

NEEDS OF THE UNEMPLOYED ADULT
IN OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA

By

HELEN JOAN RAWSON

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University of Wisconsin

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Thesis Approved:

John L. Beard
Thesis Adviser

Malcolm D. Miller

Harold P. ...

Norman D. ...
Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Industrial America is changing, with new technologies, emerging industries, failing businesses, reallocation of resources, shifting social attitudes, and a greater emphasis on adult education and training. For over a decade the United States has been moving from economies of physical scale to economies of intellectual scale.

The cost of this almost relentless commitment to innovation has been high. We have created a world that has given Americans more of everything--including human casualties through work displacement. Today's workers are forced to keep up with the fast pace of modern technology, but many fall behind, unable to accommodate to the rate of change.

Perhaps the most alarming fact of all is that the most rapidly growing segment of America's population is not the technologically prepared individual, but the displaced and discouraged--the poor and new-poor, many of whom are agricultural workers--people largely unprepared even for smoke-stack industries, much less new-wave high technology (Wiemer, 1983).

As the shift continues, the emerging high-technology

demands a work force that is highly literate and technically sophisticated, leaving behind more and more laid-off employees in basic industries, facing a fate of never being recalled to work. The nationwide increase in unemployment over the past few years, according to Wiemer, is a "...pause between eras of growth" and enthusiastically received as a necessary part of the change to high technology.

If an individual is part of the new era of high technology, he would quite likely agree with Naisbitt (1982) who stated in his book, "My God, what a fantastic time to be alive!".

But, if an individual is part of the millions of displaced and unemployed adult workers in the era of new-technology developments, he is faced with a glaring problem: What is to become of the unemployed worker?

In small communities such as Okmulgee, Oklahoma, where community leaders are already fighting economic disadvantages, these new developments create a serious, ever growing problem.

According to Bowman (1984), Research and Planning Director of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, prior to the recent nationwide recession, Okmulgee County had been an area long characterized by high unemployment, functional illiteracy and declining job opportunities. Now, compounded with the aftermath of an extensive recession and the emergence of new high technology requirements, the unemployment rate continues to fluctuate at a higher than national average.

Statement of Problem

The rising unemployment levels in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma has created local concern. Many studies exist from the viewpoint of Federal and State authorities, but no studies could be found relating the attitudes of the local displaced, unemployed adult worker. Hence, research which describes their opinions, demographic characteristics and vocational needs was deemed timely.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish a demographic profile and describe the perceived vocational needs of the displaced, unemployed adult worker in Okmulgee County. A concerted effort was made to isolate: (1) the kinds of jobs previously held and (2) insight regarding the acceptance of a formal retraining program as an approach to employment.

Objectives of the Study

To accomplish this purpose, the following objectives had to be attained:

1. To examine a demographic profile of local unemployed adult workers.
2. To clarify the attitudes and needs of local unemployed adult workers.
3. To establish the level of interest of local unemployed adult workers in a formal vocational retraining program.

4. To determine what obstacles or problems the unemployed adult worker felt would interfere with their attendance, in a formal vocational retraining program, or in a possible future work situation.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study included 122 unemployed adult workers who were interviewed over a 3-day period beginning May 21, 1985 and ending May 23, 1985.

Limitations of the Study

Possible limitations to the use of this research include: (1) the inability of some unemployed adult workers to supply sufficient or correct data, (2) a limited number of unemployed adult workers available for interview purposes, (3) lack of inferential power to apply findings to other populations, and (4) the findings may reflect only the profile and perceived vocational needs of the unemployed adult workers who are actively seeking employment at the Oklahoma State Employment Security Commission office.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions: (1) the unemployed adult workers involved in the study was representative of the displaced adult workers in Okmulgee County area who are presently seeking employment, (2) responses of the unemployed adult worker were honest expres-

sions of their opinion, and (3) the unemployed adult worker could provide accurate evaluations of their retraining and basic job skill needs.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

Discouraged Workers--Persons other than physically handicapped with special needs due to academic or economic handicaps who require special services in order to succeed in vocational education programs (Altifest, 1975).

Displaced Workers--Persons who (1) were previously employed in stable jobs with satisfactory pay and every reason to expect continued employment to retirement, and (2) have been laid off with little chance of recall and (3) are unlikely to find new employment using their familiar skills at near their customary rates of pay (National Council on Employment Policy, 1983).

Dropouts--Persons who leave high school before graduation or completion of program and do not continue their education elsewhere.

Functional Literacy--The minimal level of literacy development required to meet the normal demands of daily life, according to the early 1900's U.S. Military standards (Weber, 1975).

High Technology--In the context of preparing the Nation's work force below the baccalaureate level, high tech-

nology is characterized by the processes, products and applications resulting from the most recent scientific developments that frequently employ the programmable artificial intelligence of computers. These processes, products and applications extend human, manual and intellectual capacities in single or combined applications of the physical, biological or information sciences (Brooking, 1984).

Oklahoma State Tech--Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training, Okmulgee, Oklahoma. A 2-year Associate Degree of Technology granting vocational/technical college.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a review of the following areas: (1) Identification of displaced adult workers, (2) Legislative action, (3) Education and employment opportunities, (4) Implications for adult education, and (5) Reports of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.

Identification of the Displaced Adult Worker

The National Council on Employment Policy (1983) expressed concern in a policy paper which sought to provide enlightenment. It began, "Who and how many? These two questions are inseparable because the definition provides boundaries for the count." (p. 1).

Using definition terms, the National Council on Employment Policy cites the displaced adult worker as people primarily in operative trades in capital intensive basic manufacturing industries. Once these individuals were well-paid operatives. Now, as a displaced worker, they have nowhere to go except lower paid, more labor intensive (and less unionized) operative positions, or into unskilled service work. The Council states that some craft workers such as technicians and professionals whose skills are too closely

restricted to declining industries may also prove to be part of the permanently displaced adult work force.

It is estimated that if one used as surrogate for the number of displaced workers the number of operatives, craft workers and technicians from manufacturing industries that have been unemployed 15 weeks or more, the resulting number would be over 3 million individuals (National Council on Employment Policy, 1983).

Another approach to trying to identify the displaced American worker would be to look at the reasons for job loss. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (1961) divides the unemployed among job leavers, job losers, new entrants, and reentrants. A displaced worker would be a job loser.

The December 1983 Bureau of Labor release indicated that 12.0 million adult workers were unemployed and 7.3 million had lost their last job. Only 2.5 million of these individuals reported that they considered themselves to be on layoff with expectations of recall by their former employer.

The Bureau of Labor considers unemployed adult workers as individuals who did not work at all during the survey week and were looking for work within the preceding 60-day period and who, during the survey week, were awaiting the results of their efforts. Other persons considered as unemployed adult workers are those who are waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off, waiting to report to a new wage or salary job schedule to start within the following 30 days, or would have been look-

ing for work except that they were temporarily ill or believed no work was available in their line of work or in the community.

The United States Current Population Survey officials stated that in November, 1982 of the 12 million people officially unemployed, over 1.6 million more were described by government analysts as "discouraged workers", people who have given up looking for work because they felt it was hopeless (National Council on Employment Policy, 1983).

Social scientists define a discouraged worker as a displaced worker who would and could work if a job were available. Discouraged workers are often people whose skills are no longer in demand because machines now perform their jobs. Often, they do not have the job skills to switch occupations. Sometimes, according to the National Council on Employment Policy, these discouraged workers live in pockets of heavy unemployment. They often do not risk moving because other members of their family are gainfully employed.

The process of deciding who is officially considered employed or unemployed is a complicated one. Government figures are based on a Current Population Survey formula that is probably an accurate reflection of the actual unemployment situation in an area at any given time. Yet, these figures do not include a large body of people who are underemployed, either because they are working part time or are working at jobs that are well below their capacity. Also, these figures do not reflect those discouraged workers

who have stopped seeking employment because of their negative experiences.

Over 50 percent of the benefits are paid to long-term unemployed persons. These are individuals who have been unemployed for more than six months. Half of these people will end up withdrawing from the labor force (Oklahoma State Employment Commission, 1984).

Legislative Action

With the recent emphasis on productivity and human resources within the work force, the attitudinal development of consideration for the disadvantaged, handicapped and discouraged worker needs have been reconsidered (Bottoms, 1983). It is now felt that these efforts are necessary for the regeneration of our nation's economy.

National legislation benefits in the last decade have resulted in projects and programs designed to assist persons with special needs. For example, three pieces of legislation passed in recent years are: (1) PL94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975; (2) PL94-482, The Educational Amendments of 1976 Title II - Vocational Education; and (3) PL93-516, Section 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Albright and Phelps, 1979).

More recently, the Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration established the Job Training Partnership Act on March 15, 1983. This program was to be an updated version of the Title IV-A CETA Program. Section

106 of the Jobs Training Partnership Act directs the Secretary to establish performance standards for adult, youth and displaced workers programs. These standards should relate to the program's goals--increasing employment and earnings and reducing welfare dependency. Unlike the Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA) that it replaced, this program was designed to be developed and effectively controlled by 594 private-industry councils, headed by local business people and corporation officials, who presumably know what skills are needed in their areas (U.S. News & World Report, 1983).

Because of limited performance information at the national level concerning the conduct of programs such as those envisioned under Title III, no national Title III performance standards were established in 1984. Governors of each state were given the responsibility of projecting appropriate performance levels that they consider appropriate (Federal Register, 1984).

Historically, going back as far as the 1960's, the War on Poverty vocational programs were seen both as a way to promote economic growth through increasing productivity, and as a way to move able-bodied persons out of poverty. The Federal government hoped that acquisition of skills would increase the productivity of an individual, thus raising the employee's wages (Thurow, 1979). It was felt that increased skills would also increase an individual's range of job opportunities and regularity of employment.

According to Thurow (1979), the national vocational program of the 1960's was designed to be so diversified that it would head off projected shortfalls in particular skills areas. At the same time, the disadvantaged worker would be assisted in acquiring skills for which there would be great demand.

Unfortunately, according to economist Schultz (1971), there were large flaws in the War on Poverty, an economic model which led Americans to expect too much from legislated vocational education. Schultz points out that it is questionable whether the government has the powers of projection not possessed by the private sector. He further points out that the labor market does not always function as envisioned by the vocational education model.

According to Schultz, some economists today feel that the challenges of transferring workers who are displaced by efficiency improvements have not been met. Over the 15-year period beginning in 1965, unemployment rates have actually increased to the point, that, by 1980, the United States had higher unemployment than most other developed countries.

A review of these studies has provided a framework and a starting point for the identification and analysis of major issues raised by the existence of the federal legislation.

According to Taylor (1983), the overriding issue, and the heart of criticism about the adult basic education program is that Americans are dealing with a single piece of

legislation (PL89-750) which has been amended eleven times, but never reformed in its entire history. He states, because of this, many of the issues and criticisms that have surfaced in the literature since 1965 have never been addressed in the legislation. A select number of studies have been analyzed by Taylor in an effort to identify key issues.

Griffith and Hayes (1970) edited the first comprehensive appraisal of the state of the art of adult basic education. Its articles and views, says Taylor, are as relevant today as they were in the early 1970's. An example is Crabtree's statement on the strengths and weaknesses of adult basic education:

One of the weaknesses of the present adult basic education program is the lack of a commonly accepted purpose, both in its origin and in its implementation. Is its basic purpose to train disadvantaged adults for employment? Is it to give them a foundation of literate understanding for improving their functioning as citizens, parents and homemakers? Is it all of these? This is no mere academic question. Upon its answer depends in large measure the nature of subject matter used, the selection of the teaching and administrative personnel, the choice of teaching method, and, indeed, the whole tenor of the program (1983, p. 220).

Other topics to be addressed in an adult basic education program are teaching training, curriculum development and testing, economic considerations, and theory and practice.

Between 1970 and 1980 there has been no dearth of assessments (National Association of Continuing Adult Education, 1978; Kirschner Associates, Inc., 1976; Development Associates, Inc., 1979, 1980); evaluations (Systems Develop-

ment Corporation, 1973; General Accounting Office, 1975); reports (Grabowski, 1977; Adult Education Association, U.S.A., 1978; Russ-Eft, 1979); and criticisms (Mezirow, 1978; Gross, 1980). According to Taylor, these studies contain issues, concerns and recommendations that should be included in the dialog on reauthorization of the important Adult Education Act which expires in 1985.

During 1980, the University of Mid-America held a national symposium on the issue of adult education. John E. Ervin opened the conference by addressing adult education issues directly,

Participants hear it again and again: Now is the time to consider federal policy and the adult learner - to discuss predictions of massive change and upheaval in the '80's, for which federal policy is currently unprepared, and to define future directions of adult learning in this country.

If federal legislators and administrators are serious about making policy guidelines for adult learners, to whom can they turn in the field for authoritative information and judgement? Where is the leadership? Where is the spokesman? (as cited by Gross, 1980, p. 8).

The Madison Area Federation of Labor (1984) addressed the issue of lack of federal legislation to assist what they term the "new poor" in vocational retraining. In September, 1984 the Federation released statistics indicating a total of 5,560,000 men and women were unemployed, disabled and discouraged workers. Ten percent of the work force (14 million people) or 13 percent of the population, if consideration is made for the men, women and children involved, have moved down in annual income over the period

from 1978 to 1983.

Education and Employment Opportunities

Education in the United States has been primarily a state and local responsibility over the years. While the major focus of federal attention has been on the education of children, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Lawrence G. Derthick, recognized that issues such as adult literacy could not be excluded from American priorities for education as long as 20 years ago. In 1965 his Committee on Education and Labor reported to the United States House of Representatives:

As a nation, we are not yet sufficiently appreciative of the fact that better informed adults mean richer developmental experiences for children. Thus, providing public funds for adult education should be regarded, also, as an investment in the children. Our Nation certainly does not lack resources to make additional investment in education. Opportunities are needed for all those who can be upgraded as citizens and who can join the ranks of well-trained manpower. Indeed in these times, we can afford to do not one bit less (1965, p. 18).

Two decades later, at the time of this research, the problem of educating America's growing adult masses has still not been resolved. Since the recession struck a bottom in November, 1982, the United States has created jobs at a pace unmatched in post-World War II history (TIME, 1984). However, although more than 6.3 million people have found work during the recovery period and unemployment has tumbled nationwide from 10.7 percent to 7.5 percent by June, 1984, many American adult workers still do

not "fit" in the newly created work force environment.

The rapid growth in demand for and scarce supply of technical occupation workers speaks clearly to the need for vocational technical education (Bottoms, 1983). Traditionally, vocational education's primary objective has been to educate/train men and women in the skills necessary to acquire employment in the work force. Now, more than ever, in today's dynamic work environment, Wacker (1981) suggests vocational education as the answer to helping curb unemployment rates and increasing American workers' chances for a successful career.

According to Weber (1982), perhaps the only means available to combat the problem is vocational education combined with a strong basic academic skills program. In a study conducted by Weber which concentrated on student dropouts, he found potential secondary dropouts were frequently enrolled in vocational education programs and former dropouts often returned to vocational education to gain training useful in future employment. A profile of this "typical" dropout in terms of identifiable characteristics include (Schreiber, 1964; Greene, 1966; Altifest, 1975):

1. Dissatisfaction with school
2. Little or no participation in school activities
3. Older than normal for grade level
4. Record of poor attendance
5. Low self-concept
6. Experienced failure

7. Difficulty with basic academic skills (reading and math)
8. Low levels of emotional and social maturity
9. Membership in families of low economic status, educational advancement, and job status
10. Negative behavior patterns

Being aware of these characteristics still does not remove the difficulty of concentrating on the "typical" adult who might be attracted to vocational education. There is no one program designed to fulfill all needs or provide a perfect solution to pinpointing the adult worker profile. Original ideas must harmonize with the unique circumstances of a particular community (Minnesota State Department of Education, 1981).

However, a review of these studies has provided a framework and a starting point for an identification and analysis of major issues raised by the existence of the federal legislation and its effect on the unemployed adult worker.

Implications for Adult Education

Wright (1984) states that educators must identify the problems associated with the transition to a post-industrial America as they relate to adult education's role in the human and economic development task of retraining the adult population. His approach to this complicated issue is education's partnership with the private sector--beginning with symposiums, such as the one sponsored in 1984 by the

Androscoggin Adult Vocational Education Council of business and industry leaders of Lewiston-Auburn, Maine. Wright feels the problem facing America today is very clear and simple:

A growing cadre of adults educated and trained to work within an economic structure dominated by manufacturing are being left unemployed in an economy made up of service and information industries (p. 21).

American University economist, Striner warns that "the shift to high technology in the 1980's may leave 3 million to 4 million workers unemployable" (Harper, 1983, p. 1). Striner further points out that for educators in public schools, colleges and universities dealing with students in the 7- to 22-year-old bracket the message is obvious: rearrange programs to prepare students for the post-industrial world. However, he also stated that the millions of adults left unemployable by current events have a much different problem to face.

Okmulgee County Unemployment Data

Oklahoma Employment Security Commission statistics for the month of May, 1984 reported a total employed labor force of 13,025 persons. Another 1,675 persons were listed as seeking employment. The total available labor force was 14,700 persons. Commission authorities considered these figures to be a low estimate of the actual available labor force.

In May, 1984 the unemployment rate for Okmulgee County was reported as 11.4 percent. One year later, the rate was

essentially unchanged, but was expected to increase due to continued recession conditions and an anticipated layoff of a local major industrial employer.

The 1980 federal government census study of Okmulgee County's population, illustrated in Table I, distinguishes the local labor force population by sex, unemployment and individuals who were not participating in the labor market. These studies reflect 17,388 men and women were available for employment, but only 12,791 individuals were employed. Of these adults in the labor market, 9,923 worked in Okmulgee County, 2,728 worked outside of the county and another 140 worked outside of the state.

The 1980 Federal Census of Population stated 2,446 male and 1,473 female adult workers were unemployed. As indicated in Table II, federal studies indicate the mean weeks unemployed for males were 13.0 and 11.7 mean weeks for females.

The two largest unemployed racial groups in the 1980 Federal Census of Population were white men (78 percent) and white women (77.9 percent). These findings correlate with the racial population distribution reported by the 1984 Oklahoma Economic Development Department and the 80.7 percent profile studies released in March, 1985 by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission Research and Planning Department.

As illustrated in Table III, of the 3,919 unemployed adult workers in Okmulgee County, a total population of

TABLE I
OKMULGEE COUNTY LABOR FORCE
1980 FEDERAL CENSUS OF
POPULATION

Local Workers 16 Yrs & Over	Male	Female
Worked With Unemployment	2,303	1,331
Worked, With No Unemployment	7,660	5,809
Did Not Work, With Unemployment	143	142
Not In Labor Force	4,304	8,186

TABLE II
OKMULGEE COUNTY LABOR FORCE
1980 FEDERAL CENSUS OF
POPULATION

Persons 16 Years And Over With Unemployment And Mean Weeks Unemployed	Male	Female
Total	2,446	1,473
Mean Weeks Unemployed	13.0	11.7

1,414 individuals (36.1 percent) reported themselves as unemployed 1 to 4 weeks in the 1980 Federal Census of Population. Another 34.2 percent of the population stated they were unemployed 5 to 14 weeks and 29.7 percent of the population stated they were unemployed 15 or more weeks.

Oklahoma Employment Security Commission studies indicate that if unemployed adult workers do not locate work by the 15th week of their unemployment period, 50 percent of these individuals will quite likely drop out of the labor force and will no longer be represented in their labor data.

Table IV describes the 1984 Oklahoma Employment Security Commission's Unemployment Profile according to age group. The Profile indicated 17,276 individuals, or 54.7 percent of the Okmulgee County population are between the age of 16 and 44 years.

As illustrated in Table V, Okmulgee County has a population of 23,264 individuals age 25 and over. Of these adults 6,240 or 26.82 percent, have acquired less than an eighth grade education.

A total of 4,281 adults, or 18.4 percent of the population had an eighth grade education, but less than a high school education. The 1980 Federal Census of Population indicated 45.22 percent of the population were in the category of "Adults without a high school diploma".

In April, 1983 the U.S. Regional Economic Information System, Bureau of Economic Analysis released studies on Okmulgee County's per capita income. These figures indicated

TABLE III

OKMULGEE COUNTY LABOR FORCE
1980 FEDERAL CENSUS OF
POPULATION

Persons 16 Years And Over With Unemployment By Weeks Unemployed	Total	Percent
Unemployed 1 to 4 Weeks	1,414	36.1
Unemployed 5 to 14 Weeks	1,340	34.2
Unemployed 15 Or More Weeks	1,165	29.7

TABLE IV

OKLAHOMA EMPLOYMENT SECURITY COMMISSION
 1984 OKMULGEE COUNTY PROFILE
 BY AGE OF UNEMPLOYED

Local Workers 16 Yrs & Over	Okmulgee Profile	Profile Percent
Age 16 - 44	17,276	54.7
Age 45 - 64	7,799	24.8
Age 65 & Over	6,472	20.5
TOTAL OF POPULATION AGE 16 & OVER	31,547	

TABLE V
 OKMULGEE COUNTY EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS
 1980 FEDERAL CENSUS OF POPULATION

Variable	Okmulgee Profile	Profile Percent
Adults Who Have Less Than An Eighth Grade Education	10,505	26.82
Adults With Eighth Grade But Less Than High School Graduation	7,207	18.40
Adults Without A High School Diploma	17,712	45.22
Adults With A High School Diploma And/Or Post-Secondary Education	3,745	9.56

the per capita personal income had risen from \$4,434 in 1976 to \$8,275 in 1981. National poverty level is currently set at \$10,500 per capita.

Summary

Literature reviewed has addressed the displaced adult worker through concern by such groups as the National Council on Employment Policy, the United States Bureau of Labor, American Labor Unions, and concerned post-secondary educators. Public affairs programs have put emphasis on the depressed segment of the American work force and national legislation designed to assist individuals with special needs have been initiated. It has been demonstrated through the literature that the role of vocational educators in today's technological society is a major influence on the future of American business and industry and a possible contributing factor to reduction of the unknown number of displaced adult workers. The literature review was finalized with an overview of unemployment studies specific to Okmulgee County.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter specifies the methodology used to compile the data. It includes a description of the target population and sample used, development of the data-gathering instrument, collection of the data, and the data analysis.

Employment data used in the study was drawn from formal reports maintained by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the Okmulgee Chamber of Commerce, and the 1980 Federal Census of Population.

Post-secondary vocational data was drawn from literature and information supplied by Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training, Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study was the unemployed adult worker in Okmulgee County. Arrangements were made to interview individuals who came to the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission office located at 108 West Fifth Street, Okmulgee, Oklahoma over a 3-day period beginning May 21, 1984 and ending May 23, 1984.

Development of the Data-Gathering Instrument

The data-gathering instrument was an interview recording form (See Appendix B). It was designed to obtain information regarding the perceptions of local unemployed adult workers in respect to their attitudes and insight regarding the acceptance of a formal retraining program as an approach to employment.

The interview recording form was prepared by the researcher based on professional experiences in the community and conversations with Erna Wilson, Manager--Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Okmulgee, Oklahoma. Some reaction questions contained in the interview recording form were actually a compilation of ideas extracted from several other sources (Wright, 1984; Zemke and Kramlinger, 1982).

The interview recording form was developed by structuring short, easy-to-understand statements that were connotative. The document was divided into two parts: Part I contained demographic characteristics of the respondents. Part II inquired into educational training preferences available in the community. Under each category, several task/topics were identified. Respondents were requested to answer the questions presented by the interviewer with a yes/no response or to comment candidly to the open-ended questions.

Question topics were developed to fulfill the research study purpose. Specifically, the inquiries were:

1. What demographic patterns are exhibited by the displaced unemployed adult worker?

2. What changes or assistance does the displaced, unemployed adult worker perceive as important in obtaining employment?

3. Is the displaced, unemployed adult worker interested in formal vocational training as an approach to personal development and employment?

The presentation of the survey describes the status quo. Findings were organized to review (1) Okmulgee County unemployment data, (2) the unemployed adult workers' demographic profiles, and (3) the educational interests of the unemployed adult worker.

The data gathering instrument was pilot-tested by three persons not participating in the study to check for accuracy and clarity. Minor revisions were made before the final draft was administered.

Sampling Method

Due to the time and resource constraints, it was necessary to obtain a representative sample by recording the remarks of a limited sample of unemployed adult participants rather than trying to describe the entire 1,675 unemployed adult work force reported by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission for the month of May, 1984.

Analysis of Data

Considering that the data-gathering instrument sought descriptive information, it was also necessary to use des-

criptive statistics, such as count, percentages, and means.

Development of Instrument

The instrument was designed to investigate perceptions of the displaced, unemployed adult worker, with an ultimate objective of utilizing the research findings as an aid in planning post-secondary vocational retraining programs.

To obtain insight of the local unemployed adult workers' needs, the instrument was designed to investigate the situation through the viewpoint of the worker, rather than the employment requirements of area business and industry.

An interview recording form was chosen as the instrument after a discussion with Erna Wilson, Manager of the Okmulgee Oklahoma State Employment Security office. From her professional experiences with the unemployed adult workers in Okmulgee County, it was suggested that the target population may have difficulty reading a research instrument. To further assure clarity, the instrument was prepared in simple, easy-to-understand language, and used as structure for direct interview.

Identification of Target Population

The target population was the unemployed adult worker in Okmulgee County. Although many reasons were found for unemployment in the community, the researcher was particularly interested in the adult worker who had been displaced by recent technological changes in business and industry.

Design of Procedure for Information Collection

A face-to-face interview was deemed the best research technique. Unemployed adult workers were randomly selected from individuals who visited the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission office over a 3-day period during May, 1984.

Interview inquiries were directed to personal problems and concerns of the unemployed adult workers. Particular emphasis was directed to the participant's education, skills, and vocational interests.

Individuals were advised that their names would not be taken, that the instrument was not associated with their personal business at the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission office and that the interview was simply a survey of Okmulgee County unemployed adult workers. The author and a co-researcher administered the instrument to the research participants.

Collection of Information

Unemployed adults were asked if they would participate in the interview. Responses were excluded from the study if they contained one or more unanswered items and/or questionable interview responses.

Analysis of Information

Data was summarized and sorted into the following categories: age, sex, size of family unit, income requirements, previous education, previous employment, years in

the work force, residence preferences, interest in formal job training, length of unemployment, and factors that participants felt interfered with employment or retraining opportunities.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to gather and examine data pertaining to the displaced, unemployed adult workers' attitudes and problems regarding post-secondary vocational training and employment.

The objective of this chapter is to describe the results of the survey and to explain the process involving the collection of data.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

Table VI describes the comparison between the 1984 Oklahoma Employment Security Commission's Unemployment Profile and research results according to age. The Profile indicated 17,276 individuals, or 54.7 percent of the Okmulgee County population are between age 16 and 44 years. The age profile of respondents was not congruent with the age profile of Okmulgee County. As presented in Table VI, the survey population was high in the 16 to 44 age group and the 45 to 64 age group. It was noticeably lower in the 65 and over age group, but this deviation was expected in that many adults tend to seek retirement from the labor force after age 62.

TABLE VI
OKMULGEE COUNTY BY AGE OF UNEMPLOYED
PROFILE -V- STUDY

Local Workers 16 Yrs & Over	Okmulgee Profile	Profile Percent	Adults Surveyed	Survey Percent
Age 16 - 44	17,276	54.7	76	62.3
Age 45 - 64	7,799	24.8	38	31.2
Age 65 & Over	6,472	20.5	8	6.5
TOTAL OF POPULATION AGE 16 & OVER	31,547		122	

According to the research findings, the average adult seeking employment was age 38.2 years. The median age was 34 years and the most common age was 46 years.

As illustrated in Table VII, the Profile and research findings indicated similar lengths of unemployment by number of weeks. The category, "Unemployed 5 to 14 Weeks" indicated 29.7 percent of the Profile unemployed adults were in this group, compared to the research findings of 30.3 percent, a difference of .6 percent. The study indicated the largest group of unemployed adult workers had been unemployed 1 to 4 weeks (36.9 percent).

The mean weeks of unemployment, as indicated in Table VIII, was 14.9 percent for males and 12.6 percent for females.

If given an opportunity to find employment, 86 respondents (70.49 percent) stated they would consider moving out of Okmulgee County to obtain employment. However, only 22 respondents (18.0 percent) stated they would consider moving out of the state to obtain employment.

Many of the respondents indicated they had personal obligations in the community that might prevent them from moving. For example, some respondents stated they had other family members gainfully employed in the Okmulgee area. Other respondents mentioned the problem of selling their real estate in a "soft" market, which may interfere with their decision to move to another area which could offer employment opportunities.

TABLE VII
 OKMULGEE COUNTY BY LABOR FORCE
 PROFILE -V- STUDY

Variable	Okmulgee Profile	Profile Percent	Adults Surveyed	Survey Percent
Unemployed 1 to 4 Wks	1,414	36.1	45	36.9
Unemployed 5 to 14 Wks	1,340	34.2	40	32.8
Unemployed 15 or More Weeks	1,165	29.7	37	30.3

TABLE VIII
OKMULGEE COUNTY BY UNEMPLOYED
PROFILE -V- STUDY

Persons 16 Years And Over With Unemployment And Mean Weeks Unemployed				
	Profile Male	Profile Female	Survey Male	Survey Female
Total	2,446	1,473	86	36
Mean Weeks Unemployed	13.0	11.7	14.9	12.6

As illustrated in Table IX, only 15 unemployed adult workers (9.56 percent of the population) had a high school diploma and/or post-secondary education.

Research participants were asked to indicate how much money they needed to support their families. The mode was at least \$12,000 to \$14,999 per year. Thirty two respondents (26.53 percent) felt they would require \$15,000 to \$17,999 to meet their personal financial obligations.

When respondents were asked how many persons were being supported by their income, 34 individuals (27.8 percent) stated "1", or only themselves. A total of 64 respondents (52.46 percent) stated they support three or more persons in their household.

Respondents were asked how many different types of work they had done since entering the labor market. Thirty six individuals (29.51 percent) stated they had participated in 20 or more different types of employment.

Many of the research study male participants had previously worked at oil field jobs as welders, machinists and other well paying, but unskilled general labor positions.

Findings indicated that female participants worked mostly in service industry positions such as waitress and domestic help, which paid low wages. Two females stated they had received secretarial training while attending high school, but these skills were found to be not in great demand at the present time in Okmulgee County.

TABLE IX
 OKMULGEE COUNTY BY EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS
 PROFILE -V- STUDY

Variable	Okmulgee Profile	Profile Percent	Adults Surveyed	Survey Percent
Adults Who Have Less Than An Eighth Grade Education	10,505	26.82	40	32.79
Adults With Eighth Grade But Less Than High School Graduation	7,207	18.40	67	54.91
Adults Without A High School Diploma	17,712	45.22	107	87.70
Adults With A High School Diploma And/Or Post-Secon- dary Education	3,745	9.56	15	12.30

The respondents who stated they would move from the Okmulgee area were younger men and women, under age 45 years. The average age of males willing to move was 37 years and the average age of females was 32 years.

When the survey group were asked if they would retrain for employment they had done in the past, only 24.59 percent, or 30 respondents, stated they would do so. Forty eight adults (39.54 percent) said they would retrain for new occupations. The average age of those who were willing to retrain was 37 years. *young people are the majority*

As illustrated in Table X, the most common factor that interfered with obtaining employment or job training was assistance with child care services. Twenty one (17.21 percent) of the respondents stated if they could find low cost child care services with flexible hours, they would consider a vocational retraining program.

The second biggest factor was flexible school hours. Eighteen respondents (14.75 percent) stated if vocational training was offered with flexible hours, they would be interested in attending. Specifically, "flexible hours" meant an extended day program or evening classes leading toward a diploma, certificate or degree.

Three women expressed interest in a vocational program whereby they could be at home before and after grade school hours commenced and ended. A total of 11.48 percent of the survey population stated family responsibilities kept them from holding a 40-hour week job or retraining.

TABLE X
FACTORS WHICH HAVE INTERFERED
WITH JOB OR RETRAINING

Interfering Factors	Response	Percent
1. Serious Illness	6	4.92
2. Housing Problems	2	1.64
3. Family Responsibilities	14	11.48
4. Major Accident	4	3.28
5. Flexible School Hours	18	14.75
6. Major Expenses	0	0.00
7. Change In Marital Status	8	6.56
8. Major Problems To Someone Close To You	6	4.92
9. Help In Getting Child Care Services	21	17.21
10. Help In Getting To And From School	8	6.56
11. No Comment	35	28.68

Insecurity and self-doubt was expressed frequently during the interview process by older, unemployed adults. Individuals pointed out they felt they were too old to attend a vocational retraining program. Other problems cited were lack of basic academic skills, such as mathematics and reading. Several respondents indicated that going to a vocational school to retrain would never become a reality because of lack of monies for vocational materials, books, and tuition costs.

Educational Interests and Opportunities

The Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training, commonly known as Oklahoma State Tech, was established in the community of Okmulgee on October 1, 1946.

Oklahoma State Tech is a post-secondary institution which offers technical and occupational education programs. The philosophy and purpose of the facility is to "educate hand and mind". With an open door policy, an individual 18 years of age or over who is not a high school graduate but whose high school class has graduated, is eligible for provisional admission.

Oklahoma State Tech's objective is to prepare students to enter the industrial/business world. A five to six hour instructional day is considered as a typical full time enrollment devoted to classroom and shop/lab instruction.

Respondents were asked if they would consider a retraining program at Oklahoma State University School of Technical

Training, and if so, what program(s) of study would they be interested in.

As illustrated in Table XI, respondents expressed the most interest in the Automotive Mechanics Program of Study. Ten respondents stated they would like to take this course. Other popular courses were Automotive Body & Paint (7), Accounting (6), and Air Conditioning (5). Four respondents stated they would like to study Computer Data Processing, Culinary Arts, and Electrical Electronics. No interest was expressed in Automotive Parts Management, Baking, Practical Nursing, and Printing Programs of Study.

Other vocational interests which were mentioned, but not offered at Oklahoma State Tech as a program of study, were: cosmetology, dog grooming, truck driving, forestry, travel agency training, and music studies.

Several respondents stated they would be interested in an Oklahoma State Tech program of study, but they did not want to take the General Education courses. One respondent stated he was unhappy with the present night course program. He would like to see more shop/lab courses offered during the evening hours and be able to earn a complete degree over a period of time by attending only night classes (See Appendix C).

TABLE XI
 OKLAHOMA STATE TECH PROGRAMS OF STUDY
 OF INTEREST TO UNEMPLOYED ADULTS

Program of Study	Response	Percent
Accounting	6	9.84
Air Conditioning & Refrigeration	5	8.20
Automotive Body & Paint	7	11.48
Automotive Mechanics	10	16.39
Automotive Parts	0	0.00
Automotive Trim (Upholstry)	0	0.00
Baking	0	0.00
Building Construction	2	3.28
Commercial Art	1	1.64
Computer Data Processing	4	6.56
Culinary Arts	4	6.56
Diesel & Heavy Equipment	2	3.28
Drafting & Design	1	1.64
Drycleaning	1	1.64
Electrical Electronics	4	6.56
Furniture Upholstry	3	4.92
Jewelry Manufacturing & Repair	1	1.64
Machinist	2	3.28
Management & Marketing	1	1.64
Plumbing & Pipefitting	3	4.64
Practical Nursing	0	0.00
Printing	0	0.00
Secretarial	2	3.28
Shoe, Boot & Saddlemaking	1	1.64
Watch & Micro-Instrument Repair	1	1.64
TOTAL:	61	

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the study of the unemployed, adult worker in Okmulgee County is presented in this chapter. Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study follow the summarization.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of the unemployed adult work force in Okmulgee County regarding their needs and attitudes toward post-secondary vocational training as an approach to obtaining employment.

Descriptive research was used to solicit response to fourteen preselected questions prepared with the assistance of a State government representative and Oklahoma State University vocational/technical educators.

Comparisons were made between available Federal and State employment statistics and the research data gathered from the target population. The study was designed to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To examine a demographic profile of local unemployed adult workers.
2. To clarify the attitudes and needs of local unem-

ployed adult workers.

3. To establish the level of interest of local unemployed adult workers in a formal vocational retraining program.

4. To determine what obstacles or problems the unemployed adult worker felt would interfere with their attendance, either at employment in the work place or in a formal vocational retraining program.

Comparisons of Federal and State employment statistics were made with the survey findings. From these comparisons, overall conclusions were drawn.

Findings and Conclusions

Okmulgee County Unemployment Data

The total unemployed labor force consists of approximately 13,025 men and women. It was noted there was a large variance between the 1980 Federal Census of Population and the Oklahoma Security Employment Commission statistics. The Federal Census indicated an additional 2,688 adults were unemployed. These individuals, it is suspected, are the adult workers who have withdrawn themselves from the active labor market and may be the "discouraged" workers of Okmulgee County.

The Oklahoma State Employment Commission's report of 11.4 percent unemployment consists of 1,675 men and women. This unemployment force is higher than most Oklahoma counties, as well as the national unemployment averages, which

are reported as 7.1 percent and 7.5 percent for May, 1984 and May, 1985, respectively.

The population included in this research sample is not necessarily representative of the population of the county in terms of age or educational achievement. Of the survey population, 62.3 percent were age 16 - 44 as compared to 54.7 percent of the total county population in the same age bracket. For age group 45 - 65, 31.2 percent of the survey population were in this category whereas 24.8 percent of the county population fell into this bracket. The largest variance was age bracket 65 and over, where only 6.5 percent were in the survey population compared to 20.5 for the entire county. As indicated earlier, this unusual discrepancy may be accounted for by the fact that many people over age 65 are not a part of the active labor force.

Sixty seven individuals, or 54.9 percent of the population, had received an eighth grade education, but did not graduate from high school. This figure is noticeably higher than the State statistics (18.4 percent).

The unemployed adults have worked at many different jobs since entering the labor market. Slightly less than one out of three respondents indicated they had worked at 20 or more different types of employment since entering the labor market.

If given an opportunity for employment, 70.49 percent of the respondents advised they would move to a new job location. The majority of the adult workers, however, pre-

fer not to move out of state.

Of the eleven factors suggested as those which might interfere with job or retraining opportunities, child care services was the most frequently mentioned. Two other factors often cited were flexible school hours for their vocational training needs and the interference of family responsibilities.

Conclusions. Okmulgee County's unemployed labor force will require basic educational courses if they choose to participate in a retraining program at Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training.

Few of the individuals who indicated an interest in retraining and skills updating had completed their high school education. The mean age of the respondents who expressed an interest in retraining was 39 years of age, and if he retired at the usual age of 62 or 65 years, the individual will spend another 23 to 25 years in the work force.

This suggests a possible need for basic education courses if training or retraining is to be done at Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training.

Of the total 122 survey population, 61 respondents indicated an interest in Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training's vocational and technical programs of study. Most frequently mentioned was interest in the Automotive courses.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following are recommended:

In an effort to determine the extent that work attitudes are a factor in unemployment, one might engage in an ethnographic study of the target population. However, a study of this magnitude may not be feasible because of time and logistic limitations.

Business and industry leaders, educators, administrators, and other interested parties should continue to pursue the needs of local unemployed adult workers. This study should be made available to interested parties in an effort to aid the implementation of retraining and skills upgrading in the community.

Further efforts need to be made in establishing contact and determining the extent of the discouraged worker population of Okmulgee County. Research findings suggest these individuals have stopped seeking the services of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, thus making contact difficult. They could not be reached for purposes of inclusions in this study.

Looking at the Okmulgee County work force, it is obvious that there are many adults, both employed and unemployed, who need skills upgrading and/or need complete retraining in order to adjust to change. This is indeed a challenge to both local adult educators and managers in business and industry. (It is a challenge too great to be addressed by either

group in isolation of the other. The formation of a partnership is the critical element in the quest for adaptation to a post-industrial world.)

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

PANEL OF EXPERTS

A panel of experts was chosen by the researcher to aid in making decisions concerning the population to survey and the questions to use in the survey. The panel consisted of the following:

Dr. John L. Baird
School of Occupational & Adult Education
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma

Dr. Richard Tinnell, Coordinator
Instructional Resources
Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Dr. Earl D. Miller, Social Sciences Supervisor
Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Abe Mc Intosh, General Education Department Head
Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

Jim Suiter, General Education Assistant Department Head
Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training
Okmulgee, Oklahoma

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW RECORDING FORM

INTERVIEW RECORDING FORM

1. How old are you? _____
2. How many persons are you supporting?
 1 (Yourself) 4
 2 5
 3 6 or more
3. Which sex are you?
 Male
 Female
4. How much money do you need to support your family?
 \$ _____
5. How many years of education have you completed? _____
 Other educational experiences: G. E. D.
 Vocational training
6. How many different kinds of work have you done? _____

7. How many years have you worked for pay? _____
8. If you got a job you really wanted, would you move out of Okmulgee?
 Yes No
9. If you got a job you really wanted, would you move out of state?
 Yes No
10. Would you retrain for any jobs that you have done in the past?
 Yes No
11. Would you study for a job that you have never done before?
 Yes No
12. How long have you been unemployed? _____

13. Have any of these factors been a problem that has interfered with your job or retraining for work?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> serious illness | <input type="checkbox"/> major expenses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> housing problems | <input type="checkbox"/> change in marital status |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> major problem to someone close to you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> major accident | <input type="checkbox"/> help in getting child care services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> major financial losses | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a quiet place to study | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flexible school hours | |

Other (explain): _____

14. The following are subjects offered by Oklahoma State Tech. What subjects would you be interested in? Are you interested in any job training not listed? Explain.

- Air Conditioning & Refrigeration
- Automotive Body & Paint
- Automotive Mechanics
- Automotive Parts
- Building Construction
- Plumbing & Pipefitting
- Accounting
- Computer Data Processing
- Management & Marketing
- Drafting & Design
- Electrical Electronics
- Secretarial
- Commercial Art
- Diesel & Heavy Equipment
- Automotive Trim (Upholstry)
- Furniture Upholstry
- Watch & Micro-Instrument Repair
- Jewelry Manufacturing & Repair
- Drycleaning
- Baking
- Culinary Arts
- Machinist
- Practical Nursing
- Printing
- Shoe, Boot & Saddle

Other: _____

APPENDIX C

LIST OF COMMENTS UNDER OTHER REASONS
IN QUESTION THIRTEEN

Other Comments

"I'm too old to go to school."

"I stopped going to school when I was 17."

"No money to pay tuition costs."

"My husband won't let me. He says I have to stay home with the kids until they're grown."

"I don't want to go to school with students the same age as my own."

"I can't read well enough to go to college."

"My family keeps me too busy to go to school again."

APPENDIX D

LIST OF COMMENTS UNDER OTHER JOB TRAINING
NOT LISTED IN QUESTION FOURTEEN

Other Comments

"Beauty parlor school."

"Hair dressing."

"Dog grooming, especially small dogs."

"Truck driving school."

"Forestry."

"Travel agency."

"I wish we could have more evening classes out at Tech."

"I would go if they didn't have all those General Education classes to take. All I want is shop classes."

"I am so bad at math... I don't think I could make it in college."

"Why don't you offer some music classes?"

"Why don't you have some classes for mothers with babies?"

VITA

Helen Joan Rawson

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: NEEDS OF THE UNEMPLOYED ADULT IN OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Portage, Wisconsin, December 31, 1942, the daughter of the late Gene L. and Maxine E. Mc Donald. Married to Arthur L. Rawson on June 1, 1974.

Education: Graduated from Pardeeville High School, Pardeeville, Wisconsin, in June, 1961; received an Associate of Arts Degree in Liberal Studies-College Transfer from Madison Area Technical College in June, 1978; received a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Wisconsin in May, 1981; completed requirements for Master of Science Degree in Occupational and Adult Education at Oklahoma State University in July, 1985.

Professional Experience: Administrative Secretary, Midwest Neon, Inc., Portage, Wisconsin, 1961-1966; Administrative Secretary, Wisconsin Council of Churches, Madison, Wisconsin, 1966-1971; Assistant to Human Resources Director, Ohio Medical Products, A Division of AIRCO International, Madison, Wisconsin, 1972-1974; International Sales Coordinator/Manager, Nelson Industries, Stoughton, Wisconsin, 1974-1981; General Education Instructor, Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training, Okmulgee, Oklahoma, 1981 to present.