

IDENTIFICATION OF FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
CHARACTERISTICS IN DRY CLEANING  
ESTABLISHMENTS

By

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The variety of fabrics, customer demands and dry cleaning problems have created the need for well-trained employers and employees in the dry cleaning industry (Oklahoma, 1967). Knowledge of fibers, fabric construction, and dyes is necessary to restore a textile to its original condition and appearance. Expertise in spotting and stain removal is also needed by employees in dry cleaning establishments (Oklahoma, 1967).

Dry cleaning plants process garments in basically the same way. Garments are received by the front counter worker, who fills out a ticket noting the person's name, the number of garments and any special instructions. The clothes are then sent to the marking department where they are inspected, identified by a colored, numbered tag attached to the garment and priced for the service rendered. Garment trims, buttons or other ornaments that will be damaged in the cleaning process are removed. Clothes are searched for items left in pockets or accidentally caught between garment and lining.

Garments are inspected for unusual stains or damaged areas not noted by the front counter worker. Special instruction tags are attached along with the identification tag and the garments are sent to the dry cleaning area for classification, prespotting and cleaning.

Classification involves separating garments into like or similar groups for cleaning--light colors are separated from dark colors, and light weight, sheer, fragile fabrics are separated from heavier more durable fabrics. The special instruction tags are given attention as prespotting may be necessary to remove a stain before cleaning. Some stains are more difficult to remove after dry cleaning; heat sensitive stains, for example, can be heat set if prespotting is not done. Certain types of oil, some paints and lipstick are heat sensitive stains.

After classification and prespotting the dry cleaner weighs out the maximum load capacity for the cleaning unit and places the garments in the dry cleaning washer for agitation. The amount of time required varies with the clothing fiber, fabric and garment design. Some solvent is extracted by centrifugal force from the clean clothes and the remaining solvent is removed by forcing warm air through the tumbling clothes.

Spots and stains that were not removed in the cleaning cycle are treated and the garments are then sent to the finisher where they are restored to their original size and shape. The finisher uses equipment called wool and silk units which are misnomers. The wool unit processes suits and coats whether of wool or other fibers. The silk unit equipment processes blouses and dresses of various fibers. The choice of finishing equipment is determined by the finish desired, the garment construction and the fiber content. "Proper finishing will restore the garment partially or completely to its original appearance" (Phillips, Lesson 3-E, p. 8).

Garments are given a thorough visual examination for quality of service. If the garment is rejected as not meeting standard quality, it is returned to the area at fault for reprocessing. Inspected, finished garments are repaired, and sent to the assembly area where orders are rejoined and bagged for return to the customer.

Courses of study in the dry cleaning industry for wool and silk finishing, dry cleaning procedures and spotting and wetcleaning are offered by the Oklahoma State University School of Technical Training at Okmulgee, Oklahoma. The International Fabricare Institute offers training programs in plant operation for personnel and management. These study courses are planned for various time periods from one to four weeks and are presented in the International Fabricare Institute (IFI) laboratories in Joliet, Illinois, and Silver Spring, Maryland. When a large number of dry cleaners request, the Institute will conduct field training clinics, seminars on management and technical subjects in a geographical location. The Institute also has several correspondence courses available including a "Sales Training" course which lends itself to the purpose of the research.

Characteristics having to do with the effectiveness of a front counter employee have not been specifically identified. The need to identify these characteristics becomes evident as the employer becomes involved in the supervision of the physical aspects of dry cleaning; he relies on the front counter employee to meet the public and maintain a reputable image of the dry cleaning establishment's services. In today's economy where time is money and personal and satisfying service is important to the consumer, the efficiency and reputation of a dry cleaning establishment is tremendously improved when the front counter

worker can identify fibers, weaves, stains, and possible problems as the garments are being transferred to his care. The dry cleaning patron is more likely to return when he has been recognized by the counter worker who, with tact and diplomacy and some knowledge of textiles, can gain information from the patron concerning possible cleaning problems to be encountered or special instructions. When the front counter worker is not trained, the customer has to rely upon the person who next receives the garments--the person who has not been at the counter to receive any directives from the patron. The second person must catch problems that may be made worse after dry cleaning if they are not treated in time, productivity of the plant is slowed when this must be done.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics and critical incidents relative to the job of the front counter worker in selected dry cleaning establishments. The specific objectives were:

1. To identify characteristics needed of front counter workers as rated by owner/managers of the dry cleaning plants.
2. To identify critical incidents as related to front counter workers recalled by owner/managers of dry cleaning plants.
3. To compare ratings of characteristics between different dry cleaning plants and among small, medium, and large sized plants.

Identification of these characteristics and critical incidents could be used as a basis for establishing a training course for potential employees of dry cleaning establishments in Oklahoma County.

Results of the training would be speculative, but a survey conducted on relationships among enterprise profitability, "other measures of entrepreneurial satisfaction and the quality of a firm's services to its customers" (Pickle, 1973, p. 268) revealed that factors determining customer satisfaction were:

Employees' knowledge of product or service  
Helpful attitude of employees  
Friendly attitude of employees  
Employees appearance (Pickle, 1973, p. 272)

#### Limitations

The study was limited to sixty-four Oklahoma County Cleaners Association members who operate establishments employing from three to one hundred workers. A small business is defined as having three or four workers, a medium sized business has between five and eight workers, and a large establishment is defined as having from nine to one hundred workers. These size definitions were given by Mrs. Dorothy Bennett, Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma County Cleaners Association, who provides to the members expertise in dry cleaning and textiles, contacts for permanent, part time and occasional workers, arbitration with consumers and manufacturers, political lobbying, information about other dry cleaning businesses, and available used dry cleaning equipment. Mrs. Bennett is also the editor of the Oklahoma Dry Cleaner Bulletin, which is distributed monthly.

#### Definitions

The following definitions were deemed necessary for clarification in the study:

Oklahoma County Cleaners Association - OCCA: An organization of dry cleaners in Metropolitan Oklahoma County.

Critical Incident Technique: A set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems (Flanagan, p. 327).

Front Counter Worker: The employee who greets the patron and receives garments to be cleaned and pressed.

Characteristic: A trait that serves to identify or distinguish one from another.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature includes a short history of dry cleaning and of the International Fabricare Institute which is considered an authority in laundry and dry cleaning. Also included is an explanation of dry cleaning, a review of materials from the International Fabricare Institute, and a survey of the research regarding the critical incidents technique of data gathering.

#### A Short History

The dry cleaning industry is presumed to be 150 years old. The industry began with the dyeing industry according to the French Federation of Dyeing and Cleaning. A dyeing establishment founded by M. Belin in 1794, and later purchased by Jean-Baptiste Jolly, is credited with being the first dry cleaning operation. A legend credits the beginning of the industry to an incident which occurred during 1825. A servant in the Jolly household spilled the contents of a lamp on a table cover, and when the table cover dried, spots of soil on the coverlet had disappeared (Michelsen, 1957).

Compounds used before 1825 for cleaning textiles consisted of fuller's earth, and fresh bullock's gall (Hubbard, 1928). The compound was sponged onto the fabric with water and the fabric was then sponged until dried, hence "dry cleaning." The French are given credit for

utilization of this solvent to immerse and wash garments, hence the phrase nettoyage a sec--cleansing, cleaning, clearing without moisture (Hubbard, 1928; Brannt, 1919). Dry cleaning was also called French cleaning because of the origin of the process and the "prestige attached to France in the fashion world" (Michelsen, 1957, p. 4).

During the 1800's, the cleaning process involved taking the garment apart seam by seam. Each section was then dipped into the cleaning solvent and brushed on both sides while resting flat on a "French scouring board." The sections were rinsed twice and allowed to drain. After draining, the sections of the garment were rubbed dry with clean cotton cloths and hung in a hot stove room for several hours so that the odor of the solvent might disperse (Michelsen, 1957; Hubbard, 1928).

Solvents that had been used in the dry cleaning industry were benzine, camphere, benzol, naphtha, gasoline, turpentine, carbon tetrachloride, ether chloroform, acetic ether, or alcohol (Brannt, 1919). Price and danger forbade the use of some of these chemicals, however, each was used at one time or another. The dry cleaning industry had always been and continued to be hazardous.

The dry cleaning process, during the 1900's, began to assume a practical aspect. There were garment-cleaning machines, hydrextractors, and solvent-purification systems. Those who practiced the art of dry cleaning began to share their carefully guarded cleaning secrets. During 1907, 25 dyers and cleaners met and organized the National Association of Dyers and Cleaners. The objectives of the new Association were "to further at all times the general and mutual interest . . . to advance ideas of value and to represent . . . the



members" (Michelsen, 1957, p. 11).

During those early years, experimentation to bring the frequent dry cleaning plant fires under control was undertaken. Dr. H. E. Mechling set his own dry cleaning plant on fire to prove the value of his research on plant fires. Through the use of a rapid-stream water valve and fire doors, the fire was out in 61 seconds (Michelsen, 1957). Ordinances and laws were passed for safety and to control unscrupulous dry cleaners. The ordinances and laws kept "fly by night's" from opening a shop in unsafe locations.

During 1923, the National Association of Dyers and Cleaners cooperated with the State of Oklahoma by providing vocational education in dyeing and cleaning at the Agricultural and Mechanical College in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This was the industry's first large attempt along the lines of technical training (Hubbard, 1928). The Association also published its textbook--Instructor in Garment Cleaning--and supplied each Home Economics institution in the United States with a copy as a text and reference book (Hubbard, 1928).

During February of 1927, land was turned for the building that would house a new dry cleaning school in Silver Spring, Maryland. The first class arrived on October 17, 1927 (Michelsen, 1957). The depression, however, caused much of the research carried on at the dry cleaning school to be halted until a time period when money was more readily available. The school did not thrive and the economic situation threatened its existence.

By 1936, the National Association was again meeting its problems with renewed efforts toward stabilization. Courses were begun to provide instruction in cleaning furs and bulletins were published

and sent to Association members concerning fabrics that needed special attention.

World Wars I and II affected the dry cleaning industry as alloys, previously used in dry cleaning equipment, were utilized for war equipment. The end of World War II permitted improvements to be made to the equipment that had waited through a depression and two wars. During the middle forties, the dry cleaning school in Maryland enlarged to accommodate the demand of veterans returning to civilian life (Michelsen, 1957).

The association's name was changed to the National Institute of Cleaning and Dyeing (NICD) during 1947. The outgoing president indicated that the term "association" implied a group banded together for mutual advantage and that "institute" was a more suitable name for an organization that conducted research (Michelsen, 1957). NICD material was quoted in The Christian Science Monitor, Women's Wear Daily, and the Daily News Record (Michelsen, 1957).

The National Institute of Cleaning and Dyeing became the National Institute of Dry Cleaning and continued the challenge of properly caring for the natural and synthetic fibers. Results of the research conducted on petroleum solvents were published in the first technical bulletins of the Institute. A department of Consumer Relations helped members of the institute become familiar with the new "miracle" fabrics--Vicara, Dynel, Dacron, Orlon, Vinyon and Acrilan--through bulletins carrying fabric swatches and photographs.

Another decade and more generic fiber groups brought problems to the dry cleaning researcher. Pigment printed designs were not stable, polyvinyl chloride fibers caused complaints, the knitted

garment was slowly beginning to gain force in the fashion industry and in the home sewing market (Lyle, Fabric Facts, C-74). Bonded fabrics, thought to be such a boon, turned out to be a nightmare for the dry cleaner when the cleaning solvent dissolved the adhesive that held the bonded fabrics together (Lyle, Fabric Facts, C-79).

During the decade of the 1970's more new clothing and textile products caused problems for the dry cleaner. The fusible interfacings were dissolved by cleaning solvents, and polyurethane coated fabrics were damaged when immersed in the solvent (Lyle, Fabric Facts, C-125). Fabrics and garments imported from other countries without fiber identification labels caused problems for the dry cleaner (Lyle, Fabric Facts, C-137).

During 1972, the National Institute of Dry Cleaning and the American Institute of Laundering combined to become the International Fabricare Institute. Departments from each organization were combined and the bulletins containing fabric care information were continued.

#### Explanation of Dry Cleaning

Dry cleaning is the process whereby certain types of soil--such as oil or grease based soil--can be removed with a minimum of shrinkage while preserving the color, finish and shape (Oklahoma, 1967). Garments of similar fabric and color are placed in a perforated cylinder which revolves and moves the garments through the solvent, either petroleum or perchlorethylene, and a detergent designed for dry cleaning. The solvent is constantly filtered, clarified, and distilled to maintain an excellent condition for the prevention of soil redeposition on the garments. After extraction of the excess

solvent, the garments are air-dried or machine tumbled to be deodorized. All garments are inspected for spots and stains which are removed using special chemicals and equipment. Steam and air equipment, and the conventional hand and steam iron are used to restore the garments to a wrinkle free, original shape. Minor repairs and removed buttons or decorations are replaced and the customer's order is assembled and inspected ready for delivery (Oklahoma, 1967).

Wetcleaning is not washing clothes, rather, it is a cleaning process whereby fabrics are hand-brushed with warm water and detergent, using mild bleaches or other chemicals which are safe to fabrics and dyes in order to remove the stain or soil (Oklahoma, 1967). Wetcleaning and dry cleaning, when used by professional dry cleaners, can refurbish nearly all of the garments brought to them in soiled condition, if the abuse has not destroyed the fabric.

#### Front Counter Training Resources

The front counter worker is the first person with whom a patron of a dry cleaning establishment comes in contact. It is the front counter worker's duty and responsibility to receive the garments and send them to be cleaned and pressed. The responsibility that rests on the worker's judgment has been indicated as one that: "can make or break a dry cleaning establishment" (Vocational-Technical Education Materials Checker Marker). Fred Harris stated in his narrative that owner/managers realized: "The success of our business is really in the palms of the sales forces' hands" (Harris Tape I). (Sales force is made up of front counter workers and pick-up and delivery dry cleaning representatives.) Marketing professor Paul Pfieffer, at Kent State

University, conducted a survey for International Fabricare Institute to find out why customers changed from one cleaner to another. The study was mentioned in a tape series narrated by Fred Harris and was available for training front counter workers. The survey revealed:

For every 100 customers that a dry cleaning shop loses in a year, 1 was lost by death; 3 left because the front counter worker left; 5 left to do business with a relative or friend; 9 left because they found lower prices elsewhere; 14 left because of unadjusted complaints, and 68 left because they felt that the employees were indifferent (Harris, Tape I).

These figures show that 85 customers were lost because of the front counter worker.

Mr. Howard Reeves, a member of the staff of the International Fabricare Institute, indicated that the training of front counter workers was usually done by the manager of the establishment in order that the operations move smoothly. Mr. Reeves assumed that the manager would know enough about the front counter workers' responsibilities and duties to train his workers (Reeves, 1976).

Books were available as training aids for the workers who were involved directly with the cleaning process, but there was a lack of training information for the front counter worker. Two sets of materials from the International Fabricare Institute were available for the manager to use and/or he could rely on his own experiences.

One set of materials was a recorded counter-sales training course narrated by Fred Harris. Part one included the customer psychology with respect to patronization of the dry cleaning establishment, and the employees' responsibilities in making the clientele feel important. Part two contained help in handling customers' complaints. It included suggested ways to correctly take a consumer's complaint and adjust it

to the satisfaction of both parties. Part three related ways of developing a professional appearance in sales people by stressing dress, make-up and behavior.

The second set of materials included a nine lesson correspondence course entitled Sales Training. It gave an overview of the production area--marking, sorting, spotting, and dry cleaning; a discussion of quality levels; the special services available from a dry cleaning plant; the customers that frequented the dry cleaning plant; selling to those customers; and handling customer complaints. Tests and envelopes were included in order that tests could be returned for correction. A certificate was issued upon satisfaction completion of the course.

Texas Tech University has developed a Coordinated Vocational Academic Education (CAVE) curriculum used in junior and senior high schools. The material, entitled "Clothing Services" related procedures used in the acceptance of clothes at a front counter for either laundrying or dry cleaning; filling out a laundry-dry cleaning ticket, and sorting, marking and bundling an order. The material was not extensive, but included the development of manual skills rather than decision making activities. The material might serve as the beginning for curriculum development. Other materials have been developed in individual dry cleaning plants by front counter worker trainers to be used in training front counter workers.

#### Critical Incidents Technique

The critical incidents technique for data gathering has been in an evolutionary state since the late 1880's. The present day

technique as such, is regarded as "an outgrowth of studies in the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 328).

The major emphasis in the use of the critical incidents methods has not been in any one area. Kirchner (1957) used it to identify critical factors in successful selling for salesmen. More recent research shows the critical incidents method used to teach counselors acceptable methods of counseling (Thayer, 1971) and to identify aspects of student behavior (Jung, 1971). In the business area, the method has been used for the evaluation of supervisory training (Couch, 1971) and to develop curriculum for the service business education of prospective managers (Gehring, 1974). Some ophthalmologic training programs have used the critical incidents technique (Archam, 1972).

The critical incident technique is essentially a procedure for gathering "certain important facts concerning behavior in defined situations" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 335). An incident is considered critical when its direction positively or negatively affects the outcome of the situation. The technique requires simple judgments from the observer; only qualified observers (persons who have held the position previously or are knowledgeable in the procedures necessary for performing the activity) are used and the observations "are evaluated by the observer in terms of an agreed upon statement of the purpose of the activity" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 335). The general aim of the critical incidents technique is to gain a description of the participant's behavior that is specific in what to do or not to do in that activity.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics needed of a front counter worker in a dry cleaning establishment. The following chapter describes the sample, instrument formulation and procedures used for data collection.

#### Sample Selection

The study sample was drawn from the Oklahoma County Cleaners Association membership list. OCCA members were used because information regarding the type of plant and number of people employed were available from the association.

The sample was designed to include participants from fifteen petroleum and fifteen synthetic cleaning plants, with representatives from ten small (five petroleum and five synthetic), ten medium (five petroleum and five synthetic), and ten large (five petroleum and five synthetic) plants. The design was expected to provide a representation from the variety of plants available for the study. It was hoped that the sample would yield data adequate for a statement concerning characteristics needed for front counter workers.

Mergers, expansions and failures during the business year in the Oklahoma City area and summertime vacations determined which 30 members of the 64 OCCA members were surveyed (Appendix A). Addresses



were obtained from the current Oklahoma City Telephone Directory. Five small, four medium, and six large petroleum plants were surveyed; one plant cleaned only leathers and furs, and one plant was run solely by one man. Five small, seven medium, and three large synthetic plants were surveyed. One small plant would clean by petroleum, as well as by the synthetic method and was arbitrarily put into the synthetic group. The study was planned to interview the owner or manager of the dry cleaning establishment who was generally officed at the main plant where the cleaning processes were done, therefore, pick-up stations were not contacted.

#### Instrument

An instrument (Appendix B) was developed and based on information included in Loveall (1974), and Flanagan (1954). Loveall's (1974) ratings were used as a front counter worker characteristics checklist which was formulated from general suggestions made by Flanagan. Observations made by the researcher at dry cleaning plants, suggestions of Mrs. Dorothy Bennett and the thesis advisor were used in formulation and categorization of front counter worker characteristics. The characteristics were grouped into; 1) customer relations, (the front counter worker greeted the patron and received the clothes); 2) textiles, (what knowledge of fiber blends, prints, and dyes were needed); 3) office procedures, (what manual activities regarding money, writing clothes tickets and operating a cash register were needed); and 4) dry cleaning procedures, (what basic information about solvents and plant procedure were needed).

The front counter worker characteristic checklist was prepared so that a numbered rating system could be used. The highest rating, three indicated: "Essential"--The owner/manager would not hire the applicant unless the characteristic was developed so as to be observable. A two rating indicated: "Important"--The owner/manager would hire and train the applicant to develop this characteristic. A one rating indicated: "Helpful"--The owner/manager might expect after training and experience that the employee would develop this characteristic. Zero indicated: "No Value"--The owner/manager felt the characteristic was of no value. "Not Applicable" indicated that the characteristic did not apply to the particular business situation of the interviewee or the characteristic did not apply to the front counter worker position.

In order to complete the questionnaire and allow flexibility and coverage of front counter worker characteristics, space was given for the owner/manager to add additional characteristics to those already listed (Appendix B). In addition, the owner/manager was asked to recall a critical incident when the front counter worker was able to avert a cleaning mishap or claim for damaged clothes through behavior based on experience, awareness, or training. The critical incident question was stated in terms to elicit a response of extremity.

To determine demographic information concerning the owner/manager, a cover sheet (Appendix B) to the questionnaire was used. Questions referred to the type and size dry cleaning plant, the services rendered, the number of full time and part time front counter workers employed, the owner/managers service as a front counter worker, the need for front counter worker training, the number of employees

supervised, and the number of years in dry cleaning. To insure a more complete return of the instrument, it was decided to interview the owner/manager at the same time the instrument was completed. The interview and questionnaire were pilot tested with four of the five professional dry cleaners listed in the Stillwater Telephone Directory. One dry cleaner declined to participate in the pilot test. After the pilot test, revisions were made in the instrument.

A cover letter and the instrument were sent to the owner/managers of each dry cleaning establishment before the interview took place (Appendix C). An appointment was made to interview the owner/manager at his office and obtain responses to the instrument. The interview allowed the researcher to clarify printed instructions, give verbal instructions as to the ratings on the checklist, to record responses for additional front counter worker characteristics and to note the recalled critical incident. Approximately ten minutes were necessary to complete the interview and the instrument.

#### Data Analysis

Data gathered from the instrument were computer analyzed and comparisons were made between the petroleum and the synthetic plants, and among small, medium, and large plants. Percentages and means were used in table construction and data interpretation. Additional front counter worker characteristics and critical incidents mentioned by owner/managers were analyzed and grouped according to category.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify characteristics needed for front counter workers. The sample consisted of 30 Oklahoma County Cleaners Association members. Table I includes a description of the study participants. A number coding system for participants was used to insure confidentiality. All but one of the participants did wool and silk finishing and pressing. One study participant cleaned only leather; seven of the participants indicated that they cleaned leather as well as other fibers and fabrics. Owner/managers from all dry cleaning plants indicated that alterations were done. Most of the dry cleaning plants cleaned household items such as draperies and bedspreads (93.33%), blocked garments and needlecraft (93.33%), applied a water repellent finish to fabrics (90.00%), and offered storage service (73.33%). Fur cleaning was performed by approximately half of the participants (43.33%). A small number of participants cleaned hats (16.66%), carpets (6.66%), and deodorized clothes having undergone smoke damage (3.33%).

The number of full time front counter workers employed by the owner/managers ranged from one through fourteen. Some of these employees worked in pick-up stations and some at the home plant. Part time or occasional front counter workers were not as numerous; the greatest number of employees for this category was four. (See Table I.)

TABLE I  
 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS  
 (N=30)

Petroleum Cleaners	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Size <sup>a</sup>	s	s	s	s	s	m	m	m
Number of Services	7	8	10	9	10	9	7	9
Full Time Front Counter Worker	1	3	1	1	1	3	2	1½
Part Time Front Counter Worker	0	3	1	4	1	4	1	0
Owner/Manager as Front Counter Worker	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Training Program Available	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no
Need for Training Program	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Birth Year	07	15	27	28	20	24	26	19
Years in Dry Cleaning	52	38	29	30	36	4	30	30
Years Managed	29	35	29	25	9	4	20	20
Workers Supervised	0	2	1	14	5	13	5	6
Manage Front Counter Workers	0	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

TABLE I (Continued)

Petroleum Cleaners	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Size <sup>a</sup>	m	1	1	1	1	1	1
Number of Services	9	8	11	6	3	7	9
Full Time Front Counter Worker	2	2	6	1	5	2	4
Part Time Front Counter Worker	2	0	3	1	0	1	1
Owner/Manager as Front Counter Worker	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Training Program Available	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Need for Training Program	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Birth Year	07	12	40	50	09	46	31
Years in Dry Cleaning	9	49	1½	13	40	14	22
Years Managed	9	41	1½	7	40	8	19
Workers Supervised	6	2	5	25	25	16	18
Manage Front Counter Workers	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes



TABLE I (Continued)

Synthetic Cleaners	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Size <sup>a</sup>	m	m	m	m	1	1	1
Number of Services	7	8	10	9	10	8	8
Full Time Front Counter Workers	1	2	2	2	4	1	14
Part Time Front Counter Workers	2	1	4	1	1	2	3
Owner/Manager as Front Counter Worker	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Training Program Available	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Need for Training Program	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Birth Year	30	24	18	23	28	34	28
Years in Dry Cleaning	10	25	30	15	40	20	12
Years Managed	10	25	12	15	10	4	12
Workers Supervised	9	9	7	12	9	5	34
Manage Front Counter Workers	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes

<sup>a</sup> s=small, m=medium, l=large



All but one of the owner/manager participants had served as a front counter worker. A majority of the participants (83.33%) indicated that a front counter worker training program was provided by the plant management, but all of the owner/managers indicated a need for a front counter worker training program.

The surveyed owner/managers ranged in age from 27-73 years and represented one and one-half to 56 years of dry cleaning experience as shown in Table I. Managerial and supervisory experience of the participants was from one and one-half to 41 years. One owner/manager indicated that he supervised 34 employees, eight supervised between ten and twenty-nine employees, and twenty-one supervised nine or fewer employees. Approximately one-third of the owner/managers were responsible for employees who worked at dry cleaning pick-up stations and in laundries affiliated with the dry cleaning plant.

Table II indicates the distribution of the study participants by type and size. Half of the participants were petroleum plants and half were synthetic plants. Small plants comprised one-third of the sample (33.34%); medium plants a little over one-third of the sample (36.66%); and large plants a little less than one-third of the sample (30.00%).

The findings of the study were grouped according to: 1) customer relations, statements 1, 2, 7, 11, 12, and 13 in the checklist; 2) textiles, statements 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 in the checklist; 3) office procedures, statements 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 in the checklist; and 4) dry cleaning techniques, statements 9, 10, 21 and 22 in the checklist.

TABLE II  
 SELECTED STUDY PLANTS BY TYPE AND SIZE  
 (N=30)

Type	Small Plant	% of Sample	Medium Plant	% of Sample	Large Plant	% of Sample	Total	% of Sample
Petroleum	5	16.67	4	13.33	4	20.00	15	50.00
Synthetic	<u>5</u>	<u>16.67</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>23.33</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>10.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>50.00</u>
Totals	10	33.34	11	36.66	9	30.00	30	100.00

#### Customer Relations

In the area of customer relations the following characteristics were rated: customer courtesy, customer requests, attitude toward customer, worker appearance, condition of customer's clothes, and previous home treatment of clothes.

Owner/managers, regardless of type plant or size plant, unanimously rated customer courtesy to be of more value than all other given characteristics. One hundred percent of the participants responded with "essential" with respect to customer courtesy. (See Table III.)

Customer requests (observation by the front counter worker of special requests, i.e., press on lapels, creases, or pleats) were rated by owner/managers as "essential," "important," and "helpful." (See Table IV.)

TABLE III  
 CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
 WORKER WITH RESPECT TO CUSTOMER COURTESY

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 1 - Customer Courtesy - Petroleum								
Essential	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Important								
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 1 - Customer Courtesy - Synthetic								
Essential	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00
Important								
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

TABLE IV  
 CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
 WORKER WITH RESPECT TO CUSTOMER REQUESTS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 2 - Customer Requests - Petroleum								
Essential	3	60.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	8	53.33
Important	2	40.00	1	25.00	3	50.00	6	40.00
Helpful			1	25.00			1	06.67
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 2 - Customer Requests - Synthetic								
Essential	2	40.00	3	42.86	1	33.33	6	40.00
Important	3	60.00	4	57.14	2	66.67	9	60.00
Helpful								
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Small petroleum and small synthetic plant owner/manager responses appeared to be complements of each other (60.00% "essential" and 40.00% "important" - 40.00% "essential" and 60.00% "important" respectively). Participants from large petroleum plants rated customer requests equally between "essential" and "important," while large synthetic plants responded with one-third of the owner/managers answering "essential" and two-thirds "important."

While the researcher administered the instrument, the characteristics ratings of "essential," "important," "helpful," "no value" and "not applicable" were verbally given to the participants with the explanation of what these ratings signified. It would seem somewhat unrealistic to expect an inexperienced person to have the characteristic of being able to honor customer requests at the front counter immediately upon hiring. The "essential" rating required observable behavior, therefore, the rating of "important" which a majority of the study participants marked and signified the owner/managers would train for the characteristic could be the more realistic rating. The owner/managers who answered "essential" were businessmen aware of how consideration of customer requests by the front counter worker was necessary to their service business.

Regardless of plant type or size, owner/managers were close in their responses with respect to the front counter worker's attitude toward the customer. (See Table V.) One hundred percent of the small and of the large plant owner/managers indicated "essential." Seventy-five percent of the medium petroleum plant owner/managers indicated "essential" and 25.00 percent "important" responses as compared to 85.71 percent "essential" and 14.29 percent "important" responses for

medium synthetic plant owner/managers. With respect to the front counter worker's attitude toward the customer the owner/managers responded with awareness of the image the customer could get from the front counter worker.

TABLE V  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ATTITUDE  
TOWARD CUSTOMER

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 7 - Attitude Toward Customer - Petroleum								
Essential	5	100.00	3	75.00	6	100.00	14	93.33
Important			1	25.00			1	06.67
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 7 - Attitude Toward Customer - Synthetic								
Essential	5	100.00	6	85.71	3	100.00	14	93.33
Important			1	14.29			1	06.67
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

As the dry cleaning industry attempts to promote personal appearance as well as its services, Table VI contains the data for worker appearance as rated by owner/managers.

TABLE VI  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO WORKER APPEARANCE

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 11 - Worker Appearance - Petroleum								
Essential	4	80.00	3	75.00	4	66.67	11	73.33
Important	1	20.00	1	25.00	2	33.33	4	26.67
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 11 - Worker Appearance - Synthetic								
Essential	4	80.00	6	85.71	1	33.33	11	73.33
Important	1	20.00	1	14.29	2	66.67	4	26.67
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

The owner/managers of small petroleum and synthetic plants were in agreement as to worker appearance. Large petroleum and large synthetic plant owner/managers were compliments of each other (66.67%

"essential," 33.33% "important" and 33.33% "essential," 66.67% "important," respectively). A majority of the study participants rated worker appearance as "important"; they desired the front counter worker to be neat and clean in appearance.

A majority of the responses of the owner/managers of dry cleaning plants indicated that the front counter worker's ability to observe the condition of the incoming clothing with respect to rips, stains, and burns was "important." (See Table VII.)

TABLE VII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
WITH RESPECT TO OBSERVATION OF INCOMING CLOTHES

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 12 - Condition of Clothes - Petroleum								
Essential	2	40.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	7	46.67
Important	3	60.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	8	53.33
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 12 - Condition of Clothes - Synthetic								
Essential	2	40.00	1	14.28			3	20.00
Important	3	60.00	3	42.86	2	66.67	8	53.33
Helpful			3	42.86	1	33.33	4	26.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable



Small petroleum and small synthetic plant owner/managers were in agreement as to their responses of "essential" and "important." Petroleum medium and large plants equally divided their responses between "essential" and "important." The "important" rating as signified to the owner/managers indicated that the front counter worker would be hired and trained to observe the condition of the incoming clothes.

As people attempted to use commercial stain removal products in their homes, problems have arisen for dry cleaners. Characteristic ratings responses concerning stains and possible previous home treatment are located in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
WITH RESPECT TO HOME TREATMENT OF CLOTHES

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 13 - Home Treatment of Clothes - Petroleum								
Essential	1	20.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	6	40.00
Important	4	80.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	9	60.00
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 13 - Home Treatment of Clothes - Synthetic								
Essential	1	20.00	1	14.29	1	33.33	3	20.00
Important	4	80.00	4	57.14	1	33.33	9	60.00
Helpful			2	28.57	1	33.34	3	20.00
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

The majority of the owner/managers generally indicated that knowledge of previous home treatment of clothes was "important," but not "essential." The owner/managers rating of "important" indicated that the front counter worker would be trained to ask pertinent questions about observable stains.

#### Textiles

The area of textiles covered the characteristics related to: fabric construction, fiber recognition, dye recognition, surface print recognition, bonded fabric recognition, recognition of fragile fabrics, and the ability to recognize color.

The characteristic of recognizing fabric construction, i.e., knit, woven and felted construction, was rated by owner/managers as "important." Table IX is the collected responses with respect to fabric construction. A majority of the owner/managers responded with "important" and "helpful." One large petroleum owner/manager responded with "essential" and one large petroleum owner/manager responded with "not applicable." The rating of "important" indicated that the owner/managers were willing to train the front counter worker to recognize different fabric constructions. The rating of "helpful" indicated that the owner/managers did not require this characteristic of the front counter worker, but the front counter worker might acquire this knowledge after training and experience. Fabric construction was "not applicable" to the leather cleaning plant.

TABLE IX

CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO FABRIC CONSTRUCTION

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 14 - Fabric Construction - Petroleum								
Essential					1	16.67	1	6.67
Important	4	80.00	4	100.00			8	33.33
Helpful	1	20.00			4	66.67	5	33.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	6.67
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.01 <sup>b</sup>	15	100.00
Statement 14 - Fabric Construction - Synthetic								
Essential								
Important	3	60.00	3	42.86			6	40.00
Helpful	2	40.00	3	42.86	3	100.00	8	53.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>			1	14.28			1	6.67
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

Table X contains the data collected about fiber recognition. Both petroleum and synthetic owner/managers rated fiber recognition "important" and "helpful," with one large petroleum plant rating it "essential," and one large petroleum plant rating it as "not applicable." "Essential" rating is unrealistic from the large petroleum plant owner/managers as identification of fibers and fiber blends without testing the fabric is difficult. The owner/managers probably realized the extent to which this knowledge could be used and answered accordingly.

Comments from several owner/managers made during data collection disclosed that fiber knowledge was generally left to the cleaner and spotter.

TABLE X  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO FIBER RECOGNITION

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 15 - Fiber Recognition - Petroleum								
Essential					2	33.33	2	13.33
Important	4	80.00	3	75.00			7	46.67
Helpful	1	20.00	1	25.00	3	50.00	5	33.33
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	06.67
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 15 - Fiber Recognition - Synthetic								
Essential								
Important	2	40.00	3	42.86	1	33.33	6	40.00
Helpful	3	60.00	3	42.86	2	66.67	8	53.33
No Value			1	14.28			1	06.67
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Small petroleum and synthetic plant owner/managers answered identically with regard to dye recognition. (See Table XI.)

TABLE XI  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO DYE RECOGNITION

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 16 - Dye Recognition - Petroleum								
Essential								
Important	1	20.00	1	25.00	3	50.00	5	33.33
Helpful	4	80.00	3	75.00	3	50.00	10	66.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 16 - Dye Recognition - Synthetic								
Essential								
Important	1	20.00					1	06.67
Helpful	4	80.00	5	71.43	3	100.00	12	80.00
No Value			2	28.57			2	13.33
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

The majority of medium plant owner/managers indicated that the characteristic of dye recognition was "helpful." Plant owner/managers might expect after training and experience that the front counter worker would develop this characteristic. Plant owner/managers indicated during an interview with the researcher that the cleaner and spotter would be expected to recognize dyes.

As front counter workers came in contact with currently fashionable printed fabrics, small and medium petroleum plant owner/managers

rated surface print recognitions as "essential." Table XII contains the data.

TABLE XII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO SURFACE  
PRINT RECOGNITION

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 17 - Surface Print Recognition - Petroleum								
Essential	1	20.00	1	25.00			2	13.33
Important	1	20.00	1	25.00	2	33.33	4	26.67
Helpful	3	60.00	2	50.00	3	50.00	8	53.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	06.67
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 17 - Surface Print Recognition - Synthetic								
Essential								
Important	2	40.00	2	28.57	1	33.33	5	33.33
Helpful	3	60.00	4	57.14	2	66.67	9	60.00
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>			1	14.29			1	06.67
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Trained persons sometimes have difficulty recognizing printed fabrics and it would be unrealistic to expect a front counter worker to have this characteristic upon hiring. Owner/managers, realizing the

difficulties that can arise from cleaning prints, answered with regard to the front counter worker's need to acquire this characteristic as soon as possible. The majority of the study participants regarded surface print recognition as "helpful." The owner/managers would expect that characteristic might develop after training and experience. Several owner/managers expected the spotter and cleaner to have this characteristic rather than the front counter worker.

Bonded fabrics were manufactured as an alternative to lining garments and as a method for adding another layer for warmth. The front counter worker would be confronted with this kind of fabric when assuming responsibilities at the front counter. Table XIII relates to bonded fabrics.

Twenty percent of the large petroleum plant owner/managers rated recognition of bonded fabrics with "essential." Cleaning solvents have dissolved some of the adhesives used to hold the fabrics together, therefore, a cleaning plant is risking a customer claim on a ruined garment should the front counter worker accept such a garment. The "essential" rating could be unrealistic as the inexperienced person applying for a front counter worker position might not observably be able to recognize bonded fabrics. A majority of the study participants responded with "helpful."

Fragile fabrics were considered as silk chiffon, historical textiles and other fabrics that required special gentle handling. Petroleum plant owner/managers regardless of size rated the recognition of fragile fabrics with one-fifth to one-fourth of their responses as "essential." (See Table XIV.)

TABLE XIII  
 CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
 WORKER WITH RESPECT TO RECOGNIZING  
 BONDED FABRICS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 18 - Bonded Fabric Recognition - Petroleum								
Essential					1	16.67	1	06.67
Important	1	20.00	1	25.00	2	33.33	4	26.67
Helpful	4	80.00	3	75.00	2	33.33	9	60.00
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	06.67
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>
Statement 18 - Bonded Fabric Recognition - Synthetic								
Essential								
Important	2	40.00	1	14.29	1	33.33	4	26.67
Helpful	3	60.00	5	71.42	2	66.67	10	66.67
No Value			1	14.29			1	06.67
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.



TABLE XIV  
 CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
 WORKER WITH RESPECT TO RECOGNIZING  
 FRAGILE FABRICS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 19 - Recognition of Fragile Fabrics - Petroleum								
Essential	1	20.00	1	25.00	1	16.67	3	20.00
Important	1	20.00			2	33.33	3	20.00
Helpful	3	60.00	3	75.00	2	33.33	8	53.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	06.67
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 19 - Recognition of Fragile Fabrics - Synthetic								
Essential			1	14.29	1	33.33	2	13.33
Important	2	40.00	3	42.85	1	33.33	6	40.00
Helpful	3	60.00	2	28.57	1	33.34	6	40.00
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>			1	14.29			1	06.67
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Medium and large synthetic plant owner/managers rated the characteristic of recognizing fragile fabrics as "essential" (14.29% and 33.33%, respectively). A majority of the plant owner/managers rated the characteristic as "helpful." One large petroleum plant owner/manager regarded the characteristic as "not applicable," and one medium synthetic plant owner/manager rated the recognition of fragile fabrics as of "no value." The "helpful" rating would indicate that the

owner/managers would expect the characteristic to recognize fragile fabrics to develop after training and experience.

Primarily the recognition of color characteristic was directed at a front counter worker's possibility of being color blind. As stated to this researcher few of the owner/managers had thought of color blindness and responded to this characteristic with the correct recording of garments on a ticket in mind. (See Table XV.)

TABLE XV  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO COLOR RECOGNITION

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 20 - Recognition of Color - Petroleum								
Essential					2	33.33	2	13.33
Important	3	60.00	1	25.00	1	16.67	5	33.33
Helpful	2	40.00	3	75.00	3	50.00	8	53.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>99.99<sup>b</sup></u>
Statement 20 - Recognition of Color - Synthetic								
Essential			1	14.29	2	66.67	3	20.00
Important	3	60.00	2	28.57	1	33.33	6	40.00
Helpful	2	40.00	4	57.14			6	40.00
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

The front counter worker was trained to fill out a ticket for that particular plant's labeling and identification system. Color blindness was admitted by one owner/manager, yet he had performed as a front counter worker without difficulty. It would seem that color blindness was not a problem and accurate recording of clothes on a ticket was possible regardless of the ability to recognize color.

#### Office Procedures

The area of office procedures covered the following topics: writing clearly, making correct change, recognizing incorrectly written checks, operating a cash register, and working without close supervision.

One front counter worker characteristic very observable upon hiring is the ability to write clearly. The applicant filling out an application would allow an owner/manager to rate this characteristic. (See Table XVI.) Surveyed owner/managers from small petroleum plants responded with 60.00 percent "essential" and 40.00 percent "important" as compared with small synthetic plant owner/managers 40.00 percent "essential" and 60.00 percent "important." Medium petroleum and synthetic plant owner/managers indicated somewhat similarly as did the medium petroleum plant owner/managers who responded one-quarter "essential" and three-quarters "important" as compared to medium synthetic plant owner/managers 14.29 percent "essential" and 85.71 percent "important" with regard to writing clearly. A majority of the owner/managers rated the characteristic as "important" and perhaps thought a person's legibility could be improved.

TABLE XVI  
 CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
 WORKER WITH RESPECT TO WRITING CLEARLY

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 3 - Writes Clearly - Petroleum								
Essential	3	60.00	1	25.00	2	33.33	6	40.00
Important	2	40.00	3	75.00	3	50.00	8	53.33
Helpful					1	16.67	1	06.67
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 3 - Writes Clearly - Synthetic								
Essential	2	40.00	1	14.29	1	33.33	4	26.67
Important	3	60.00	6	85.71	1	33.33	10	66.67
Helpful					1	33.34	1	06.67
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

Consideration of the front counter worker's characteristic for making correct change was indicated as being "essential" by 100.00 percent of the petroleum plant owner/managers, regardless of plant size. (See Table XVII.) Several plant owner/managers remarked that they would teach a front counter worker to make correct change. In plants where checks are received as payment or charge accounts are available fewer problems would arise than in a plant that does only "cash and carry" business. A plant owner/manager obviously could not

afford to lose money indefinitely through a front counter worker's inability to make correct change.

TABLE XVII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO  
MAKING CORRECT CHANGE

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 4 - Makes Correct Change - Petroleum								
Essential	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Important								
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 4 - Makes Correct Change - Synthetic								
Essential	4	80.00	4	57.14	2	66.67	10	66.67
Important	1	20.00	3	42.86			4	26.67
Helpful					1	33.33	1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

Incorrectly written checks posed a problem to the plant owner/managers. In considering this characteristic it was found that small petroleum and synthetic plant owner/managers agreed on its value (80.00% "essential," and 20.00% "important"). (See Table XVIII.)

TABLE XVIII

CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
WITH RESPECT TO INCORRECTLY WRITTEN CHECKS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 5 - Recognizes Incorrect Checks - Petroleum								
Essential	4	80.00	2	50.00	2	33.33	8	53.33
Important	1	20.00	2	50.00	2	33.33	5	33.33
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>					2	33.33	2	13.33
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>99.99<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>15</u>	<u>99.99<sup>b</sup></u>
Statement 5 - Recognizes Inccorect Checks - Synthetic								
Essential	4	80.00			1	33.33	5	33.33
Important	1	20.00	7	100.00	2	66.67	10	66.67
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

Medium and large petroleum plant owner/managers divided their responses between "essential" and "important" as compared to medium synthetic plant owner/managers response of 100.00 percent "important." Two of the six large petroleum plant owner/managers indicated "essential," two indicated "important" with respect to incorrectly written checks and the remaining two responded with "not applicable" as these plants did not accept personal checks. A majority of the study

participants indicated that the characteristic of recognizing incorrectly written checks was "important." Therefore they would train a front counter worker to recognize an incorrectly written check.

Few dry cleaning businesses operate without a cash register or cash drawer of some sort. The owner/managers generally considered operating a cash register as "important." (See Table XIX.)

TABLE XIX  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO OPERATING  
A CASH REGISTER

Ratings	Small Plants		Medium Plants		Large Plants		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 6 - Operates Cash Register - Petroleum								
Essential	3	60.00	2	50.00	1	16.67	6	40.00
Important	2	40.00	2	50.00	4	66.66	8	53.33
Helpful					1	16.67	1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 6 - Operates Cash Register - Synthetic								
Essential			1	14.29	1	33.33	2	13.33
Important	5	100.00	6	85.71	1	33.33	12	80.00
Helpful					1	33.34	1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Although the ability to operate a cash register was desired by owner/managers when hiring, two-thirds of the study participants indicated that they would train the front counter worker to develop this characteristic.

When considering the characteristic of working without close supervision the small petroleum and synthetic plant owner/managers responded identically. (See Table XX.)

TABLE XX  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO WORKING WITHOUT  
CLOSE SUPERVISION

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 8 - No Close Supervision - Petroleum								
Essential	2	40.00	1	25.00	4	66.66	7	46.67
Important	3	60.00	3	75.00	1	16.67	7	46.67
Helpful					1	16.67	1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>
Statement 8 - No Close Supervision - Synthetic								
Essential	2	40.00	2	71.43	1	33.33	5	33.33
Important	3	60.00	5	28.57	1	33.33	9	60.00
Helpful					1	33.34	1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.



A majority of the study participants responded with "important" with respect to the front counter worker being able to work without close supervision. Initiative or the characteristic of self-direction is desired by plant owner/managers, but the owner/managers would aid a person in making decisions about garments and customers, i.e., when to consult the owner/manager. This characteristic would relieve the owner/managers to supervise and conduct other business elsewhere. When the situation arose that required a decision to be made that was beyond the front counter worker's responsibilities the owner/manager was consulted.

#### Dry Cleaning Procedures

Characteristics that were rated under the general heading of dry cleaning included: front counter worker reading garment labels sewed into the seam of the garment, rejoining the cleaning orders to be returned to the customer, and what could or could not be cleaned in petroleum or synthetic solvent.

Characteristics with respect to reading garment labels were rated by owner/managers. Table XXI contains the collected data. According to Federal Trade Commission rulings, textile products must have fiber and care labels permanently sewn into a seam or hem. The front counter worker has this information available if the consumer has not removed the label from the garments. The front counter worker may discover that the garment is not drycleanable through information on the label. A majority of the participants responded with "important" when rating the characteristic of reading garment labels. Several owner/managers mentioned that a lack of time might prevent the front counter worker

from reading the labels. Generally the owner/managers would train the front counter worker to be aware of these labels, yet owner/managers expected the cleaner and spotter to consult the label.

TABLE XXI  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO READING  
GARMENT LABELS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 9 - Garment Labels - Petroleum								
Essential	2	40.00	2	50.00	1	16.67	5	33.33
Important	3	60.00			4	66.66	7	46.67
Helpful			2	50.00	1	16.67	3	20.00
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 9 - Garment Labels - Synthetic								
Essential	1	20.00	2	28.57	1	33.33	4	26.67
Important	4	80.00	5	71.43	1	33.33	10	66.67
Helpful					1	33.34	1	06.67
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

In smaller plants it is sometimes the duty of the front counter worker to rejoin cleaning orders. After clothes have been cleaned in the silk and/or wool unit, it is necessary to combine the clothes to

join the order. Table XXII is the collected data from owner/managers responses.

TABLE XXII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
WITH RESPECT TO REJOINING CLEANING ORDERS

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 10 - Rejoining Cleaning Orders - Petroleum								
Essential	3	60.00	3	75.00	2	33.33	8	53.33
Important	2	40.00			3	50.00	5	33.33
Helpful			1	25.00			1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>					1	16.67	1	06.67
Totals	5	100.00	4	100.00	6	100.00	15	100.00
Statement 10 - Rejoining Cleaning Orders - Synthetic								
Essential	3	60.00	2	28.57	3	100.00	8	53.33
Important	2	40.00	4	57.14			6	40.00
Helpful								
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>			1	14.29			1	06.67
Totals	5	100.00	7	100.00	3	100.00	15	100.00

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Small petroleum and small synthetic plant owner/managers answered with 60.00 percent "essential" and 40.00 percent "important" as to the necessary precision in this characteristic. One large petroleum plant

and one medium synthetic plant owner/manager responded with "not applicable" as this characteristic did not apply to the front counter worker's duties. A majority of the owner/managers responded with "essential" in regard to rejoining cleaning orders.

All textile products do not clean the same way in petroleum and synthetic solvent and are sometimes disintegrated or stiffened when cleaned in the inappropriate solvent. Table XXIII contains the data collected from owner/managers.

TABLE XXIII  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER WORKER  
WITH RESPECT TO PETROLEUM SOLVENT CLEANING

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 21 - Petroleum Solvent Cleaning - Petroleum								
Essential	1	20.00	1	25.00	1	16.67	3	20.00
Important	2	40.00	2	50.00	1	16.67	5	33.33
Helpful	2	40.00	1	25.00	3	50.00	6	40.00
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.01<sup>b</sup></u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 21 - Petroleum Solvent Cleaning - Synthetic								
Essential					1	33.33	1	06.67
Important	1	20.00	1	14.29	1	33.33	3	20.00
Helpful	1	20.00	1	14.29			2	13.33
No Value N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>3</u>	<u>60.00</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>71.43</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>33.34</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>60.00</u>
	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

<sup>b</sup>Totals do not equal 100.00 percent because of rounding.

Petroleum plant owner/managers responded with a majority of their ratings as "helpful." One owner/manager responded with "not applicable"; the characteristic of knowing what could not be cleaned in petroleum solvent was not expected of the front counter worker. The owner/managers left that characteristic to the cleaner and spotter.

A majority of the synthetic solvent owner/managers responded with "not applicable" as to knowing what could not be cleaned in petroleum solvent. This characteristic was left to the spotter and cleaner.

The characteristic of being able to recognize items that could not be cleaned in synthetic solvent was rated by owner-managers. Table XXIV contains the data collected from the owner/managers. A majority of the petroleum plant owner/managers responded that the characteristic of being able to recognize what items could not be cleaned in synthetic solvent was "not applicable." A majority of the synthetic plant owner/managers responded with "important"; they would hire and train a front counter worker to recognize those items that would not clean in synthetic solvent.

Upon completion of the checklist of characteristics the owner/managers were given the opportunity and encouraged to add characteristics to the checklist and rate them accordingly (Appendix D). These characteristics were grouped according to the initial categories, were rated and noted as to the number of times owner/managers mentioned the characteristic. The first three characteristics mentioned the largest number of times fell into the customer relations category. Remembering patrons' names by cultivation of a memory and honesty with a customer rated "essential," as did listening to customer. Other characteristics generally were mentioned singly with the exception of: know fabric

(mentioned twice); obtain written releases on special projects (mentioned twice); and the front counter worker being flexible (mentioned twice). These characteristics were rated "essential."

TABLE XXIV  
CHARACTERISTIC RATINGS OF THE FRONT COUNTER  
WORKER WITH RESPECT TO SYNTHETIC  
SOLVENT CLEANING

Ratings	<u>Small Plants</u>		<u>Medium Plants</u>		<u>Large Plants</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Statement 22 - Synthetic Solvent Cleaning - Petroleum								
Essential	1	20.00			1	16.67	2	13.33
Important			1	25.00			1	06.67
Helpful			1	25.00			1	06.67
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>	4	80.00	2	50.00	5	83.33	11	73.33
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>
Statement 22 - Synthetic Solvent Cleaning - Synthetic								
Essential			3	42.86	1	33.33	4	26.67
Important	3	60.00	1	14.28	2	66.67	6	40.00
Helpful	2	40.00	3	42.86			5	33.33
No Value								
N/A <sup>a</sup>								
Totals	<u>5</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>100.00</u>

<sup>a</sup>N/A=Not Applicable

Percentages were not determined as few characteristics were mentioned more than once, and some owner/managers listed several while

some did not add characteristics. Some of the characteristics might be difficult to rate upon hiring of a front counter worker, but would become more evident as the front counter worker assumed responsibilities.

#### Critical Incidents

Critical incidents involving the front counter worker were collected while characteristics were being rated. Appendix E lists the critical incidents and their categories. The openended question that elicited the critical incident was stated in negative terms with the purpose of bringing to mind extreme situations the owner/managers could recall. These extreme situations were easily remembered and had been used as the owner/manager's way of cautioning the front counter worker to be aware.

The critical incidents mentioned were not related to one cleaning solvent or another nor were the sizes of the plants relevant to the incident recalled by the owner/manager. The incidents recalled which were related to customer relations (Appendix E) involved garments and household items. Some garments and household items were cleaned with no guarantee of the outcome and were cleaned against the better judgment of the owner/manager.

The critical incidents related to textiles (Appendix E) involved primarily dyes, vinyl and labeling. Loose dyes had colored whole loads of clothes. Vinyl had melted or disintegrated in dry cleaning loads. Labels, warning against dry cleaning, had been removed by the customer and dry cleaning loads had been ruined.

Dry cleaning critical incidents (Appendix E) were concerned with vinyl being stiffened or melted. The initial search of clothes did not find the potentially harmful item between garment and lining and the subsequent load was damaged.

The category of "Other" included in Appendix E consumers' expectations that were beyond what could reasonably be done by the dry cleaner. Complaints against the dry cleaner by the consumer were recalled by the owner/managers.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify front counter work characteristics needed in dry cleaning establishments. Data were collected by checklists and personal interview and analyzed with frequencies and percentages. The following conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

#### Summary

Regardless of type or size plant, those characteristics related to customer relations were rated as being "essential." Dry cleaners indicated that textiles information should be left to the spotter and cleaner. The front counter worker did not need a textiles background to perform the duties and responsibilities of the position. It is important that the front counter worker know simple office procedures of operating a cash register, recognizing incorrectly written checks and making correct change. Responses of owner/managers indicated they would hire and train a person to develop these characteristics.

Petroleum plant owner/managers expected their front counter workers to know what could not be cleaned in petroleum solvent; they also expected the spotter and cleaner to be more knowledgeable in this area. Synthetic plant owner/managers expected the spotter and cleaner rather than the front counter worker to be aware of solvent cleaning

capabilities. Owner/managers recalled critical incidents when quick thinking and action of the front counter worker helped avert a claim against their business.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions could be drawn from this study:

1. A front counter worker would be trained by owner/managers to fulfill their responsibilities.
2. Owner/managers relied on their own experience in dry cleaning to relate knowledge to front counter workers. Information from International Fabricare Institute was sometimes used.
3. Characteristics needed by front counter workers were basically the same regardless of plant type or size. Basic training of a front counter worker would allow them to be hired by a petroleum or synthetic plant.

### Recommendations

Recommendations include the following:

1. Establish a training course where needed, using critical incidents as a teaching method. Video-tapes could be used if funds were available. Case studies and simulation could be utilized in teaching front counter workers their duties and responsibilities. Learning packages could be developed by dry cleaners and educators to facilitate training.
2. Owner/managers investigate the possibility of front counter worker self-evaluation using characteristic checklists. The checklist could be used on a merit basis for pay raises.

3. Encourage front counter workers to read the International Fabricare Institute bulletins in order to remain current in dry cleaning problems and the research that has been conducted in an attempt to solve those problems.
4. The study should be replicated with a larger sample, in other sections of the United States, to compare findings.
5. The study could be replicated using trained front counter workers as interviewees rather than owner/managers of dry cleaning establishments.
6. The identification of characteristics needed of the front counter worker could be done within the laundry industry to compare findings.

#### Implications

The characteristics checklist, critical incidents and possible subsequent training program could be used by those persons who are not considered skilled: i.e., high school students, homemakers re-entering the job market, prison release centers. Development of the program could possibly involve individually paced instruction.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

SELECTED STUDY PARTICIPANTS FROM THE  
OKLAHOMA COUNTY CLEANERS  
ASSOCIATION

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Admiral Cleaners                            | 16. Manhattan Cleaners           |
| 2. American Cleaners and Laundry               | 17. Master Cleaners              |
| 3. C and C Cleaners                            | 18. Melody Leather Cleaners      |
| 4. Cherokee Hills Cleaners and<br>Laundromat   | 19. Paragon Cleaners and Laundry |
| 5. Coronado Cleaners                           | 20. Pat's Drive In Cleaners      |
| 6. Deluxe Drive In Cleaners and<br>Fur Storage | 21. Quality Cleaners             |
| 7. Elite Sanitone Cleaners                     | 22. Rightway Cleaners            |
| 8. Fabric Care Center, Inc.                    | 23. Round Up Cleaners            |
| 9. Family Cleaners                             | 24. Scott Cleaners Inc.          |
| 10. Fiesta Cleaners and Laundry                | 25. Shartel Cleaners             |
| 11. Hearse's Cleaners                          | 26. Stevens-Midway Cleaners      |
| 12. Jack's Cleaners                            | 27. Surf Cleaners                |
| 13. Lakewood Master Cleaners                   | 28. Whirlwind Cleaners           |
| 14. Lebow's Cleaners                           | 29. White House Cleaners, Inc.   |
| 15. Magic Cleaners and Laundry                 | 30. Zerral Squyres Cleaners      |

APPENDIX B

THE INSTRUMENT



## QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: Please answer questions or place check marks where indicated.

1. NAME AND BUSINESS (optional) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Check the type of solvent used: Petroleum \_\_\_\_\_ Synthetic \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please check the type of service rendered in addition to cleaning:
 

Wool finishing _____	Pressing _____	Blocking _____
Silk finishing _____	Alterations _____	Storage _____
Leather _____	Water proofing _____	Hats _____
Household items _____	Fur _____	Other services-- Please list.
4. How many full-time front counter workers are employed at your location? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many part-time or occasional front counter workers are employed at your location? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you served as a front counter worker? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does the drycleaning plant provide a training program for the front counter worker? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
8. Is there a need for a training program for the front counter worker? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
9. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many years have you engaged in drycleaning? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many years have you managed or supervised in drycleaning? \_\_\_\_\_
12. How many workers report to you? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you manage front counter workers? \_\_\_\_\_

## SKILLS CHECKLIST

DIRECTIONS: Circle the number to indicate the importance of each of the following skills to a front counter worker in a drycleaning business.

The number 3 indicates the skill is essential.

The number 2 indicates the skill is important.

The number 1 indicates the skill is helpful.

The number 0 indicates the skill is of no value.

The letters N/A indicate the skill does not apply.

Skills	Essen- tial	Impor- tant	Help- ful	No value	
1. Is courteous in dealing with customers.	3	2	1	0	N/A
2. Observes small details when dealing with customer, i.e.: special requests, press on lapels, creases, or pleats.	3	2	1	0	N/A
3. Writes clearly.	3	2	1	0	N/A
4. Makes correct change.	3	2	1	0	N/A
5. Recognizes checks written incorrectly.	3	2	1	0	N/A
6. Operates a cash register.	3	2	1	0	N/A
7. Friendly attitude toward customers.	3	2	1	0	N/A
8. Works without close supervision.	3	2	1	0	N/A
9. Reads labels that are sewn into garments.	3	2	1	0	N/A
10. Is precise in rejoining cleaning orders.	3	2	1	0	N/A
11. Is neat and clean in appearance.	3	2	1	0	N/A
12. While in the presence of the customer, observes missing buttons, color loss, cigarette burns, etc. on incoming clothes.	3	2	1	0	N/A

Skills	Essen- tial	Impor- tant	Help- ful	No value	
13. Asks questions about observable stains, i.e., age of stain, nature of stain, previous home treatment.	3	2	1	0	N/A
14. Recognizes fabric construction, i.e., woven, knit, or other.	3	2	1	0	N/A
15. Recognizes natural, synthetic and blended fibers.	3	2	1	0	N/A
16. Recognizes types of dyes.	3	2	1	0	N/A
17. Recognizes surface prints.	3	2	1	0	N/A
18. Recognizes bonded fabrics.	3	2	1	0	N/A
19. Recognizes fragile fabrics, i.e., silk chiffon, historical textiles.	3	2	1	0	N/A
20. Recognizes colors--is not color blind.	3	2	1	0	N/A
21. Recognizes items that cannot be cleaned in petroleum solvent.	3	2	1	0	N/A
22. Recognizes items that cannot be cleaned in synthetic solvent.	3	2	1	0	N/A

Are there skills you would expect from a front counter worker that have not been mentioned? Please list them below and indicate the importance of those skills to front counter workers.

Skills					
_____	3	2	1	0	N/A
_____	3	2	1	0	N/A
_____	3	2	1	0	N/A

Can you recall a situation or a time that a garment was saved from ruin or your business avoided a claim because of the experience, knowledge or quick thinking of your front counter worker or supervisor?

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF CLOTHING, TEXTILES  
& MERCHANDISING

STILLWATER, OKLAHOMA 74074  
HOME ECONOMICS WEST 312  
(405) 624-5034

July 1, 1977

Dear Sir:

I am currently conducting a survey to determine the responsibilities--required knowledge of business procedures and textiles--of front counter workers in the drycleaning industry. Mrs. Dorothy Bennett, Executive Secretary of the Oklahoma County Cleaners Association, suggested I contact and interview the manager or supervisor of your plant as part of this survey.

Enclosed is a copy of the questions to be answered during the interview. The information collected will be used as part of a master's thesis in the Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising Department at Oklahoma State University. All information will be kept confidential.

Interviews will be arranged for the week of July 6-9. Each interview will take approximately 10-15 minutes. You will be contacted later by phone to arrange a time for an interview. If you have questions please contact me: 6516 S. Indiana, Oklahoma City, 73159, 685-1332.

Yours truly,

Glenda Lowry  
Graduate Student  
Clothing, Textiles and  
Merchandising Department  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL FRONT COUNTER WORK CHARACTERISTICS

AS RECALLED BY OWNER/MANAGERS

ADDITIONAL FRONT COUNTER WORK CHARACTERISTICS  
AS RECALLED BY OWNER/MANAGERS

Characteristic	Number of Times Mentioned	Rating
<u>Customer Relations</u>		
1. Be honest with customer	3	Essential
2. Cultivate a memory	5	Essential
3. Listen to customer	2	Essential
<u>Textiles</u>		
1. Know fabric	2	Essential
2. Be able to sew - to repair not alter	1	Essential
3. Be able to alter garments	1	No rating
<u>Office Procedures</u>		
1. Get first and last name of patron for notification	1	Essential
2. Be precise in returning order to customer	1	Essential
3. Be courteous over the telephone	1	Essential
4. Follow instructions	1	Essential
5. Keep counter area clean and Pleasant	1	Essential
<u>Dry Cleaning Techniques</u>		
1. Be thorough in initial search of clothes	1	Essential
2. Obtain written releases on special projects, i.e. draperies	2	Essential
<u>Personal Characteristics</u>		
1. Initiative	1	Essential
2. Dependability	1	Essential
3. Flexibility	2	Essential
4. Willingness to learn	1	Essential
5. Mannerliness	1	Essential

APPENDIX E

CRITICAL INCIDENTS AS RECALLED

BY OWNER/MANAGERS



CRITICAL INCIDENTS AS RECALLED  
BY OWNER/MANAGERS

Critical Incident	Group
1. The front counter worker received garments and household items that would be cleaned at the customer's own risk. A customer's release was obtained.	Customer Relations
2. Draperies were brought to the plant to be cleaned. The draperies were in poor condition and possibly would have been destroyed in the cleaning. The customer was warned of the possibility and a customer release was obtained.	Customer Relations
3. The front counter worker noticed stains before the garments were dry cleaned, and was able to have the spotter give special treatment to the garments.	Customer Relations
4. Garments were lost because a tag did not remain attached to the garment. The front counter worker was involved in helping the customer file a claim.	Customer Relations
5. The front counter worker noticed a label that the coat was to be cleaned by sawdust method and the equipment was not available at the plant. The customer took the coat elsewhere.	Customer Relations
6. A jacket was made that had vinyl sleeves and a wool body. The materials were incompatible for cleaning purposes. The front counter worker explained to the customer the situation.	Textiles
7. Loose dyes in flimsy expensive garments "bled" over a load of drycleaning. The front counter worker was made aware of the possibilities and future customers were informed of the problems and garments were cleaned individually at the customer's own risk.	Textiles
8. Some leather-like garments were not labeled dry cleanable and the front counter worker obtained a customer release.	Textiles
9. The front counter worker was aware that stains that looked like hair dye were difficult to remove and there was no guarantee that it could be removed from some fibers. Customer release was obtained.	Textiles

## CRITICAL INCIDENTS (Continued)

Critical Incident	Group
10. The customer was informed by telephone that DO NOT DRY CLEAN labels were found in the household items and garments that were brought in to be cleaned.	Textiles
11. Dye was lost from a garment in cleaning and was no longer bright. The front counter worker informed the customer of the textile problem. The manufacturer was at fault.	Textiles
12. Popular iron-on transfers on T-shirts were brought in to be cleaned. The solvents used sometimes dissolved the adhesive that held these in place. The transfers sometimes dissolved in the cleaning solvents. The customer was informed of the possibility. Customer release was obtained.	Textiles
13. The dry cleaner measured wool knit garments before and after cleaning and reshaped a garment if it shrank or stretched.	Dry Cleaning
14. Ballpoint pen, crayola, lipstick, mascara were caught between lining and garment. Loads of dry cleaning were damaged; individual garments were recleaned and some claims were avoided as some of the garments were wearable after the second cleaning.	Dry Cleaning
15. Vinyls hardened in the cleaning solvent and were softened to wearability by the use of plasticizer.	Dry Cleaning
16. Vinyl trims were stiffened or disintegrated in the cleaning process. Customer claims were filed for damaged clothing.	Dry Cleaning
17. Some customers had unrealistic expectations on household items and the front counter worker informed the patrom of the cleaning limitations.	Other
18. Snags on knits were attributed to the cleaner; the front counter worker had noted on the ticket that the snags were in the garment upon arrival.	Other
19. Cigarette burns were attributed to cleaner; the front counter worker had noted on the ticket that the burns were on the garment upon arrival.	Other

VITA<sup>2</sup>

Glenda Lee Lowry

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

**Thesis:** IDENTIFICATION OF FRONT COUNTER WORKER CHARACTERISTICS IN DRY CLEANING ESTABLISHMENTS

**Major Field:** Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising

**Biographical:**

**Personal Data:** Born in Wichita, Kansas, January 7, 1944, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Lowry.

**Education:** Graduated from Duncan High School, Duncan, Oklahoma, June 1, 1962; attended the University of Oklahoma, 1962-66; attended Oklahoma State University, 1966-68 and received the Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics Education in May, 1968; attended California State University at Fresno, California, 1968; attended Oklahoma State University, 1970; attended Northeastern Oklahoma State University at Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 1971-72; attended Oklahoma State University, 1975-77; completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State University in December, 1977.

**Professional Experience:** Taught Vocational Home Economics at Colbert High School, Colbert, Oklahoma, 1968; taught Science and Home Economics at Lindsay Junior High School, Lindsay, California, 1968-70; taught Vocational Home Economics at Cameron High School, Cameron, Oklahoma, 1970-72; taught Vocational Home Economics at Tipton High School, Tipton, Oklahoma, 1972-75; graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising at Oklahoma State University, 1975-76; graduate teaching assistant-audio-visual specialist on Dean's Staff, Division of Home Economics, 1976-77.

**Professional Organizations:** Omicron Nu; Phi Upsilon Omicron.