RETAIL MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS:

VARIABLES AND OUTCOMES OF

THE TRAINING PROCESS

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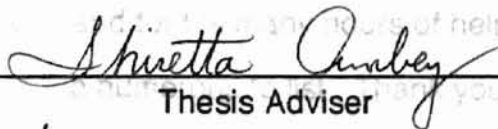
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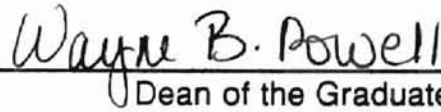July, 1999

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter I

Introduction

The explosion of the human resource development profession has created an emphasis on training, and how occupational training can affect both the employee and the organization. Occupational training is training which occurs with the intent of preparing individuals for a particular occupation or job task. New employees enter a training program to prepare them for the duties of their occupation and to orient them to their new organization. These training programs should serve two functions. First, training should help employees develop the ability to use "tools" and perform tasks with high self-confidence. This condition of mastering a skill so that it may be applied in a real world situation is known as competence. The training process should also make a newcomer feel welcome, secure, and create an environment for success (Axelrod, 1969). Because of the importance of each function, program effectiveness is vital.

The retail sales industry in the United States alone employs approximately 18.5 million people. Educators and leaders from the retail industry are legitimately concerned with the inability to attract and retain retail personnel, especially at the management level. A key factor that discourages individuals from entering the field is that students view "retailing as dull, offering low pay and requiring long hours" (Swinyard, Langrehr, & Smith, 1991, p. 461). Dispelling the negative stigma of retailing can be attempted by fully explaining the nature of the job, importance of a college degree, advancement

1

opportunities, training procedures, salary schedules, and geographical benefits. Swinyard, Langrehr, and Smith (1991) suggest that to attract the quality of individuals needed to provide leadership in this highly competitive environment, attention should be placed on the fine-tuning of entry-level positions. A need for strong retail managers increases as businesses evolve and management responsibilities change.

Change is inevitable in the world of business. Competition continues to increase as the business market becomes a true global environment. As changes occur in technology and competition, organizations are reevaluating training needs. Technology has now made it possible for store managers, first line managers, to produce much of the output that was once the responsibility of middle managers. Store managers are now, in many corporations, the link between corporate goals and the labor force, sales associates. The new role of managers has created new training responsibilities. Store managers must be able to interpret corporate goals, explain them clearly to workers, and motivate the workers to achieve the goals. Besides the "traditional technical skills related to their jobs" (Alpander, 1986, p. 3), managers must now develop conceptual and interactive skills.

> "The products of management training and development functions must deliver. They must help the senior management team articulate and implement business strategies and achieve the bottom-line objectives of the corporation......The training profession will be judged and measured on the impact it has on the business" (Bolt, 1987, p. 12).

As the importance of management development is understood, constraints in the training process must be acknowledged.

A major issue in training is the cost or efficiency of the training program. Today trainers are having to deal with limited resources, changing

technologies, and increased demands (Trautman & Klein, 1993). Assessing cost/benefits has become more complex by the increasing availability of training technology such as video and computers (Kearsley & Compton, 1981). When one begins to identify the costs associated with training it is easy to see how a company's investment can quickly escalate. The high level of human and financial resources required for training encourages retention of employees to facilitate cost efficiency. To help ensure cost efficiency, organizations should be aware of some important characteristics about the individuals they are training.

Just as in the world of business, colleges and universities are also experiencing change. An increase in the number of adult students, students 25 years of age and older, has motivated significant research on adult education. A primary focus for instructors within the adult education field is identifying the characteristics of their adult learners. Several successful assessment tools have been developed within this field. The most common type of assessment used by adult educators classifies students by a particular learning style. Instructors have the ability to assess their students in each class and to modify the teaching techniques in order to provide each student with the best learning environment so that they might experience success.

This study focused on the training of retail managers. The study applied the knowledge of the adult education field to the training environment. The goal of both structured education and occupational training is to teach adults the skills they need to be successful. By collecting information from a major retailer on generalized training procedures the researchers hoped to provide universities and the industry with valuable suggestions for improving training, providing managers a positive training experience, increasing job satisfaction, strengthening organizational commitment, and increasing job retention.

<u>Theoretical framework</u>

The developmental process of the current research project began by forming several research questions. The first issue of investigation was: does an individual's learning style account for variations in the perception of the training experience? Secondly: does the manager's perception of the training experience account for variations in the level of job satisfaction, degree of organizational commitment, and intent to stay? The theoretical framework used as a basis for the study was Hall and Nougaim's (1968) career stage model. Research generated by Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (1985) provided an additional foundation for the study.

A model was developed to illustrate the proposed relationships among the variables (see Figure 1). It should be noted that the intent of this model was to indicate sequential relationships, not causal relationships.

Figure 1. Theoretical model designed to illustrate sequential relationships among the variables of the study.

4
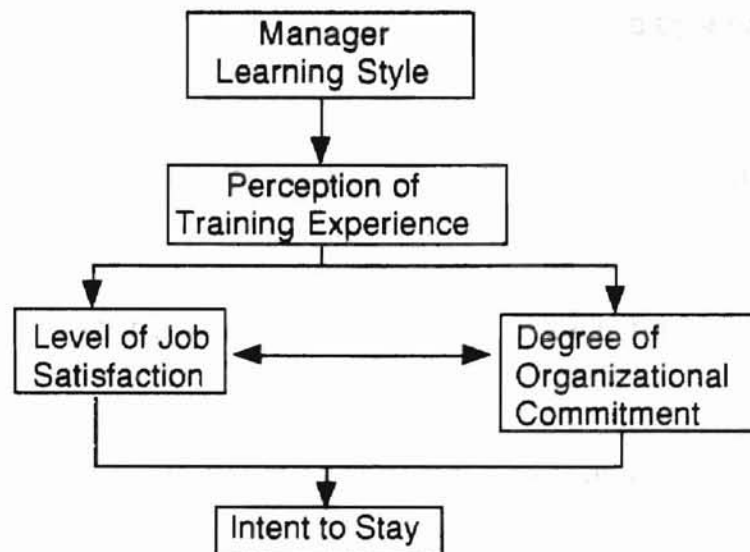
A relationship was proposed to exist between learning style, how an individual prefers to learn, and perception of the training experience. A relationship was hypothesized to exist between perception of the training experience and both job satisfaction level and degree of organizational commitment. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were identified as predictors of intent to stay with the company. In addition, the relationship between job satisfaction level and degree of organizational commitment was investigated.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate a major retailer's training program, and the training techniques utilized in the program, for retail managers. In addition, the study investigated managers' perceptions of that training in relation to managers' learning styles, job satisfaction level, degree of organizational commitment, and intent to stay with their employing firm.

Objectives

1. Develop an overview of the training techniques used by a national retail organization.

2. Evaluate retail managers' perceptions of their training experiences (positive vs. negative).

3. Assess the learning style and intent to stay of each manager surveyed.

4. Assess the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of each manager.

5. Analyze relationships among manager learning style, perception of training experience, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to stay.

Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that:

H1: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's learning style score from the Learning Style Inventory and perception of training experience.

H2: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and job satisfaction.

H3: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and degree of organizational commitment.

H4: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's job satisfaction level and degree of organizational commitment.

H5: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's job satisfaction level and intent to stay.

H6: A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's degree of organizational commitment and intent to stay.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made:

1. Training experiences are different for each individual.

2. A variety of training techniques are used in the retail industry.

3. Major differences in the training experience are related to the manager's learning style, manager's preference for training techniques, and training techniques used.

6

Limitations of the Study

    The study has been limited to the population of retail store managers and assistant managers of a national specialty retailer. These managers have completed their organization's initial management training program, and have been in their current position for no more than 36 months. Therefore, the results of the study will be generalizable to new management recruits and retail firms utilizing similar training techniques.

Definitions of Terms

    Causal relationships - occurs when variable A causes variable B

    Conceptual skills - those skills which "involve education and/or extensive experience that develop over time" (Alpander, 1986, p. 3).

    Employee turnover - "individuals leaving firms voluntarily or involuntarily" (Gable & Hollon, 1984, p. 54).

    Intent to stay - the degree to which an individual plans to stay with an organization.

    Interactive skills - the ability to "develop tools and techniques which stimulate subordinate assistance and involvement" (Alpander, 1986, p. 3).

    Job satisfaction - "A pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience" (Locke, 1983, p. 1300).

    Learning style - "the way you learn and how you deal with ideas and day-to-day situations in your life" (Kolb, 1985, p. 2).

    Organizational commitment - "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974, p. 604).

    Retention - the act of continued employment.

7

<u>Sequential relationships</u> - occurs one after another; variable A eventually leads to variable B, but variable A does not cause variable B.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The purpose of the study was to examine training programs for retail managers and managers' perception of that training. This review provides a summary of the literature related to the relevant variables. The basis for the study and testing of the major hypotheses were established by a review of literature regarding the below topics: early-employment period, training techniques, immediate relations styles, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the text to stay.

The purpose of the study was to examine training programs for retail managers and managers' perception of that training. This review provides a summary of the literature related to the relevant variables. The basis for the study and formation of the major hypotheses were established by a review of literature related to the following topics: early-employment period, training techniques, managers' learning styles, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to stay.

Early-employment Period

Research examining the early-employment period has been conducted in relation to several issues. First, a large percentage of voluntary managerial turnover has been found to occur during this early period of employment (Good, Sisler, & Gentry, 1988; Gable, Hollon, & Dangello, 1984; Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). Second, literature from the field of career development revealed that particular developmental tasks and concerns were related to the stages of employees' careers (Brousseau, 1983; Schein, 1978). Swinyard, Langrehr, & Smith (1991) suggested that in order to attract the quality of individuals needed to provide leadership in this highly competitive environment, attention should be placed on the fine-tuning of entry-level positions.

As a result of research on life and career stages, several models of career stage development have been produced (Hall & Nougaim, 1968; Schein, 1978; Super, Crites, Hummel, Moser, Overstreet, & Warnath, 1957;

9

Van Maanen & Schein, 1977). The Hall and Nougaim (1968) model has been identified as the most accurate model to illustrate the stages of a managerial career (Brousseau, 1983). Based on the longitudinal study of management trainees and their careers, Hall and Nougaim (1968) proposed three hierarchical stages. Individuals pass through each stage as they move upward in an organization. The stages in hierarchical order are: (1) establishment, during which an individual seeks security, a means of gaining recognition, defining the structure of his/her position, and integrating him/herself into the organization; (2) advancement, the stage at which achievement and esteem needs become paramount and the individual seeks opportunities for promotion; and (3) maintenance, the attainment of a career achievement plateau resulting in a decreased need or opportunity to compete and the seeking of gratification from sources other than career advancement.

The focus of this study was on retail managers who have held their positions for three years or less. Therefore, only the establishment stage will be discussed in the following review. From Hall and Nougaim's (1968) discussion it is evident that the establishment stage commences upon an employee's decision to join the organization. Safety concerns are dominate the first year of employment for all employees. The newcomer is primarily concerned with defining his/her environment and with feeling secure there (Hall & Nougaim, 1968). Axelrod (1969) suggested that the training process should be utilized to make a newcomer feel welcome and secure, and to create an environment for success.

Schein's (1978) career stage model classified the establishment period into three substages of development: entry, socialization, and mutual acceptance. The individual substages or processes of the establishment stage

10

may be more complex, as suggested by Van Maanen and Schein's 1977 model. However, for the current study the three substage model will be utilized.

Entry, includes the recruitment, selection, and hiring decision which occurred prior to joining the organization; the individual's preparation and training; and the initial job placement. The primary obstacle to be dealt with during this period is the development of a realistic view of the occupation (Schein, 1978). Swinyard, Langrehr, and Smith (1991) proposed that dispelling the negative stigma of retailing may be attempted by fully explaining the nature of the job, importance of a college degree, advancement opportunities, training procedures, salary schedules, and geographical benefits.

Socialization, the second substage, is the learning process of how to "make it" in the organization, how to deal with the interpersonal relationship, and how to perform the duties of the job (Jordan, 1987). "This is often a period during which the person feels highly disillusioned and sees little fit between his training and the organization's requirements" (Hall & Nougaim, 1968, p. 23). Research on the socialization period suggests that certain factors of the work environment influence future success within the organization (Saks, 1996; Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974). In a study of relationships among early job challenge, early performance, and later success, Berlew and Hall (1966) found that new employees were anxious to show their competence by demonstrating their abilities to learn and adapt to the demands of the work environment. A correlation was found between first-year job challenge and later performance and success. These findings were supported by an eight-year study of management trainees' career progression (Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974). In the analysis of relationships between aspects of the work environment and achievement, Bray et al. found both early period job stimulation and challenge

11

and supervision from supervisors, to be highly correlated with later success. The final substage, mutual acceptance, is the process of formally and/or informally offering membership to the new employee (Jordan, 1987). This may be signified through traditional rituals, the awarding of promotion, salary increases, and the offering of more challenging job assignments and responsibilities. These early-career stages lead to one of two outcomes. The employee is either successfully socialized into the organization or a great mismatch is recognized and termination is initiated by either the employee or the organization. Saks' (1996) study of entry training and work outcomes for newcomers during organizational socialization, suggested that the overall training process is a significant factor for individuals adjusting to the new job environment. Further, he recognized the effectiveness of formalized training programs in the socialization of newcomers.

Training and Techniques

Organized training programs began nearly a century ago during the time of the Industrial Revolution. This training focused primarily on technical skills necessary for production work. Prior to World War II, management training was introduced to the United States. The introduction of management training into U.S. companies strategically raised productivity and dramatically increased the role of training in the business setting (Wiley, 1993) During this time, Sears, Roebuck and Company was the leader of training and development programs within U.S. industries. Since World War II, the entire workforce has been influenced by training. From clerical to executive management, employees expect training and employers have accepted the role of educator.

Training changed during the 1980s and this evolution is expected to continue into the next century. Harkins and Giber (1989) have identified three

12

factors that have continued to create this new demand for training since 1980: 1) adapting to rapid changes in technology, 2) improving the quality of products and services, and 3) increasing productivity in order to stay competitive. Shifts in training emphasis have occurred because of the diversification of the workforce, and as production technologies increasingly require more cognitive-based job designs.

During the 1990s training has focused on contributing to the bottom line. Employees are being required to accept greater responsibility for production and/or quality products and services. Therefore, employee development has been required for short and long-term success of the company. Wiley (1993) stated that to ensure its success, an organization must address the training and development needs of its employees. Hence, training departments are increasingly concerned with the issue of employees performing better as a result of their training experiences.

Management skills and development has been the most frequently offered type of training in most industries. The popularity has been attributed to the manager's large responsibility for the success and productivity of their organization. According to the 1992 "Industry Report," 2.9 million middle managers receive corporate training each year. The 1992 report showed an increase in companies teaching computer skills which put computer training in a tie with management skill training as the most common type of training used in U.S. companies.

Wiley's (1993) study identified the most frequently used instructional methods in the training process. The following statistics illustrate the percentage of organizations that used the specified method at some point in their training process. Videotapes were used by 90% of the organizations.

13

Videotapes are typically used to deliver new concepts and ideas, or to demonstrate technical and behavioral skills. The lecture method was used by 85% of the organizations. The lecture method allows the opportunity to provide uniform information to a large group in a short amount of time. One-on-one instruction was used by 70% of the organizations. This method is utilized to teach observable skills through demonstration of the skill, practice, and feedback. Role-playing was the next most popular method used. The role-playing method encourages attitude changes by having the trainee learn by doing. All organizations were increasing the use of computer technology in training. "Systems such as computer-based training (CBT) and interactive videodisc (IVD) are becoming increasingly more popular due to their cost-effectiveness, timeliness, and convenience" (Wiley, 1993, p. 84). Another type of computer technology which has been increasing in use was satellite education. This method allows one instructor to reach a limitless number of students through distance education.

Corporate America has always been aware of the importance of training and education programs. Expenditures on employee education have been estimated to be $200 billion annually (Wiley, 1993). Investing in workplace training has allowed many companies to regain market share from their competitors. Xerox and General Motors are two organizations that have profited from such training (Wiley, 1993). "To keep up with change, to compete in their industries, and to provide high-quality customer service, companies must train employees and managers effectively while minimizing their time away from the job" (Wiley, 1993, p. 94).

14

Learning Styles

The study of adult learning has emerged from research on developmental stages and life phases. Cognitive or learning styles provide important implications for adult learning. The study of learning styles provides a way of understanding adults' similarities and differences. An individual may prefer to learn by listening, observing, or reading. These individual preferences exhibited by learners are known as learning styles.

Learning style has been defined by a variety of researchers. Gregorc (1979) viewed learning style as distinctive behaviors that served as an indicator of the process by which people learn from and adapt to their environments. For Canfield (1988), learning style referred to the affective component of the educational experience that motivated a student to choose, attend, and perform well in a course or training exercise. The current research employs Kolb's (1985) definition, "the way you learn and how you deal with ideas and day-to-day situations in your life" (p. 2).

In research cognitive style and learning style have been used synonymously. However, learning style is the more comprehensive term (Campbell, 1991). Learning style includes cognitive, affective, and physiological styles (Keefe, 1988). Cognitive style refers to the process of cognition and reveals how information is processed (Campbell, 1991). The affective dimension of learning style includes emotional and personality characteristics. These characteristics relate to such areas as motivation, attention, locus of control, interests, willingness to take risks, persistence, responsibility, and sociability (Cornett, 1983). This dimension cannot be observed directly. Physiological dimensions include sensory perceptions such

15

as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, taste, and smell, as well as the environmental characteristics of sound, light, temperature, and room arrangement. This

Many instruments have been developed to measure learning style preferences. At least 32 commercially published instruments are being used by researchers and educators to assess different dimensions of learning style (Campbell, 1991). Although there are similarities in these instruments, terminology used to identify the learning styles vary. A representation of the variety of terms has been provided by highlighting several of the instruments used to measure learning style preferences.

The Gregorc Style Delineator was designed to determine a person's perceptual and ordering preferences (Gregorc, 1979). Gregorc's instrument classifies individuals into one of four patterns of style: concrete sequential, abstract sequential, concrete random, and abstract random. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which has often been used by educators, has a possibility of 16 different four-letter types (Cooper & Miller, 1991). For example, an ENFJ is an extrovert who is intuitive, feeling, and judging. Witkin's Embedded Figure Test provides a score that shows the test taker to be either field dependent or field independent (Campbell, 1991).

The instrument utilized in this study was Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI), which was derived from Kolb's experiential learning theory (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988). The instrument was designed to measure an individual's strengths and weaknesses as a learner. The LSI measures four learning abilities: concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). The four learning ability scores are used to determine two combination scores "that indicate the extent to which an individual emphasizes abstractness over concreteness (AC-

16

CE) and the extent to which an individual emphasizes action over reflection (AE-RO)" (Ash, 1986, p. 15). These two scores are then plotted on a grid. This plotting identifies the learning style of each individual.

Kolb has identified four dominant learning styles: converger, diverger, assimilator, and accommodator. The following descriptions are included in the LSI: Self-scoring Inventory and Interpretation Booklet.

Converger -

> People with this learning style are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories. If this is your preferred learning style, you have the ability to solve problems and make decisions based on finding solutions to questions and problems. You would rather deal with technical tasks and problems than with social and interpersonal issues (Kolb, 1985, p.7).

Diverger -

> People with this learning style are best at viewing concrete situations from many different points of view. Their approach to situations is to observe rather than take action. If this is your style, you may enjoy situations that call for generating a wide range of ideas, as in a brainstorming session. You probably have broad cultural interests and like to gather information (Kolb, 1985, p.7).

Assimilator -

> People with this learning style are best at understanding a wide range of information and putting it into concise, logical form. If this is your learning style, you probably are less focused on people and more interested in abstract ideas and concepts. Generally, people with this learning style find it more important that a theory have logical soundness than practical value (Kolb, 1985, p.7).

Accommodator -

> People with this learning style have the ability to learn primarily from "hands-on" experience. If this is your style, you probably enjoy carrying out plans and involving yourself in new and challenging experiences. Your tendency many be to act on "gut" feelings rather than on logical analysis. In solving problems, you may rely more heavily on people for information than on your own technical analysis (Kolb, 1985, p.7).

17

It is not only important to know and understand the learning style of one's students; instructors need to be aware of their own learning style too (Cooper & Miller, 1991). "Whereas it has been thought that teachers teach the way they were taught, research indicates that teachers teach the way they learn" (Campbell, 1991, p.358). Studies have shown that students have been more successful when their learning preference was congruent with the instructor's learning style. For this reason it has been important that instruction was presented using a variety of techniques to reach all students and allow them to be successful.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the attitudes of an individual toward the job in general, as well as aspects of it, such as leadership, colleagues, pay, fringe benefits, and opportunity for advancement (Kelly, Gable, & Hise, 1981). Researchers usually define job satisfaction in terms of positive effect.

Systematic attempts to study the nature and causes of job satisfaction began in the 1930s (Locke, 1983). Many of the first studies looked at the effects of factors such as breaks and incentives on productivity. Soon, however, emphasis switched to the study of "attitudes." The Hawthorne studies which were initiated by Mayo and his colleagues found that workers make appraisals of their work situation and these appraisals affect how they react to the situation. The Hawthorne view focused on the importance of the supervisor and the work group in determining employee satisfaction.

During World War II the "Human Relations" movement began. The movement's influence may have peaked between the late 1950s and early 1960s. "The publication of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's monograph in 1959 signaled the beginning of a new trend which was to refocus attention on

18

the work itself" (Locke, 1983, p. 1299). The new emphasis suggested job
satisfaction was only possible if the employees were allowed responsibility and
discretion to encourage mental growth.

In more recent years, job satisfaction has been investigated in terms of
satisfaction with particular job dimensions (Teas, 1981; Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller,
1979; Hackman & Oldham, 1974; Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1974). Hackman and
Oldham's (1974) Job Diagnosis Survey (JDS) tested five "core" job dimensions:
skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from the
job itself. In addition, measures were obtained for two other dimensions,
feedback from agents and dealing with others. Sims, Szilagyi, and Keller's
(1979) Job Characteristic Inventory (JCI), a revision of the JDS, tested the
following six job characteristics: variety, autonomy, feedback, dealing with
others, task identity, and friendship. The six dimensions of the JCI were tested
across five occupations. The reliability coefficients ranged from .74 to .80, with
the exception of friendship that only scored a .62. Teas (1981) tested the JDS
"core" dimensions as a determinant of job satisfaction. However, overall job
satisfaction was measured by the employee's satisfaction with pay, promotion,
supervision, work, and co-workers.

Many job satisfaction scales exist, however, the JDS and the JCI are "the
most commonly used" (Lee, 1987). Although, the scales were judged to be too
lengthy to include in this study's instrument, characteristics of these two scales
were utilized in choosing a scale. The nine-statement job satisfaction scale
used by Kelly, Gable, and Hise (1981) and Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974)
focused on three job dimensions: self-actualization, autonomy, and esteem.
"The Spearman-Brown internal consistency reliabilities for the three job
satisfaction facets were self-actualization (.84), autonomy (.85), and esteem

19

(.75)" (Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1974, p. 32). The reliability coefficients for these subscales were the highest among the scales that were considered for this study. This job satisfaction scale was chosen for use in the present study based on three factors: high reliability coefficients; it had previously been tested with retail store managers (Kelly, Gable, & Hise, 1981); and the scale length was appropriate.

Job satisfaction has been investigated for many reasons. "Social scientists concerned with organizational behavior have made numerous attempts to identify the determinants of employee withdrawal" (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981, p.78). Most studies which have examined the causes of job turnover have focused on job satisfaction as a primary predictor variable (Locke, 1983; Porter & Steers, 1973). "Job satisfaction has been linked consistently to employee decisions to leave jobs permanently, to be absent from work, and to accept job offers" (Feldman & Weitz, 1990, p. 270).

However, more recently researchers have examined organizational commitment as a predictor of turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976; and Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974). Porter et al. (1974) stated "the overall findings of this study suggest...general attitudes toward the organization may be more important in the decision to remain than the more specific attitudes toward one's particular job" (p. 608). Farrell and Rusbult (1981) found job commitment to be more significantly related to turnover than job satisfaction.

A number of the variables that have been found to affect job satisfaction have also been related to organizational commitment. Marsh and Mannari (1977) hypothesized that job satisfaction was a determinant of commitment and empirically supported this hypothesis in their research. Bluedorn's (1982)

20

unified model of turnover suggested that job satisfaction variables plus organizational commitment variables lead to intent to leave and eventually to turnover. Research has not been able to positively clarify the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, in this study both variables were evaluated individually as possible determinants of intent to stay.

Organizational Commitment

Two theoretical approaches to the investigation of commitment have evolved from past research. Organizational behavior scholars have defined commitment as a process by which employees develop an identity with the goals and values of an organization and become attached to that organization (Buchanan, 1974; Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). The development of commitment has been operationalized as the employee's desire or intent to continue membership in the organization. Staw (1980) called this approach attitudinal commitment. Commitment assumes an attitude of attachment to the organization from which particular work outcomes can be predicted. Committed employees were less likely to voluntarily leave the organization than were less committed employees (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). The current research focused on the behavioral outcomes of commitment attitudes.

The second theoretical approach of organizational commitment has resulted from the research of social psychologists (Kiesler, 1971). This research concentrated on the importance of specific types of behaviors for subsequent attitudes. This concept of behavioral commitment deals with the process by which an employee's past behavior unites him to the organization. It is a personal evaluation of the costs and rewards associated with organizational membership. For example, when members have made personal

21

sacrifices and investments to join or remain with an organization they were more likely to develop attitudes that justified their cost for membership in that organization (Salancik, 1977). Salancik (1977) claimed that a self-reinforcing cycle was created in which behavior produces the development of accordant attitudes and these attitudes lead to reinforcing behaviors. Over time, the person increases both behavioral and attitudinal linkages with the organization.

The organizational behavior theory of commitment has emphasized the influence of attitudes on behavior, whereas the social psychological theory has emphasized the influence of commitment behaviors on attitudes. Staw (1980) argued that the question of which approach is superior is not an issue; rather the concept of commitment is clarified by viewing these two approaches as interrelated. In agreement with this position, Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982, p. 47) stated that "it is important to recognize that commitment may be developed through a subtle interplay of attitudes and behaviors over time."

Intent to Stay

Intent to stay can be defined as the degree to which an individual plans to stay with an organization. Most researchers consider intent to stay to be a determinant of turnover (Bluedorn, 1982; Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Marsh & Mannari, 1977). The relevance of studying intent to stay and turnover, especially in the retail industry, is described below.

"Employee turnover is expensive, costing American industry billions of dollars each year" (Good, Sisler, & Gentry, 1988, p. 295). Turnover is an especially significant problem for the retail industry. High turnover rates have been reported among retail management trainees, the entry-level position for retailing graduates. A 24% turnover rate was reported by Porter, Crampon, and Smith (1976) for management trainees of a large merchandising firm. Gable,

22

Hollon, & Dangello (1984) observed a 49% turnover rate among retail management trainees. The high rate of turnover with n the retail industry warrants research. Further identification or clarification of any variables that are related to intent to stay will be of great value to the retail industry.

Summary

Training programs are important to the success of the retail industry. The employee, as well as the retail firm, benefits from the manager having a positive perception of the training experience. The manager's perception of their training experience may be related to their learning style and the training techniques they are exposed to during the training process. These variables should be examined for possible long-term effects on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention.

The high turnover rate among retail managers negatively impacts both the employee and the retail organization. Previous research has identified both job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of turnover. Although numerous studies have investigated both topics, few have pertained to retail management positions. Studies within the retail setting typically have focused on lower-level positions, such as sales associates.

The subjects of this study were retail store managers and assistant managers who had completed their management training programs, and had been employed in their current position for no more than 36 months. Hall and Nougaim's (1968) career stage model provided the theoretical framework for this study of the training process. Manager learning style, training techniques used or applied, perception of training experience, job satisfaction level, degree of organizational commitment, intent to stay, and demographic characteristics have been analyzed to identify statistically significant relationships.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate a major retailer's training program, and the training techniques utilized in the program, for retail managers. In addition, the study investigated managers' perceptions of that training in relation to managers' learning styles, job satisfaction level, degree of organizational commitment, and intent to stay with their employing firm.

Objectives

1. Develop an overview of the training techniques used by a national retail organization.

2. Evaluate retail managers' perceptions of their training experiences (positive vs. negative).

3. Assess the learning style and intent to stay of each manager surveyed.

4. Assess the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of each manager.

5. Analyze relationships among manager learning style, perception of training experience, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to stay.

The methodology by which the study was conducted is outlined in this chapter. First, the research design and the study sample are discussed. The

research instrument, including scales used to measure each of the variables are described. Lastly, the closing sections of the chapter describe the procedures used for data collection and statistical analysis.

Research Design

The empirical investigation was based on a field study of retail managers and assistant managers from a national specialty retailer. The research methodology involved a mailed survey. To test the research hypotheses, the following data were collected: 1) managers' learning styles, 2) training techniques used, 4) managers' perceptions of their training experiences, 5) job satisfaction, 6) organizational commitment rating, 7) intent to stay at present job, and 8) demographic characteristics of retail managers.

Sample

A nonprobability, purposive sample of retail managers and assistant managers from a national specialty retailer was used. The study sample included only those managers and assistant managers who completed, within the 24 months prior to the survey, their organization's management training program. An executive of the participating company provided a current listing of management associates who met the study criteria. Due to a lengthy turn around time between receiving the address list and mailing the questionnaires, managers who had been in their current positions for 36 months or less were included in the study's analysis. The company executive also provided a cover letter, to be mailed with the questionnaire, stating the organization's approval and support of the study. There was a population of 729 managers.

Hall and Nougaim's (1968) career stage model suggests that the first years of employment are critical to the retention of employees. Buchanan's (1974) research supported predictions made by career-stage theorists that the

25

first four years of a managerial career are critical in the development of job related attitudes such as organizational commitment. This study recognizes the importance of the first years of employment; therefore, the sample included only those managers who had completed their training, and had been in their current position for no more than 36 months. These sample restrictions regarding length of time in managerial position and duration of time since training completion appeared necessary in order to collect valid information pertaining to the training process.

Research Instrument

Data were collected by means of a mailed survey. Prior to the mailing, a pilot test was conducted. Questionnaires were mailed to eight alumni who currently work in the retail industry. Based on suggestions from the six respondents, minor clarification adjustments were made to the instructional sections of the questionnaire.

Dillman's (1978) survey method was adapted for use in developing and distributing the questionnaire. The original survey included two cover letters, one from retail organization and one from the researcher. A reminder postcard was mailed one week after the survey. An additional reminder letter, including a replacement survey, was mailed eight weeks after the survey.

The questionnaire (see Appendix F) included a combination of three previously developed scales, two scales developed specifically for this project, two single-item measures, and a demographic section. The measures of learning style, training techniques used or applied, perception of training experience, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to stay, and demographic characteristics are described in this section.

26

Measurement of learning style. The Learning Style Inventory consists of a 12-item copyrighted scale (Kolb, 1985). The researcher purchased the rights to use Kolb's scale for the current study. Each item consists of a sentence with four possible endings. Each ending is ranked from 1=*Least Like You* to 4=*Most Like You*. Scores were calculated for each of the four columns, labeled as abstract conceptualization (AC), concrete experience (CE), active experimentation (AE), and reflective observation (RO). Next the CE and RO scores are subtracted from the AC and AE scores respectively. This provides two combination scores, AC-CE and AE-RO. Finally, these two scores were plotted on the Learning-Style Type Grid which identified a primary learning style for each respondent. Each respondent was categorized as having one of the following four learning styles: accommodator, assimilator, converger, or diverger.

Measurement of training techniques used or applied. A list of frequently used training techniques was developed from a review of the literature on training. Each technique was defined. The subjects marked the techniques that were used or applied during his/her training process. Percentages were calculated across the sample to identify which techniques were used most often. In addition to the training techniques, one statement requested information on where the manager's training occurred. This item included five possible responses, and was collected for descriptive purposes.

Measurement of perception of training experience. The manager's overall perception of his/her training experience was measured by a single item. The managers responded to the statement, "my overall training experience was positive." The response was scored on a four-point scale ranging from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 4=*Strongly Agree*. Therefore, the scores

27

may range from 1 to 4, with the latter indicating a more positive experience. Perception of training experience was categorically scored as positive or negative. Respondents answering 1=*Strongly Disagree* or 2=*Disagree* were categorized as having a negative perception of the training experience. Therefore, respondents answering 3=*Agree* or 4=*Strongly Agree* were categorized as having a positive perception of the training experience. Since this variable was measured by a single item, the response ranging from 1 to 4 was also used as the mean score for each subject.

Measurement of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured by a nine-statement scale, which tests three facets of job satisfaction: self-actualization, autonomy, and esteem (Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1974; Kelly, Gable, & Hise, 1981). All items were scored on a five-point likert-type scale ranging from 1=*Strongly Disagree* to 5=*Strongly Agree*. Item scores were summed and the mean was used as the indicator of level of satisfaction. Thus, the mean scores can range from one to five, with a higher mean indicating a higher level of job satisfaction.

Reliability of the job satisfaction scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha statistic. An alpha of .89 for the overall scale was calculated. Alpha coefficients for the three subscales of self-actualization, autonomy, and esteem were .82, .56, and .69 respectively. Internal reliability coefficients reported by Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974) for the self-actualization, autonomy, and esteem subscales were .84, .85, and .75 respectively. The current study showed the lowest reliability coefficient for autonomy which was calculated using only two items. The self-actualization and esteem subscales were scored using four and three items respectively. Nunnally stated "the reliability of scores obtained on a sample of items from a domain increases with the number of

28

items sampled (Nunnally, 1978, p.210). Thus, the reliability coefficient for the autonomy subscale might be raised by adding items to the subscale.

Measurement of organizational commitment. The retail managers' degree of organizational commitment was measured by the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Porter, Crampon, & Smith, 1976). The measurement (OCQ) includes 15 items, six of which were negatively phrased and reverse-scored when analyzed. All items were scored on a five-point response continuum, ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. Items were summed and the mean score was used as the indicator of level of commitment. Thus, the score can range from 1 to 5, with the latter signifying a greater degree of organizational commitment.

Reliability of the OCQ measurement was tested by Cronbach's alpha statistic. An alpha coefficient of .90 was calculated for the scale. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) reviewed nine studies in which the OCQ had been used. A total of 2,563 subjects across a variety of job fields were tested. Coefficient alphas ranging from .82 to .93 were reported. Jordan's (1987) study of 158 department store managers reported a coefficient alpha of .91 using the OCQ scale.

Measurement of intent to stay. Intent to stay was measured by one single item. The subjects responded to the following statement, "I see myself staying with this organization." The item was scored using a five-point scale ranging from 1=Only a Few More Months to 5=More than Ten Years. The score was used to indicate the length of time the manager intends to stay. Thus, the score can range from 1 to 5, with the latter signifying an intent to stay longer.

Measurement of demographic characteristics. The demographic variables: average hours per work week, length of time at present job, length of

time with present organization (in any capacity), amount of full-time retail experience, present age, gender, and level of education were self-reported responses.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

This study was designed to investigate relationships between a number of variables pertaining to the training of retail managers. The analysis procedures used are explained for each of the eight hypotheses.

The first hypothesis states, "a statistically significant relationship exists between the manager's learning style and manager's perception of the training experience." The Learning Style Inventory was used to measure each manager's learning style. Each manager was categorized as having a/an accommodator, assimilator, converger, or diverger learning style. Perception of the training experience was scored categorically. A response of *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* signified a negative perception score. A response of *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* was categorized as a positive perception score. To test for a relationship between learning styles and perception of the training experience an independent sample chi-square test was used. The analysis results have been presented in a contingency table of learning styles by perception, positive or negative (see Table 2).

"A statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and levels of job satisfaction," is the second hypothesis. Besides being categorically scored as positive or negative, a score was also recorded based on the response to a single-item measurement for the manager's perception of the training experience. The mean score for the level of job satisfaction was calculated.

The relationship between perception of training experience and job satisfaction level was analyzed utilizing the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r). "Pearson's r is employed to assess the relationship between two variables when both are continuous, have been measured on an interval or ratio scale, and are normally distributed" (Touliatos & Compton, 1988, p. 378). A Cronbach's alpha coefficient was also utilized to test the reliability of the scale and its subscales.

The third hypothesis tested to see if "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and degree of organizational commitment." The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was used to measure managers' commitment to their organization. The scale's reliability was tested for comparison with the alpha coefficients reported in the literature. The organizational commitment mean score has been tested against the mean score for the perception of training experience measurement. This procedure utilized a Pearson's r correlation.

Hypothesis four tested for "a statistically significant relationship between manager's job satisfaction level and the degree of organizational commitment." A mean score was calculated for each scale. A Pearson's r was employed to test the relationship.

Hypothesis five stated that "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's job satisfaction level and intent to stay". Intent to stay was measured by a single item with a score ranging from 1 to 5. A mean score for job satisfaction was calculated. A Pearson's product-moment correlation procedure measured the relationship between intent to stay and job satisfaction level.

31

The final hypothesis stated, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's degree of organizational commitment and intent to stay." The mean organizational commitment score and the intent to stay score were analyzed using Pearson's *r*.

The demographic characteristics obtained from the sample were analyzed for descriptive purposes. This information has been presented in the findings of this study.

Summary

Six research hypotheses were investigated. The model illustrated in Chapter I was utilized in developing the hypotheses. The study focused on retail mangers who had completed their training programs, and had been in their management positions for no more than 36 months prior to the survey. A mailed questionnaire was employed for data collection. The following procedures were used to analyze the final data: chi-square test, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (*r*), and Cronbach's alpha statistic.

Chapter IV

Statistical Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate techniques utilized in training programs, for retail managers. The study also investigated managers' perceptions of training in relation to managers' learning styles, job satisfaction level, degree of organizational commitment, and intent to stay with their employing firms. This chapter examines the demographic characteristics of the sample and findings related to each of six hypotheses.

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 211 (of 663 deliverable) questionnaires were collected representing a 31.8% response rate. Of the 211 questionnaires received, 181 (85.8%) of the questionnaires, were considered usable by the criteria of the manager having been in their current positions for no more than 36 months.

Table 1 presents data describing characteristics of the sample. Sixty-three percent of respondents were female. The mean age of the sample was 31.3 years. Individuals ranged from 20 to 58 years of age. The most frequent level of education was "technical or trade school beyond high school," which 39% of the sample had attended. Only four respondents (2%) had earned a "college or university bachelor's degree."

The sample reported managers working an average of 46.5 hours per week. Seven percent of the individuals had been in their current positions for less than 12 months, 78% 13-24 months, and 15% 25-36 months. Although the mean for time in their current position was 19.87 months (about one year and

Table 1

Demographics of Sample

Demographic Traits (N=181)	No response n	Response n	%
Gender	0		
Female		114	63
Male		67	37
Age	2		
20-24		37	20
25-29		54	30
30-34		35	19
35-39		24	13
40-44		16	9
45-49		8	5
50-54		2	1
55-60		3	2
Months at Present Job	3		
<=12		13	7
13-24		138	76
25-36		27	15
Months with Present Organization	5		
<=24		59	32
25-48		81	45
49-72		22	12
73-98		7	4
97-120		4	2
>120		3	2
Months of Prior Retail Experience	3		
0		33	18
1-24		36	20
25-48		25	14
49-72		22	12
73-96		11	6
97-120		20	11
>120		31	17
Level of Education	0		
Grade 11 or less		3	2
High school diploma or equivalent		39	21
Technical or trade school beyond high school		70	39
Some college		30	17
Two-year college degree or certificate		35	19
College or university bachelor's degree		4	2

34

eight months), the mean for months with the organization was 43.99 (about three years and eight months). Thirty-three individuals had no prior retail experience before their present positions. Respondents ranged from having no experience to having 1,200 months (10 years) of experience with a mean of 76.83 months (about six years and seven months).

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's learning style score from the Learning Style Inventory and perception of training experience." Hypothesis one was addressed by categorizing respondents as having one of the four learning styles: accommodator, assimilator, converger, or diverger. These categories were calculated by summing the scores for each of the four columns on the LSI. Those scores were labeled as abstract conceptualization (AC), concrete experience (CE), active experimentation (AE), and reflective observation (RO). The CE and RO scores were subtracted from the AC and AE scores providing two combination scores, AC-CE and AE-RO. For each respondent, these two scores were plotted on the Learning-Style Type Grid which identified a primary learning style for the respondent. Finally, 31% of the sample was categorized as having an accommodator learning style. The remaining 69% of the sample was broken evenly with 23% being categorized as diverger, 23% as assimilator, and 23% as having a converger learning style.

Next, respondents were categorized as having a positive or negative perception of their training experience. Perception of the training experience was measured by a single-item stating, "My overall training experience was positive." Managers answering 1=*Strongly Disagree* or 2=*Disagree* were categorized as having a negative perception of their training experience. Those

35

answering 3=*Agree* or 4=*Strongly Agree* were categorized as having a positive perception of their training experience. Twenty-four percent of the sample was categorized as having a negative perception of training and 66% as positive.

An independent sample chi-square test was used to test for a relationship between the managers' learning style and perception of training experience. Use of the independent chi-square test assumes that the variables are independent of each other, meaning the occurrence of one is not dependent upon the occurrence of the other. This test is also used to determine "whether or not the observations are significantly different from what might be expected by chance" (Huck, Cormier, & Bounds, 1974, p. 218). The results have been provided in a 2x4 contingency table (Table 2). The obtained $x^2 =$ 1.177, $df = 3$, was not significant at the .05 level. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Table 2

Learning Styles by Training Perception

| Learning Styles | n | Training Perception | | | | |
| | | Positive | | | Negative | |
		n	%		n	%
Accommodator	51	37	22.2		14	8.4
Diverger	38	29	17.3		9	5.4
Assimilator	39	29	17.3		10	6.0
Converger	39	32	19.2		7	4.2
Total	167	127	76.0		40	24.0

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and job satisfaction." The managers' perception of their training experiences were measured by a single questionnaire item. Therefore, it was not necessary to calculate a mean score

36

for each respondent. The actual score ranging from 1 to 4 was used for the analysis procedure. The mean score for the entire sample was 2.86.

Job satisfaction of each manager was measured by a nine-statement scale. A mean was calculated for each manager. There was a possible mean range of 1 to 5 with the latter showing a greater level of job satisfaction. The sample mean was 3.99. Details of the job satisfaction scale and results are provided in Table 3.

To determine if a significant relationship existed between the manager's perception of training experience and job satisfaction, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was performed. "The correlation coefficient r can range from -1.00 to +1.00" ; a value greater than zero indicates a positive relationship and a +1.00 "signifies a perfect positive linear relationship" (Kachigan, 1991, p.126). Results indicate there was a low positive correlation between the managers' training perceptions and their levels of job satisfaction $(r = 0.18; p<0.05)$. This weak correlation represents a weak relationship. Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's perception of training experience and degree of organizational commitment." A score was recorded for perception of training experience based on participants' response to a single-item measurement. The mean score for the mangers' degree of organizational commitment was calculated from the OCQ. The organizational commitment mean for the sample was 3.86.

A Pearson's r was employed on the data to test for a relationship between training perception and organizational commitment. A low positive

Table 3

Responses to Job Satisfaction Scale

Job Satisfaction Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
My work is important to the success of the organization. (N=181)	0	0	0	0	5	3	49	27	127	70
My job provides me with the opportunity to grow and utilize a wide range of my skills. (N=181)	1	1	14	8	32	18	69	38	65	36
My job provides me with the opportunity to prepare myself for future advancement in the organization. (N=181)	2	1	14	8	25	14	75	41	65	36
My job is viewed as important by employees working in other areas within this organization.	1	1	14	8	30	17	96	53	39	22
My job allows me to set goals and objectives. (N=181)	0	0	3	2	13	7	99	55	66	36
My job provides me with a sense of accomplishment. (N=179)	0	0	7	4	15	8	94	53	63	35
My job is viewed as important by people outside of the organization. (N=181)	4	2	23	13	54	30	79	44	21	12
My job is very challenging. (N=181)	3	2	14	8	40	22	81	45	43	24
My job allows me to utilize the full range of my educational training and previous work experience. (N=181)	6	3	26	14	38	21	75	41	36	20

correlation ($r = .19$; $p < 0.05$) indicated a weak relationship so the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's job satisfaction level and degree of organizational commitment." To test for any significant relationship between the managers' level of job satisfaction and level of organizational commitment, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) was utilized. Findings indicated a correlation of .77 between the level of job satisfaction and the degree of organizational commitment. The high positive correlation ($r = .77$; $p < 0.01$) showed a strong direct relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 was, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's job satisfaction level and intent to stay." Intent to stay was measured by a single item. Scores ranged from 1 (intent to stay only a few more months) to 5 (intent to stay more than five years). Table 4 presents the subjects' responses by statement. The intent to stay for the majority of the sample was 5 or more years.

Table 4

Responses to Intent to Stay Item

Intent Measures	n	%
Only a few more months	9	5.0
One to two years	21	11.6
Three to five years	32	17.7
Five to ten years	43	23.8
More than ten years	72	39.8
Total	181	100.0

39

A Pearson's *r* was used to test for a significant relationship between the manager's level of job satisfaction and intent to stay with the organization. A moderate positive correlation was found ($r=0.54$; $p < 0.01$) and the degree of correlation indicated a direct relationship. The hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 stated, "a statistically significant relationship exists between manager's degree of organizational commitment and intent to stay." A relationship between the managers' degree of organizational commitment and intent to stay with the organization was tested utilizing the Pearson's *r*. A relationship does exists between the two variables. A moderate positive correlation ($r=0.64$; $p < 0.01$) is an indicator of the strength of the relationship. Based on these findings the hypothesis was accepted.

Training Techniques and Locations

Training techniques and locations were data collected for descriptive purposes only, to gain a better understanding of retail management training programs. For descriptive purposes, data were summarized from all 211 respondents, even those who had been employed longer than 36 months.

Each manager marked the techniques that were used or applied during his/her training program. Percentages were calculated to signify which techniques are used the most. The most frequently used training techniques were "printed materials" and "one-on-one" being utilized in 98% and 92% of the training programs respectively. All 12 training techniques are ranked from most frequently used to the least frequently used in Table 5.

When asked where their training took place, the respondents were given five choices. They were asked to mark all that applied to their training experience. The possible answers were: "store where I work," "nearby store,"

40

Table 5

Frequency of Training Techniques Used

Training Techniques	Usage	
	n	%
Printed material	207	98
One-on-one	194	92
Videotapes	116	55
Group discussion	111	53
Role-playing	110	52
Lecture method	104	49
Behavior modeling	87	41
Computer-aided instruction	78	37
Computer simulation	57	27
Equipment simulation	33	16
Teleconferencing	20	9
Video-conferencing	10	5

"training store," "district/corporate office," or "other location." A "training store" was the most frequent location for training, 45.5% of the managers reported having been in a training store for at least a portion of their training program. Training locations are ranked from most frequently to least frequently used during the training process in Table 6.

Table 6

Training Location Frequency

Training Locations (N=181)	n	%
Training store	83	45.9
Nearby store	68	37.6
Store where I work	38	21.0
Other Location	14	7.7
District/corporate office	2	1.1

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The U.S. retail industry employs approximately 18.5 million people. The inability to retain personnel, especially at the store management level, is a legitimate concern for the industry. As retail competition continues to increase, so do the responsibilities of retail managers. Often a store manager is the link between corporate goals and sales associates. New management roles have created new training responsibilities. This study focused on retail management training programs of a national specialty retailer.

The purpose of this study was to investigate training programs for retail managers. The study measured managers' perception of training in relation to managers' learning styles, job satisfaction level, degree of organizational commitment, and intent to stay with their employing firm. The empirical investigation was based on a field study of retail managers from a national specialty retailer. Data were collected by means of a mailed questionnaire.

Research Discussion

Six research hypotheses were investigated. To test the research hypotheses, the following variables were analyzed: managers' learning style, managers' perception of the training experience, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to stay. Demographic characteristics and training techniques used were also evaluated for descriptive purposes. Chi-square tests and the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were used to

43

analyze the final data. Hypotheses were tested at the p≤= 0.01 and p<= 0.05
levels of significance.

Discussion of Findings Related to Hypotheses

Research hypothesis 1 was rejected. No significant relationship was
found between the managers' learning style and perception of training
experience. A more logical way to investigate this relationship would be to
evaluate learning style as a predictor of training technique preferences. The
congruency of learning style and preference of training techniques should be
tested for their effects on the perception of the training experience. The
assumption would be that if the training techniques used are the preferred
techniques of managers categorized as possessing learning style A, then
managers' with learning style A would have a more positive perception of their
training experience than managers with learning style B, C, or D.

Research hypotheses 2 and 3 were also rejected. Weak relationships
were found between the managers' training perception and both the level of job
satisfaction and the degree of organizational commitment. Although, both
relationships were positive, they were statistically weak. Training perception
was measured by a single item. In future research, perception of training
should be examined for individual facets of the training experience. Some of
these facets could include: socialization, adequacy of training, supervisor
support, time involved, and training techniques used.

Research hypothesis 4 was supported. A strong direct relationship was
found between managers' level of job satisfaction and level of organizational
commitment. "Many of the same variables which have been found associated
with overall job satisfaction have also been related to organizational
commitment" (Jordan, 1987).

44

Each person enters his/her work situation with expectations. "Individuals come to organizations with certain needs, desires, skills, and so forth, and expect to find a work environment where they can utilize their abilities and satisfy many of their basic needs" (Steers, 1977). When these expectations are not met, then it affects the emotional state or feelings the person has about his/her job and organization. This would result in a lower level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. On the other hand, if one's expectations are met or exceeded, the result might be a higher level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 5 which investigated the relationship between the managers' level of job satisfaction and intent to stay with the organization was supported. A moderate positive correlation was found indicating a direct relationship. These results are significant for retailers because of the high turnover rate within the industry and the cost associated with turnover. "Turnover cost include those such as separation (exit interview, separation pay), recruitment (advertising, campus recruiting), selection (interviewing, reference checks) and training" (Gable and Hollon, 1984, p. 55).

The job satisfaction scale used in this study consisted of three subscales. These subscales measured the managers' level of self-actualization, esteem, and autonomy. Examining the individual subscales of job satisfaction will assist organizations in developing useful action plans for decreasing the rate of voluntary turnover. One study of store managers of a specialty store chain developed an action plan and were able to reduce turnover by approximately 20%. The actions they took were "increasing annual salaries by approximately $8,000, utilizing realistic job previews, and providing opportunities for

managers to receive recognition" (Gable & Hollon, 1984). These actions affected even the pre-employment stage and influenced self-actualization and esteem.
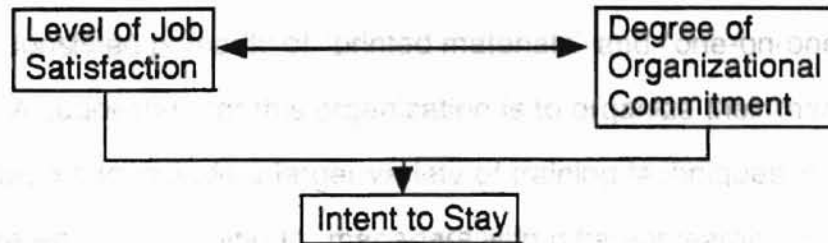
Research hypothesis 6 was also supported. A significant relationship was found between the managers' degree of organizational commitment and the managers' intent to stay with the organization. Job satisfaction has generally been the accepted means of predicting turnover; however, "recent findings indicate that organizational commitment is often the better predictor" (Good, Sisler and Gentry, 1988).

Organizations desiring to improve retention by improving job satisfaction or organizational commitment should choose a reliable and pre-tested instrument. They should fully understand the components or subscales of the chosen instrument. Previous research utilizing the selected scale should be reviewed. These steps will assure that organizations have reliable information to make educated decisions when forming the best action plan for their organization.

Findings from this study indicate that alterations should be made to the original theoretical model (see Figure 1) which was used to design the research project. Analysis supports that a relationship exists between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Hypotheses testing also supported that a relationships exists between job satisfaction and intent to stay, and organizational commitment and intent to stay. See the revised model in figure 2. Although positive correlations were found between perception of training and job satisfaction, and perception of training and organizational commitment, the correlations were weak. Since the hypotheses were not supported the variables were not included in the final theoretical model. More thorough

46

testing in future research may better explain the relationships between

perception of training and the other variables of the study.

Figure 2. Revised theoretical model designed to illustrate statistically significant
relationships among the study variables.

```
  ┌──────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────┐
  │ Level of Job │ <───────────────>  │ Degree of        │
  │ Satisfaction │                    │ Organizational   │
  └──────┬───────┘                    │ Commitment       │
         │                            └────────┬─────────┘
         │          ┌──────────────┐           │
         └─────────>│ Intent to Stay│<─────────┘
                    └──────────────┘
```

Demographics

Study results showed that 63% of the managers responding to the survey

were female. This is consistent with 68% (Good, Sisler, and Gentry, 1988) and

64% (Teas, 1981) of women found in previous studies of retail managers and

retail salespersons. A study by Gable and Hollen (1984) would suggest that the

unbalanced ratio of female to male managers is further supported by retention

rates by gender. Their study of employee turnover among department store

management trainees found a higher rate of retention for females than for

males.

A measurement of education level revealed that only 2% of the

managers had earned a "college or university bachelor's degree." Since the

company solicits management applicants with college degrees, this finding

indicates that the company is not successfully attracting college graduates for

store management positions. Further, the mean time that the managers had

been in their current position was 19.87 months. However, the average mean

time with the organization was 43.99 months. This finding suggests that

experience with the organization is allowed to be a substitute for higher levels

of education in the company surveyed.

47

Training Techniques

From the survey, it can be concluded that the majority of training for this company takes place in a "training store" or a "nearby store," a store close to where the manager will ultimately be working. The data shows that training procedures consisted primarily of "printed materials" and "one-on-one" instruction. A suggestion for this organization is to organize their management training programs to include a larger variety of training techniques in order to provide more effective training for managers with different learning styles.

The sample's learning style mix consisted of 30.5% accommodators, 22.6% divergers, 23.2% assimilators, and 23.5% converger. "One-on one" instruction is very beneficial to the accommodator learner if the process includes both observing and doing. This type of learner thrives from hands-on experience. A diverger learns a great deal just by observing "different points of view" (Kolb, 1985, p. 7). "Group discussion" is an ideal method of training a diverger, allowing one to brainstorm and gather information from other's "points of view." An assimilator learns best from receiving information and being able to organize the ideas and concepts in a logical form. This type of learner requires less personal interaction than the previous learning styles; for this reason appropriate training techniques would include: printed materials, videotapes, and the lecture method. Finally, the converger is a technically oriented learner. A converger is primarily concerned with the task at hand. This person would benefit from having access to information through printed materials and computer-aided instruction while being able to practice the task utilizing computer and equipment simulators.

Training programs benefit by presenting information in a variety of formats. This allows more opportunities for the training material to be presented

48

in a way that the managers can process and assimilate the information. All of the training techniques discussed in the previous paragraph are very conducive to the retail training environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study began to investigate retail management training programs and how they may affect the retention of retail managers. Additional research needs to further explore how the training process can influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment and in turn create a higher retention rate among retail managers. The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Retail managers from other types of retail organizations should be surveyed to gather more generalizable data about management training programs.

2. Training techniques should be categorized as most appropriate per learning style and analyzed for congruency with managers' learning styles.

3. Retail organizations with different educational qualifications for managers should be studied in order to identify differences in training programs and managers' perceptions.

4. Specific facets or subscales of the training experience should be examined in order to more accurately measure perception of the training experience.

5. Individual factors affecting retention should be examined by gender to explore reasons for a lower retention rate of men than women.

6. Demographic characteristics such as level of education should also be examined for effects on the rate of retention among retail managers.

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51

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A--LETTER OF PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE "LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY"

Hay McBer
116 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02116-5712
Tel: (617) 437-7933
Fax: (617) 425-0073

February 3, 1997

L. Jill Fogle
Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, OK _____

Dear Ms. Fogle:

Thank you for the letter explaining your research study. You may have permission to reproduce____ of the *Learning Style Inventory* and include it in the tri-fold format for your study. Please include our copyright notation on any reproduction,

© Experience-Based Learning Systems, Inc., 1981, revised 1985. Developed by David A. Kolb. Reproduced with permission from McBer and Company, Inc., 116 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA, 02116. 617-437-7080.

McBer and Company will charge you $60 for the right to reproduce *the Learning Style Inventory* in your study. If there are any questions, please call me at 617-425-4576. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tamara Friedman

Tamara Friedman
Coordinator. Business Development & Research

November 24, 1997

Dear _____ Associate:

Opportunities for career advancement are always a concern for individuals when considering employment. Training programs can enhance career entry and progress. The structure of a training program can help a company to attract bright, capable professionals with high goals. A positive training experience is beneficial to those entering the retail, as well as those who recruit and train of retail managers.

_____ store managers from across the U.S., who have been the company for two years or less, are being asked to provide their opinions about retail training. Completing the enclosed questionnaire usually takes 10-15 minutes. To ensure that the results will be an accurate representation of _____ store managers, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

Your answers will be confidential. The enclosed questionnaire has an identification number only so that we can mark your name off our mailing list when we hear from you. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. In addition, your individual answers will never be shared with _____ and will not affect your employment.

Oklahoma State University will provide a summary of this study to _____ corporate officials and the educational community to assist in improving retail management training programs. You may receive a summary of the results of this study by writing "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope, and printing your name and address below it. Please do not put this information of the questionnaire itself. We want your answers to remain confidential.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Please write or call. Our office telephone number is (405) 744-5035.

Thank you for your assistance. We look forward to receiving your opinions.

Sincerely

Shiretta Ownbey Ph.D.
Project Coordinator

TO: Select Store Managers

FROM: _____, Manager - Operations Training

SUBJECT: Participation in the Oklahoma State University survey of retail training programs.

Oklahoma State University is conducting a research project about the effectiveness of Store Manager training techniques and procedures across retail companies. You have been selected as a possible participant in this survey because you became a Store Manager during 1996. Your participation in the survey is entirely voluntary, but encouraged.

I would like to assure you any answers you provide will be kept confidential by the researchers at Oklahoma State. Your answers will not be seen by _____. _____ will receive combined summary results from all the research conducted.

Thanks for you time and participation in this educational project.

Sincerely,

_____
Manager, Operations Training

December 15, 1997

Last week a questionnaire seeking information and your opinions concerning your training experience at _____ was mail to you.

If you have already completed and returned the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks and gratitude. If not, please do so today. The survey was sent only to a small, but representative group of _____ retail managers who have been with the organization for a limited time period. It is of vital importance that your response be included in the study in order to ensure accurate representation of opinions of _____ managers.

If you did not receive the questionnaire, or it has been misplaced, please call me or speak with our secretary (405-744-5035) and we will send you another copy today.

Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey Ph.D.
Project Coordinator

January 27, 1998

Dear _____ Associate:

About eight weeks ago I wrote to you seeking information about your retail training experience. As of today I have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

We began this study because of the belief that retail managers' opinions and experiences are valuable for future organization and execution of training programs.

I am writing to you again because each questionnaire is significant to this study. Your name was selected because you are currently a part of the management team of _____ and have completed your training program within the last two years. Only a small and select group of associates were chosen to receive a survey. Therefore, in order for the results of this study to be truly representative of the opinions of all the _____ managers, it is vital that each person return their questionnaire.

If you did not receive the questionnaire, or it has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

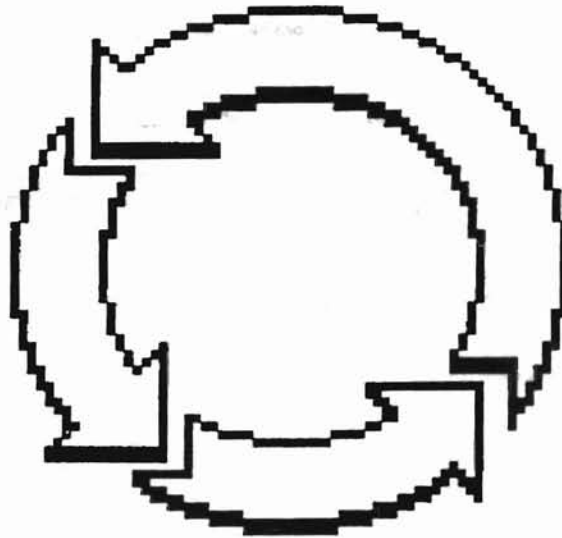Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey, Ph.D.
Project Coordinator

Retail Management:

Training Programs

And Your Learning Style

Please return this questionnaire to:
Dept. of Design, Housing & Merchandising
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078

Learning-Style Inventory: Instructions

The Learning-Style Inventory describes the way you learn and how you deal with ideas and day-to-day situations in your life. Below are 12 sentences with a choice of four endings. Rank the endings for each sentence according to how well you think each one fits with how you would go about learning something. Try to recall some recent situations where you had to learn something new, perhaps in your job. Then, using the spaces provided, rank a "4" for the sentence ending that describes how you learn best, down to a "1" for the sentence ending that seems least like the way you would learn. Be sure to rank all the endings for each sentence unit. Please do not make ties.

Example of completed sentence set:

When I learn:	_4_	I like to deal with my feelings	_1_	I like to watch and listen	_2_	I like to think about ideas	_3_	I like to be doing things

1. When I learn:	___	I like to deal with my feelings	___	I like to watch and listen	___	I like to think about ideas	___	I like to be doing things
2. I learn best when:	___	I trust my hunches and feelings	___	I listen and watch carefully	___	I rely on logical thinking	___	I work hard to get things done
3. When I am learning:	___	I have strong feelings and reactions	___	I am quiet and reserved	___	I tend to reason things out	___	I am responsible about things
4. I learn by:	___	feeling	___	watching	___	thinking	___	doing
5. When I learn:	___	I am open to new experiences	___	I look at all sides of issues	___	I like to analyze things, break them down into their parts	___	I like to try things out
6. When I am learning:	___	I am an intuitive person	___	I am an observing person	___	I am a logical person	___	I am an active person
7. I learn best from:	___	personal relationships	___	observation	___	rational theories	___	a chance to try out and practice
8. When I learn:	___	I feel personally involved in things	___	I take my time before acting	___	I like ideas and theories	___	I like to see results from my work
9. I learn best when:	___	I rely on my feelings	___	I rely on my observations	___	I rely on my ideas	___	I can try things out for myself
10. When I am learning:	___	I am an accepting person	___	I am a reserved person	___	I am a rational person	___	I am a responsible person
11. When I learn:	___	I get involved	___	I like to observe	___	I evaluate things	___	I like to be active
12. I learn best when:	___	I am receptive and open-minded	___	I am careful	___	I analyze ideas	___	I am practical

MCB200

The following statements represent possible feelings that you might have about work in general. With respect to your own feelings, about your job in general, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling ONE of the five responses.

	Circle the most accurate response for each statement.				
1. My work is important to the success of the organization.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
2. My job provides me with the opportunity to grow and utilize a wide range of my skills.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
3. My job provides me with the opportunity to prepare myself for future advancement in the organization.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
4. My job is viewed as important by employees working in other areas within this organization.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
5. My job allows me to set goals and objectives.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
6. My job provides me with a sense of accomplishment.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
7. My job is viewed as important by people outside of the organization.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
8. My job is very challenging.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
9. My job allows me to utilize the full range of my educational training and previous work experience.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

The statements below represent possible feelings you might have about your present job. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling ONE of the five responses.

	Circle the most accurate response for each statement.				
1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

3. I feel very little loyalty to this organization.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

4. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

5. I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

6. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7. I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

8. This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

9. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

10. I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I was hired.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

11. There isn't much to be gained by staying with this organization indefinitely.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

12. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

13. I really care about the fate of this organization.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

14. For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

15. Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

Below is a list of instructional techniques. Mark, with an X, the techniques that were used during your training for the position you currently hold.

_____ 1. INSTRUCTION MANUALS, HAND-OUTS, BROCHURES - printed materials

_____ 2. LECTURE METHOD - a carefully prepared oral presentation of a subject by a qualified person.

_____ 3. VIDEOTAPES - prerecorded information, often used for orientation purposes and to deliver new concepts and ideas.

_____ 4. TELECONFERENCING - a group of individuals linked by a multi-line telephone to provide or share information.

_____ 5. VIDEO-CONFERENCING - a server is used to deliver a presentation over a wide area network or other remote locations.

_____ 6. ONE-ON-ONE INSTRUCTION - instruction typically provided in the work setting, useful in teaching trainees directly observable skills.

_____ 7. EQUIPMENT SIMULATORS - using equipment to imitate or work out a process or procedure.

_____ 8. COMPUTER AIDED INSTRUCTION - the use of computer software, allows individualized instruction with the advantage of self-pacing by trainees.

_____ 9. COMPUTER SIMULATION - using a computer to imitate or work out a process or procedure.

_____ 10. ROLE-PLAYING - a spontaneous portrayal (acting out) of a situation, condition, or circumstance by selected members of a learning group.

_____ 11. BEHAVIOR MODELING - a carefully prepared presentation that shows how to perform an act or use a procedure; trainees repeat the behavior until procedure or act is learned.

_____ 12. GROUP DISCUSSION OR ACTIVITY - a purposeful conversation and deliberation about a topic of mutual interest among three or more participants, under the guidance of a leader.

Which of the above training techniques were used most frequently during your training period? (Put the number of the item from the previous section in the appropriate space.)

_____ MOST FREQUENT

_____ SECOND MOST FREQUENT

Please list or briefly describe any training techniques that were utilized during your training process, that were not listed in the above section.

_____

_____

_____

For each of the following statements circle the most accurate response.

1. My overall training experience was positive. (Circle ONE Answer)
   1   STRONGLY DISAGREE
   2   DISAGREE
   3   AGREE
   4   STRONGLY AGREE

2. My training took place at: (Circle all numbers that apply)
   1   THE STORE WHERE I AM WORKING
   2   ANOTHER NEARBY STORE LOCATION
   3   A TRAINING STORE
   4   A DISTRICT OR CORPORATE OFFICE
   5   OTHER:_____

3. I see myself staying with this organization: (Circle one number)
   1   ONLY A FEW MORE MONTHS
   2   ONE TO TWO YEARS
   3   THREE TO FIVE YEARS
   4   FIVE TO TEN YEARS
   5   MORE THAN TEN YEARS

Complete each of the following questions by writing the correct response in the space provided.

1. What is the average number of hours you work per week in your present job? _____ HOURS PER WEEK

2. How many months have you been working in your present job? _____ TOTAL MONTHS

3. How long have you been employed by your present organization in any capacity? _____ TOTAL MONTHS

4. How much retail experience did you have prior to your present position? _____ TOTAL MONTHS

5. Your present age: _____ YEARS

6. Your gender (mark the correct response): _____ MALE _____ FEMALE

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Circle one number)
   1   GRADE 11 OR LESS
   2   HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR EQUIVALENT
   3   SOME COLLEGE OR TRADE SCHOOL BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL
   4   TWO-YEAR COLLEGE DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE
   5   COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY BACHELOR'S DEGREE
   6   OTHER:_____

Please list your degree(s) and major area(s) of study:
   DEGREE (e.g. BA, MBA)   MAJOR AREA(e g. marketing, merchandising)
   _____   _____
   _____   _____

Your contribution to this study is greatly appreciated. If you would like to receive a summary of the results, please print your name and address on the back of the return envelope. DO NOT PRINT YOUR NAME OR ADDRESS ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Project Coordinator: Dr. Shiretta Ownbey
Oklahoma State University
431 HES Building
Stillwater, OK 74078-6142
(405) 744-5035

IRB Contact person: Gay Clarkson
Institutional Review Board
305 Whitehurst
Stillwater, OK 74078
(405) 744-8700

APPENDIX H--IRB FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 06-09-97   IRB#: HE-97-068

Proposal Title: RETAIL MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS: THE EFFECTS OF LEARNING
STYLES ON THE TRAINING PROCESS

Principal Investigator(s):   Shiretta Ownbey, L. Jill Fogle

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

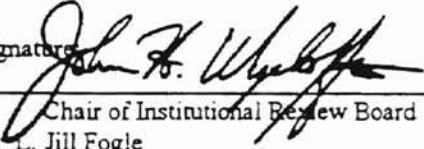Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature _____   Date: June 11, 1997
Chair of Institutional Review Board
cc: L. Jill Fogle

70

VITA

Lucynda Jill Fogle

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: RETAIL MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMS: VARIABLES AND OUTCOMES OF THE TRAINING PROCESS

Major Field: Design, Housing and Merchandising

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Sulphur High School, Sulphur, Oklahoma in May 1991; received Bachelor of Science degree in Fashion Merchandising from University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond. Oklahoma in May 1995. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Design, Housing and Merchandising at Oklahoma State University in July 1999.

Experience: Retail experience including management roles: employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of Design, Housing and Merchandising as a graduate research assistant: employed by a major retail organization as a distribution analyst and a buying analyst, 1997 to present.