agencies, the Virginia Employment Commission, and other relevant observations by employers.

Mass Media

Though employers were made aware of VIEW through varied sources, mass media was identified by three-fourths of the employers as the most effective source and the most prevalent means by which employers learned about VIEW. Some responses concerning how employers heard of VIEW included:

Julius Clothing Manufacturing. "Basically, just what I have seen in the newspaper or on the radio or TV or whatever that is basically about it."

Bell's Discount Retail Store. "Well, I have heard bits and pieces and not necessarily here at the store; a lot of it I heard mainly on the news, and I think it is an excellent program."

FreddieCare of Georgetown. "Through TV, the news programs."

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. "As far as welfare reform in general, I can't think of anything in specific I've read just in different papers and magazines."

Social Services Agencies

One-fourth of the employers indicated that social service agencies had encouraged them to become involved with VIEW. The following two employers reported the influence of social service agencies:

Hudson HealthCare “We work closely with social services.”

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. “Well, through our local social services department. We've been at some meetings where they have discussed the facts.”

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC)

Though mass media and social services had the greatest influence on employer participation in VIEW, , two of the employers indicated that the VEC made materials available to them about VIEW, which influenced their decision to participate.

Raymond’s Textiles. “When I moved to Virginia I had some information that was given to me from the VEC. I think that if they [social services] had a closer relationship with the Virginia Employment Commission, it would help. If they had the ability to funnel some more people into the VEC's program then they would make them available to employers. I know that in recent meetings, they talked about the one-stop concept for benefits and trying to tie all those folks together, and I think that's the direction we need to go, because when you have employers in this area where the unemployment rate is very low, they need people quickly, they can't get their hands on them because they don't know who is out there. On the other hand, you have folks who are needing employment and just don't know the right places to go to get it.”

Julius Clothing Manufacturing. “I may have had some documents come across my desk from the Virginia Employment Commission, but I'm not really sure.”

Other Relevant Observations by Employers

Employers indicated that additional information about VIEW would probably influence an employer’s decision to participate in VIEW. Presently, the other methods of increasing awareness relative to VIEW seem to be limited. This lack of information might cause an employer who needs workers to decide not to hire VIEW participants because of stereotypes. Employers sometimes learn about VIEW from people coming into their offices seeking employment or from acquaintances. Adequate information about VIEW had not reached some employers, so their knowledge about it was lacking. Several employers indicated that other factors would influence employers’ decisions to participate in VIEW. Other items mentioned by employers were a desire help the welfare reform initiative (one respondent), a need for workers (one respondent) and the availability of tax credits (two of the respondents).

Floretta Brown Fast Foods. “I think that it would be wise, maybe, for the VIEW program to let people know about what they are doing and what they are trying to help people do. You know, maybe a little bit more publicly. Because it is not very public. I think that would definitely be a good thing.”

Norma’s Nursing Home. “I don't know how to go about it, but I wish I had more applicants. I would be delighted to talk to more VIEW applicants.”

Williams and Shorter. “I think they need to get something out to the employers to let them be aware of this program. I don't know where that needs to come, through unemployment or employment commission. Someone needs to.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. "Well, the big thing is there is so much of a stereotype I guess you would say on welfare itself. And I know a lot of people that I have spoken with have that still banging around in their mind, and they just need to be more open minded. From a manager's perspective you are supposed to be open minded anyway. But that does not necessarily happen."

Raymond's Textiles. "I think from my standpoint there are a couple of things that always concern me when I look at these programs. One is giving the employers information and input on the type of training that the people are going to receive."

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. "They [government personnel] need to meet with employers and find out; our government might do well to meet with the average employers instead of big business that pays big money because more of the need is in the lower paying jobs or whatever. It doesn't mean we care any less because we try hard to work with our people."

Occasionally, employers (depending on the size of the business) learned of VIEW upon receiving instruction from the corporate office about the process to use when hiring welfare recipients.

Tom Tom's Grocery Store. "Our home office sent us papers, basically telling us what to do step by step when we hired someone. I do have quite a few people working for me, I'm assuming from the VIEW program."

Factors Affecting Entry of Welfare Recipients into the Workforce

Eight themes emerged from the analysis of transcripts relative to factors that affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce: qualifications, employability skills (such as work ethic, attitude, and appearance), work experience, education and training, support system or monitoring plan, welfare policies, child care, and lack of funds (for transportation and appropriate clothing).

Qualifications

One theme that emerged as affecting workforce entry of VIEW participants was qualifications. The term qualifications, as used in this study, relates to the employers' criteria, standards, and tests administered and implemented to determine the technical skill level of the applicant. All respondents stated that their reasons for hiring VIEW participants were based on qualifications. The jobs involved in this study were varied and the number of jobs filled by VIEW participants last year were few when compared to the number of welfare recipients on the welfare rolls. This reinforces the fact that applicants need to be well qualified to become employed with VIEW and other welfare-to-work programs. Also work ethic issues affect the qualifications of VIEW participants, according to employers. Employers made the following comments about the qualifications of prospective VIEW participants.

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. "They were qualified for the job.

They answered the questions as far as satisfying the company instructor.

Standard questions, which means: Are you willing to work this way? Can you work in this store? Do you have transportation? They were, I felt, trainable."

Bell's Discount Retail Store. "They were just qualified; they seemed like they were good candidates for our positions. At the time we didn't know; we don't know if they are VIEW participants or not. We just know them as individuals, and we hire them on the bases of their merits and what kind of references they have."

Raymond's Textiles. "Really, they meet the needs of entry-level employees. Because there are those jobs, like I said, are labor intensive and don't require a lot of communication skills either oral or written. And so, the folks that I've seen come in have been able to meet those requirements as far as the physical labor and working in those types of jobs."

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. Being an equal employment opportunity employer, and we are, if we can find a qualified person it makes no difference to us. We can keep people working. . . .We've got the jobs."

Employability Skills

Employers value the attitude, appearance, and work ethic of an employee. Sometimes these employability skills will give the employee a greater edge to be hired than the technical required skills. Employers are interested in hiring welfare recipients who are willing to work, but the welfare recipients must convince employers they are serious about wanting a job and becoming employed with the employers' business. In addition, employers indicated there is a need for them to receive enough information about VIEW participants to erase their previous stereotypes regarding the employability skills of these potential employees.

VIEW participants' on-the-job problems can often be attributed to employability skills and life skills rather than basic work skills. Welfare recipients not showing up for work and leaving work after a couple of days of employment are the major work-related problems encountered by employers. Failing to come to work is seen by employers as a lack of bonding between employer and employee.

Through education and a support system, VIEW participants should be taught the importance of being dependable employees. Occasionally, welfare recipients perceived the work they did to be too labor intensive for a minimum wage and quit the job. Based on comments from the respondents, VIEW participants should develop good employability skills before seeking employment.

The need for employability skills surfaced when employers were asked about welfare recipients' basic skills. Employers want VIEW participants to have the basic skills as a requirement for employment, for instance, a high school diploma or GED. However, a positive attitude and communication skills also are needed and highly influence an employer's decision to hire VIEW participants. Employers want VIEW participants who are committed and have integrity, follow a dress code, show some stability through their tenure on the job, and project themselves as responsible employees.

The wage earned by VIEW participants can be affected by their employability skills. As reported by these employers, the wage earned by most VIEW participants ranged from a minimum wage of \$4.75 to \$6.00 an hour, but sometimes wages were unlimited because the earnings were based on production. One employer stated, "It is hard for a VIEW participant to support a family on the wages most employers are paying." Therefore, it is necessary for the VIEW participant to develop and acquire good employability skills because high wages lead to self-sufficiency. Eleven of the twelve employers suggested that employability skills are very important when seeking and retaining employment, and some of their comments follow.

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. "I'm telling you that I started when there wasn't rules that an employer had to abide by as far as documentation and all this. I have seen a deterioration in attitude, and commitment, and integrity and

morals in employees in the last ten years that makes me want to walk away and never work another day.”

Raymond's Textiles. “A couple of the problems that we ran into had more to do with life skills and work skills. But the work that we did on the committee, we were trying to steer them more into more training about life skills, budgeting, and being punctual, and being responsible for your appearance, and your attitude and things like that. One thing that I try to counsel people on is that when I look at an application, I don't want to see ten or fifteen different places that someone's worked. I want to see good steady employment. People bouncing around from one job to another kinds of scares us because of the cost associated with turnover.

Hudson HealthCare. “If I had two people come in here, one is definitely casual and shorts, and chewing gum, maybe has a cigarette in her mouth. And then the other one is dressed nice and neat and very proper and I had to choose between the two of them . . . We've gone through a lot of people, and the reasons are they are not dependable, their mannerisms, they're just not professional at all. It's amazing to me, I don't get very many sharp people that come in for a job. Sharp looking people. So, I find my expectations, you know, they don't get satisfied hardly at all, that's frustrating.”

Williams and Shorter. “They have to be at work on time, everyday. Have a will, want to work and to be able to get along with people, a team concept.”

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “The ones that we have hired come in with basically no skills, not even personal hygiene skills. And one of the first things you have to tell them and usually one of the hardest things you have to tell them is they got to take a bath and they have to wear clean clothes. And they have to comb their hair and wash it, and they have to dress appropriately for the job. So you really have to start from the ground up with them. They are a lot of times very timid, won't speak out, won't ask questions, and become kind of isolated.”

Norma's Nursing Home. “People should have good work ethics, be dependable, show up when you are scheduled, call in if you are not coming, and most of the time these folks don't do that. And not just VIEW, this is pretty much most people. They are lacking I guess just the work ethics that I saw years ago are gone.”

Work Experience

Two-thirds of the employers indicated work experience does enhance a person's chance of getting a job, but lack of experience does not necessarily prevent a person from becoming employed. When asked about what would be required for VIEW participants to obtain employment, all employers responded by saying that work experience was needed. They also indicated they will provide training to help participants acquire specific skills, but they want VIEW participants to already have the employability skills. As expected, the employers had different thoughts about the effect of work experience on the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. Employers indicated that work experiences gained through temporary agencies are valuable work experiences, though they prefer to hire employees not affiliated with temporary agencies. Employers recognized the limited exposure to the world of work that VIEW participants often bring to the job. Many of the VIEW participants had never worked or at least had never worked consistently. Examples of the employers' comments follow.

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. “Well some of them, I would say a small majority of them, have had some cashier experience or cleanup. But your welfare [recipients] are not likely to have as much experience because they just haven't been exposed to the job market.”

Norma's Nursing Home. “And when I talk to people I try to get them to understand that you have got to settle in. Build a good work history.”

Raymond's Textiles. “I think the other thing is to be more aware of the costs that are associated with turnover, and the risk and the fear that creates for employers. Because I think what the fear is most of the time is here is someone who hasn't been willing to work before, and you want me to give them a job.”

Tom Tom's Grocery Store. “A lot of them have never worked before, so therefore, they don't have the knowledge of the workforce, what needs to be done. So, I take my people by the hand; they have training tapes; we put them out there on the floor with another cashier or a bagger and we work with them.”

Hudson HealthCare. “As a whole they are inexperienced, or they have short term job experience.”

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. “I would describe it [work experience] as minimal. The Director of our center would probably know more than I would, but I would say it's probably been minimal at times.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. “Work experience, a lot of times if they did have work experience it may have been just temporary or part time and maybe something that they didn't really care about too much.”

Education and Training

Education and training emerged in the findings as factors that influenced employers decisions to hire VIEW participants. Ten of the employers indicated that education and training are needed for VIEW participants who are preparing to enter the workforce. Employers also indicated that education and training are needed to help make entry into the workforce a smooth transition. Though they recognize VIEW participants' limitations relative to education and training, they will continue to participate in VIEW, and they would recommend that other businesses participate in it. They indicated that their involvement with VIEW is a positive step in helping the community and sometimes employers can also get a better selection of workers at lower wages.

Employers suggested that additional training should be a priority to help welfare recipients enter the workforce. They believe that education and training to develop employability skills would encourage other employers to participate in VIEW or other welfare reform programs. Respondents would like to see more employers included in meetings where decisions are being made relative to the education and training of VIEW participants in order to make them marketable. They also suggest employer input when decisions are being made about employers, welfare recipients, and employment. Employers indicated that matching welfare recipients with the right job may be a positive change that will come because of education and training. In addition, this will make their involvement with VIEW more successful. The following are employers' comments regarding employee education and training.

Raymond's Textiles. “I think more education is needed for the employers and welfare recipients. The company also has an excellent reimbursement package

for folks who want to continue their education or go through a GED program. In [another state] when I was on the committee about participating and sponsoring [welfare reform]; a training center was one of the things we were looking at in [another state] where companies were donating machinery and equipment so that people could be trained on what we're actually using before they come to us. And that would help the VIEW program in that it would support the training and the knowledge they are trying to give the people that makes them more employable if they have that training up front.”

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. “Well, since we do most of our training here, we usually can hire unskilled workers that don't have any particular background.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. “Training, and the willingness of the employer, you are going to have some things where a person may have never worked. The employer needs to be flexible, and they may need to go an extra step or two as far as training goes. The best training is on-the-job training. You can't just read a book and go in and do a job. We have a very good training program, I think.”

Norma's Nursing Home. “I think they [welfare recipients] need some basic education and skills and a work ethic that would help them retain the jobs they get. We strongly encourage them to get a GED. It's not required, as far as entry level, CA [Certified Assistant] training.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. “Just a basic, a lot of it is just basic fundamental skills. I haven't had a situation yet where I haven't had anybody that couldn't read.”

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “Right now I think that they [social services] are assisting them trying to get them to do some basic interview skills.

From the welfare leaders that I've talked to we had one to come over and present a program to us, and this is the impression that I got. They are trying to give the interview skills, and they are trying to teach them how to dress for an interview, and I think they are trying to maybe fit the person to the position.”

While eight of employers indicated that education and training across the entire spectrum and at all levels; are important to helping welfare reform become successful, Ten of the responding employers stated that they provide some type of formal training for their new workers, besides on-the-job training. Some examples of employers' statements about training they provide are presented here.

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “We have several employees that are taking classes, working on their RN 5egrees5 and we work our schedule around their school schedule. . . .So we are more than willing; in fact, the company, corporation, has a tuition reimbursement program. So, after they have been employed with us for a year, then the company will reimburse tuition and books. So they [company or corporation] encourage the employee to go ahead and further their education.”

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. “Well, we bring them into the store, and we have a person who is a designated trainer for the store, and they are allowed five days. During that time they are told the policies and procedures, they read the handbook, and of course they read the job description at the interview. So, there is training, to get them to where they should be able to have a general understanding of the operation.”

Tom Tom's Grocery Store. "We have the training tapes. We have a workbook that goes along with the training tape, and then we have hands-on on the floor."

Hudson HealthCare. "We spend three hours with them [VIEW participants] and as far as adding to the training that they've already received. I spend about an hour on policies and procedures, what we expect out of them. We go in detail as to what we expect out of them when they go into a home."

Norma's Nursing Home. "Well for instance, our program here we have a RN who is employed full-time, and we do classes pretty much back to back. We loan the books, provide paid training, and they [welfare recipients] are employed the first day of class. If they want to go on to school later, we encourage them to do that and will help them apply for scholarships and that kind of thing to get into LPN and RN training, so it's an open door for them. If they will take advantage of it."

FreddieCare of Georgetown. "If you just take one department, for example, which has classes. When they [welfare recipients] come into housekeeping, first of all we spend about 16 to 18 hours with them going over policies and procedure, dress codes, behavior codes and all that kind of thing, and then we go into the inservice manual."

Support System or Monitoring Plan

Over half of the employers indicated that a support system or monitoring plan should be available to VIEW participants as a liaison or some type of help system. Through this support system, training should be provided or made available to assist working VIEW participants with developing and improving their employability skills, in addition to making welfare recipients aware of available job opportunities. Follow-up visits to job sites where VIEW participants are working or have job placements are needed. Employers indicated that VIEW participants could become good workers if they had a support system or monitoring plan available to them when they enter the workforce. Nonetheless, due to a lack of employability skills and few or no work experiences, VIEW participants are often confronted with problems they do not know how to handle. Often they do not understand the negative effect their absences from work create for the employer.

VIEW participants need to know someone is concerned about helping them become successful employees. Four employers indicated that a support system or monitoring plan is a necessity if VIEW participants are to succeed in the workforce. According to employers a monitoring system is needed in order to insure that welfare recipients achieve stability on the job and consequently acquire the necessary employability skills needed to become good workers. Interviewees' comments include:

Floretta Brown Fast Foods. "I think that one thing that I would recommend and I don't even know how this would be possible, you need some kind of, I would not say a guarantee, but I would say a knowing that they are going to be there because it is easier for them not to be . . . calling an employer up."

Julius Clothing Manufacturing. "Support from the local services, social services or whoever, just like I'm saying, to show that they are concerned, and want to put the people back to work too. To follow up to make sure that they do come to work and making sure that these individuals are performing and keeping up to standards and their end of the bargain."

Tom Tom's Grocery Store. "I just want to say social service worker is really good. . . . when I hired a participant she called me, she checks up on her clients I should say. And if I have a problem I'm able to call her with it; so far it's worked out okay for us."

Welfare Policies

Welfare policy problems were cited by almost of the employers. As indicated by the respondents they perceive that welfare policies need to be revised to more effectively to move welfare recipients into the workforce and make employers' involvement with VIEW more successful. Employers would like to see appropriate changes in VIEW, so that participants will have an opportunity to become good employees without welfare policies impacting them negatively. This study's respondents believe that a sliding scale or gradual reduction in benefits should be established rather than reducing benefits drastically or eliminating them altogether because welfare recipients need to work full-time. This reduction should be started based on the pace of the welfare recipient's upward mobility to self-sufficiency. It should be noted that responses reflect employers' perceptions about policies, which may in some cases have been inaccurate or based on welfare programs prior to VIEW. Employers had these comments about welfare policies.

Freddie Care of Georgetown. "One girl, we hired her part time; she wanted to go full time and we had a position that was going to open up full-time and we were going to put her in that position, but she went back to social services or somewhere and asked for assistance for her baby-sitter so she could come to work-full time, and they told her if she would quit work and stay home they would pay for a baby sitter. But they would not pay for her baby sitter while she worked."

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. "It just seems to me like the law on this, or whatever, if somehow our government could see fit to give a law or get the laws adjusted to where the employer would feel comfortable calling social services and say, we have three openings. I think if they would encourage people that are on welfare to go to work with an incentive to go to work instead of an incentive not to work, that would help the employer 100%. Right now it seems that the incentive is to not work. We have on two or three occasions had the experience of people actually leaving us because of being under some type of welfare assistance that caused their money or their pay from this company to be more than they were allowed to earn, so in order to keep their rent payment down they would leave us or leave their jobs."

Julius Clothing and Manufacturing. "One thing I don't understand, these individuals are on welfare, once they start making x amount of dollars they cut their welfare so low they see that it is not worth it to work. Reduce it down slowly in order so these people will continue to stay at a level they need to stay and hopefully build that level up higher. You've got to level it out. I hope VIEW does that."

Hudson Healthcare. "I think there was a lot of things, bugs that need to be worked out. For instance, 90% of the ones [VIEW participants] that I've put on here, do not want to work full time. They have a certain amount of hours, and they want to stay at those hours. And when you offer them full time, they're going to lose benefits. So, that's why I'm just a little bit on the pre-cautious side when I hire

somebody like that.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. “The way the welfare program is, the limitations that we put on the recipients, I know that we are trying to get as many people from off the welfare program and into the working community.”

Pearlie's Restaurant. “I think instead of them giving them everything that they need to live a life, if they want to come and work for me for \$5.25 or \$5.75 that I'm going to pay then let that be their part [without having other benefits eliminated]. Because nobody can live off of \$5.25 an hour especially if they are an only parent. It would be hard for two people making \$5.25 an hour.”

Employers indicated that qualified applicants have problems trying to work because of constraints placed upon them by the welfare system. They perceived conflicts with the policies relative to benefits received based on the number of hours worked. These conflicts caused employers to have apprehension about investing in these individual through their training programs and other means of preparing VIEW participants for the job. Employers lose money when they invest their time, talents, and other resources into VIEW participants who are then forced to quit work to prevent their welfare benefits from being reduced or eliminated. This is especially true if health care is a benefit that will be affected.

One employer summed her position about welfare policies in the following excerpt.

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. “Okay. I said I've made a lot of comments here, but to sum it all up I would like to say that I know it would probably be difficult for VIEW; I think it's going to take a great old big dipper, including a government effort also to look at what the employer is facing. Which means that people need help in other areas of assistance, such as babysitting which I know they get that now to a degree and transportation or whatever it takes to encourage them to look for a job instead of paying them not to work, and I refer to my statement regarding the rent for example. An employee needs to know that they are going to be backed by the employer and also by their government or VIEW or whatever to say we are going to help you any way we can to keep you on the job, not help you to quit.”

Child Care

Employers confirmed that child care is a major factor in determining the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. There was a consensus among all respondents that child care is the greatest barrier that confronts VIEW participants when they are trying to enter the workforce. Employers made the following comments regarding the lack of child care.

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. “Child care, that was the biggest thing that they had because they had always been home with their children. They need a babysitter; that's the big thing.

Hudson HealthCare. “It's hard, it's hard for people [welfare recipients] to get started; they'll call and say, I don't have the money to go to work today, I don't have a babysitter.”

Raymond's Textiles. “I think child care is definitely an issue that VIEW needs to address.”

Pearlie's Restaurant. “Child care. We don't provide any kind of child care, and it would be real hard for anybody to pay for child care even on what I pay.”

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “I would think if someone, either the company that was hiring or the welfare itself, would provide assistance with baby-sitting. . . . or even if the employers would be given some incentives to provide daycare centers. That would help.”

Floretta Brown Fast Foods. “I hope they [VIEW] will help with child care.”

Child care affects the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce because often VIEW participants qualify for jobs that require evening, night, or weekend work. These are time periods in which children are not in school and need supervision. On the other hand, employers need workers to fill positions during these times. Three employers indicated that the inability of VIEW participants to work during evenings and weekends because they do not have child care is a problem for those who want to work. On the other hand employers perceive that there are also times when VIEW participants use child care problems as an excuse not to come to work.

Bell’s Discount Retail Stores. “Some people [welfare recipients] can't work on Saturday because they can't get a babysitter. So, I see it more on the weekend than I do during the week. The overtime sometimes some of the people have to leave because they don't have child care.”

Floretta Brown Fast Foods. “Well, it is so expensive for people. Child care is expensive, and if they have 3 or 4 it's even more expensive, and if they are going to be working 4 to 12 at night it's going to be hard to find somebody that's going to take an offer; they are going to want a lot a money to keep that kid at that time of night.”

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. “The biggest thing that we found is day care, lack of availability of day care particularly on second and third shifts. There are very few providers that will give day care for second and third shifts.”

One employer would like to have the government provide incentives to employers to encourage them to provide child care centers. A move in this direction, as suggested by the employer, is a positive way of helping to provide quality child care for welfare recipients who want to become employed full-time.

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “That is the biggest problem, most of the people [VIEW participants] that we hire seem to be single parents with children; or if someone would assist them with baby-sitters or something. . . . Or even if the employer was going to provide a day care along with their job. . . . If the employers would be given some incentives for the day care along with theirs, and that's what I would like to see here is a day care center. If there were some incentives in that direction encouraging employers to develop day care centers and get reimbursed for this, or cover some of the reimbursement for it.”

Lack of Funds

Employers are often not able to foresee certain barriers that may cause a VIEW participant not to be able to fulfill part of the work requirement. What is not known, and many times not discovered in a job interview, is the level or seriousness of an individual’s financial condition. An employer’s awareness of the status of the individual’s financial level usually surfaces after the welfare recipient is on the job. For instance two-thirds of the employers indicated that welfare recipients may not have the money to buy the gas for the car or to pay bus or taxi fare or purchase appropriate

clothing. Opinion of the employers were mixed regarding lack of funds for transportation and clothing, as noted in the following comments.

FreddieCare of Georgetown. “It hasn't hampered any of them here. They've all come in better cars than mine and more reliable. But it may not be so much in not having the vehicle but maybe not having money for gas. It's never really been a major problem if they would call and say I don't have money for gas today. We usually send someone to pick them up, or we tell someone in that area when they come to work stop and pick up so and so. So they work pretty well together as a team, kind of like a family taking care of each other.”

Floretta Brown Fast Foods. “I don't really see why that should be, I think that anybody has to have transportation some way. There's buses, there's cabs, you know. Money could be an issue.”

Norma's Nursing Home. “There are some things that I see in interviewing that I don't always quite get the full picture of until once they [welfare recipients] start working, and it is things like not having reliable transportation. Because they don't have the money. Basically I have had some [VIEW participants] to say I can't work because I don't have money to buy uniforms.”

Williams and Shorter. “Well, they've got to have good transportation.”

Lewis Oil and Ready-to-Move Food Stores. “I said transportation. If they don't have a way they will say, if you can give me [a job at]this store right here which is under my apartment over here; I can't do that; we've got stores everywhere. So if they had a little shuttle bus that ran for periods, and I'm sure it's the same with the factory because our stores are open at 7:00 a.m.”

Tom Tom's Grocery Store. “Well, I did have one case transportation was a problem. They had set up a cab schedule for her to come to work or something and that didn't work out too well. I don't know if it was her or if it was the cab or just what it was. Yes, transportation can be a problem.”

Daniel James Health and Rehabilitation Center. “Transportation, that's a problem at times. Absolutely, especially in the winter months. People having reliable transportation. We do have the city bus service here, but it really isn't available to the extent that you can rely on it for daily transportation. That can be real difficult for the different shifts in work, I think make that even harder.”

Raymond's Textiles. “I think transportation is definitely an issue that VIEW needs to address.”

Julius Clothing Manufacturing. “Not in this small area, because we have taxi service, we have a bus that runs regularly up here . . . I haven't seen any problem.”

Bell's Discount Retail Store. “No, I haven't had any transportation problems the only time you might have transportation problems is like when there is bad weather, things of that case. We have a couple of housing projects locally here, and I have a lot of people that just walk to work.”

Pearlie's Restaurant. No, we have even provided means of transportation for people [welfare recipients] that have worked for us. And one of them was with your VIEW program. I went and picked her up most mornings. She came in the same time I did.”

Hudson HealthCare. “ I’ve had the people come in here and say, I get my babysitting taken care of, they’ll pay my cab fee, fare to come to work, which is good.

Summary

The perceptions of twelve employers who participated in the VIEW program are reported through the responses presented in this chapter. Findings from this study revealed twelve themes in employers’ perceptions of factors associated with VIEW. Four themes related to factors that encouraged employers’ participation in VIEW: mass media, social services agencies, the Virginia Employment Commission, and other observations. The other eight themes regarded factors that affected the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce: qualifications, employability skills, work experience, education and training, a support system or monitoring plan, welfare policies, child care, and lack of funds.

The findings of this study suggest some directions regarding how VIEW can better assist welfare recipients to enter the workforce. A discussion of these findings and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research are presented in Chapter 5

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, ASSERTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the discussion, assertions, and recommendations based on the findings of this study. The themes that evolved regarding employers' perceptions of factors related to Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW) are discussed, as are recommendations for making the welfare reform initiative more successful.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine employers' perceptions of factors related to their participation in VIEW and identify factors that they felt affected the entry of welfare recipients' into the workforce. The study used a qualitative research methodology involving personal interviews to obtain information about employers' perceptions. The survey of employers who participated in VIEW was guided by the research questions. The respondents chosen for this study were (a) employers who: are from the selected two counties and one small city, (b) participate or have participated in VIEW; and (c) represent a range of business characteristics that were appropriate for the research questions.

Twelve private-sector employers were selected from two counties and one small city in Virginia as respondents for this study. This study focused on food service, health care, manufacturing, and retail sales businesses. Interviews with a CEO, manager, or personnel director from each business were audio-taped and transcribed to computer files. Nud.ist, a qualitative research computer program, was used in the data coding and analysis process. Information was collected based on the review of literature and the research questions. These research questions provided a focused atmosphere in which to conduct the interviews with the employers:

1. What factors encourage employers to participate in the Virginia Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW)?
2. What factors affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce?

The theoretical framework of this study was based on two theories of organizational change. Most relevant to this study were the innovations (Havelock & Zlotolow, 1995) and diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 1995) models.

The findings from this study suggested that most of the factors which emerged from the data were similar to those identified in the review of literature. Interviewing 12 employers who had participated in VIEW provided insight into their perceptions of factors that encouraged them to participate in VIEW and factors that affected the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. Because this study was conducted only with twelve employers, all of whom had participated in VIEW, the findings cannot be generalized to other employers who participate in welfare reform, and are even less relevant to those who choose not to participate.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

This section presents an overview of the findings related to each research question as well as other findings. Discussion of findings in relationship to previous literature also is included.

Factors Encouraging Employer Participation

Research question one related to factors that encouraged employers to participate in VIEW. The themes that emerged from employers' responses were: mass media, social

services agencies, the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), and other relevant observation by employers.

As mentioned in the review of literature, the methods most often used to notify employers about welfare programs were coordinated by the federal and state governments. Barr and Harris (1997) stated that a federal worker-trainee program started in 1968 will be the plan used for government hiring of welfare recipients in the current welfare reform effort. Itzkowitz (1991) quoted Robert L. Martin of the National Chamber of Commerce, “The shift of programs from the federal government to the state, and from the state into the hands of employers is supported by the business community” (p. 284).

In this study, employers indicated that they became aware of VIEW through state and local agencies, but also from other sources.

Mass media. The review of literature did not make an inference about mass media having influence on employers relative to welfare reform. **Most** of the employers in this study became familiar with VIEW through mass **media, which** had a major influence in encouraging employers to participate in VIEW. Most often, employers learned of the VIEW program via television, radio, or the newspaper. Information acquired about VIEW through mass media prompted many employers to seek additional information about the program. In fact, respondents indicated their knowledge about VIEW was minimal or nonexistent before hearing of it through the media.

Social services agencies. Positive interaction between social services agencies, the Virginia Employment Commission, and temporary agencies and the desire to be supportive of welfare reform efforts played an important role in encouraging employers to participate in VIEW. The collaboration between employers and agencies has fostered good public relations.

Employers indicated they had participated in meetings or seminars or served on committees relative to VIEW that were initiated by social services. At these gatherings, social services personnel presented and discussed the VIEW program and welfare reform in general. Employers indicated that having support from social services and others after a VIEW participant was hired encouraged them to participate in VIEW.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC). Respondents indicated that the VEC sometimes distributed information to them about VIEW. Knowledge gained by reading this information motivated the employers to participate in VIEW. Previously, employers were not familiar enough with VIEW to employ welfare recipients through this program.

Other relevant observations by employers. Education and knowledge about VIEW encourages employers to participate. An investment in VIEW participants through additional training to improve employability skills and instill into participants the importance of having a commitment and a responsibility toward their work were perceived as being more valuable to employers than a tax credit.

Other items mentioned were a desire to help the welfare reform initiative and a need for workers. Welfare recipients can make good workers, despite apprehension that may exist in the minds of some employers. Respondents indicated that some employers may need sensitivity training before they become totally aware of the value welfare recipients can bring to their business. Education relative to removing employers' myths about welfare is needed. Additionally, education and information about the VIEW program are also warranted. Employers are interested in the growth of their communities

and recognize the importance of providing jobs for local people to help their communities grow and prosper.

Only two respondents indicated that tax credits encouraged them to participate, so it is likely that some employers were not aware of their eligibility for tax credits. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) became effective on October 1, 1996 to offer employers an incentive to hire individuals from certain groups who have had problems securing employment. This tax credit is a \$2,100 value to employers who take advantage of this offer (U.S. Department of Labor, 1997).

As noted in the review of literature, Congressman Charles Rangel from New York stated that it was being proposed in the 105th Congress that employers receive \$5,000 per employee as a tax break for hiring welfare recipients (National Alliance of Business, 1997b). However, no action has been taken on this proposal to date. Nevertheless, tax credits are unlikely to significantly influence the employers to hire welfare recipients based on the findings from this study. Providing tax credits may not be as important as getting information about VIEW to prospective employers in order to open work opportunities for welfare recipients. As the study indicated, employers who learned about VIEW from the aforementioned sources discovered that their interests could be met by participating in VIEW and hiring needed workers from the VIEW employee pool.

Factors Affecting Workforce Entry

Research question two involved factors that VIEW employers felt affected the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. This study's results and the review of literature (Wilson, 1997; Martin & Tolson, 1985; Block & Noakes, 1988) indicate the welfare recipients can make good employees. The employers who were interviewed for this research indicated that the following characteristics affected welfare recipients' successful participation in the work force: qualifications, employability skills (such as work ethic, attitude, interpersonal abilities, attendance, and appearance), work experience, education and training, a support system or monitoring plan, welfare policies, child care, and lack of funds for transportation and appropriate clothing.

Qualifications. Many employers participate in VIEW because the program has qualified people who have the prerequisites for the available jobs that employers need to fill. Some VIEW participants are qualified because they have received some education and training that have improved their basic skills. Several employers reported that VIEW participants were readily available and willing to work. Other respondents in this study, however, agreed with the National Alliance of Business (1997b) in stating that the greatest barrier to work for welfare recipients is skill deficits (p. 4).

Two of the employers in this study had received a partial reimbursement for hiring welfare recipients through government programs in which they had participated previously. Therefore, they perceived VIEW to be a similar program and participated based on these financial reasons. Generally though, employers will not hire welfare recipients based only on incentives if they do not perceive the people to be qualified. As stated by Caputo (1989), employers "will not employ the hard to employ if they can get better qualified individuals" (p. 88).

Most employers wanted VIEW participants to have the basic skills needed to do the job, for instance, a high school diploma or GED along with communications skills. The National Alliance of Business (1997b) stated that if welfare recipients have appropriate levels of education and skills, employers will be eager to hire them. Stability

of employees' tenure on the job also is weighed heavily by employers because of costs associated with turnover. Findings from this study further indicated that employers realized that some VIEW participants were good workers despite the fact that their skills were limited. This perspective was similar to that reported by Finn (1996), "We are very pleased to find people ready, willing and able to work, said Andrew Blair, chief executive of Colonial Parking, which hired three welfare recipients in one month" (P. Va 1). Wilson (1987) stated that the amount of education a person has does not necessarily determine whether that individual will be a productive employee.

Employability skills. The findings from this study support the review of literature in noting that employability skills (such as interpersonal abilities, attendance, work ethic, appearance, attitude, and behavior) can affect the entry of welfare recipients' into the workforce. Vobejda (1996) indicated employability skills of welfare recipients leave something to be desired, and gave as examples positive attitudes, the ability to deal with day-to-day office politics, the capacity to handle workplace conflicts, and good attendance and work habits. Employers want people who are committed to work to the extent that they not only come to work, but also report on time and are appropriately dressed. The attitude and behavior demonstrated to the employers by a person who is seeking a job weighs heavily in the employer's decision to hire that individual. Barclay (1995) indicated that some employers believe there are people who are not suitable for employment because they do not report to work on time or work up to satisfactory production levels, have bad attitudes, come to work intoxicated, and do not respect authority. Welfare recipients may have to do a better job of projecting themselves in a positive light because some employers hold stereotypes about welfare recipients and their willingness to work. Similarly, employers want employees who have a pleasing appearance. Welfare recipients who do not value their appearance will face difficulties entering the workforce.

Employers do use temporary agencies to find workers, but also believe that temporary agencies interfere with the bonding process of the employer and employee, thereby causing the worker not to develop the loyalty and responsibility which help develop a person into a good employee. Employers stated that if VIEW participants would come to them before going to a temporary agency, they would have the same opportunity of being hired to the same job that they would get through a temporary agency.

Work experience. Employers will hire VIEW participants who have no work experience; though, they prefer a worker who has a work history. If the VIEW participant is committed to wanting to work, employers will waive the work experience requirement in lieu of a positive attitude.

Findings from this study also suggest that employers want employees who do not present a high level of risk; frequent employee turnovers cost employers money. Because of this, employers are somewhat hesitant about hiring people who have a limited or sporadic work history. Barclay (1995) indicated, "some employers want the states to create a special category for welfare recipients who have never had a job and who need to get off the system" (p. A 14). Despite this hesitancy, employers can be encouraged to give VIEW participants an opportunity to demonstrate their worth. This parallels a comment in the literature (Associated Press 1997) that company presidents must be persuaded to take risks on entry-level workers.

Education and training. Education and training are needed to do a satisfactory job, and their absence can pose a problem for welfare recipients trying to enter the workforce. Employers need people who are willing to participate in training to become qualified for the jobs that are available. Findings also suggest that employers are willing to provide necessary training and most often have to make it available for new hires. Welfare recipients also may experience problems in learning from the training that employers provide if their basic skills are not adequate.

Itzkowitz (1991) cites Pierce A. Quinlin, of the National Alliance of Business, as believing that businesses are looking desperately for reliable, trained workers and are not finding as many as they need. Findings from this study indicated that employers do indeed invest in their employees by providing formal training. Most responding employers provide some type of training for their new workers, yet they believe more training programs are needed to help VIEW participants enter the workforce. For instance, employers requested that social services or other agencies teach VIEW participants the necessary employability skills before sending them into the workforce.

Findings in this study were consistent with some sources (What do employers want, 1997; Smith, 1995) regarding the relationship between the employees' job level and whether formal training is or provided. Nightingale and Haveman (1995) indicated that "individuals with high levels of education are more likely to receive training from their employers than those with lower levels of education" (p. 142). The entry level positions available to VIEW participants in this study provided only limited formal training. This type of training, however, was more readily available to VIEW participants employed in the health care areas included in this study than in the other areas of employment.

Support system or monitoring plan. Employers in this study indicated that a support system or monitoring plan should be provided by social services to follow VIEW participants on the job. This has been a positive factor in some cases cited by employers to make a smooth transition between welfare and work. This finding supports the review of literature; for example, Vobejda (1996) cited Gary Stangler, Missouri's social services director, as saying that employers wanted the state to supply a case manager to help deal with problems that arise when companies hire from the welfare rolls. Gueron (1996) indicated that it costs money to make available to welfare recipients what is needed to transform welfare, but, in the past, Congress and states have not made those resources available. Gueron further stated that it is expensive to monitor work sites and to provide child care to people while working. Again, employers in this study see these as important needs in helping the welfare reform efforts move welfare recipients into the workforce.

Welfare policies. Churchill (1995) stated welfare recipients do not have a voice in helping to shape the policies that affect them even though these welfare policies are influencing their state of well-being. Welfare recipients' lack of involvement in policy making, according to Churchill, leaves them without the ability to navigate their way out of the system. Employers in the current study indicated that welfare policies, in the employers' experiences, prevent VIEW participants from working full-time, yet full-time work is needed if VIEW participants expect to reach a level of self-sufficiency.

The findings of this study indicated that welfare policies seriously affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce, and this was supported by the review of literature. Harris (1996) suggested that in devising the welfare bill, policy makers

focused on the wrong questions. In other words, policy makers constructed a welfare bill that did not totally address the work-related barriers that are confronted by welfare recipients.

The block grants provide a little leeway in the law but leave a great deal of ambiguity. . . . Because the House Ways and Means Committee had decided not to clarify the issue states are free to decide. . . . “There was an error in the language and because of all the controversy around it, it is not going to be corrected” MacKinnon says a Ways and Means staffer told him (Alistair MacKinnon, New York federal education legislation coordinator). . . . In many cases, state leaders are doing what Congress did, passing down the responsibility along with the money. Cities and counties are left reacting to whatever comes down the pike, trying to answer a storm of questions in the absence of a clear policy (Litvin, 1997, p. 33).

The administration of the welfare policies seems to acquire different interpretations and meanings as they pass through the dissemination phase, according the social services VIEW coordinator in one of the counties in this study. In *Workfare: The New Slavery* (1996) it is indicated that the states have been given more jurisdiction over the implementation of the welfare policies. Therefore, the interpretations of the policies are passed from the state to local social services agencies to be applied to individuals. The administration, interpretation, and dissemination of information about welfare policies at the local level often creates problems for VIEW participants and other welfare recipients. The Social Services VIEW coordinator in one of the counties included in this research stated that the welfare policies are clear, but that the inconsistencies in the administration of the policies at the local level many times causes problems. Consequently, as policies filter to VIEW participants and are then translated to the employer by the VIEW participants, they may not have the same meaning and intent they had from the outset. Thus, this could create confusion and misunderstanding of the policies by welfare recipients and employers alike. Many times, it is the VIEW participant who will be interpreting the welfare policies to the employers about the number of hours that they work and about child care stipulations.

It is evident from this study that employers and VIEW participants may have a different understanding about the welfare policies than social services personnel. VIEW was in operation before the recent federal welfare reform initiative began, yet the state of Virginia’s welfare-to-work program (VIEW) policies and procedures were generally in agreement with the federal policies. Therefore, the policies that govern the VIEW program were approved by the federal government as viable policies, perceived to be in keeping with the new law. A complicating factor in Virginia is that the state plan allows counties and cities a great deal of flexibility in implementing the VIEW program.

According to *Workfare: The New Slavery* (1996), the new federal program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) “contains two key restrictions. First, it requires states to make many of their welfare recipients do some kind of work. Second, most recipients will be cut off after two years, and there is a lifetime limit of five years” (p. 33). Revised procedures for communicating welfare policies are needed to help eliminate or minimize the different interpretations of the welfare reform law. The findings from this study suggest that present welfare policies affect the relationships between wages paid by employers and benefits received by welfare recipients. This is

due to policies preventing welfare recipients from working full-time because of the possibility of having benefits reduced if they engage in full-time employment.

Welfare recipients' tenure on the job may not be long enough to cause them to receive wage increases based on promotions or merit or to get beyond the probation period. Not remaining on the job long enough to get past probation does not allow the employer the time span needed to observe and discover the caliber of worker the person may become. Thus, welfare recipients will most often receive a minimum wage because they are always starting at entry level jobs.

Present policies have shaped the attitudes of welfare recipients about work. For example, they question why they should work full-time if benefits are going to be decreased or eliminated. Therefore, welfare recipients may seek part-time work from employers, yet employers want and need full-time workers. Here again, the implementation of the policies by the local social services agencies and the interpretation of the welfare policies by the recipients may have played a role in helping to shape the attitudes of these employers about the welfare policies.

Welfare policies affect work experience; when welfare recipients constantly leave jobs to prevent benefit loss, they lose time that could help them acquire work experience. When they continue to leave the workforce and return, it sends a negative message to an employer about their dependability, which implies that investing in this individual as an employee is risky. Consequently, the welfare recipient is disadvantaged again; the employer is hesitant about hiring a person with this type of work pattern.

Based on the findings of this study, it is not clear who will profit most from the new welfare policies. Findings revealed that this study's employers believed the welfare policies hinder their ability to hire welfare recipients. The review of literature, (Iitzkowitz, 1991; Martin & Tolson, 1985), however, suggests that employers may be the most likely to benefit from the new welfare policy.

Child care. Gabe and Falk (1995) stated the cost of child care may deter some mothers on welfare from taking a job. The findings from this study also support this information from the review of literature. The consensus among all employers in this study was that child care was the greatest factor affecting the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce. They said that VIEW participants cannot report to work if they do not have child care readily available. This is especially true if the children are not school age. According to Finn (1996), Virginia's officials said they are studying whether any revenue savings created by the state's welfare initiative can be diverted into expanded child-care programs for all low-income families.

Entry level employment available to welfare recipients often requires late hours or weekend work; therefore, children may not be in school and the parent has to find child care. One employer in this study speculated that the government should encourage employers to provide a day care center by providing some type of incentive to employers. Without quality child care, welfare recipients cannot become good workers. Often the lack of child care will force employees not to show up for work, leave work early, or perform poorly on the job because their concentration is divided between work and their children. Employers indicated that child care support should be continued since it is a necessary service for welfare recipients to attain self-sufficiency. Lack of adequate child care may prevent welfare recipients from getting the full-time, continuous employment that is needed to become self-sufficient through receiving wage increases.

Haveman (1997) indicated that states should increase the funding to expand child care and other efforts aimed at moving recipients into jobs. The National Alliance of Business (1997b) stated “one of the greatest barriers to work for welfare recipients is child care” (p. 4). There is a consensus among respondents to this study and in the literature that child care is a primary factor that confronts welfare recipients who are trying to enter the workforce.

Additionally, everyone benefits from promoting quality child care because employees can concentrate better on their work tasks if they know their children are being cared for properly. Employers will have a productive worker, and the economic base of the community and state will improve because of the newly generated taxes collected from welfare recipients due to full-time employment.

Lack of funds. Several employers interviewed for this study indicated that a lack of funds could inhibit the ability of welfare recipients to work regularly because of limiting their options regarding transportation and appropriate clothing for the job. In the review of literature, Evans (1996) stated that the “lack of transportation is one of the biggest problems for public assistance recipients who want to work” (p. A 23). The National Alliance of Business (1997b) stated that one of “the greatest barriers to work for welfare recipients is . . . transportation” (p. 4). The findings from this study showed almost equal division of opinions among employers relative to the transportation issue. A transportation system is available to welfare recipients in one locality, but some respondents indicated that the transportation system is not too reliable. Some employers reported having to provide transportation for employees in order to carry out the day-to-day operations on the job. Other respondents indicated that welfare recipients did not have the money to buy job-related clothing such as uniforms. The review of literature (Evans, 1996; National Alliance of Business, 1997b) referred to the lack of transportation as a barrier to welfare recipients entering into the workforce, but lack of money to buy clothing was not mentioned. Insufficient funds to purchase gas for a car, pay taxi or bus fare, or buy the appropriate clothing often results in the individual not reporting to work at all or reporting late, which could be interpreted as a sign of poor work ethic by an employer who did not know the underlying causes.

Discussion of Other Findings

It was interesting to note that the loss of government-provided health care benefits due to employment was not mentioned by employers in this study. Will employers pay the cost of health insurance for minimum wage or entry level employees? Will employers pay wages sufficient to offset loss of benefits by welfare recipients? More experience with welfare reform and its results will be needed to determine the answer to questions such as these.

Based on the review of literature, many employers are paying between \$5.75 and \$6.00 an hour (Alliance of Business, 1997b; Churchill, 1995). Employers in this study are paying wages that are somewhat lower than those wages, for example, \$4.75, \$5.30 and occasionally \$6.00 an hour. One employer in this study stated “Nobody can live off \$5.25 an hour, especially if they are a single parent. It would be hard for two people making \$5.25 an hour.” Andelman (1995) reported Ross as saying, “It’s pretty hard to support a family of two or three on \$5.50 or \$6.00 an hour, according to Assistant Labor Secretary Douglas Ross of the Employment and Training Administration” (p.38).

The perceptions of employers in this study seemed to vary according to the size of their businesses. Business sizes were defined based on information received in telephone interviews with personnel at the Virginia Employment Commission. For this study a small business is one that hires 20 or fewer employees, a medium business has 21 to 100 employees, and a large business hires over 100 employees. While generalization cannot be made from the 12 employers interviewed for this study, it appeared that employers in small businesses were less likely to be as familiar with VIEW, but they believed VIEW could help welfare reform. Employers in medium-sized businesses had more general knowledge about VIEW and felt VIEW was a positive direction for increasing the number of productive, tax-paying citizens in their localities. These employers also tended to be more humanitarian and community oriented in their perception of VIEW. The perceptions about VIEW of employers in large businesses had more economic overtones. These employers saw VIEW as a much needed program that is having some success. According to one employer in a large business VIEW was perceived to be a program that is moving traditional welfare recipients from dependency to self-sufficiency. As a whole, employers in this study felt positive about the new pool of available workers.

Assertions

The respondents in this research were interviewed at length and certain responses which were made repeatedly were considered to be themes. In this section, assertions which might be drawn from those themes are discussed.

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it can be asserted that employers need workers and are committed to hiring welfare recipients if sufficient support is rendered once the recipients are hired. The support may come from social services, VEC, or other agencies and could include monitoring recipients once they are on the job to be sure necessary benefits are continuing.

Employers are willing to provide some education and training to welfare recipients if they demonstrate good employability skills. Though employers prefer workers who have had work experience, they will hire welfare recipients who have had limited workforce participation.

This study's employers believe that welfare policies that govern VIEW participants' employment and benefits hinder the ability of welfare recipients to achieve self-sufficiency. The interpretation of the policies by the recipients and the employers and the implementation of new policies during a period of welfare reform may have contributed to this notion.

Important barriers to successful employment for welfare recipients include lack of child care and funds for transportation and appropriate clothing. Issues related to child care are availability of good quality yet affordable services and provision of care for preschool and school age children on evenings and weekends to accommodate employment beyond the traditional weekdays and hours.

Under the current system, it seems unlikely that tax credits are going to influence employers to hire large numbers of welfare recipients. Tax credits may be viewed negatively by employers because of the required paper work and complications.

The employers in this study tended to be optimistic about the role VIEW and other welfare reform efforts can play in helping welfare recipients become gainfully employed.

Employers indicated they should be given the opportunity to have more input into the training programs for VIEW participants, and that they would encourage other employers to give VIEW participants an opportunity to prove their worth by hiring them.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The theoretical base of this study was grounded in the work of Havelock (1995) and Rogers (1995). Havelock (1995) theorized that innovation deals with a problem-solving process involving change agents and the development of ownership for the innovation by participants. Rogers (1995) theorized that diffusion of innovations is “communicated in a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (pp. 5-6). The employers in this study were faced with new information from various sources that affected their decision to participate in welfare reform, specifically the VIEW program. It was difficult for them reach a mutual understanding in support of VIEW because they were not involved in the planning process and thus did not develop a sense of ownership. Presently the primary change agents for the VIEW program are social services agencies and the Virginia Employment Commission. State and local efforts to increase the involvement of employers, welfare recipients, and other key groups such as community organizations and job training providers could enhance the ownership felt by these groups and thus the effectiveness of welfare reform.

Policies governing welfare programs should continue to undergo extensive scrutiny as the impacts of recent reforms are assessed. Small business owners want more input into policy decisions before they are made; they want to have some say about changes that will affect them. In addition, employers believe they are not adequately represented in the decision-making process relative to policies affecting employers and welfare recipients. Employers would like to see businesses as a major, positive part of the welfare reform solution by contributing their insights to it. Giving employers a greater feeling of ownership regarding welfare reform would be likely to increase their participation.

At a time when many welfare policies have changed, clearly written information should be provided to employers so they understand how these changes affect them as well as the welfare recipients. Educational and discussion sessions for employers regarding their role in welfare reform could be sponsored by community groups such as social services, Cooperative Extension, and educational institutions. Again, states and localities should look for ways to get employers more involved in the planning process so such informational efforts will be successful.

The review of literature and employers’ comments indicated a perception that Virginia and other states may have a compartmentalized approach to welfare reform. What is needed may be a more wholistic system in which governments, social services, businesses, and participants alike work toward one goal: to get welfare recipients into the workforce. Consideration should also be given to developing greater consistency among localities regarding the implementation of welfare reform policies

Findings from this study indicated that employers would like to have a support system provided by someone outside the business to assist VIEW participants after they have been hired. Social services agencies, the Cooperative Extension System, educational organizations, or other community groups could provide the liaison or

monitoring services to help make a smooth transition between welfare and the world of work.

Federal vocational education legislation (U.S. Congress, 1990) requires that a support system be provided to assist members of special populations in making the transition to the workforce. An adaptation of that transition model may be an alternative for providing support services to welfare recipients. This type of assistance could be made available through community mentoring programs, Cooperative Extension, educational institutions, or other agencies. These support services could strengthen the wholistic approach that is needed to enhance the success of welfare reform.

For some businesses, tax credits may encourage more extensive participation in VIEW and other welfare reform programs. More complete and clear information about available tax credits should be provided to employers through a variety of sources including the mass media and community organizations.

Based on the findings of this study, vocational education and other job training agencies should develop on-going interaction and collaboration with employers as they plan programs and curricula to prepare welfare recipients for employment. Employers in this study welcome the opportunity to share information about their needs and how they can make employment opportunities available for individuals entering the workforce.

Employers and educators should coordinate efforts to encourage policy-makers to appropriate additional funding for quality child and preschool programs such as Head Start. These programs can help prepare young children for a structured learning environment in addition to providing parents with reliable child care. Employers also indicated that financial incentives for worksite child care would be a policy change that could benefit both businesses and their employees.

Recommendations for Future Research

Limited research has been conducted relative to employers and welfare reform. Most of the research conducted about welfare reform has focused on welfare recipients. Until this study, no research was found that brought together the perceptions of employers about VIEW, in particular, and welfare reform overall. Because this study involved only twelve employers, more extensive research is needed to determine whether findings would be consistent.

Further research is needed to acquire a better understanding of the relationship between welfare reform and employers. Quantitative studies should be conducted to determine the number of employers who have hired welfare recipients full-time and the extent to which this employment has caused welfare recipients to become self-sufficient. The employers should be selected from a cross-section of businesses in both urban and rural geographic areas where there are large numbers of welfare recipients. Research could explore reasons why some employers have chosen not to participate in welfare reform.

Further qualitative research should be conducted to understand the perceptions of welfare recipients, employers, and service providers regarding welfare reform programs, using the findings of this study as a reference point. What are the opinions of both groups about current welfare policies and the effect of these policies on welfare recipients' ability to become self-sufficient?

Additional research should be conducted to determine how successful the VIEW program in Virginia and programs in other states have been in meeting the needs of

welfare recipients. Have these programs helped them find full-time employment with sufficient earnings to support themselves and their families? Do their earnings increase overtime to adequately replace the loss of benefits previously provided through the welfare system? What impact has welfare reform had on the numbers of individuals living below the poverty level or requiring assistance from charitable organizations? Aspects of this research could be both qualitative and quantitative in design.

A specific research focus could be to identify strategies for providing quality child care for welfare recipients and other low income workers. What policies could be enacted to provide incentives for workplace child care? What agencies and organizations should be involved in this effort?

In the area of vocational and technical education, further research should determine what types of training programs are most effective in providing welfare recipients with job preparedness skills and career development strategies. Studies should include welfare recipients who have found jobs after participating in the various kinds of programs and the employers of those individuals.

Summary

Based on this study's findings, employers are interested in supporting welfare reform but will not be likely to sacrifice profits to help with humanitarian initiatives and social problems. Employers seek qualified employees with good skills and attitudes and the capability to be dependable and productive workers. Educational and social agencies have a responsibility to help welfare recipients gain the skills and abilities employers need.

In summary, twelve themes emerged from this study. Factors which encouraged these Virginia employers to participate in welfare reform were: (a) mass media, (b) social services agencies, (c) the Virginia Employment Commission and, (d) other observations. Factors perceived by the employers as affecting the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce were: (a) qualifications- employers want employees who have certain attributes and are qualified for the jobs that are available; (b) employability skills (c) work experience (d) education and training, (e) a support system or monitoring plan, (f) welfare policies, (g) child care, and (h) lack of funds for transportation and appropriate clothing. All of these factors should be considered in future decisions that influence welfare-to-work programs.

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Appendix A
Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Part A: Factors that Encourage Employers' Participation

1. How would you describe the VIEW program?
2. What information and/or materials about welfare reform did you or your staff hear or read that influenced your decision to participate in VIEW?
3. Describe the kinds of jobs in your business that would be available for VIEW participants.
4. How many VIEW participants have you hired in the last year?
5. What is the total number of employees you hired in the last year?
6. How many VIEW participants do you think you will hire within the next year?
7. What were your reasons for hiring VIEW participants?
8. Have you had any work-related problems with any of the VIEW participants you have hired?
9. In terms of participating in this program, what specific incentives do you receive for hiring a welfare recipient? Discuss each briefly.
(Examples: reduced salary cost, satisfaction from contributing to the community, free training for new employees, tax credit of \$2,100).
10. (If tax credits aren't mentioned for # 9: You may be aware that employers can receive tax credits for hiring welfare recipients.)
To what extent do you think employers participate in welfare-to-work programs because of tax credits?
11. What changes would make your involvement with VIEW more successful?
12. What things do you think would encourage more employers to participate in VIEW or other welfare reform programs?
13. Based on your experience with VIEW, would you recommend other companies to participate in VIEW? Why or why not?
14. Do you work through temporary agencies to secure workers?
15. If yes, do you sometimes hire these individuals yourself after they have worked for you through the temporary agency?
16. Do you see this as a good way for welfare recipients to get work experience and be successful workers?
17. What does your company see as its responsibility to the community regarding welfare reform?

Part B: Factors that Affect the Entry of Welfare Recipients into the Workforce

18. What are some things that you think would affect the entry of welfare recipients into the workforce? I'd like for you to discuss each one briefly.
(If respondent doesn't mention any of the following, ask about it specifically.)
 - a. basic job skills
Do you require a person to have a high school diploma or GED before applying for employment in your business?
Will you be willing to hire a VIEW participant while she or he is attending GED classes or some other training program as long as the time period does not conflict with the work schedule? Why or why not?
 - b. specific job skills
Overall how would describe the job skills of welfare recipients you have hired or considered hiring?

- c. employability skills (attendance, punctuality, dress, attitude, ethic, realistic wage expectations, etc).
 - d. work experience
How would you describe the previous work experiences of welfare recipients you have hired or considered hiring?
 - e. job training
Please describe the job training you provide for your employees.
 - f. child care
 - g. transportation
 - h. criminal record
 - i. substance abuse
 - j. extended debt problems
19. In what ways do you think VIEW will assist with helping welfare participants enter the workforce?
20. What other comments would you like to make about the VIEW program and your participation in it?
- Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Business and Respondent Profile

Business and Respondent Profile

(Information received from written materials and/or interview.)

Name of Respondent _____ Gender M F
Name of Business _____
Location _____
Description of the work environment (visual observation):
Description of the company's products, services, or sales:
Total number of employees at this location _____
Number of years the business has been in operation _____
Respondent's title or position in the firm _____
Number of years respondent has been in this position _____
Respondent's total years with the business _____

Appendix C
Human Subjects Form

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Informed Consent for Participants
of Investigative Projects

Title of Project: Welfare Reform: Employers' Perceptions of Factors Associated with Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare

Investigator: Bernice B. Wilson, Graduate Student, Vocational and Technical Education

I. The Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this project is to examine employers' perceptions of factors related to Virginia's Initiative for Employment Not Welfare (VIEW). VIEW is a welfare-to-work program implemented in Virginia to help welfare recipients become self-sufficient.

II. Procedures

You are participating in VIEW and by signing this form are agreeing to participate in this study. During this interview, you will be asked to respond to a list of questions. The issues discussed through the interview questions will be: (a) What factors encourage employers to participate in VIEW, and (b) What do VIEW employers perceive as factors that affect welfare recipients' entry into the workforce? You are free to stop me at any time during the interview and ask for further explanation about the question. Additionally, you are free to decline to answer any questions. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed to computer files in preparation for the analysis and interpretation of data. Information obtained will only be used to foster the objectives of the research study. All tapes and additional field notes from this study will remain with the researcher to protect your confidentiality and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

III. Risks

The interview process is non-invasive. A telephone contact will be made to the personnel officer or company executive office to set up an appointment for the interview. Before proceeding with the interview you will have an opportunity to decline to have the session recorded. Information obtained will only be used to foster the objectives of the research study. All tapes and additional field notes from this study will remain with the researcher to protect the confidentiality of the employers.

No risks are involved with this study.

IV. Benefits of this Project

The potential benefits will be helping welfare recipients and employers utilize policies to help gain self-sufficiency and economic stability. Results of this study will have meaning and significance for those seeking to help welfare recipients make the transition to employment. Employers provide jobs which form the economic base that people use to provide resource for their families.

V. Confidentiality/Anonymity

Businesses' and participants' names will be kept confidential and will not be reported in the study. To protect the identity of employers, coding numbers will be used to reference all interviews. Two Virginia Tech secretaries will transcribe the tapes. However, I, the investigator, will be the only person with access to the data. Tapes will be stored in a secure place to provide confidentiality.

VI. Compensation

No compensation will be given to participants of this study. The research will be done on a voluntary basis; you will have the opportunity to decline participation in the study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study anytime without a penalty.

You are also free not to answer any questions or respond to situations, without penalty.

VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and by the Department of Teaching and Learning.

IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibility:

(1). To complete a personal interview.

X. Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. All my questions have been answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

Signature	Date
Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact	
_____	<u>(540) 961-1227</u>
Bernice B. Wilson	Phone
Investigator	
_____	<u>(540) 231-8180</u>
Dr. Daisy Stewart	Phone
Faculty Advisor	
_____	<u>(540) 231-9359</u>
H. T.Hurd	Phone
Chair, IRB	
Research Division	

Appendix D
Confidentiality Form

Confidentiality Agreement

I _____ an employee of Virginia Tech and transcriptionist for the research being conducted by Bernice B. Wilson, a graduate student at Virginia Tech, **agree to confidentiality** in transcribing audio-tapes of personal interviews of employers in Virginia relative to welfare reform.

Transcriptionist

Graduate Student

Advisor

VITA

Bernice B. Wilson

Bernice Bussey Wilson was born in Georgetown, Georgia. She graduated from Kaigler Training School where she successfully maintained a position on the honor roll throughout her twelve years of schooling and received the honor of being valedictorian. During her senior year in high school she performed the duties of a substitute teacher occasionally when substitute teachers were not available. She entered Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) and majored in Home Economics Education. While pursuing her B.S. degree, her work study assignment was on the pediatric ward of John Andrew Hospital. She worked at this job during her entire undergraduate career. From Tuskegee University she earned a Master of Education degree in Student Personnel Services and an Education Specialist degree in Adult and Vocational Education with an emphasis in Home Economics. Bernice earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Virginia Tech in Vocational and Technical Education in the Spring of 1998, with an emphasis in Consumer Studies and Family Resource Management.

The majority of Bernice's work experience is as a County Extension Agent with the Cooperative Extension Program at Tuskegee University. As a County Extension Agent, she was responsible for developing, planning, and implementing programs for adult learners. Mass media was a very successful delivery method; she initiated a weekly radio program and continued the program for 20 years by changing the format of the delivery procedures as needed for updates. Through her leadership as a County Agent, a monthly newsletter serving 567 households provided timely information on various topics to clients in Macon and Montgomery Counties for 22 years. She also appeared on several television programs during her tenure with Cooperative Extension. A satellite program on Civil Rights Training was aired nationally through the Cooperative Extension System of Alabama, and she was a presenter on this program.

Other relevant experience includes working with the Syracuse City School System as a Head Start teacher in Syracuse, New York, and as a Residence Hall Director at Tuskegee University.

Professional experiences include serving as co-editor of a 1996 book by Flora L. Williams, *Economics and Resource Management: Principles for the Financial Planner, Consumer Specialist, and Family Economist*. Published by the Purdue University Department of Consumer Sciences and Retailing. As a graduate intern at Auburn University, in the summer of 1996, she participated in and observed the outreach education division's day-to-day operations and became familiar with the program planning process in a variety of university outreach divisions. In the spring of 1996, she developed a class project (Consumer Helpnet) which was displayed on the Internet. During fall 1995, she worked as a graduate teaching assistant and taught a methods course for nutrition and dietetics majors.

Bernice's work experience, community involvement, and education are noteworthy in that they led her to a number of awards: American Vocational Association/Family and Consumer Sciences Graduate Fellowship, 1996; Certified Home Economist; 1987; Alabama Cooperative Extension Service Employee Organization Merit Award, 1980; Dictionary of International Biographies, 1979; Notable American Award; 1977, and Outstanding Young Women of America Award, 1977.

Bernice is a member in the following professional organizations: Kappa Delta Pi, Omicron Tau Theta, Alabama Cooperative Extension Services Employee Organization, American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, Alabama Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, Alabama Education Association, American Vocational Association, American Vocational Education Research Association, and National Education Association. Participating in these organizations will continue to be an area of emphasis and professional focus in her life.