

Pittsburg State University

## Pittsburg State University Digital Commons

---

Research Problems, 1940-1991

Graduate School

---

8-1949

### A Study to Determine the Duties and Deficiencies of Employees of Negro Business Firms and Professional Offices in Tulsa and Muskogee, Oklahoma

Wynona Barrett Bush  
*Kansas State Teachers College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/problems>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Bush, Wynona Barrett, "A Study to Determine the Duties and Deficiencies of Employees of Negro Business Firms and Professional Offices in Tulsa and Muskogee, Oklahoma" (1949). *Research Problems, 1940-1991*. 70.

<https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/problems/70>

This Graduate Research is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Problems, 1940-1991 by an authorized administrator of Pittsburg State University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@pittstate.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@pittstate.edu).

A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE DUTIES AND DEFICIENCIES  
OF EMPLOYEES OF NEGRO BUSINESS FIRMS AND PROFESSIONAL  
OFFICES IN TULSA AND MUSKOGEE, OKLAHOMA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer is indebted to Dr. W. S. Lysterla,  
Professor R. J. Thomas, and Professor C. A. Swenson  
for their helpful suggestions and constructive  
criticisms. She also wishes to express her  
A Problem Submitted to the Graduate Division in Partial  
Appreciation to the teachers and the businessmen  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
who cooperated in making this study possible.  
of Master of Science

*Problem  
1.5.1949*

BY

Wynona Barrett Bush

KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

August, 1949

02855518

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer is indebted to Dr. W. S. Lyerla, Professor R. J. Thomas, and Professor C. A. Swenson for their helpful suggestions and constructive criticisms. She also wishes to express her appreciation to the teachers and the businessmen who cooperated in making this study possible.

APPROVED:

Thesis Adviser W. S. Lyerla

Chairman of Thesis Committee W. S. Lyerla

Chairman of Graduate Council Ernest Mahan

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CHAPTER |  | PAGE |
|---------|--|------|
| I.      | INTRODUCTION.....  | 1    |
|         | Statement of Problem.....  | 1    |
|         | Purpose of Study.....  | 1    |
|         | Need for Study.....  | 2    |
|         | Limitations of Study.....  | 3    |
|         | Related Studies.....   | 4    |
|         | Method of Procedure.....   | 6    |
| II.     | THE BUSINESS COMMUNITIES.....  | 7    |
|         | Types of business firms and<br>professions.....                                    | 7    |
|         | Number of Clerical and Sales<br>employees.....                                     | 8    |
|         | Sales paid employees.....  | 9    |
|         | Machines in use.....   | 11   |
| III.    | DUTIES PERFORMED BY CLERICAL AND SALES<br>EMPLOYEES.....                           | 13   |
|         | Telephoning.....   | 13   |
|         | Stenographic.....  | 14   |
|         | Bookkeeping.....   | 16   |
|         | Cashiering.....  | 18   |
|         | Retailing.....   | 19   |
|         | Miscellaneous.....   | 21   |
| IV.     | DEFICIENCIES NOTED AMONG EMPLOYEES.....  | 24   |
| V.      | RATINGS GIVEN EMPLOYEES ON LANGUAGE AND<br>WRITING ABILITIES AND PERSONAL TRAITS.. | 34   |
|         | Language and Writing Skills.....   | 34   |
|         | Personal Traits of Employees.....  | 37   |
|         | Ratings of Office Employees.....   | 40   |
|         | Cooperative Part-Time Training.....  | 42   |
| VI.     | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....   | 43   |
|         | BIBLIOGRAPHY.....  | 48   |
|         | APPENDIX.....  | 49   |

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the duties performed by the employees of business firms and professional offices operated by Negroes in Tulsa and Muskogee and to discover the areas in which these employees need additional training according to their employers.

The writer prepared check lists of traits and abilities needed by employees and submitted these forms to a selected group of business men who made certain additions and changes. The revised list was then presented to commercial teachers of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers. Criticisms and suggestions were made and as a result the final questionnaire was prepared and mailed to 67 business and professional men. Responses were received from 37 of the persons contacted, which represents more than 50 per cent of the persons to whom check lists were sent.

As a result of this study it was found that stores employ more workers than do offices; duties performed most frequently by store employees include waiting on customers, making change, answering telephone, arranging stock, and identifying people. It was further found that store workers need more training in making change, dressing windows, and helping to plan advertisements. Duties performed most frequently by office workers include answering telephone, identifying people, making note of telephone messages and

talking with visitors while employer is busy. Deficiencies found among this group of employees included filing, making accurate note of messages, and identifying people.

This study further reveals that the ability to meet and get along with people is important for both store and office personnel.

As a result of the findings of this study, the writer suggests that the second year of shorthand be replaced by a one semester course in transcription followed by a semester of office practice. For those business students who do not take shorthand, a course in clerical training is recommended. A course in Retailing or Distributive Education should also be offered inasmuch as so many young people find employment in this area.

There exists a great need for the development of such traits as initiative, loyalty, and dependability in both store and office workers. The encouragement of desirable character traits should be the responsibility of each teacher, and meaningful school experiences designed to develop such traits should be incorporated in all school subjects.

## LIST OF TABLES

| TABLE   | Page |
|---|------|
| I. Classification of Employees.....   | 9    |
| II. Salaries Paid Employees.....  | 10   |
| III. Machines in Use in Firms and Professional<br>Offices.....  | 11   |
| IV. Telephone Duties and Percentage of Employees<br>Who Perform Each Duty.....  | 13   |
| V. Stenographic Duties and Percentage of Employees<br>Who Perform Each Duty .....                                     | 14   |
| VI. Record Keeping Activities and the Percentage<br>of Employees Who Perform Each Duty.....                           | 16   |
| VII. Cashiering Duties and the Percentage of<br>Employees Who Perform Each Duty.....                                  | 19   |
| VIII. Retailing Activities and the Percentage of<br>Employees Who Perform Each Activity.....                          | 20   |
| IX. Miscellaneous Duties and the Percentage of<br>Employees Who Perform Each Duty.....                                | 22   |
| X. Percentage of Employers Stating That More<br>Training Is Needed in Telephoning Acti-<br>vities.....                | 24   |
| XI. Percentage of Employers Stating That More<br>Training Is Needed in Stenographic Activit-<br>ies.....              | 26   |
| XII. Percentage of Employers Stating That More<br>Training is Needed in Bookkeeping Activities..                      | 28   |
| XIII. Percentage of Employers Stating That More<br>Training is Needed in Cashiering Activities...                     | 29   |
| XIV. Percentage of Employers Stating That More Train-<br>ing is Needed in Retailing Activities.....                   | 30   |
| XV. Percentage of Employees Feeling That More Train-<br>ing is Needed in Miscellaneous Activities.....                | 32   |
| XVI. Percentage of Store Employees Rated Good, Fair,<br>Poor, and Not Observed on Language and Writing<br>Skills..... | 34   |



LIST OF TABLES (CONTINUED)

| TABLE  |  | PAGE |
|--------|--|------|
| XVII.  | Percentage of Office Workers Rated Good,<br>Fair, Poor, and Not Observed on<br>Language and Writing Skills ..... | 35   |
| XVIII. | Percentage of Store Employees Rated Good,<br>Fair, and Poor by Employers on Personal<br>Traits .....             | 38   |
| XIX.   | Percentage of Office Employees Rated Good,<br>Fair, and Poor by Employers on Personal<br>Traits .....            | 40   |

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

This is a study designed to determine the duties performed by the employees of business firms and professional offices operated by Negroes in Tulsa and Muskogee, and to discover the areas in which these employees need additional training, according to their employers.

#### Purpose of the Study

Each year a large number of graduates of Negro high schools are absorbed in the business world as employees of stores and offices which are managed by Negroes. Many of these pupils have had little or no vocational business training. Students who are enrolled in subjects not designed as terminal training courses find themselves filling various types of positions as office workers in which highly trained employees are not required. Despite the fact that business department objectives may be non-vocational, and regardless of the educational objective, certain competencies are necessary. According to Hamden Forkner, all young people should have school experiences which will direct their attention to and build ~~com~~petencies in dealing with common everyday business situations. Those who have given considerable

study to this problem are definitely of the opinion that the majority are not competent to deal with common business and economic situations which face them.<sup>1</sup>

How the schools can improve their services to these pupils and thereby to the business community in which these pupils are to take their places is a vital and pertinent question. The first step toward its solution is to determine what duties are expected of these pupils, what skills and traits they will need, and what deficiencies are found most frequently by their employers. It is the purpose of this study to answer these questions.

#### Need for the Study

A few years ago there appeared in a large Negro newspaper in Oklahoma an editorial which severely criticized the business teachers for the inefficiency of the pupils being graduated from the commercial departments of the public schools. This article attracted widespread attention in its attack on the inefficiency of office workers. The schools were charged with failing to meet student needs as regarding the employment situation.

These accusations were discussed at length at the Business Teachers Department of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers and a series of articles to combat the

---

<sup>1</sup>H. L. Forkner, "Does Everybody Need Some Business Education?", NEA Journal, XXXVIII, (April, 1949), 260-1.

unfavorable publicity was planned. Nothing was done, however, to find out how other businessmen feel toward the high school graduates whom they employ.

This information should be of great value to pupils in the selection of their schedules of classwork; to administrators in the planning of a curriculum to fit student needs; and to the commercial teachers in the choice and preparation of subject materials to be used in their teaching.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is based on check lists returned by thirty-seven business and professional men in two Oklahoma cities. The business firms in these two cities, Tulsa and Muskogee, do not vary greatly from those of other cities throughout Oklahoma and the findings may be considered fairly typical.

Although Negro business firms in these areas number in the hundreds, the majority of these are operated solely by the proprietor and were, therefore, not sent check lists. Through personal interviews, it was further discovered that several of the sixty-seven establishments to which check lists were sent had no employees other than members of the proprietors' families.

The ratings of good, fair, and poor which the business and professional men used to indicate the efficiency of of their employees in the performance of various duties and

in the description of personal traits were purely subjective in nature and based on the judgment of the employer.

### Related Studies

In the search for related literature the writer found that investigations dealing with duties required of and deficiencies found among employees in Negro establishments were extremely limited.

In 1940 the Hartford Board of Education invited the Hartford Chapter of the NOMA to participate in a thorough-going investigation of the commercial preparation offered in the public schools as a result of complaints about weaknesses in computation, typewriting, stenographic skills, and the use of English. Five committees were appointed, one of which was a committee on Job Analysis which broke down in detail the knowledges, skills, and attitudes necessary for success in office work. As a result of this study the commercial curriculum was revised so that increased opportunities for actual business practices were provided, selective factors controlling admission of pupils to business courses were put into operation, a program on good English usage and effective speech habits was provided, a one-semester business correspondence course was prescribed for all commercial students, and the development of workers ability to assume responsibility were given more attention along the line of inculcation of desirable attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Fred D. Wish, "Cooperation in Actual Practice," National Business Education Quarterly, (March, 1945), X III, p. 17.

In a similar study of 100 businesses in Salina, Kansas in 1945 it was found that accuracy in work was the most important qualification for clerical workers and the largest deficiency was found in handwriting. Russell further pointed out that business men were critical of the schools for tending to limit instruction to shorthand, typewriting, and book-keeping and stressed the importance of developing initiative and interest in work and the importance of personality.<sup>3</sup>

A study of 36 offices of Norman, Hobart, Chickasha, and Oklahoma City attempted to find out what the average Oklahoma businessman thinks about certain problems of conduct. This study brought out the facts that the three most desirable traits for office workers were ability to get along with people, good personality, and neat appearance, and efficiency in work. Following in close order were honesty, punctuality, cooperation, a good voice, alertness, dependability, intelligence, common sense, and a willingness to stay on the job. The writer concluded that the most common reasons for failure were inability to get along with people, inefficiency, laziness, failure to take responsibility, allowing personal affairs to interfere with office work, dishonesty, lack of common sense, not being on time, and revealing confidential matters.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Robert H. Russell, "An Analysis of the Traits and Abilities Needed by Clerical Workers in Salina, Kansas," unpublished masters thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, 1945.

<sup>4</sup>E. E. Hatfield and Edna Mercer, "What Businessmen Think About Office Conduct," Journal of Business Education, (October, 1946), XXII, No. 2.

### Method of Procedure

A check-list of traits and abilities needed by employees was prepared and submitted to a selected group of businessmen who made certain additions and changes. The revised list was presented to the commercial teachers at the February meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Negro Teachers. This group was invited to criticize and make suggestions concerning the check list.

The final questionnaire was sent to sixty-seven business and professional men who were requested to check those duties performed by their workers and those duties in which deficiencies were most frequently noted.

After two weeks when only eighteen of the sixty-seven questionnaires had been returned, interviews were arranged with many of the Tulsa business men while postal cards urging the return of the check lists were sent to those in Muskogee area. This follow-up resulted in a total of thirty-seven completed check lists. These were tabulated and analyzed to present the picture shown in the pages which follow.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

Tulsa, a city of 185,000 population, 41,000 of which are Negroes, and Muskogee, with about 26 per cent of its 40,000 population Negroes, form the setting for this study. Tulsa has gained national recognition for the rapid development and the progressiveness of its Negro business establishments, and the Greenwood area, a Negro business district, has received much recognition through its alert Chamber of Commerce.

Muskogee, a much smaller city, is probably more representative of the average Oklahoma community. Despite the apparent difference in the achievement records of the business firms in these two cities, there was no noticeable difference in the replies to the check lists.

#### Types of Business Firms and Professions

The firms and professional men invited to participate in this study were as follows:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Attorneys at Law            | 6 |
| Cleaning establishments     | 3 |
| Doctors, dentists           | 7 |
| Drug stores                 | 7 |
| Dry goods stores            | 2 |
| Electrical appliance stores | 2 |
| Grocery stores              | 7 |
| Hospitals                   | 2 |
| Hotels                      | 1 |
| Insurance companies         | 1 |
| Mortuaries                  | 5 |
| Newspaper publishers        | 4 |



|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Prescription shops | 2     |
| Restaurants        | 9     |
| Schools, private   | 2     |
| Taxicab companies  | 4     |
| Theaters           | 3     |
| Variety stores     | 2     |
|                    | <hr/> |
| Total              | 69    |

A similar breakdown of the questionnaires returned was impossible because the persons responding were not requested to indicate the names of their businesses. They were, however, asked to indicate whether their establishments were stores or offices.

Of the persons reporting, nineteen indicated that they operated stores and eighteen offices.

#### Number of Clerical Employees

The 37 persons who returned check lists reported a total of 85 employees, as shown in Table I, in positions of secretaries, receptionists, bookkeepers, cashiers, salesclerks, and typists. There were five secretaries, 21 receptionists, two bookkeepers and one cashier employed by the eighteen offices reporting. The 19 stores listed one bookkeeper, eight cashiers, and 39 sales clerks.

TABLE I

## CLASSIFICATION OF EMPLOYEES

| Persons employed<br>primarily as | Stores | Offices | Total |
|----------------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| Secretaries                      |        | 5       | 5     |
| Receptionists                    |        | 21      | 21    |
| Bookkeepers                      | 1      | 2       | 3     |
| Cashiers                         | 8      | 1       | 9     |
| Sales Clerks                     | 39     |         | 39    |
| Typists                          |        | 8       | 8     |

A total of 48 employees were reported by the 19 stores, or an average of 2.5 employees for each store. The 18 offices reported a total of 37 employees.

Salaries Paid Employees

Salaries for the workers in the six classifications ranged from \$60.00 per month to \$180 per month. This is shown in Table II.

The lowest salary paid to a bookkeeper was \$95.00 per month and the highest paid employee in this classification earned \$180. The average salary earned by bookkeepers was \$123.00.

The lowest salary paid to a cashier was \$60.00 per month while the highest paid received \$180. The average salary for cashiers was \$122.00.

TABLE II

## SALARIES PAID EMPLOYEES

| Classification | Low           | High     | Average  |
|----------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Secretary      | \$ 60.00      | \$160.00 | \$123.00 |
| Receptionist   | 65.00         | 100.00   | 84.50    |
| Bookkeeper     | 95.00         | 180.00   | 123.00   |
| Cashier        | 60.00         | 180.00   | 122.00   |
| Sales Clerk    | 60.00         | 180.00   | 99.00    |
| Typist         | Not Available |          |          |

Sales clerks earned an average of \$99 per month.

Those in the lower income bracket earned \$60 per month while the highest paid sales people earned \$180, which was in line with salaries paid to secretaries and bookkeepers.

The lowest salary paid to receptionists was \$65 per month while the highest amount received by receptionists was \$100. Those in this classification received an over-all average of \$84.50 per month.

Sixty dollars per month was the smallest salary paid to a secretary while two secretaries earned \$160 per month. One employer indicated that he used a secretary only part time (four hours per day) and paid her a salary of \$150 per month. At the same rate of pay this worker could have earned \$300 monthly working full time inasmuch as she held another job in the mornings. No information was received, however, from her other employer.

No information was available on the salaries paid to typists as neither of the two offices listing typists filled in that section of the questionnaire.

From the foregoing schedule it may be seen that the highest salaries are paid to secretaries, and bookkeepers, who each average \$123 per month. Cashiers rank very close, earning an average of \$122 per month. Sales clerks and receptionists are in the lowest paid bracket averaging, respectively, \$99 and \$84.50 per month.

### Machines in Use

Typewriters, dictation machines, adding machines, cash registers, and duplicators were the machines checked by the various firms as being used by their employees.

With the exception of two firms, all stores and offices participating in the study had at least one machine available. Most of the stores responding to the questionnaire had only one cash register and one adding machine. Table III lists the machines in use in the firms and offices studied.

TABLE III

#### MACHINES IN USE IN FIRMS AND PROFESSIONAL OFFICES

| Type of Machine    | Number of machines in use |         |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------|
|                    | Stores                    | Offices |
| Typewriters        | 4                         | 26      |
| Adding machines    | 14                        | 5       |
| Dictation machines | 0                         | 4       |
| Duplicators        | 1                         | 3       |
| Calculators        | 0                         | 0       |
| Cash registers     | 24                        | 0       |

The 19 stores reporting listed only 4 typewriters while the offices listed 26. Four dictation machines were listed in 18 offices. Three were Soundscribers and one a Dictaphone. Three duplicators in use, all of which were in offices--two of them being a Speed-O-Print and the other make not mentioned.

In one store, 3 cash registers were in use; 2 cash registers each were in use in four other stores; 13 stores indicated one cash register each. Offices, however, listed none.

Nineteen adding machines were in use, 14 in the stores and 5 in the offices. With the exception of one Dalton and one Allen-Wales, all of the adding machines were Burroughs machines.

The largest number of machines available in any one firm was reported by an office which listed six typewriters, two duplicators, one dictaphone and an adding machine. One store reported three adding machines, three cash registers, and a typewriter.

The 37 firms and professional offices reporting listed a total of 30 typewriters, 19 adding machines, 4 dictation machines, 4 duplicators, and 24 cash registers.

In the following chapter the duties of sales and clerical personnel in performing telephoning, stenographic, bookkeeping, cashiering, retailing, and miscellaneous activities will be discussed.

### CHAPTER III

#### DUTIES PERFORMED BY CLERICAL AND SALES PERSONNEL

##### Telephone Activities

Duties connected with the telephone seem most common to all types of store and office employees. Table IV shows the percentage of workers who perform telephone activities on their jobs.

TABLE IV

##### TELEPHONE DUTIES AND THE PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORM EACH DUTY

| Nature of Activity                             | Percentage of Employees |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|
|  | Store                   | Office |
| Answer telephone                               | 62.5                    | 83.7   |
| Get other parties on line                      | 18.7                    | 35.1   |
| Send long distant calls<br>and telegrams       | 8.4                     | 19.0   |
| Receive and make note of<br>telephone messages | 50                      | 48.5   |

Sixty-two and one-half per cent of all store employees and 83.7 per cent of all office employees are required to answer the telephone. Almost twice as many office employees as sales employees are responsible for getting other parties on the line for their employer. This is one of the tasks of 35.1 per cent of office workers whereas only 18.7 per cent of

store workers perform this activity. More than twice as many office employees as store employees are required to make long distant calls and send telegrams for this is required of only 8.4 per cent of store employees as compared with 19 per cent of the office workers. With the exception of receiving and making note of telephone messages, more office workers perform duties involving use of the telephone than do store employees. This exception is probably due to the fact that a large volume of business is usually transacted through telephone and delivery service by the average small retail establishment.

#### Stenographic Activities

Very few duties involving typewriting activities are required of retail store personnel. Table V shows the percentage of the store and office workers who perform certain duties.

TABLE V

#### PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES PERFORMING STENOGRAPHIC DUTIES

| Nature of Activity             | Percentage of Employees |        |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
|                                | Store                   | Office |
| Typing form letters            | 2.1                     | 16.2   |
| Typing statements and reports  | 4.2                     | 21.6   |
| Addressing envelopes and cards | 6.3                     | 29.7   |
| Taking reports from dictation  | 0                       | 10.8   |
| Taking letters from dictation  | 0                       | 16.2   |
| Composing letters              | 2.1                     | 10.8   |
| Typing legal material          | 0                       | 13.5   |
| Cutting stencils               | 0                       | 13.5   |

The most common typewriting activity performed by store employees is the addressing of cards and envelopes, and this is required of only 6.3 per cent. Four and two-tenths per cent of the employees of stores are required to type statements or reports. Two per cent of the store employees are requested to type form letters and occasionally to write a letter of their own composition for their employer.

None of the store employers require activities involving the taking of letters or reports from dictation, typing legal materials, or cutting stencils.

A few of the office managers require all stenographic duties listed on the check list, but no single activity is required by more than 30 per cent. Again, addressing postal cards and envelopes is the most common typing duty and this ability is considered especially desirable by 29.7 per cent of the office managers responding. The second most frequently performed activity is the typing of statements and reports which is required of 21.6 per cent of all office workers. Sixteen per cent of the employees are required to type form letters and also take letters from dictation. Typing legal materials and cutting stencils are required by 13.5 per cent of the office managers.

Duties required less frequently are the taking of reports from dictation and the composing of letters. This work is



required by employers of 10.8 per cent of the office workers as compared with 0 per cent and 2.1 per cent of the store workers respectively.

### Bookkeeping Activities

The number of store employees who perform bookkeeping activities is exceedingly small when the keeping of records is so vital to the success of any business.

Twenty-five per cent of all store employees assist in the keeping of inventory records. This represents the largest number of store employees engaged in record keeping activities. Another activity performed quite frequently by store workers is the keeping of accounts receivable and accounts payable records, which as shown by Table VI, is done by 16.6 per cent of store employees. Nineteen per cent of the office employees, however, keep accounts receivable and payable records.

TABLE VI

RECORD KEEPING ACTIVITIES AND THE PERCENTAGE  
OF EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORM EACH ACTIVITY

| Description of Activity                                     | Percentage of Employees |        |
|---|-------------------------|--------|
|   | Store                   | Office |
| Writing receipts and checks                                 | 12.5                    | 29.7   |
| Making journal entries                                      | 2.1                     | 10.8   |
| Posting to ledger   | 2.1                     | 16.2   |
| Keeping accounts receivable<br>and accounts payable records | 16.6                    | 19.0   |
| Making profit and loss statements                           | 2.1                     | 8.1    |
| Preparing balance sheets                                    | 2.1                     | 2.7    |
| Figuring interests and discounts                            | 2.1                     | 8.1    |
| Figuring customers' balances                                | 8.3                     | 21.6   |
| Keeping inventory records                                   | 25.0                    | 13.5   |
| Reconciling bank statements                                 | 6.3                     | 8.1    |

Only 2.1 per cent of retail store employees perform such common bookkeeping activities as making journal entries, posting to ledger, preparing profit and loss statements and balance sheets. Six per cent of store employees reconcile bank statements, 8.3 per cent compute customer accounts and 12.5 per cent write receipts and checks.

There are two probable explanations for the small number of employees participating in the keeping of store records. The first is that some of the business establishments probably have no system of record keeping. This is not merely a situation which exists in the area of this study, for previous studies have shown that a large percentage of Negro retail establishments keep no records at all and an even larger percentage use inadequate bookkeeping methods.<sup>5</sup> Even as recently as 1947 it was found that 15.3 per cent of Negro businesses keep no records and the inadequacy of many others was described as appalling.<sup>6</sup>

The seriousness of this situation and the consequences to which it might lead are emphasized by the report of a 1941 congressional committee with reference to small businesses in general.

An appraisal of the adequacy of records of New Jersey and Boston bankrupts disclosed that almost one-third kept no records and that less than one-fourth kept adequate records.....a similar condition existed among Chicago bankrupts.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Holsey, A. L., Report of the Survey of Negro Business, (Tuskegee: National Negro Business League, 1928).

<sup>6</sup>J. A. Pierce, Negro Business and Business Education, (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947) 49.

<sup>7</sup>Temporary National Economic Committee, Problems of Small Businesses, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1941), 856.

The other possibility as to why so few of the employees perform bookkeeping duties is that in many small business establishments most of the records are kept by the proprietor or the manager himself. Inasmuch as this study does not include the duties of the manager, the writer is unable to state the number of firms to which this might apply.

The number of office employees participating in bookkeeping activities provides a more promising picture. This is, however, as one might expect. Almost 30 per cent of the office workers write receipts and checks, 21.6 per cent compute customer accounts, and 19 per cent keep accounts receivable and accounts payable records. Journal entries are made by 10.8 per cent of the office workers and 16.2 per cent post to ledger. Only 13.5 per cent of the office workers are concerned with inventory records as compared with 25 per cent of the store employees. This latter activity is the only duty involving record keeping in which more store than office workers participate. Eight per cent of the office workers make profit and loss statements, reconcile bank statements, and compute interests and discounts; however, less than three per cent prepare balance sheets.

#### Cashiering Activities

Table VII shows a comparison between the percentages of store employees and office employees who perform cashiering duties.

TABLE VII

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES PERFORMING  
CASHIERING DUTIES

| Description of Activity   | Percentage of Store | Employees Office |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Balancing cash daily      | 8.3                 | 19.0             |
| Making Change             | 81.4                | 13.6             |
| Filling out deposit slips | 10.4                | 10.8             |

More than twice the number of office workers as store employees are responsible for balancing cash receipts at the end of each day. Six times as many store employees as office workers are required to make change. This is readily understandable, however, due to the nature of work in retail establishments. The percentage of workers preparing money for deposit and filling out deposit slips is approximately the same in stores as in offices.

Retailing Activities

Retailing presents one of the most fascinating business fields for Negroes. In 1939 there were 29,827 retail stores operated by Negro proprietors in the United States. There were at the same time approximately 14,000 employees in this business and the total annual payroll was considerably more than \$5,000,000.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>U. S. Bureau of the Census, "Retail Trade--Retail Negro Proprietorships in U. S., 1939," (Negroes in the U. S., Bulletin No. 2075, mimeographed, August 29, 1941).

According to responses from the store proprietors as shown in Table VIII, the most important duty performed by employees is helping the customer find the article he desires.

TABLE VIII  
PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES PERFORMING  
RETAILING DUTIES

| Description of Activity                 | Percentage of Employees |        |
|---|-------------------------|--------|
|   | Store                   | Office |
| Waiting on customers                    | 93.7                    | 21.6   |
| Arranging stock                         | 35.4                    | 2.7    |
| Writing sales tickets                   | 33.3                    | 5.4    |
| Printing store cards or<br>window signs | 8.3                     | 0      |
| Dressing windows                        | 16.6                    | 0      |
| Planning advertisements                 | 2.1                     | 0      |
| Purchasing goods for resale             | 12.5                    | 2.7    |

A total of 93.7 per cent of retail employees engage in this activity. Arranging the stock is the responsibility of 35.4 per cent of all store employees, however, less than half this number assist in dressing the store windows and arranging displays. The writing of sales tickets is a part of the job of one-third of all store employees as compared with 8.3 per cent who print store cards and window signs. Twelve per cent of these employees have the responsibility of purchasing goods for resale. Planning of advertisements is one of the duties of only 2.1 per cent of the store employees.

Among the office workers, 21.6 per cent are occasionally responsible for waiting on the customers and 5.4 per cent write sales tickets. Less than three per cent of office workers handle such duties as arranging some stock or purchasing goods for resale. None of the office workers arrange window displays, print cards or assist in planning advertisements.

#### Miscellaneous Activities

Miscellaneous, or general duties, make up a large part of the workers' business day. Some of these activities and the number who, according to the returns of the questionnaire, perform these miscellaneous activities are shown in Table IX.

One-third of all sales employees and four-fifths of the clerical employees are required to be able to identify the customers. Twenty per cent of the store employees and 45.9 per cent of office employees are required to converse with the customers who are waiting to see the employer if the employer is busy.

TABLE IX

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES PERFORMING  
MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES

| Description of Activity                            | Percentage of Employees |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|
|  | Store                   | Office |
| Identifying people                                 | 33.3                    | 78.3   |
| Talking with visitors while employer is busy       | 20.8                    | 45.9   |
| Ordering supplies or equipment for store or office | 33.3                    | 5.4    |
| Filing letters, reports, etc.                      | 2.1                     | 24.3   |
| Delivering messages                                | 8.3                     | 24.3   |
| Running errands                                    | 8.3                     | 10.8   |
| Keeping store or office tidy                       | 87.4                    | 45.9   |

One-third of the store workers are responsible for ordering supplies and equipment for the store, but only one-twentieth of the office workers are assigned this task.

The filing of letters and reports is done by only 2.1 per cent of the store employees but by twelve times as many office workers.

Delivering messages and running errands occasionally are duties required of 8.3 per cent of store employees and twice as many office employees.

More than 87 per cent of all store workers are responsible for helping to keep the store clean as compared with 45.9 per cent of the office workers.

In order to determine the areas in which more training

is needed, employers were requested to check, from the same list of duties, those in which they had found their employees needed more training. The results of these tabulations are shown in the succeeding chapter.



CHAPTER IV  
DEFICIENCIES NOTED AMONG CLERICAL  
AND SALES PERSONNEL

Nineteen store proprietors and eighteen professional men checked the weaknesses found most frequently among their employees to which they would like the school to devote more training. Many of these concerned the use of the telephone, as is shown in Table X.

TABLE X

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS STATING  
MORE TRAINING IS NEEDED IN  
TELEPHONING ACTIVITIES

| Description of Activity                            | Percentage of<br>Store | Employers<br>Office |
|--|------------------------|---------------------|
| Answering telephone                                | 31.5                   | 22.2                |
| Getting other parties on line                      | 10.5                   | 22.2                |
| Sending long distant calls<br>or telegrams         | 5.2                    | 11.1                |
| Receiving and making note of<br>telephone messages | 31.5                   | 33.3                |

One-third of all store proprietors and professional men desire that their employees have more training in the receiving of and making note of telephone messages. A physician relates an incident in which a patient called leaving a message requesting that he visit her as soon as he came in and stating that it was urgent. The receptionist

who took the message stated that she "didn't understand exactly what the lady's name was but it sounded something like Nelson or Watson." Neither had she asked the address.

Although the employers feel that more training in telephone usage would prohibit such occurrences, it would seem that the use of common sense and forethought is needed in this and similar situations.

Twice as many professional men as store proprietors feel that their workers need more training in getting other parties on the line and in sending long distant calls and telegrams. They feel that in some way students should be taught to realize the importance of being accurate, not only in the information they give over the telephone, but be accurate also in receiving messages.

#### Stenographic Deficiencies

Store proprietors have little criticism of the training their employees have received in stenographic activities, but the professional men have found that additional training is desired in all of the stenographic duties which are listed in Table XI. Only 5.2 per cent of the store proprietors feel that their employees should have additional training in the typing of statements and reports, addressing envelopes, also postal cards, and composing letters.

Office managers, on the other hand, feel differently. Almost 28 per cent of this group desire for their workers

more training in addressing cards and envelopes, taking letters from dictation, and typing form letters. More training is taking reports from dictation, typing reports and statements, and typing legal material is desired by 16.6 per cent.

This same percentage would also have their employees more efficient in composing letters when only the thought of the gist of the letter to be written has been given them. Only 5.5 per cent of the office managers would like their employees to have additional training in the cutting of stencils.

TABLE XI

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS STATING THAT  
MORE TRAINING IS NEEDED  
IN STENOGRAPHIC ACTIVITIES

| Description of Activity               | Percentage of Employers |        |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------|
|                                       | Store                   | Office |
| Typing form letters                   | 0                       | 22.2   |
| Typing statements and reports         | 5.2                     | 16.6   |
| Addressing envelopes and postal cards | 5.2                     | 27.7   |
| Taking reports from dictation         | 0                       | 16.6   |
| Taking letters from dictation         | 0                       | 22.2   |
| Composing letters                     | 5.2                     | 16.6   |
| Typing legal material                 | 0                       | 16.6   |
| Cutting stencils                      | 0                       | 5.5    |

Bookkeeping Deficiencies

A healthy sign, indeed, is the large percentage of store and office managers who desire that their employees have more training in bookkeeping or the keeping of accounts. Five per cent of the store managers state that their employees are deficient and should have more training in figuring discounts and interest. Twice as many employers feel that additional training is needed in making profit and loss statements, preparing balance sheets, and figuring customers' balances. More training in making journal entries, posting to ledger, and keeping inventory records is requested by 15.8 per cent of the store managers. Twenty-one per cent would have their employees have more training in keeping accounts receivable and accounts payable records while 26.3 per cent would like more training devoted to the writing of receipts and checks.

Table XII shows that the percentage of office managers feeling a need for employees better trained in bookkeeping is even greater than that of store proprietors. One-third of the office managers would like their employees to have further training in making journal entries and 27.7 per cent indicate a desire for better trained employees in posting, keeping accounts receivable and accounts payable records, making profit and loss statements and preparing balance sheets. Twenty-two per cent express the need for more training in computing discounts and interests and half that number for figuring customers' balances and reconciling bank statements .

Only five per cent of the office workers need more training in keeping inventory records, according to the employers.

TABLE XII

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS STATING THAT  
MORE TRAINING IS NEEDED  
IN BOOKKEEPING ACTIVITIES.

| Description of Activity                                     | Percentage of Store | Employers Office |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| Writing receipts and checks                                 | 26.3                | 16.6             |
| Making journal entries                                      | 15.8                | 33.3             |
| Posting to ledger   | 15.8                | 27.7             |
| Keeping accounts receivable<br>and accounts payable records | 21.0                | 27.7             |
| Making profit and loss statements                           | 10.5                | 27.7             |
| Preparing balance sheets                                    | 10.5                | 27.7             |
| Figuring interest and discounts                             | 5.2                 | 22.2             |
| Figuring customer balances                                  | 10.5                | 11.1             |
| Keeping inventory records                                   | 15.8                | 5.5              |
| Reconciling bank statements                                 | 5.2                 | 11.1             |

Several store proprietors who did not check any bookkeeping activities performed by their employees did place check marks in the adjacent column to indicate a desire for employee training in certain bookkeeping activities. This might indicate that some of the stores which do not have adequate systems of bookkeeping are not opposed to record keeping and are actually desirous of improving their systems, but do not have personnel capable of handling the task.

Cashiering Deficiencies

More store managers than office managers desire additional training for their employees in the handling of cash, according to Table XIII. Sixteen per cent of the store managers desire additional training for their employees in balancing cash at the end of the day and filling out deposit slips. Forty-two per cent of the store managers feel that their employees need more training in making change.

Twenty-two per cent of the office managers feel that their employees should have more training in balancing cash at the end of the day and one-half that percentage would like employees who are better trained in making change and filling out deposit slips.

TABLE XIII

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS STATING THAT  
MORE TRAINING IS NEEDED  
IN CASHIERING ACTIVITIES

| Description of Activity   | Percentage of Store | Employers Office |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Balancing cash daily      | 15.8                | 22.2             |
| Making change             | 42.0                | 11.1             |
| Filling out deposit slips | 15.8                | 11.1             |

Retailing Deficiencies

More than 130,000 youths between the ages of 18 and 19, and 150,000 between the ages of 20 and 24 enter employment in the distributive field each year, but virtually none of these persons have had previous training for the job.<sup>9</sup>

It is quite understandable that more store proprietors than office managers are desirous of additional training for their employees in activities connected primarily with retailing. Table XIV shows that additional training in waiting on the customer is desired by 11.1 per cent of the office managers and 21 per cent of the store proprietors.

TABLE XIV

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS STATING THAT MORE  
TRAINING IS NEEDED IN  
RETAILING ACTIVITIES

| Description of Activity                  | Percentage of Employers |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|
|  | Store                   | Office |
| Waiting on customer                      | 21.0                    | 11.1   |
| Arranging stock                          | 42.0                    | 5.5    |
| Writing sales tickets                    | 10.5                    | 0      |
| Printing store cards and<br>window signs | 36.8                    | 5.5    |
| Dressing windows                         | 47.3                    | 5.5    |
| Planning advertisements                  | 31.5                    | 5.5    |
| Purchasing goods for resale              | 21.0                    | 0      |

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth B. Haas, Distributive Education, (New York: The Gregg Publishing Company, 1941), 6.

Less than six per cent of the office managers indicated that they would like their employees to have additional training in arranging stock, printing cards and signs, dressing windows and planning advertisements.

Ten per cent of the store proprietors would like their employees to have more training in writing sales tickets and 21 per cent in purchasing goods for resale, but no office managers had found these two items necessary. More than 30 per cent of the store proprietors requested additional training for their employees in planning advertisements and printing store cards and window signs. More than 40 per cent of the store proprietors expressed a need for employees trained in arranging stock and almost 50 per cent for those who could dress store windows.

#### Miscellaneous Deficiencies

Table XV shows that training in identifying people and talking with visitors while the employer is busy was checked as desirable by 31.5 per cent of the store proprietors and by 22.2 per cent of the office managers. One store proprietor made it clear that he meant that his employees should be trained when to consider it important to chat with the customers and when to refrain from doing so. He also stated that often when the store was filled with customers waiting to be served, his employees would spend



too much time chatting with one customer. Another proprietor stated that the nature of his business kept him out of the store a good deal of the time. He complained that during his absence, his youthful employees would invite in their friends or hold lengthy personal telephone conversations.

This seems to show a need for the development of business like attitudes rather than training in talking with customers or clients while the employer is busy.

TABLE XV

PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYERS FEELING THAT MORE  
TRAINING IS NEEDED IN MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

| Description of Activity                            | Percentage of Employers |        |
|--|-------------------------|--------|
|  | Store                   | Office |
| Identifying people                                 | 31.5                    | 22.2   |
| Talking with visitors while employer is busy       | 31.5                    | 22.2   |
| Ordering supplies or equipment for store or office | 36.8                    | 5.5    |
| Filing letters, reports, etc.                      | 21.0                    | 33.3   |
| Delivering messages                                | 10.5                    | 11.1   |
| Running errands                                    | 5.2                     | 5.5    |
| Keeping store or office tidy                       | 26.3                    | 27.7   |

More than 36 per cent of the store proprietors feel that employees should have more training in ordering supplies and equipment for the store, but less than six per cent of the office managers feel a need for such training. One-third of the office managers and one-fifth of the store

proprietors feel that more training is needed in the filing of letters and reports.

Slightly more than 10 per cent of the store and office managers feel their workers should be more dependable and accurate in delivering messages, and one-half that number feel likewise in regard to their employees in the runnings of errands.

More than one-fourth of the store and office managers express a desire that their employees be better trained in keeping the office or store tidy.

In addition to the knowledges and skills discussed in the previous chapters, the personal traits and the ability of the worker to speak and write effectively are of vital concern and interest to the employer. The sales and clerical personnel of all business firms and professions contact the public through either written or spoken English. Oftentimes the only impression one receives of a firm is through contacts with these employees. The operators of Negro business firms realize that the success of their enterprises is directly related to the caliber of their employees. It was therefore considered important to discover how well the employers feel they are being represented through these employees. To determine this will be the purpose of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### RATINGS GIVEN EMPLOYEES ON LANGUAGE AND WRITING ABILITIES AND PERSONAL TRAITS

Forty-eight employees of retail stores were rated by the store managers on the following language and writing abilities: spelling, punctuation, grammar, sentence sense, structure of sentences, paragraphing, and vocabulary. As shown by Table XVI, 65.5 per cent of these employees were not observed as to their skill in paragraphing, nor has the ability to punctuate correctly been observed in 41.6 per cent of store employees.

TABLE XVI

PERCENTAGE OF STORE EMPLOYEES RATED, GOOD, FAIR, POOR,  
AND NOT OBSERVED ON LANGUAGE AND WRITING SKILLS

|                    | Good | Fair | Poor | Not<br>Observed |
|--------------------|------|------|------|-----------------|
| Spelling           | 43.7 | 35.4 | 10.4 | 10.4            |
| Punctuation        | 12.5 | 31.3 | 14.5 | 41.6            |
| Grammar            | 16.6 | 43.7 | 22.9 | 16.6            |
| Sentence Structure | 12.5 | 47.9 | 14.5 | 25.0            |
| Paragraphing       | 10.5 | 12.5 | 12.5 | 64.5            |
| Vocabulary         | 12.5 | 56.2 | 22.9 | 8.3             |
| Sentence Sense     | 12.5 | 33.3 | 14.5 | 39.5            |

Thirty-nine and one-half per cent of the employers indicated that they had not observed their employees' ability to construct sentences.

The foregoing percentages seem to indicate that skills connected with writing ability are not too important for most store employees. On the other hand, 22.9 per cent of the store employees were found to be poor in grammatical usage and in vocabulary. More than ten per cent of these employees were classified as poor spellers, and 35.4 per cent as fair spellers. It is interesting to note that spelling is the only category in which a larger percentage of store employees were rated good than fair.

Table XVII shows how 37 office workers were rated on the same language skills.

TABLE XVII

PERCENTAGE OF OFFICE WORKERS RATED GOOD, FAIR, POOR,  
AND NOT OBSERVED ON LANGUAGE AND WRITING SKILLS

|                    | Good | Fair | Poor | Not<br>Observed |
|--------------------|------|------|------|-----------------|
| Spelling           | 32.5 | 62.1 | 5.4  |                 |
| Punctuation        | 43.3 | 5.4  | 40.5 | 10.8            |
| Grammar            | 54.0 | 37.9 | 8.1  |                 |
| Sentence Structure | 48.6 | 13.6 | 27.0 | 10.8            |
| Paragraphing       | 21.6 | 40.0 | 2.7  | 35.1            |
| Vocabulary         | 54.0 | 32.4 | 13.6 |                 |
| Sentence Sense     | 48.6 | 27.0 | 10.8 | 13.6            |

As contrasted with the ratings of store employees, the ability to punctuate correctly had not been observed in only 10.8 per cent of the office personnel. Of these same workers, 35.1 per cent had not been observed in paragraphing.

The large percentage of office workers who apparently have no need for paragraphing skills is probably due to the fact that many of the employers indicate the beginning of each new paragraph when dictating.

Thirty-two per cent of the office workers were rated good in spelling as compared with 62.1 per cent who were rated fair. This is almost in direct contrast with the ratings ratings received by store employees.

In sentence structure and sentence sense 48.6 per cent of the office workers received ratings of good as compared with only 12.5 per cent of the store employees.

Office workers seem to be superior in vocabulary to store employees. Fifty-four per cent of the office workers were rated good on vocabulary as compared with 12.5 per cent of the store employees.

Office managers appeared more critical of punctuation than of any other English skill. Forty per cent of their employees were considered poor in punctuation.

The fact that 40.5 per cent of the office managers found deficiencies in punctuation as compared with 14.5 per cent of store employers may be due to two possibilities. The first is that office managers feel this ability is more

important in their workers because more written work is required of them than of the store personnel. The second possible reason that store employers were not so displeased as were the office managers regarding punctuation and sentence structure may be due to the fact that store managers are not too well able to judge competency on these items.

The typical operator....of Negro businesses has had 9.6 years of schooling. It was found that 18.4 per cent of all the operators... had less than a seventh grade education, 84.7 per cent had not entered college, and 92.3 per cent had not completed a college course.

The median extent of education of operators of retail stores is only nine years and only 7.1 per cent of them have finished college. The typical operator of a service establishment has had 9.8 years of schooling, but only 4.0 per cent of them had completed a college course.<sup>10</sup>

This is evidenced by frequent misspellings of words seen on store cards, painted on window advertisements, written on menus at cafes and restaurants, and typewritten for advertisements which are flashed on the screen at movie theaters.

This, indeed, is an area in which improvements are sorely needed and in which the public schools could perhaps be of assistance.

#### Personal Traits of Employees

In another section of the questionnaire, employers were requested to rate their employees on certain personal traits.

---

<sup>10</sup>J. A. Pierce, Negro Business and Business Education, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), p. 81.

A column was provided on the check list in which the employer might indicate any trait listed which he had no opportunity to observe in his employees. It is interesting to note that no employer made use of this column.

Table XVIII shows how store managers rated their employees on tact, courtesy, personal appearance, dependability, initiative, loyalty, honest, personality, and punctuality.

TABLE XVIII

PERCENTAGE OF STORE EMPLOYEES RATED GOOD, FAIR,  
AND POOR BY EMPLOYERS ON PERSONAL TRAITS

|                     | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---------------------|------|------|------|
| Tact                | 37.5 | 52.0 | 10.4 |
| Courtesy            | 62.5 | 20.8 | 16.7 |
| Personal Appearance | 81.4 | 18.6 |      |
| Dependability       | 54.1 | 29.2 | 16.7 |
| Initiative          | 50.0 | 31.3 | 18.6 |
| Loyalty             | 64.5 | 25.0 | 10.4 |
| Honesty             | 68.8 | 31.3 |      |
| Personality         | 70.8 | 20.8 | 8.3  |
| Punctuality         | 50.0 | 33.3 | 16.6 |

Thirty-seven and one-half per cent of the store employees were considered very tactful by their employees, 52 per cent fairly tactful, and 10.4 per cent were described as exhibiting

very little tact in business situations. Sixty-two and one-half per cent of the 48 store employees were considered very courteous as compared with 20.8 per cent fairly courteous and 16.7 per cent poor in courtesy.

Appearance seems to be no problem at all, for none of the employees were rated poor in personal appearance. More than 80 per cent were rated good and the remaining were rated fair.

Fifty-four per cent of the store managers considered their employees very dependable, 29.2 per cent fairly dependable, and 16.7 per cent poor in dependability. Fifty per cent of the employees were rated good in initiative while 31.3 were rated fair and 18.6 per cent poor.

Employers considered 64.5 per cent of their employees very loyal and 68.8 per cent very honest. Twenty-five per cent of the employees were rated as fairly loyal and 31.3 per cent fairly honest. Ten per cent of all these employees were rated poor in loyalty.

With the exception of personal appearance, employees ranked higher on having pleasing personalities than any other trait. Only 8.3 per cent of the store employees were considered as having personalities which were not fairly pleasant.

Only one-half of the employers reporting considered their employees very punctual. One-third of the employees stated that their workers were fairly punctual and one-sixth of the employers found their workers poor in punctuality.



Ratings of Office Employees

Among office employees, personal appearance ranked high as is shown in Table XIX. Employers seemed well pleased with the appearance of their personnel as 81 per cent of the workers were rated good in personal appearance and the remaining 19 per cent were rated fair. None were rated as poor in personal appearance.

TABLE XIX

PERCENTAGE OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES RATED GOOD, FAIR,  
AND POOR BY EMPLOYERS ON PERSONAL TRAITS

|               | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---------------|------|------|------|
| Tact          | 62.1 | 32.4 | 5.4  |
| Courtesy      | 70.2 | 24.3 | 5.4  |
| Appearance    | 81.0 | 19.0 |      |
| Dependability | 24.3 | 62.1 | 13.5 |
| Initiative    | 48.5 | 10.8 | 40.5 |
| Loyalty       | 67.5 | 19.0 | 13.5 |
| Honesty       | 78.3 | 21.6 |      |
| Personality   | 72.9 | 19.0 | 8.1  |
| Punctuality   | 43.2 | 43.2 | 13.5 |

Employees of professional offices also ranked high in personality and courtesy, 72.9 per cent and 70.2 per cent of them receiving ratings of above average on these two

traits, respectively. Seventy-eight per cent of the office workers were considered very honest while 22 per cent were rated fairly honest. Only 24.3 per cent of the office workers were rated high on dependability as compared with 62.1 per cent who received rating of fair and 13.5 per cent who were rated poor.

Forty-per cent of the employers expressed a desire for more initiative on the part of their employees.

Thirteen per cent were displeased because of their employees lack of loyalty to the job and even a larger percentage of those interviewed voiced a criticism of this nature.

More than 13 per cent of the office employers found that their employees were poor in punctuality, while one-half the remaining employers found their workers only fair in this respect.

As compared with store employees, the office workers ranked higher on all traits except initiative and dependability.

Three employers stated that they had no criticism regarding the technical skills of their employees, but that they were very dissatisfied with some of the attitudes and personal traits of their workers. One pharmacist commented that his employees seemed never to have heard of professional ethics. Four other professional men were of the opinion that the employees have no conception of that it means to

be loyal to an employer. Lack of initiative and lack of interest in the business were also very common criticisms.

Ethical conduct is a relative matter and it may vary from group to group depending on what that particular group determines as ethical. It is the responsibility of the school, however, to train the pupils in socially accepted patterns of conduct.

### Cooperative Part-Time Training

Regarding the question asking if they would be willing to cooperate in a part-time training program in which selected school pupils would spend a certain number of hours in school and a certain number of hours working in their stores or offices, six of the persons did not answer.

Of the 31 persons responding to this question, only ten of them stated that they would be willing to participate in such a program. Eighteen stated that they would not be interested in cooperative part-time training. Three of the persons seemed undecided, answering, "not sure" and "perhaps."

Of the eighteen persons who replied negatively to this question four stated that they would not have time to spend in supervising such employees. Two professional men stated that they were not in favor of such a plan because they had tried similar arrangements before and their experience had been very unsatisfactory.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Thirty-seven business and professional men of Tulsa and Muskogee, Oklahoma participated in this study of employees of Negro business and professional men. The purpose of the study was to find out what duties were required of the employees, what deficiencies appeared most frequently, and what personal traits needed further development.

It was found that stores employ more workers than do offices. There are more retail establishments than offices, and the average number of employees per establishment is greater in stores than in offices. Salaries range from \$60 per month to \$180 per month. Bookkeepers and secretaries average more than other clerical or sales employees.

Duties performed with the most frequency by store employees are waiting on customers, making change, answering telephone and making note of telephone messages, arranging stock, writing sales tickets, identifying people, ordering supplies and taking inventories.

The employers of the store workers were desirous of more training for their employees in making change, dressing windows, arranging stock, printing store cards and window advertisements, and helping to plan advertisements. Store proprietors also expressed a desire for additional training for their employees in answering the telephone and making

note of telephone messages, ordering supplies for the store, identifying people, and helping to keep the store neat.

Duties performed most frequently by office employees include answering telephone, identifying people, making note of telephone messages and talking with visitors while the employer is busy. Addressing envelopes and postal cards, writing receipts and checks, and helping to keep the office neat were also check very frequently.

Deficiencies occurring among office employees to which the managers thought that the school might devote more training were filing, making accurate note of telephone calls, addressing cards and envelopes, and taking letters from dictation. Identifying people and helping to keep the office tidy were also listed as items in which workers needed more training.

Very few activities involving typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping are carried on by employees of retail business firms. Neither do skills involving written English appear too important to the success of the sales person, however, the office managers are quite critical of their employees in this respect.

The ability to meet and get along with people seems important for both store and office personnel. Managers of stores and offices seem well pleased with the personal appearance and personality of their employees; however, both

expressed a desire for greater loyalty, ethics, and business like attitudes in their employees. A majority of the employers were not in favor of participating in a cooperative training program.

### Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study, the writer recommends that the second year of shorthand which is offered in many of the Oklahoma schools be replaced by a one-semester course in transcription followed by a second semester of office practice. A course in clerical practice is recommended for students who do not desire or who cannot achieve in shorthand.

Inasmuch as distributive occupations provide employment for so many young people, some consideration should be given this fact in planning the business department curriculum. The writer would, therefore, recommend a course in Distributive Education or Retailing. Opportunities in the field of selling are often neglected in the smaller high schools even though so much of the business activity of the small community centers around this type of work.

Before any type of cooperative training program can be set up, however, it will be necessary to engage in a program which will improve community-school relationships. That this is necessary is indicated by the large number of businessmen who express an unwillingness to cooperate with the school in the training of pupils.

Aside from the usual publicity program engaged in before setting up cooperative training courses, a well planned workshop might be organized under competent supervision, as an in-service training program for sales personnel.

The business teacher might also become more a part of the business community by taking jobs in local retail stores and offices during vacations or holiday rush periods when there is a demand for extra workers. In this way the teacher and the businessman would have the opportunity to become better acquainted while actually filling an immediate need by rendering this service to the business man. Likewise, the services of various businessmen in the community might be utilized by inviting them into the classroom to talk with the students whenever suitable occasions arise. By such programs involving mutual dependence, the pupils, the teacher, the businessman and the school should all benefit.

The greatest need shown by this study, however, seems to exist in some areas in which no school subjects are specifically designed and which no instruction is offered. Several employers stated that they had no criticism regarding the technical skills of their employees but that they were very dissatisfied with some of the attitudes and personal traits of the workers. Comments that employees

lacked initiative, loyalty, dependability, interest in the business, professional ethics, and businesslike attitudes were frequently stated. There is no one subject in our schools in which these traits should be developed, but rather the teachers of all subjects should share this responsibility. Just as the teachers have apparently done a good job in improving the personal appearance of their pupils, encouraging honesty and the development of personality; likewise, other desirable ideals may be inculcated.

Educators take refuge behind the defense that character training, like moral and religious concepts, should be instilled in institutions other than the school. Of course, the home, the church, and the community\* should cooperate in developing these ideals, but often products of the schools are found failing on their jobs because of the lack of these fundamental character and personal traits.

"Character is an integral part of the total personality pattern and it affects the degree of success in which an individual can make the necessary adjustments to life; therefore the development of such traits should not be left to chance.<sup>11</sup>

We must then realize that if schools are to function effectively, character development must be one of their fundamental objectives. Meaningful school experiences designed to develop desirable traits must be the responsibility of each teacher.

---

<sup>11</sup>T. H. Knapp, "Are We Overlooking Personality?" School Review, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September, 1944), 26-7.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Haas, K. B., Distributive Education. New York: Gregg Publishing Company, 1941.
- Holsey, A. L., Report of the Survey of Negro Business. Tuskegee: National Negro Business League, 1928, 97.
- Oak, Vishnu, The Negro's Adventure in General Business. Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1949, 223.
- Pierce, J. A., Negro Business and Business Education. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947, 338 pp.
- Temporary National Economic Committee, Problems of Small Businesses. Senate Committee Print No. 17. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1941. 856 pp.

Periodical Articles

- Caplan, S. W., "Signals for The Coordinator," Business Education World, XXIX, (January, 1949), 289-91.
- Craf, J. R., "Education for Industry and Business," Journal of Business Education, XXIV, (March, 1949), 49-50.
- Forkner, H. L., "Does Everybody Need Some Business Education," NEA Journal, XXXVIII, (April, 1949), 15-16.
- Hatfield and Mercer, "What Businessmen Think About Office Conduct," National Business Education Quarterly, XXII, (October, 1946), 17-18.
- Knapp, T. H., "Are We Overlooking Personality?" School Review, XXXIV, (September, 1944).
- Rice, G. C., "Retailers Make Good Professors," Business Education World, XXIX, (January, 1949) 272.
- Wish, F. D., "Cooperation in Actual Practice," National Business Education Quarterly, XIII, (March, 1945), 17-19.

Unpublished Material

Russell, R. H., "An Analysis of the Traits and Abilities Needed by Clerical Workers in Salina, Kansas." Unpublished masters thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, Pittsburg, January, 1945.

APPENDIX

128 Oak Street  
Sand Springs, Okla.  
April 25, 1949

Dear Sir:

The commercial teachers in high schools throughout Oklahoma are deeply interested in improving the training of their pupils--your potential employees. In an effort to furnish the type of employees needed by business we realize that we must first determine what those needs are. By finding out just what is expected of our pupils we can better know how to train them.

You have been selected as one who might help us in determining the needs of local Negro businessmen. As an employer, you, no doubt, have observed first-hand the weaknesses and strengths in the work of our pupils. While we realize that the purpose of high school business courses is not primarily vocational, we know that many high school pupils are absorbed into local stores and offices. We are, therefore, desirous of helping them to meet the demands placed upon them.

You can be of great service to us in the training of these young people. You can help us by filling out the enclosed check list and returning it in the envelope which is provided for your convenience. By so doing you will be rendering an immeasurable service to our children, our schools, and our business communities.

You need not place your name or the name of your firm on the check list. It is your OPINION which we value and seek.

Very truly yours,

*Wynona Joan Barrett*

Wynona Joan Barrett

Enclosures

**CHECK LIST TO BUSINESS MEN**

Please answer each question as accurately as you can. It is not necessary to place your name on the check sheet. Although this list may appear lengthy, most of the items require only a check mark or a number in the proper column.

1. Indicate whether your business establishment is a store \_\_\_\_\_ or office (check one). \_\_\_\_\_ Store \_\_\_\_\_ Office

2. Indicate below the number of employees you have, either full or part time, whose duties are primarily those of:

Receptionist \_\_\_\_\_ Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Bookkeeper \_\_\_\_\_ Cashier \_\_\_\_\_ Sales clerk \_\_\_\_\_ Typist \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. In the appropriate space, indicate the average monthly salary paid employees whose duties are primarily those of: Receptionist \_\_\_\_\_; Secretary \_\_\_\_\_; Bookkeeper \_\_\_\_\_; Cashier \_\_\_\_\_; Sales clerk \_\_\_\_\_; Typist \_\_\_\_\_; Other \_\_\_\_\_.

4. By placing a check mark in the proper column, indicate how you would rate your employees on skills listed below. If rating more than one employee use numbers instead of the check mark.

|                    | Good | Fair | Poor | Not observed | Remarks |
|--------------------|------|------|------|--------------|---------|
| Spelling           |      |      |      |              |         |
| Punctuation        |      |      |      |              |         |
| Grammatical usage  |      |      |      |              |         |
| Sentence structure |      |      |      |              |         |
| Paragraphing       |      |      |      |              |         |
| Vocabulary         |      |      |      |              |         |
| Sentence Sense     |      |      |      |              |         |

5. Please indicate in a similar manner how you would rate your employees on the following traits:

|               | Good | Fair | Poor | Not observed | Remarks |
|---------------|------|------|------|--------------|---------|
| Tact          |      |      |      |              |         |
| Courtesy      |      |      |      |              |         |
| Appearance    |      |      |      |              |         |
| Dependability |      |      |      |              |         |
| Initiative    |      |      |      |              |         |
| Loyalty       |      |      |      |              |         |
| Honesty       |      |      |      |              |         |
| Personality   |      |      |      |              |         |
| Punctuality   |      |      |      |              |         |

6. Indicate by placing a figure in Column A the number of your employees of whom the following duties are required. In Column B check those items to which you feel the school should devote more training.

|  | COLUMN A<br>Number of employees<br>whose duties include: | COLUMN B<br>Pupils need more<br>training in: |
|--|--|--|
| Answering telephone  |  |  |
| Getting other parties on line                                  |  |  |
| Sending long distant calls or telegrams                        |  |  |
| Receiving and making note of telephone<br>messages             |  |  |
| Typing form letters  |  |  |
| Typing statements or reports                                   |  |  |
| Addressing envelopes or postal cards                           |  |  |
| Taking reports from dictation                                  |  |  |
| Taking letters from dictation                                  |  |  |
| Composing letters  |  |  |
| Typing legal material  |  |  |
| Cutting stencils   |  |  |
| Writing receipts and checks                                    |  |  |
| Making journal entries   |  |  |
| Posting to ledger  |  |  |
| Balancing cash daily   |  |  |
| Keeping accounts receivable and/or<br>accounts payable records |  |  |
| Making profit and loss statements                              |  |  |
| Preparing balance sheet  |  |  |
| Figuring interest and discounts                                |  |  |
| Computing customer accounts                                    |  |  |
| Keeping inventory records                                      |  |  |
| Making change  |  |  |
| Filling out deposit slips                                      |  |  |
| Reconciling bank statements                                    |  |  |
| Identifying people   |  |  |
| Waiting on customers   |  |  |
| Talking with visitors while<br>employer is busy                |  |  |
| Arranging stock  |  |  |
| Writing sales tickets  |  |  |
| Printing store cards or window signs                           |  |  |
| Dressing windows   |  |  |
| Planning advertisements  |  |  |
| Purchasing goods for resale                                    |  |  |
| Ordering supplies or equipment for<br>for office or store      |  |  |
| Filing letters, reports, etc.                                  |  |  |
| Delivering messages  |  |  |
| Running errands  |  |  |
| Keeping store or office tidy                                   |  |  |
| (Other)  |  |  |

7. In the first column check those machines used by your employees. In column B check those in which your employees need more training.

| Name of machine            | Machines used | Need more training in: |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Typewriter                 | _____         | _____                  |
| Dictation machine (name)   | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |
| Adding machine (name)      | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |
| Billing machine            | _____         | _____                  |
| Calculator (name)          | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |
| Cash register              | _____         | _____                  |
| Duplicating machine (name) | _____         | _____                  |
| _____                      | _____         | _____                  |

What specific deficiencies have you noted in your employees that the school might remedy?

Would you be willing to cooperate in a part-time training program in which selected high school pupils would spend a part of the school day or a certain number of hours per week working under your supervision in your store or office?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to Wynona Joan Barrett, 128 Oak Street, Sand Springs, Oklahoma.