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Management Assessment Technology
for Human Service Managers

by

Jacquelyn Starkey

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Social Welfare, The City University of New York

1996

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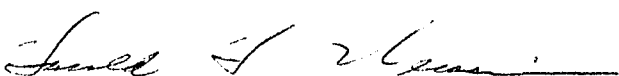
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Date


Chair of Examining Committee

12/11/95
Date


Executive Officer

Harold Weissman

Robert Salmon

Mildred Mailick

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

**MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TECHNOLOGY
FOR HUMAN SERVICE MANAGERS**

by

Jacquelyn Starkey

Advisor: Professor Harold Weissman

This study examines a competency based assessment technology known as Assessment Centers. Typically utilized by for-profit organizations, the author's purpose is to adapt this technology to the career development needs of human service managers. The exercises, instructions and Assessment Center format are adapted to fit the social work managerial experience. Feedback is the primary method used to measure the effectiveness of the adaptation of the instruments. Feedback is also obtained about the overall assessment experience. Both quantitative and qualitative data is collected and analyzed. The analysis demonstrates the need for a cost effective skills assessment methodology specifically geared to human service managers. Implications for future assessment experiences of this type are reviewed and future research directions are proposed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The focus of this study will be that process commonly known in administrative circles as the Management Assessment Center. Generally speaking, Management Assessment Centers utilize a process whereby the managerial skills of a group of candidates is tested against a set of administrative standards to determine an individual's suitability for selection as a new employee in an organization, and/or promotion within that organization, or for purposes of career development for individual candidates. The history of its use has been, predominantly, in the areas of selection and/or promotion.

Management Assessment Centers have enjoyed a history of popular usage since the creation of the process in the 1940s. Their success can be attributed directly to the inclusion of simulation exercises as a way of assessing managerial behavior. Prior to this technology, managerial skill was measured predominantly through the use of paper and pencil tests and standard psychological tests. The idea that simulating work situations within a test environment could more accurately assess candidates' abilities originated with the Assessment Center concept. It followed that, if abilities could be accurately assessed in candidates, in this way, then one could accurately predict the success of candidates in new jobs or in promotional positions. This potential for prediction has made Assessment Centers a very popular management and personnel tool in large, private corporations over the last four decades.

The first organization to experiment with the concepts and structures which would ultimately become the first Assessment Center was AT&T. The central question these early inquiries wished to address was: would ability and fitness for certain kinds of work be related to certain variables of personality, character and education?

For the answer, organized interviewing on college campuses was begun by some Bell System companies as early as World War I. The judgment these early recruiters exercised was based upon considerable Bell System research conducted over the years on the relationship between college achievement and later success in the company. Initiated in the 1920s by Donald S. Bridgeman, this research generated empirical evidence for the connection between education and managerial success (Byham and Wettengel, 1974). Bridgeman recorded two major results:

1. Rank in the college graduating class was a valid predictor of success in a company. Forty-five percent (45%) of the top third in the academic class were also in the top third salary range at AT&T. This was in comparison to 22% of those in the lowest third of the academic class.
2. Once in the top third salary range, those with substantial campus achievement tended to hold those positions longer, as compared to those having no campus achievement.

When asked why they chose Bell System employment, 80% of the interviewees gave reasons of training, development and advancement opportunities; 55% identified location, income, benefits and security as motivating factors; 32% were attracted by the

quality of AT&T personnel; 24% were 2nd or 3rd generation employees working there because their parents had worked there before them; and 17% were attracted by the high prestige of the company. This early research identified one of the important variables influencing managerial achievement: education. Education, in the form of development, would become an important reason motivating managers to seek a Management Assessment Center experience. It would allow managers to become educated about their professional potential. This, in turn, would expand their career opportunities.

An Assessment Center is not only an assessment philosophy. Nor is it only an interesting personnel methodology. An Assessment Center is also a programmatic structure which usually occurs in an insulated physical setting for a specific period of time. A center is administered over a period of time that can be as short as two or three days, or as long as two weeks. The first time this structure was used occurred in the early 1940s.

During World War II, many military and civilian candidates for assignment to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), America's intelligence organization, were given the task of participating in what is now called an Assessment Center. For one week, they underwent a series of interviews, tasks and performance simulation designed to reveal whether they had the qualities needed for intelligence work. Candidates were examined for mental ability, motivation to serve, physical stamina, emotional stability and resistance to stress. This week-long participation in the Assessment Center was geared to reveal every asset and weakness these candidates might have. Unlike AT&T, the OSS focused its attention on the impact of personality on the organizational success of participants. In this way, the OSS experience introduced the second important variable impacting upon achievement: that of personality characteristics. The OSS Assessment

Center was staffed (for the first time) by a group of psychologists and psychiatrists under the direction of Dr. Henry A. Murray of Harvard University. Murray was medically trained and earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry, but soon turned his interests toward psychology. He carried out research that helped to develop techniques for the clinical assessment of personality, particularly around the aspects of motivation. His pioneering work in the 1930s, published under the title Explorations in Personality, paved the way for wholesale evaluation of human characteristics and potential (Bray, 1976).

Murray felt it necessary to observe candidates over the space of several days and put them through elaborate individual and group performance situations. He postulated that ordinary interviews and standard paper and pencil psychological tests were insufficient to fully assess individuals. These special time requirements gave the assessment center one of its central characteristics: a specific, limited period of time within which to observe and evaluate behavior in a variety of situations.

For much of the fifties, this technology remained the province of academically focused researchers. However, it was too attractive an assessment tool to remain in this exclusive arena for long.

In 1956, AT&T decided to use the Assessment Center as its primary methodology in a longitudinal study it was undertaking to examine the development of young managers. Called the Management Progress Study, it set out to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of adult development, and to deal with many unanswered questions about the causes and effects of success, and lack of success, in a management career. Under its auspices, AT&T combined psychological factors with management aspirations in

managers. Douglas W. Bray was the architect of this landmark study. He defined the purpose of an Assessment Center as one which "provides an objective off-the-job evaluation of developed abilities, potential, strengths and weaknesses, and motivation" (Bray, 1976). A 3 day assessment center was designed, and the 422 subjects of the study were assessed in the years 1956 to 1960. From this point on, the Assessment Center became an increasingly popular selection mechanism within the business community.

The use of Assessment Centers by public governmental agencies followed closely on the heels of private business application. The federal government implemented Assessment Centers in the IRS to select *first-line supervisors*. The Federal Aviation Administration, Social Security Administration, HUD and the Armed Forces all have used Assessment Centers (Wise, 1979).

At the height of its popularity, Assessment Centers were used by private and public agencies to improve their effectiveness in selecting managers. Throughout the 1970s, this was their primary focus. However, as organizational growth slowed, some serious disadvantages began to be experienced by organizations in the public sector around selection. For example, since Assessment Centers are really elaborate testing laboratories, it sometimes occurred that talented managers "flunked" the tests.

If an Assessment Center in question places too high a premium on "passing," deserving and capable managers could be passed over for promotion. This can contribute to significant dissatisfaction and morale problems for staff. Further, in public sector organizations, selection is complicated by entrenched civil service systems which traditionally

require selection for promotion from civil services lists not necessarily correlated with management expertise. For these reasons, there has been a shift in Assessment Center focus from selection to training and development of potential managers, particularly in the public sector. One of the first organizations to refocus its Assessment Center on career development was IBM. It has been suggested that the success of this refocused use of technology for development and self-selection through career planning makes the Assessment Center a much more viable process (Hart and Thompson, 1979).

IBM's experience with development seemed to answer some of the serious deficits in Assessment Center results as it pertained to selection. For example, a frequent criticism of Assessment Centers was its direct encouragement of artificial behavior of the participants. When development is the focus, participants are more likely to manifest genuine behavior because they know that the purpose of the experience is solely to help them learn new skills. When selection is the point, there is always the question of who gets and controls the final report on a participant of the Assessment Center. When management controls the report, there are difficult questions as to who should have access to the information. Many an Assessment Center has been dropped or failed because of the potential damage to morale created by this situation. When development is the focus, the feedback goes only to the participant.

On a deeper level, Assessment Centers lend themselves to concerns of career and training development because of their reliance upon and use of needs assessment. Of primary consideration is the determination of whether there is a perceived discrepancy between desired and actual levels of performance. This desired level is not only what the organization needs, but what it will continue to need in order to achieve goals and

objectives (Gent and Dell'Ono, 1989). The Assessment Center is tailored to determine the nature of this discrepancy and suggest training solutions to close the gap.

Other advantages of the development focus are that people are more willing to attend a development workshop than a program that can make or break their career. And more people are likely to benefit from attending a development- oriented center than from a selection-oriented center. Most "selection" centers are win-or-lose experiences. Little if anything is done with the results for the losers. Hopefully, participants in a "development" center all gain greater insight into themselves as managers.

These two managerial concerns, selection and development, have made Assessment Centers a very popular personnel methodology over the last twenty years. Significant numbers of organizations have become interested in sponsoring development programs for their employees. They believe these programs will benefit both the individual and the organization (Stump, 1986). But what exactly does an Assessment Center look like and how does it function?

The Design of Assessment Centers

A Center will usually consist of a series of individual and group exercises designed to simulate the most essential conditions of a job. Participant behavior is observed by a team of trained raters, called assessors. Assessors are managerial experts either drawn from various levels within the subject organization, or brought in as consultants from the outside.

The assessors view candidate effectiveness from a common frame of reference under standardized conditions. This frame of reference is established by training the assessors to evaluate work behavior related to specific performance dimensions. These dimensions, or skills if you will, are determined through an analysis of the particular job. These dimensions are observed and evaluated through the standardized job simulation exercises.

Finally, after all the exercises have been completed, the assessors meet and combine their observations of each candidate to arrive at an overall estimate of their managerial potential (Joiner, 1986). While this is easy enough to describe, each one of these Assessment Center components requires detailed specification, in-depth training and comprehensive coordination.

These unique methodological components have been organized into a set of nationally recognized standards. In 1975, the Task Force on the Development of Assessment Center Standards developed a set of criteria by which to distinguish the Assessment Center technique from other assessment processes (McGee and Crow, 1982). In order to comply with the standards set forth in that document, and thus to qualify as a legitimate Center, the following criteria must be met:

1. Multiple assessment techniques must be used. At least one of these techniques must be a simulation.
2. Multiple assessors must be used. These assessors must receive training prior to participation in a center.

3. Judgments resulting in an outcome (i.e., recommendations for promotion, specific training or development) must be based on pooling information from assessors and techniques.
4. An overall evaluation of behavior must be made by the assessors at a separate time from observation of behavior.
5. Simulation exercises are used. These exercises are developed to tap a variety of predetermined behavior and have been pretested prior to use to ensure that the techniques provide reliable, objective and relevant behavioral information for the organization in question.
6. The dimensions, attributes, characteristics or qualities evaluated by the Assessment Center are determined by an analysis of relevant job behaviors.
7. The techniques used in the Assessment Center are designed to provide information which is used in evaluating the dimensions, attributes or qualities previously determined (Bray, 1976).

Following is a more detailed discussion of these Assessment Center components.

Dimensions

As mentioned above, the task of an Assessment Center is to measure those behaviors which have been determined by the job analysis to be important for successful job per-

formance in that particular job for that particular organization. Therefore, among the first tasks required is to determine the number and kind of dimensions under which candidates will be assessed. Generally speaking, a number of dimensions have been identified as pertinent to managerial skill. These include (but are not limited to): leadership, organizing and planning, decision-making, oral and written communications skills, initiative, energy, analytical ability, resistance to stress, use of delegation, creativity, controlling and overall potential. Which dimensions are used is usually a function of a job analysis of the participants involved. Dimensions, in fact, reflect the role that managers assume in their day to day work lives.

The history of management has seen many transformations in understanding the managerial role. Indeed, the meaning of the word "manager" has always been rather elusive. As Drucker notes, the word has no counterpart in any other language (Drucker, 1985). In English, the word has a history of imprecision.

Early in the history of management a manager was defined as someone who was responsible for the work of others. While this was useful for a time, particularly in distinguishing the function of the manager from the function of the owner, it did little to create a specific set of standards for the position.

Perhaps the first person to systematically think about the administrative function within an organization was Henri Fayol, an engineer and director of a coal manufacturing firm active in the 1880s. Deriving from his own practical experience as an administrator, he set down five basic work functions: to plan, to organize, to command, to control and to

coordinate (Fayol, 1949). Fayol's ideas were prescient and many of them are accepted today by modern managers.

The need to systematically and logically understand how best to run organizations became a focus of most administrative theorists through the first half of the twentieth century. One of the most influential thinkers in this group was Fredrick Taylor, who ushered in the "rational" approach with his theory of scientific management. This approach required that organizations rationally plan, organize and control the employee's work in order to predict productivity (Taylor, 1947). So successful were his ideas that they can be seen in operation today in most organizations. Rational planning around goals and objectives, technologies such as MBO and control activities of all kinds have their roots in the scientific management of Fredrick Taylor.

Building upon the work of Taylor and Fayol, Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick introduced the concept of POSDCORB, which summarized the duties of the chief administrator. These were described as Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Co-ordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting (Gulick and Urwick, 1937). These functions quickly were recognized as pertinent to middle managers as well, and became a part of a managers job description.

The theorists I have mentioned were, wholly or for the most part, interested in efficiency and the productivity of organizations. Their views depicted organizations as logical, rational machines, which can be made to conform to strict, exacting procedures all in the service of greater productivity. Most organizations, including those in the business of meeting human need directly, utilize these theories to maintain an orderly and predict-

able existence. Yet, they simply do not explain the whole organizational story. They explain organizations in static, irreducible terms. This is a partial explanation at best.

Today we understand organizations to be dynamic, interactional systems, complex and often paradoxical in their function. This view of the organization as a system was recognized by Mary Parker Follett early on. Her experience in numerous arenas, including politics, economics and social work, told her that issues of power and conflict impacted decisively on organizational life. Follett's work helped expand the view of organizations from passive, inert structures to active, dynamic systems. Follett and others, including Chester Bernard, Rensis Likert and Kurt Lewin, created the "worker as person" orientation within the organization. The work people do must be experienced by them as significant, and therefore more satisfying. Significance and satisfaction are the tools organizations can use to combat the cynicism and impersonality of the bureaucratic process.

Once the perception of the organization shifted to include dynamic, changing systems, it followed that the role of the manager would similarly expand. POSDCORB would no longer do to explain managerial function. Currently, the manager is seen as orchestrating a complex number of varying functions. There are those theorists who consider the managerial role as the central characteristic of organizational life (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

The work of Henry Mintzberg demonstrates how complex the role of manager has become. Mintzberg has divided managerial activities into three groups: those concerned primarily with interpersonal relationships, those dealing primarily with the transfer of information, and those that essentially involve decision-making. He then divides these three groups into ten distinct roles. The interpersonal roles derive from formal authority

and status in the organization. They include the figurehead role which involves the manager in representing the organization in all matters of formality. Another role is that of liaison, who interacts with peers and others outside the organization to gain information and favors. Thirdly, the manager takes on the role of leader, which defines the environment within which employees will work.

The interpersonal roles place the manager in a unique position to obtain information, and this allows him/her to exercise the roles associated with information processing. The first is the monitor role, which puts the manager in the position of a receiver and collector of information enabling her/him to develop a thorough understanding of the organization. The manager also becomes a disseminator, transmitting special information into his/her organization, and a spokesman, disseminating the organization's information into its environment (Mintzberg, 1973).

The manager's access to information and his/her status and authority place her/him in a strategic position when decisions are made. Mintzberg identifies four roles associated with decision making. The entrepreneurial role allows the manager to initiate change. As the disturbance handler, the manager can take charge when the organization is threatened. As resource allocator, the manager decides where the organization will expend its effort, and, as negotiator, the manager deals with those situations which she/he feels necessitates negotiation on behalf of the organization (Mintzberg, 1973). All these roles and groups are interrelated and derive from one another. It is an extremely comprehensive definition of managerial roles. All can be framed into dimensions utilized in an Assessment Center.

Participant/Assessor Selection

The next task, or perhaps more correctly, the task to be undertaken simultaneously with the above is the identification of candidates. Candidates are commonly nominated for assessment by their supervisors. "Usually supervisors are instructed to nominate employees who are performing adequately in their current jobs and who, in their estimation, have potential for advancement" (Byham, 1970). This is not a hard and fast rule. In certain circumstances, candidates can nominate themselves.

Perhaps as critical is the selection of assessors. A typical Assessment Center will have four to six assessors in ratios of 4:1 to 1:1 (Howard, 1974). The assessors may be internal to the organization or outside of it. Most importantly, assessors are trained for their job. They become familiar with the exercises by participating themselves, watching videotapes or observing actual performances. The dimensions to be assessed are defined, and assessors are given practice and instruction in how to recognize the behaviors associated with the dimensions. Assessor training varies widely in duration, from brief orientations to two or three weeks of intensive training. Companies highly interested in training managers in appraisal techniques will change assessors frequently, while those most interested in producing a stable selection program or in saving money on training will make changes less often.

There is a danger when assessors are nominated by supervisors internally. After a Center has passed from the experimental to the operational phase, controls may be relaxed somewhat, and senior management may be tempted to send "cooperative" man-

agers to centers to act as assessors (Byham, 1970). Ultimately, this will impact upon assessor reliability.

Assessors are a unique feature of Assessment Center design. They are, essentially, raters, who both score the exercises and act as observers during simulations. In the Assessment Center proposed, assessors will be trained prior to the center and will have a uniform understanding of the criteria utilized in rating the dimensions. Behavioral observation techniques are utilized during the group simulation.

The Exercises

Exercises bring out the behavior to be observed in the participant. So they are very important to the center's success. The exercises, in effect, measure the dimensions selected earlier in the Assessment Center process. "The stated intention of the OSS staff was to measure the Gestalt, or whole, integrated personality. The modern extension of this idea, in process-oriented terms, is that the whole personality is observed in interaction with simulations of the future job environment" (Howard, 1974). Assessment Center exercises use several formats.

The In-Basket - Typically, the participant is faced with an accumulation of memos, reports, notes of incoming telephone calls, letters and other materials collected in the in-basket of the job the participant is to take over. The participant is asked to dispose of these materials in the most appropriate manner by writing letters, notes, reminders, etc. Sometimes the in-basket exercise is followed by a questionnaire or an interview by one of the assessors, in which the participant is asked to justify his/her decisions, actions

and non-actions. Ratings of performance may be subjective evaluations or highly standardized checklists.

The Leaderless Group Discussion—The participants in the leaderless group discussion are usually given a discussion question and instructed to arrive at a group decision. Dimensions that can be revealed in the leaderless group discussion include interpersonal skills, individual influence and leadership.

Management Games. These require participants to solve problems, either cooperatively or competitively. Some games also permit observations under stress, especially when conditions suddenly change or when competition stiffens.

Objective Tests. All types of paper and pencil tests of mental ability, personality, interests and achievement are used. The tests are generally standardized instruments.

Projective Tests. Sentence completions and TAT cards are the most popular tests used. The projectives are used to get at some of the more obscure behavioral characteristics, such as need for achievement or originality.

Interview - Most centers have an interview between at least one assessor and the participant. Interviews vary in terms of structure, interpretation and the climate in which they are conducted.

Some or all of these exercises are administered in Assessment Centers.

After the candidates have completed their participation in the process, the assessors meet for the final evaluation/ integration session. The procedure for establishing candidate ranking is a combination of cumulative scores on each dimension plus an overall evaluation score. Assessors arrive at these scores by consensus.

Assessment Centers allow candidates to demonstrate more of their skills through a number of job-relevant situations. Thus, assessors are able to observe candidate effectiveness in a variety of realistic settings dealing with typical issues and problems associated with the target job (Joiner, 1986). There is a great amount of flexibility in such a system and this flexibility extends to the number of ways an Assessment Center can be used.

Alexander (1979) identifies the following uses of an Assessment Center: identification of employee strengths and weaknesses, making promotional decisions, developing managerial potential, aiding in career planning, determining training needs, improving performance and determining assessors' developmental needs. Bray (1976) adds affirmative actions to this list. In this regard, normal processes of identification, development and advancement are often lengthy, and it is particularly important to identify minority- group members with high potential so that they may be moved along more quickly (Ross, 1979). A high priority issue for human service organizations, then, would appear to be the identification of methods by which to develop managerial skills in persons with potential.

The Purpose of the Study

Generally speaking, the intention is to develop a study which adapts the basic Assessment Center concept to a human service setting. In so doing, the hope is to redirect the goals of a typical Assessment Center away from selection and promotion and toward staff development issues. This will require the creation of a new methodology which focuses upon the development of managerial skills within human service settings. This will be one goal.

Another and more formidable goal is to create this methodology in a cost effective way. Cost is perhaps the major reason why Assessment Centers have not been more widely utilized as a staff development tool in non-profit organizations.

The possibility of using these centers to develop administrators found an eager audience among governmental and human service agencies where better trained and better skilled administrators were needed to fill the gap created by the intense accountability focus of the 1970s and '80s. A number of human service systems adapted the Assessment Center concept to focus on the development needs of human service personnel. These centers were conducted internally, in much the same way as business organizations had done. However, there was, and is, a limit on the types of human service systems which can take advantage of such a process. Because of their high costs, assessment centers have been utilized only by large, bureaucratic and public systems. Smaller, not-for-profit systems have not been able to take advantage of this technology.

Nevertheless, for those human service agencies which can afford it, focusing on staff development needs allows the Assessment Center technology to examine a broad range of managerial concerns. Assessments can be made around managerial capacities, single areas of competence, specific job functions, or, indeed, all of these. It is this aspect of the methodology which has proved attractive to human service organizations.

Rino Patti has furthered this interest by focusing some of his research on the training needs of human service managers. His overriding concern is the preparation of direct-line social workers for supervisory and management responsibilities within an organization. His research attempts not only to describe dimensions of managerial behavior but also to relate these behaviors to ongoing training needs of social welfare administrators (Patti, 1977).

Patti has suggested that the pattern of managerial behaviors he found indicated that social service managers tended to be generalists. Most of the managers spent at least some of their time engaged in a rather wide variety of activities. Further, many of these managers indicated a need for higher levels of skill in accomplishing the day-to-day requirements of their jobs. Patti suggests greater training is needed to assist social workers to negotiate the numerous management tasks implied by such generality (Patti, 1977).

Further, Patti identified a number of variables which impact upon the social worker's ability to execute such tasks. In discussing the transition phase of social workers from direct service to management, Patti identifies five variables that will impact upon the ability to manage adequately. These are the social worker's orientation to authority, ori-

entations to effectiveness, their accustomed modes of decision-making, and their orientation to relationships both in general and to collegial relationships specifically.

By looking at these briefly, it is possible to see the management dilemmas that arise specific to the social work profession. Social work practitioners are trained to derive their authority with clients from a dynamically focused expertise. That is, clients become more enabled as they "come to believe in and accept the worker's expertise" (Patti and Austin, 1977). Managers, on the other hand, must be prepared to rely on the authority conferred through their position when consensus with subordinates is absent. Likewise with decision-making, the practitioner is charged with maximizing the benefit each client receives from the services delivered. The practitioners consider this their primary responsibility. Hence, decisions are made case by case, to better maximize the client's potential.

Managers do not have this luxury usually. They are forced to make decisions based upon the best alternative available given scarce resources. "The decision made for the manager is one of satisficing rather than optimizing, and while this may be considered unfortunate, in given instances the managerial culture recognizes this as both a necessary and an ethical approach to decision making" (Patti and Austin, 1977).

Practitioners are trained to be expert at the art of relationship. This expertise allows clients to be free to express feelings and ideas in an atmosphere of trust. Patti calls this an expressive orientation to relationship. The relationship between manager and worker, however, is more instrumental and specific. That is, geared much more to meeting the goals of the organization. Individualistic expression becomes subordinate

to the issue of equity toward all workers. A similar situation exists when the focus is collegial. Practitioners seek and support collegial relationships. The mutuality of experience provides important supports to the practitioner within the system. A different set of norms exists at the administration level, where competitiveness is likely to be the more common behavior.

Finally, orientations to effectiveness are different. Few practitioners judge their effectiveness solely upon the achievement of measurable objectives. Managers, however, "are more inclined to treat process outcomes as means to the achievement of program objectives rather than as independent indices of success" (Patti and Austin, 1977).

These variables have impacted adversely upon social work practitioners when they assume management positions. Patti feels there is simply not enough preparation of practitioners prior to assuming these roles. He feels there is widespread misinformation about managerial functions on the part of social workers, as well as little role playing or role practicing. "Novice supervisors need a systems perspective in order to understand supervisory organizational role taking" (Patti and Austin, 1977). Role modeling is simply not given high enough priority in human service systems. Lastly, practitioners do not develop a good enough sense of what it means to enter administrative circles. Misconceptions about being a "bureaucrat" and "functionary" convey unpleasant (though erroneous) meanings.

Patti suggests that education and training are required to overcome these deficits. It is particularly important to give students the opportunity to experience an in-depth expo-

sure to supervisory roles, to access their own potential for management positions and to involve participants in simulation and role playing techniques.

This proposal suggests one way of achieving this kind of educational development: the process of an Assessment Center.

The Study Objective

This study will focus on the development of management assessment instruments that can accurately reflect and capture human service managers' skills and experiences. In this regard it will be an exploratory descriptive study.

This will allow a thorough description of the management assessment process as it pertains to human service managers working in small, human service settings. It will also allow the generation of basic descriptive and qualitative data. The primary focus, however, is on the instruments themselves and how well they assess human service managers' needs.

This formative study will generate descriptive knowledge which will supply information directly pertinent to the participation and process of an Assessment Center. (Tripodi, 1983) The parameters of the study will not allow the prediction of outcomes in other Assessment Centers of similar type. Nor will the data allow generalization in any broad way. However, qualitative data gathered in the feedback section of the study will be used to suggest improvements and adaptations of the instruments used. Descriptive

statistics plus qualitative data will allow for a certain low-order of generalization which, it is hoped, will be useful for future adaptations of the assessment technology presented.

The study further will be focused exclusively on development needs of human service managers. Promotion and selection will be issues beyond the scope of this study. In this sense, this study is programatically oriented. It is concerned with developing the kind of assessment technology which will be responsive to the career skills and training needed by social work managers to advance into decision- making positions within organizations.

In specific terms this study will examine a group of social work managers whose work location is a small, not-for-profit human service agency in New York City. The methodology for this study is complex and requires a number of separate developmental tracks:

- a) Development of the exercises, development of assessment tools, development of instructions for administrator assessors and participants.
- b) Training of assessors.
- c) Selection of participants.
- d) Scheduling of Assessment Centers.

This researcher will develop the instruments and administer the Assessment Center as well as participate as one of the assessors. A second assessor will also be trained for these Centers.

Selection and recruitment will then commence and the Assessment Centers scheduled and implemented. The choice of two assessors, one of which does double duty as administrator, is one of the cost containment factors built into the study. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, Assessment Centers are very labor-intensive experiences. Consultant assessors are typically hired in a ratio of one to three participants. Here, the ratio will be no fewer than one to six participants. Often actors are employed to play out specific roles in simulation exercises. These costs plus the length of an Assessment Center, often one to two weeks, make Assessment Centers expensive in the extreme. In most cases, these kinds of resources are not available to the not-for-profit agency. By decreasing the number of assessors and shortening the time allotted to completing an Assessment Center, it is hoped the Centers will become cost-effective. One of the outcomes of the study will be the demonstration of the effectiveness of such an abbreviated experience.

What will be lost as a result, and what will be gained? Will these abbreviations cut too deeply into the character and purpose of an Assessment Center? For answers to these questions, the design will rely heavily upon participant feedback. For this purpose, feedback instruments will be developed for each exercise administered. In addition, a self-assessment instrument will be developed.

The implementors of this study will be this researcher and a colleague from the Hunter College School of Social Work. Both are pursuing doctorates at the above institution and are social workers with Master's degrees. This researcher is a white, middle-aged, female with at least twenty years' experience in the field. The other assessor is a younger black male beginning his academic career. It is hoped that our demographic

differences will lend an equilibrium to the assessment process, which under the best of circumstances is a highly subjective process. The circumstances for assessment in this case will not be ideal. Assessors for these Assessment Centers have been reduced to the barest minimum of two. A question to be answered by this study is whether or not this number is sufficient to successfully conduct an Assessment Center.

My colleague's role is to act as an assessor during the assessments themselves. This role will require him to observe and report on the behaviors presented by the participants. This researcher will be participating with him in this assessor function, and our judgments concerning management skills will be jointly arrived at through consensus meetings. All other aspects of this study, the development and testing of instruments, the training of assessors, scheduling, recruitment of participants, administering and evaluating of the Assessment Center, and participant feedback sessions, will be the researcher's responsibility alone.

The target population will consist of managers recruited from a not-for-profit social service agency. All participants in this study will come from this agency. All participants fall into two distinct management levels, supervisors and coordinators from middle management and Directors of service. All participants have M.S.W.s. In the proposal submitted to the agency, it was suggested that a series of Assessment Centers might be useful to both participants and organization. The participants involved would receive an assessment of their managerial skills which could benefit them in their career development, and the agency could utilize assessment information, in a general way, to formulate future management training plans. Two qualifiers accompanied this proposal: all participants must voluntarily choose to participate, and individual, specific management as-

assessments would not be shared with the agency. In other words, individual scores and assessments would be confidential. The proposal was accepted on this basis.

Thirty participants engaged in three Assessment Centers during the course of the summer of 1989. Seven others were involved in the pre-testing of the instruments developed.

The objective of the study, to reiterate, will be to determine if a cost-effective, human service oriented Assessment Center, utilizing adapted methodology, can be developed to successfully capture managerial skill in human service workers. The dependent variable is expressed by the outcome: a successfully operating Assessment Center as defined by participant feedback. Several independent variables are suggested as influencing this outcome, and will also be in the form of feedback. First among these is the technology developed. These instruments will have the greatest influence on the outcome. Other independent variables include the impact of assessors on the outcome, and the administration and duration of the assessment centers on the outcome. This study should provide useful information to organizations interested in management assessment. Further, it is hoped such information will make this technology available to many more users than now employ it. Effectiveness and cost- efficiency will contribute greatly to this expanded use.

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Chapter 2

Literature Review

This will be a pragmatic study. Its focus upon instrumentation would not, ordinarily, inspire theoretical discussion. The motivation for the study, however, the need to develop evaluation techniques which can better guide social work managers toward skill development which will enhance responsible, effective management, does derive from an amalgam of management theory. The Assessment Center concept when adapted to human service needs bridges two prominent theoretical positions: scientific management and humanistic management. These two orientations to management theory inform this study's practical nature.

There is a tension between the theoretical preference for fact and the theoretical preference for feeling that goes far beyond the management arena. The expression of these theoretical preferences has a very long history which has manifested itself in many different bodies of knowledge. Management theory in this regard is a rather small, current thread in this old tapestry. It is part of the larger nature/nurture paradigm. Is truth to be found in nature alone or in the nurturing influence of humankind upon nature? Which deserves to dominate? The search for truth along these lines has consumed the imagination of many scholars and artists in many disciplines for hundreds of years.

For the purposes of this discussion the terms nature and nurture shall be defined as follows. By nature it is meant those truths which appear to the senses and to logic to be established by laws outside of human influence or interference. Natural phenomena are distinguished by fundamental or essential characteristics. By extension, naturalism is the doctrine that scientific laws are adequate to account for all phenomena.

The term nurture refers to the sum of influences modifying the expression of the genetic potential of an organism. To nurture, in this regard, is to further the development of an organism beyond its innate characteristics. To nurture, according to this definition, need not lead to a benign or helpful experience. The tension between rational and nonrational explanation, between nature and nurture as a generic source of knowledge, has existed in the arena of the physical sciences for ages. But that is not the only body of knowledge where such tension exists.

When Constable insisted upon painting trees green, he was championing truth in the form of naturalism. Paintings should reflect what is there, he felt. "The great vice of the present day," he said, "is bravura, an attempt to do something beyond truth." (Leslie, 1845) Classicists painted trees brown and they also believed they were expressing truth. And what was Turner expressing? Turner became more and more extravagant, and less attentive to nature. Ruskin described him as he who "perceives at a glance the whole sum of visible truth open to human intelligence." (Leslie, 1845) Turner and the classicists were nature advocataes. That is, they overlaid symbolism and personal meaning onto natural phenomena.

This tension even manifests itself in the present day backyard. Nature writers are observers by definition and possess a reverence for the objective. Thoreau's brief experience with nurturance repelled him. He attempted to plant a beanfield at Walden, but he found by doing so he had greatly complicated his relationship with nature. Indeed, he felt he had made an enemy of it. He declared he would rather live by the most dismal swamp than by the most beautiful garden. (Thoreau, 1958). He could not imagine an active role for himself in nature except as despoiler.

Gardeners, on the other hand, are nurturists. They believe that it is possible to heal and improve a landscape. A garden, in fact, may be defined as any place where nature and culture have been wedded with success. Human beings have championed one or the other of these ideas through the ages. Many, if not most, bodies of knowledge harbor their own version of the nature/nurture controversy. It is no surprise, then, when these same tensions appear in the arena of management theory.

Management Theory

In management terms this tension exists between rationalists who put their faith in technology and the logical processes of planning, and those who see a need to focus on effectiveness as well as efficiency in pursuing satisfactory outcomes. The seventies exhibited a marked preference for enhanced technology particularly in the areas of control and evaluation. This was a logical extension of the renewed priority to link resources to outcomes. The values underlying this priority are rooted in Scientific Management Theory, first articulated by Frederick Taylor (1947). This theory states that there is a logical relationship between means and ends, and that this logic makes outcomes specifiable and predictable. Under such circumstances, efficiency becomes the primary motivation in the production of work with its need to reduce judgment and discretion as factors in outcomes (Patti, 1975).

Decision-making under this system is based upon quantifiable data or facts analyzed in a rational, logical context. Negotiation, the need for consensus, is minimized. The needs of an organization to meet latent goals are minimized under this theory, as are the needs of socio-political interests. These non-rational realities are perceived generally as obstacles to the pursuit of successful outcomes.

Elaborate technologies have evolved to carry out the rational intent of scientific managers. Management by Objectives, Management Information Systems and Cost-Benefit Analysis are some of these technologies. Their intent is to direct organizational attention to the successful accomplishment of outcomes.

Lost in this juggernaut for the period of the seventies was the program-oriented professional. This type of professional, trained in judgment and problem-solving in complex situations, was overwhelmed by the rational approach.

The strong influence of rational management throughout the seventies, in a sense, forced human service management to shift from an overriding concern with program maintenance and expansion to a preoccupation with program control and evaluation (Patti, 1975). The rise of administrative curriculums in postgraduate schools of social work was one response to this shift. The late seventies and eighties saw a proportionate rise in human service managers trained in scientific techniques. This period also saw a rise in the conflict such techniques tended to generate within the social work profession. In many ways these skills called for behavior which social work managers sometimes found unethical, or forced compromises which social workers found detrimental.

Adjustments began to be made in the late seventies and early eighties, when it became clear that logic alone could not solve the problems with which human service organizations contend. Humanistic theorists maintain that rational, technological processes cannot be the sole means for achieving outcomes.

Administrators do sometimes need to put aside hard data suggesting change if, for example, vested interests in a program mitigated against it. Compromise is sometimes better than logic in accomplishing goals. Finally, reason is constrained by the biases and

commitments of numerous external interest groups. These assumptions, while viewed by rationalistic managers as inefficient, might be, in fact, highly effective. A sophisticated understanding of programs, an ability to use political processes in decision-making and a sensitivity to external constituencies all can contribute to the achievement of successful outcomes (Patti, 1975).

Another way to highlight these two theoretical trends is to look at the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness. Historically, the tension between the two dates back at least to the 1920s when the psychological aspects of personnel management began to hold sway. This was part of the rise of humanistic thinking to explain employee work behavior (Leiby, 1991). Effectiveness came to be seen as substantially influencing the quality of outcomes. Efficiency had already been established as a critical factor in achieving outcomes.

There are those who argue that efficiency and the functioning of complex organizations are mutually exclusive realities (Gruber, 1991). Although this sounds like an extreme position, there is some justification for it. Outcome measures in human service organizations are often intangible. Further, because quality of service is so difficult to capture with quantitative indices, it is frequently removed as a criterion of productivity. This further exacerbates the tension between professionals and the organization for which they work. Here again the argument can be stated as a nature/nurture tension. Efficiency is a force of reason and effectiveness a force of complexity. As Gruber suggests (1991), when we scratch below the surface of efficiency concepts we find variables as multiple and as elusive as those encountered in effectiveness measures. Contemporary efficiency theory, he suggests, is too limited and too linear.

There is a theoretical and practical line of thinking which attempts to bridge the two through the concept of service effectiveness (Patti, 1987). In the author's context, service effectiveness is seen as an outcome. Not just an outcome, but the most important outcome that a social service organization can deliver. Subordinate to effectiveness but critically important to achieving it are the factors of efficiency and productivity. In a sense it turns efficiency theory on its head. According to Patti (1987) this is the only way to successfully reconcile the rational thinking in management with the human need that is the heart of human service delivery. Effectiveness-oriented management is concerned, centrally, with how improved performance in output, efficiency and resource acquisition influences improvements in service effectiveness. It speaks to the strong value systems in place in human service systems which contribute so importantly to worker motivation and performance. As Patti correctly points out, there will be times in the life of an organization when the need for efficiency outcomes will outweigh the need for effectiveness outcomes. Organizations are dynamic in nature and, in fact, juggle this tension between effectiveness and efficiency constantly. Future human service managers will need to acquire skills which allow them to manage this dynamic.

To what extent is a Management Assessment Center the expression of these theoretical positions? Until recently it could be argued that Assessment Centers were pure extensions of scientific management theory. Its focus on productivity through the process of pinpointing those best suited for selection and promotion makes it a highly rational technology. At the same time, however, its procedures are highly subjective. Traditionally, these subjective factors have been rigorously restricted and many attempts have been made to eliminate them.

In recent times, Assessment Centers have been adapted to reflect the more indeterminate realities associated with the human service experience. These adaptations have

largely to do with the choice of dimensions or skills tested. This study aligns itself with this perspective and attempts to bridge the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness though its primary concern is with effectiveness; while Assessment Centers are elaborate technologies rooted in scientific management theory, my intention here is to make it more receptive to the qualitative concerns of human service managers.

Validity

For much of its history, Assessment Centers have been perceived by professionals as an accurate, reliable and fair technology. Nevertheless, questions continue to arise regarding its validity (Dreher and Sackett, 1981). This attention has been prompted by the fact that Assessment Centers have often been used to predict successful managers. This information has been used to hire and promote individuals. More has been written about validity in Assessment Centers than any other characteristic. And while this study does not concern itself with prediction, discussion of validity does highlight some of the problematic aspects of assessing by this method. Most questions concerning validity focus on the areas of management competence, the content of exercises and the role of assessors in the evaluation process (Olshifski and Cunningham, 1985).

The characteristics that make up a good manager can be theoretically vague. At the practice level they can be contradictory. A good manager must be flexible, yet decisive, an expert, yet a generalist. There is no theory available to help us select those managerial skills which most closely simulate effective managers. This is true in part because *managerial jobs have always been broadly defined to allow for adaptability to very different environments.* Furthermore, the higher the position the more vaguely defined the job. Yet Assessment Centers require that jobs be precisely defined (Olshifski and Cunn-

ham, 1985). This dilemma goes right to the heart of validity. Are we testing what we say we are testing?

For example, some managers' roles are concerned with day-to-day operations and some managers are concerned with monitoring and assessing functions. (Ansoff, 1972). Often these roles are combined in one manager even though the behaviors required are different and may even be contradictory.

This makes it difficult to construct exercises with the correct mix of managerial skills. To minimize this potential source of invalidity, only managers involved in day-to-day operations are tested.

When selection and promotion are the goals in an Assessment Center, numerous validity problems can occur. For example, it can be very difficult to maintain the independence of Assessment Center outcomes when such outcomes are utilized by organizations as criteria for promotion. This type of contamination exists in many validity studies (Sackett, 1982). Further, generalizability of research findings are almost impossible with Assessment Centers because of the lack of standardization among Centers. Variations exist from Assessment Center to Assessment Center in the number of exercises, the number of dimensions, the extent of assessor training and the method of reaching consensus among assessors to mention some.

It is recognized that prediction is not the sole reason for choosing Assessment Centers over other approaches. Developmental value and user acceptability are other factors entering into such a decision. Increasingly, the Assessment Center is being used in this less rigorous, though highly useful form. Even when used for developmental purposes, however, precautions must be taken to be as precise as possible. The dimensions of

good management must be explicit in the instruments and in the instructions to assessors. This has been incorporated in the present study.

These issues become more concrete when we look at the design of Assessment Center exercises. These exercises are constructed to operationalize the definition of the manager reflected in the dimensions identified. What must be remembered is that validity is based upon inferences, not tests (Tenopir, 1977). If experts agree that the components of an exercise constitute an appropriate sample of the possible components of a skill being measured, for example, judgment skills, then content validity can be established. It also implies that the test scenarios and simulations constitute a realistic representation of skills required for the actual job.

Validity can be assessed by two criteria. One type of criteria is internal in nature and is typified by the concept of content validity. This validity refers to the extent to which the measurement of a concept adequately reflects the content that is perceived as relevant to the concept (Tripodi, 1983). This type of validity cannot be used to predict behavior or make generalizations from the sample to the general universe the sample is taken from.

Empirical or external validity is concerned with correlation and the comparison of methodological and theoretically relevant variables (Tripodi, 1983). My study concerns itself with content or face validity only.

This is a low order of validity but not inconsistent with the scope of this study. Nevertheless, there is often strong criticism of Assessment Centers when it comes to validity. Some of this derives from the bias in the scientific community toward the creation of instruments using strict, predefined procedures which can be confirmed by empirical evidence. Some social scientists maintain that content validity is not sufficient, that predic-

tive validity is also required. But in order to do this one would have to look for correlations between test results and changes within the organizations for whom the participants work. Not only does this go beyond the scope of this dissertation, but there are problematic aspects to this approach. It is not appropriate to judge the competence of a manager by the performance of the organization. Too many extraneous variables intervene. As Olshifski and Cunningham (1985) attest, one cannot reduce the characteristics of organizations to characteristics of managers within that organization. The requirement of predictability denotes a scientific bias. And while it is appropriate in many research projects, there is doubt about its appropriateness for Assessment Centers. There exists a small controversy in the field concerning which type of validity is required. Qualitative scientists (Norton, 1981, and Neidig and Neidig, 1984) support content validity for Assessment Center exercises, while quantitative scientists support predictive validity for Assessment Centers (Sackett and Dreher, 1982). It should be noted, however, that these demands are focused on outcomes which seek to use results for selection and/or prediction of promotions for managers.

This disagreement crystalized around the work of two groups of authors: Sackett and Dreher (1982) and Neidig and Neidig (1984). The argument hinges upon whether exercise construction alone is evidence for validity. Sackett and Dreher argue that exercise design alone serves as very weak evidence for content validity due to the complexity of the typical Assessment Center rating and evaluation process. Evidence that assessment ratings accurately reflect the traits they claim to measure has not been provided to date. Their findings suggest that assessment ratings do not measure the intended constructs, and the authors highlight the need for more rigorous research standards.

Neidig and Neidig argue that, in fact, there is no research technique solid enough to eliminate validity error. The intent of Assessment Centers should be to allow for the obser-

vation and evaluation of job-related behaviors. The use of different exercises reflects the position that stable performance across exercises by all participants is not necessarily expected and that this variance is not necessarily due to error in measurement. They believe that such findings should not cause alarm. The failure of internal exercise ratings to satisfy validity requirements does not preclude the job relatedness of the assessment center method.

Since assessment centers are really job samples, they can be justified on content validity grounds rather than requiring empirical validation (Sackett, 1982). According to Jaffee and Sefcik (1980), content validity is inherent in the assessment center process when the situational exercises are developed based on a thorough job analysis. It is commonly understood that a measure has content validity when the measure represents a sample of the skills or knowledge needed for the job.

The In-Basket exercise is a case in point. The In-Basket is a simulation exercise requiring the performance of a managerial position by dealing with the mail and related items which accumulate in the "in-basket" of the manager. Each participant is confronted with a standard set of problems in the form of letters, memos, reports and related materials. It seems reasonable to question whether the ability to handle a manager's paperwork responsibilities actually does reflect accurately the ability to manage an organization. There is research to suggest that the performance style one exhibits in handling carefully selected, but true-to-life "in-basket" items does correlate with demonstrated on-the-job performance of a managerial position, especially the ability to handle the planning and administrative aspects of the job (Meyer, 1970).

In sum, most Assessment Centers are not founded upon empirical studies of the manager's role. They are based largely on a review of the research literature and the judg-

ment of executives in the organization as to what makes an effective manager. Based upon these factors, dimensions are chosen and tasks analyzed. Task analysis will be the factor informing this study as well.

A frequent criticism of Assessment Centers is that they are too stressful. The exercises are designed to elicit a fair amount of stress. This is used as a mechanism for encouraging actual rather than preconceived behavior. Stress can be modified by adjusting the difficulty level of exercises, informing participants about the program in advance, and being supportive with persons manifesting signs of anxiety.

A very important part of this is building in a feedback mechanism. For this study, a personal interview will be given to each participant apprising them of their scores and ratings and to work out any specific development plans they may have. This component is, indeed, the most important facet of this study, for such feedback will provide us with the information we need to further refine and tighten this promising technology.

Lastly, there is internal consistency. This type of validity tests the assumption that the concept of "leadership" in exercise A carries the same meaning as "leadership" in exercise B. Some of this consistency is achieved through assessor training. Further, the instruments in this study insure that each exercise covers only those behaviors which are reliably manifested. Each dimension or skill tested is present in more than one exercise. This diminishes the possibility that a participant's opportunity to problem-solve, for example, will be rated artificially high or low. It enhances the participants' opportunity to demonstrate typical performance on a dimension (Sackett and Dreher, 1982). It is important that the instruments validly measure those traits and behaviors that the Assessment Center is designed to measure (Hinrichs and Haanpera, 1976). This being achieved, the data can then be used for meaningful feedback to the individual for development purposes.

If these characteristics can be achieved then content validity can be claimed. Central to the Assessment Center approach is the belief that stable behavior patterns exist which can be categorized as representing various dimensions. Multiple exercises are used to provide multiple opportunities for these behaviors to be manifested.

Reliability

A primary technique for insuring reliability of the assessor's judgment is to evaluate the extent of agreement among two or more raters observing the same exercise. This is termed inter-rater reliability. This type of reliability has been addressed in this dissertation by, first, providing training to the two assessors involved. This training was focused upon discussions concerning the meaning of the dimensions/skills identified. There had to be agreement about the meaning of "leadership" or "problem-solving." Further, there had to be agreement concerning how these meanings are manifested in behavior, for it is only the behavior that the assessors observe. Training allows for a commonality of understanding on these behaviors. Even more important as far as training is concerned is the time spent becoming aware of and discussing individual preferences and biases. These management biases have a critical impact on judgment and efforts must be made to limit that impact as much as possible. Careful attention to the actual description of behavior observed rather than what the behavior means does create greater objectivity. When these techniques are used, research on the reliability of assessor judgments suggests that moderately high interrater agreement is likely in the Assessment Center context (Howard, 1979).

Another reliability technique frequently utilized is called test-retest. Test-retest reliability looks for stability of repeated measurements over time. For example, scores received by a group of people today would be similar to their scores 2 months from now if the test

were reliable. While this study is preliminary in this regard, they were all pretested. Re-testing of the instruments developed for this study could be the focus of future studies.

Further, reliability has to do with the assessor's role in the Assessment Center process. Depending upon the level of reliability, the assessor's role becomes more or less critical. When multiple choice/true and false criteria are used, then the role of the assessor is reduced to a mechanical and unimportant one. The evaluation is designed, in this context, to eliminate human variability in the process. To that end, the assessor's role is strictly constrained and every attempt is made to eliminate assessor judgment and the error which might attend it.

However, when seeking content validity, as is the case here, the reliability of the assessor becomes paramount. Assessor judgment contributes significantly to the outcomes. Assessors must note in detail participant behavior in the simulation exercises. They also score the paper and pencil exercises for each participant. After discussion with all assessors, participants are rated along various pre-determined dimensions/ skills.

The assessors' final ratings are a consensus judgment. The participants' behaviors must be judged in context. This means that behavior assessed positively in one context may be judged differently in another context. This means assessors must be well trained. They must be flexible and understand their own preferences and biases as far as management is concerned.

It is the intention of this study that the information generated will contribute to more reliable, efficient and effective assessment center instruments for future study. And while this study utilizes only the simplest forms of reliability and validity, it must be remembered

that issues of reliability and validity are never completely resolved, except, as Michael Smith has stated, in research heaven (1990).

Other Relevant Studies

Assessment Centers, because they are often used as tools for job selection, have often been the focus of attention from the perspective of fairness. Many studies on Assessment Centers address this issue. Under a 1973 consent decree between AT&T, the EEOC and the Department of Labor, AT&T agreed to use an Assessment Center to evaluate college graduate, female employees as one mechanism for identifying promotable females. That Assessment Center assessed 1,634 women and found 42% of them possessed management potential. Byham (1977) reviewed several court cases involving Assessment Centers. Only one of these, *Berry v. City of Omaha*, directly challenged the fairness of an Assessment Center. The challenge dealt with the subjectivity of assessor judgments. The court ruled in this case that the Center was fair, since adequate assessor training produced reliable judgments.

Huck and Bray (1976) found a high degree of validity for both black female and white female candidates. Moses and Boehm (1975) found Assessment Center evaluations to be fair and valid for both men and women.

It is ironic that such a subjective technology could come to be viewed as fairer to candidate than more "objective" written evaluation procedures. In fact, Assessment Center evaluation assumes bias in all evaluation technologies, written or otherwise. Having made this assumption, the technology can then be adapted to limit that bias. By basing judgments directly on observed behavior rather than inferring likely behavior from correlates such as test scores, this technology creates a distinct advantage where fairness is

concerned. In addition, the Assessment Center offered a varied and multiple view of the participant. These multiple indices of achievement are considered to assess a participant more fairly than intellectual tests could.

In 1980, Donnell and Hall reviewed five studies involving almost 2,000 men and women. They reached the conclusion that women, in general, did not differ from men in the ways in which they administered the management process. Data supports the view that successful management is not sex related. As a result of such studies, Assessment Centers have been viewed as one of the few evaluation technologies suitable for assuring affirmative action objectives.

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Chapter 3

Population

In keeping with the goal to develop and adapt Assessment Center instruments to the assessment needs of human service managers, work began by surveying human service managers in various settings. The researcher's work experience was with public service systems, and, initially, it was thought that a sample population could be drawn from this group. However, obtaining the necessary approvals and working through the complexity of the civil service system made this option too difficult. The other option was to look at smaller, less structurally complex, not-for-profit systems. Within a relatively short period of time, a smaller, not-for-profit organization, interested in having its management staff assessed for the purposes of developing a training program was identified.

The subject agency is a medium-sized human service organization which has provided services to children for over one hundred years. The Agency was founded in the nineteenth century to care for orphaned girls. Today, it is a modern, professionally supervised agency caring for over 2,000 children daily. From its central office, the Agency provides the following direct services: intake, adoption, group homes, foster homes, and mental health. They also provide support services such as staff training, personnel, fiscal and legal services.

In addition to this, the agency has several field offices. These offices offer direct service predominantly in the areas of prevention and family day care. All five field offices provide family day care. At the time of this study, the agency was in the middle of a two-year plan to relocate into bigger headquarters and consolidate some work locations. This perhaps

contributed to their willingness to have their staff assessed as part of an overall development training plan.

A couple of preliminary meets were held with the agency. While the agency was willing to engage in this study, it would be the researcher's responsibility to recruit the staff. It was hoped that the whole management staff of the agency could be recruited, thus avoiding the necessity of a sample. The researcher met with the agency's Executive Director and executive staff on May 22, 1989. The proposal for an Assessment Center to be administered to the agency's management staff was presented. It was explained that the general purpose of an Assessment Center was to provide objective, off-the-job evaluation of participants' abilities and potential, as well as weaknesses, through the evaluation of their managerial behavior in a variety of test and performance situations. Those behaviors would then be rated on a number of predetermined "dimensions." Conclusions would be drawn from these ratings and developmental needs diagnosed. These conclusions would be shared with the participant at the end of the Assessment Center.

It was explained that some modifications had been made to the traditional assessment center format. These changes were necessitated by the fact that standard formats focused upon for-profit businesses whose management philosophy differed in some critical ways from human service organizations. (Cashman, 1978) Not only format but content had to be altered to reflect human service management situations and orientations.

Other changes included a shortening of the process. Traditional Assessment Centers took from three to five days to complete. This center would take one and one-half days to complete. Also, traditional Assessment Centers developed 5 to 6 exercises per center;

more than half of these simulations. This center would develop four exercises, three of which would be simulations.

These last changes were dictated by the very high cost of traditional Assessment Centers. Most employ large numbers of staff not only to act as administrators and assessors, but also to perform as actors in elaborate simulation exercises. The detail and intensity of these simulations is time consuming. This time consuming activity is responsible, in the main, for the fact that human service organizations have passed it by as an assessment technology. One of the functions of this study was to demonstrate that this technology can work in a less labor-intensive, less time consuming way. (Dittrich, 1972) Staff and Assessment Center time has been cut to a minimum to make it fiscally viable to human service organizations.

A number of agreements were arrived at as a result of these meetings. The agency agreed to the recruitment of its management staff for this study. The study in fact coincided with their own reorganization plans. The agency was expanding and was planning to institute a management training program. An assessment study of their management personnel would allow them to gear their training plans into those areas where the assessment indicated the most need.

The Assessment Center was seen as a cost-effective precursor to training. It was agreed that the assessment center would be presented to management staff, but that participation would be completely voluntary. In addition, it would have to be completely confidential. Individual assessment results would not be shared with the Executive Director or his/ her staff. Voluntary participation and confidentiality were important to insure spontaneous and genuine response to assessment center exercises. In order to meet the organization's needs, however, it was agreed that the Director would receive a

summary of the results indicating, in managerial terms, the training needs of their staff. The above being agreed to, it remained to discuss those general skills the agency felt were necessary to perform managerial work within the agency. These skills became the dimensions that the participants were tested against. (Swierczek & Carmichael, 1985)

Assessment Centers rate participant behavior on a number of predetermined "dimensions." These dimensions were the key working elements of the assessment process. They generated the conclusions reached concerning potential for certain levels and types of work. It was decided that the following skills would be tested in the Assessment Centers.

1. Judgment

Defined as the ability to weigh facts and to arrive at decisions in an objective way. This includes the ability to think through situations, the potential impact of decisions upon the organization, and the ability to arrive at sound conclusions.

2. Problem-Solving

Defined as the ability to analyze and solve organizational problems utilizing information related to the problem, resources on behalf of solutions, and the ability to identify causes and potential consequences to problems.

3. Planning Skills

Defined as the ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate work processes. This includes

the ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others, to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

4. Decision-Making Skills

Defined as the readiness to make decisions, render judgments, take actions and/or commit oneself to a course of action.

5. Leadership Skills

Defined as effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding staff toward task accomplishment. This includes ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility.

6. Control Skills

Defined as ability in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. This includes ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

7. Communication Skills

Defined as the ability to express ideas clearly in verbal form. This includes the ability to communicate with others at all levels in the organization in an appropriate way.

8. Supervisory Skills

Skill in perceiving the impact and implications of decisions on staff and other facets of the organization.

These dimensions reflected actual work responsibilities and denoted those skills the agency considered important for success in various managerial jobs. (Howard, 1974).

With these issues decided, this researcher met with the staff at agency headquarters on June 15, 1989. The purpose and function of the study was explained to those assembled as well as the benefits of participation should they choose to do so. Questions were answered, and a general explanation of the format was described. A handout was developed and handed out at this meeting (see Appendix A). Three Assessment Centers were to be held during the summer of 1989. Sign-up forms for all three centers were left with the Director.

These were returned on July 3, 1989. Only ten days elapsed between the arrival of the preliminary lists and the start of the first assessment center on July 12, 1989. The original listings contained 41 names spread over 3 assessment center periods. Group 1 contained 10 names, Group 2 contained 15 names and Group 3 contained 16 names. These names represented the entire management staff in the agency (see Appendix B1). However, the number who actually showed up to participate in the Assessment Centers came to 30 (see Appendix B2). Eight (8) individuals participated in the first Assessment Center on July 12 and 13, 1989. Thirteen (13) individuals participated in the second Assessment Center on August 16 and 17, 1989. Nine (9) individuals participated in the third Assessment Center on September 6 and 7, 1989.

TABLE 1
FREQUENCY OF SHOW-UP RATE IN TARGET POPULATION

<u>Groups</u>	<u>Initial Response</u>	<u>Participated</u>
1	10	8
2	15	13
3	<u>16</u>	<u>9</u>
TOTAL	41	30

Table 1 reflects the dropout between the initial groups and the participating groups. Personal illness and schedule conflicts account for the differences in initial and actual participants in Groups 1 and 2. However, Group 3 shows approximately a 40% dropout rate from the time of initial sign-up to actual appearance. This cannot be accounted for by the above explanations. There was a problem within the target population which, unfortunately, did not become apparent until the last day of the last Assessment Center. Through the built-in feedback mechanisms within the Assessment Center it became clear that those who did not show up for the last session did not believe the assurances of confidentiality given at the preliminary meeting. This did not appear to be a factor in the first two groups. It is possible that those believing the confidentiality of the process would be violated held back in signing up initially, and ended up in the last scheduled assessment center. In addition to the assurances given concerning confidentiality at the preliminary meeting, these assurances were reinforced in each Assessment Center as part of the introduction on the first day. Internal tensions within the organization, however, might have made these reassurances ineffectual for these individuals. This will be discussed again when general feedback is discussed.

All thirty individuals who attended the Assessment Centers filled out a self-assessment instrument (see Appendix C). These instruments were filled out before the exercises were begun, and represent data gathered prior to the assessment center experience.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT CENTER
PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

<u>Groups</u>	<u>-30</u>	<u>30-40</u>	<u>41-50</u>	<u>51-65</u>	<u>66+</u>
1	12½%	37½%	37½%	12½%	-
2	8%	23%	38%	31%	-
3	-	44%	22%	33%	-
TOTAL	8%	33%	33%	26%	

As Table 2 demonstrates, managers in this study were neither very early nor very late into their careers. Sixty- six percent (66%) fall within the age grouping of 30 to 50 years. Only 8% of these participants were younger than 30. Group 3 had the highest percentage of managers over 50 (33%), whereas Group 1 had the highest percentage of managers under 30. Fifty percent (50%) of the participants of Group 1 were under 40 years of age. Age is one of the most homogeneous characteristics of these groups.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT CENTER
PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATION

<u>Groups</u>	<u>A.A.</u>	<u>B.A.</u>	<u>MSW</u>	<u>DSW</u>
1	-	12½%	87½%	-
2	8%	-	92%	-
3	-	-	100%	-
TOTAL	3.3%	3.3%	93%	-

Table 3 demonstrates homogeneity around the variable of education as well. This was, perhaps, the characteristic with the greatest homogeneity among the participants. Ninety-three percent (93%) of all participants had masters level degrees. There also was an expected relationship between age and education with the oldest group (3) holding the most MSW degrees.

Managers were overwhelmingly female in this study. Eighty percent (80%) of all participants were female and this held consistently across all groups. This was one area where the dropout group could be consulted to gain an understanding of the entire population. Of the 11 managers who dropped out, 8 were women. It can be said that this is an organization with a predominantly female management staff.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT CENTER
PARTICIPANTS BY RACE

<u>GROUPS</u>	<u>BLACK</u>	<u>WHITE</u>
1	37½%	62½%
2	31%	69%
3	<u>55%</u>	<u>44%</u>
TOTAL	40%	60%

As displayed in Table 4, sixty percent (60%) of all participants were white and 40% of all participants were black. These percentages hold true for Groups 1 and 2. Group 3 had a majority of black participants (55%).

In Table 5, when gender and race were looked at together, we found that black male managers are the most underrepresented group in the study. Males, in general, were underrepresented. Black females comprise 33% of the study group.

TABLE 5
PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT CENTER
PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER AND RACE

<u>GROUPS</u>	<u>FEM WH</u>	<u>FEM BK</u>	<u>ML WH</u>	<u>ML BK</u>
1	37½%	37½%	25%	-
2	61%	23%	8%	8%
3	<u>33%</u>	<u>44%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>11%</u>
TOTAL	46%	33%	13%	7%

In Table 6, when the study looked at Gender and Race against position, it was noted that the preponderance of directorships belong to white females. Of the 30 participants, 14 identified themselves as supervisors and 13 identified themselves as directors. Three (3) others identified themselves as coordinators or trainers. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of all directors in the study were white females. Twenty-three percent (23%) of all directors were black females. Males in directorships was negligible. Eight percent (8%) of white males and no black males were represented.

Further, it should be noted that the "director" position in this agency as a whole is very large. Forty-three percent (43%) of all administrators in this agency were directors. Table 7 looks at these same variables for the supervisor, middle manager group in this study.

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANTS
BY GENDER, RACE AND POSITION

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>Directors</u>				<u>TOTALS</u>
	<u>FW</u>	<u>FB</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>MB</u>	
1	15%	-	-	-	2
2	46%	15%	-	-	8
3	<u>8%</u>	<u>8%</u>	<u>8%</u>	-	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	69%	23%	8%	-	(13) 100%

Interestingly enough, while 13 of 30 participants identified themselves as directors, as many as 7 of the 13 or 60% considered themselves to be, nevertheless, middle managers. All the other participants (17) also considered themselves to be middle managers. Feedback indicates that often the boundaries between "director" and "supervisor" were blurred in this agency. Supervisors were more uniformly distributed across the three groups.

TABLE 7

PERCENTAGE TABLE OF ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANTS
BY GENDER, RACE AND POSITION

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>Supervisors</u>				<u>TOTALS</u>
	<u>FW</u>	<u>FB</u>	<u>MW</u>	<u>MB</u>	
1	12%	12%	12%	-	6
2	12%	6%	6%	6%	7
3	<u>12%</u>	<u>17%</u>	-	<u>6%</u>	<u>6</u>
TOTAL	35%	35%	18%	12%	(17) 100%

The next set of characteristics demonstrates the participants' motivation to have their management skills accessed. Motivation is usually a key factor in a successful Assessment Center experience. (Kraut, 1972) The self-assessment instrument asked three

questions related to motivation. The first question had to do with years of service in the agency as demonstrated in Table 8.

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE OF ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANTS'
YEARS OF SERVICE WITHIN ORGANIZATION

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>YEARS OF SERVICE</u>				
	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-4</u>	<u>5-9</u>	<u>10-15</u>	<u>16+</u>
1	13%	75%	12%	-	-
2	46%	23%	31%	-	-
3	<u>22%</u>	<u>66%</u>	-	-	<u>11%</u>
TOTAL	30%	53%	16%	-	1%

Eighty-three percent (83%) of all participants had been with the agency five years or less. Thirty percent (30%) had been with the agency one year or less. This then was a young administrative staff whose energies were probably still strongly invested within the organization.

TABLE 9

PERCENTAGE OF ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANTS'
YEARS WITHIN PRESENT POSITION IN ORGANIZATION

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>YEARS IN PRESENT POSITION</u>				
	<u>0-1</u>	<u>1-4</u>	<u>5-9</u>	<u>10-15</u>	<u>16+</u>
1	25%	75%	-	-	-
2	54%	31%	15%	-	-
3	<u>22%</u>	<u>78%</u>	-	-	-
TOTAL	37%	57%	6%	-	-

A similar result is shown for years in current position (Table 9). Ninety-four percent (94%) had been in their current jobs four years or less. Even those who have been with the

agency sixteen years or more (11%) in Group 3 had held their current positions four years or less. This would imply that the organization had been reorganized within the last five years, or there is a rather high turnover rate in the system.

These statistics would indicate mild motivation for change at best. However, as demonstrated in Table 10, 83% of those in the study were interested in advancement either within or outside of the organization. All of Group 1 was interested in advancement, primarily focused within their present organization. This motivation is even stronger for Group 2. Group 3, containing the oldest employees in the system, had less motivation. Nevertheless, 55% of this group had an interest in advancement. This would indicate that their motivation to improve and use their management skills to improve their positions would be high.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE OF ASSESSMENT PARTICIPANTS
INTERESTED IN ADVANCEMENT

<u>GROUP</u>	<u>ADVANCEMENT</u>		<u>OTHER</u>
	<u>WITHIN</u> <u>ORG.</u>	<u>ANOTHER</u> <u>ORG.</u>	
1	75%	25%	-
2	94%	6%	-
3	<u>44%</u>	<u>11%</u>	<u>44%</u>
TOTAL	50%	33%	17%

Instruments

The instruments finally used in the Assessment Center were, with one exception, adaptations of exercises typically found in this type of assessment. Numerous types of instruments are routinely used in traditional Assessment Centers. These include In-Basket

exercises, group exercises, problem analysis, tests, oral presentation exercises, role-play exercises and self-assessment exercises. Of these the In-Basket exercise is perhaps the most consistently used. It attempts to simulate a management situation in which managers are required to respond to memos of varying importance and priority. The participant is required to respond to these memos under stressful conditions and with a limited amount of time.

Group discussion exercises take one of two forms. In the first, no assigned roles are given to any of the participants. This is sometimes referred to as a leaderless group discussion. The group is simply given current issues or problems and instructed to formulate specific recommendations or decisions. Likewise there are groups in which candidates are given an assigned role and a "position" which they must support. As with the first group, the participants are expected to come to a consensus concerning what decisions and/or recommendations should be adopted.

Problem-analysis exercises can take many forms but they all ask participants to decide upon and support one of two alternative courses of action.

Oral Presentation exercises are simulations which ask participants to plan, organize and prepare a presentation on an assigned topic to a specific audience. Once the presentation is made, the participant responds to questions and/ or challenges.

Role Play exercises also employ actors in the simulation. The participant takes the role of a middle or top manager and must respond to subordinates, or other interest groups who have problems or complaints. A trained role player(s) is used and responds in character to the actions of the participant. (Kaman & Bentson, 1988)

Written tests are used in the traditional way by testing knowledge around specific topics. Time is used in all these exercises to create the kind of pressure one might experience on the job. Time itself is an important simulation factor in an assessment center.

Decisions had to be made concerning the number and type of exercises to be used in this Assessment Center. Cost was a critical factor in those decisions. Because cost is one of the most important reasons for disinterest in this technology among human service organizations, costs had to be contained for the technology to gain wider acceptance. Costs were contained by two methods. First, the Assessment Center process was shortened from a typical length of five days to a length of less than two days. This also limited the number of exercises used. Second, no role-players were used, and assessors were reduced. It was hoped that these restrictions would contain costs sufficiently to make the technology practical to human service organizations.

Four exercises were chosen for this Assessment Center. The exercises were chosen for their capacity to examine a set of dimensions (management skills) in a cost efficient way. The following exercises were administered in the three assessment centers used for this study.

The In-Basket exercise was chosen, partly, because it is widely used in assessment centers as an effective instrument for assessing real-life managerial work. (Meyer, 1970). The In-Basket is a simulation exercise requiring the participant to deal with memos and related items which have accumulated in their "In-Basket." Simulation is enhanced by the requirement that participants must follow a specified time limit.

A planning exercise was included. This was a two-part simulation requiring the participant to handle a scheduling problem focused upon crisis intervention activity, and a paper and pencil test dealing with a budgetary problem.

A supervision exercise was included which was a paper and pencil test requiring the participant to answer questions related to educational and administrative supervision in a human service setting. This exercise was created for this assessment center.

Lastly, a group interaction exercise was chosen. This was a simulation whereby participants demonstrated communication abilities, motivation, and the effects of various leadership styles on the problem-solving process. Once again, there were no role playing components to these simulation exercises as these functions increase the cost of an Assessment Center in a disproportionate way.

These four exercises were written to allow assessment of a number of management/organizational functions through demonstration of certain management skills (dimensions). Each exercise was formulated to assess the following functions and skills.

<u>Exercises</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Dimensions (Skills)</u>
1. In-Basket	Administrative activities Planning activities Leadership	Judgment, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control, Supervision
2. Planning	Planning activities Administrative activities	Judgment, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control
3. Group Simulation	Group interaction Leadership	Problem-solving, Leadership, Communication
4. Supervision	Supervision Leadership	Judgment, Decision-making, Leadership, Communication skills, Supervision skills

All of the skills identified were assessed in more than one exercise. Each skill was measured at least twice and some were measured across three exercises. This redundancy was intentional. It attempted to acknowledge individual variation in the expression of such skills. A participant may exhibit leadership skill in supervision situations although this skill might be muted when engaged in more rational activities, such as planning. The technology attempted to maximize the opportunity for the expression of these skills. The chart below demonstrates the range of skill/ dimension assessment across exercises:

CHART 1

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Exercises</u>			
	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Simulation</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Judgment	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	X
Supervision Skills	X			X

All of the exercise instruments are collected in Appendix C. This Appendix includes an introduction to the Assessment Center, a schedule of events over the course of the two-day experience, a self-assessment instrument, discussed earlier in this chapter, and the four exercises noted above. In addition to these, each exercise had an evaluation form associated with it. After each exercise, the participant was asked to fill out this form to evaluate the previous exercise. Lastly, the Appendix also included an Assessment Center Evaluation form. This instrument sought to take feedback on the benefit of the overall a process for the participants. These evaluation forms comprised the primary feedback instruments of this study.

A number of established Assessment Center methodologies were consulted to obtain a sense of the formats most commonly used. Among those Assessment Centers consulted were Developmental Dimensions, Inc. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Minnesota Management Profile, Inc. in Park Ridge, Illinois. Both of these methodologies were designed specifically for business organizations whose interest was employee selection. Nevertheless, several format ideas were adapted to the In-Basket, Planning and Group Discussion instruments presented here. The Power Perception Profile from the Center for Leadership Studies contributed to the formulation of the ideas related to the leadership dimension, particularly as it relates to the group discussion. Finally, The Career Development Project from the Syracuse Research Corporation, and administered in NYS/DSS, was consulted for its many ideas related to the self-assessment instrument and evaluation forms. This was the only methodology consulted that focused upon a human service organization, and upon career development rather than selection. The content of all four exercises was original and based upon the researcher's professional experience. There follows a description of each exercise used in this group of Centers.

The In-Basket Instrument

The format for the In-Basket is well established, and the instrument is probably the most frequently used simulation in an assessment center. For the purposes of this Assessment Center study, the in-basket, as well as the other instruments, began with rather specific instructions to the participant. Instructions were critical to successful Assessment Centers for there needed to be a clear and commonly shared understanding of how to proceed, and what was expected of the participant. Misunderstanding about what was being asked for will lead to behaviors that could not be assessed against the skills identified.

The in-basket instructions first identified and listed the materials the participant received. These included a set of memos plus two organizational charts, a set of priority worksheets and an evaluation form. The task involved was twofold. Each participant decided what action to take in response to each memo. These actions were listed on worksheets associated with each memo. The options on the worksheets were not exhaustive but the participant was asked to make the most appropriate action given the information available to them. The second task was to prioritize the memos in terms of their perceived importance. Time frames were explicitly identified in the instructions and adhered to in practice. This In-Basket was developed to assess the skills/dimensions of judgment, problem-solving, planning, decision-making, control and supervision.

The content of the in-basket began with a scenario concerning a management situation. In this case the participant was asked to assume the role of deputy director. This was an unfamiliar role to approximately half of the participants. This Deputy Director has been away on vacation and has returned to a full in-box. The participant was given one hour to go through the memos, prioritize them, and make decisions concerning disposition.

All in-baskets manipulate time to create tension. Usually the time factor is never long enough to feel comfortable performing the exercise. This is intentional. The tension attempts to simulate an actual work environment and thus approximate the environment within which actual decisions are made. It tries to incorporate both rational and non-rational responses. (Kraut, 1972) To intensify this experience, other restrictions may be used. In this case, the need to meet end of fiscal year deadlines enhanced the possibility that in-basket decisions would be made under conditions that were usually fraught with tension.

The final version of this exercise consisted of memos and worksheets. It provided a staff roster to help participants identify the individuals addressed in the memos. It also included two organizational charts to help participants assess the positions of these staff and establish the lines of authority and accountability. The memos varied in their nature, length and significance. Once the exercise was completed, participants were asked to evaluate the exercise by filling out the evaluation form.

The Planning Instrument

The planning exercise was the most difficult of the four exercises to create. None of the formats consulted held up to the complexity of tasks associated with meeting human service need. Ultimately it was decided to divide the instrument into two parts: the first a simulation focused on a scheduling problem, and a paper and pencil test concerning a problem analysis. In this case the problem was fiscal in nature.

The scheduling simulation contained a number of tasks which had to be assigned and scheduled within a highly proscribed period of time. (Kaman & Bentson, 1988) The scenario involved the participant by asking them to assume the role of a middle manager whose unit provided crisis intervention services to families where child abuse was suspected or identified. These intervention services were delivered as a consequence of receiving a call over their 24-hour hotline telephone system. It was the participant manager's supervisor who summarized the calls that had come in the night before. The supervisor also decided how long the tasks should take and how many workers the task would require. All calls must be responded to within the same day. These devices were used to deprive the participant of a comfortable range of options. It ensured that there would be too many tasks, too little time and too few qualified workers to adequately accomplish service delivery. Decisions, then, had to be made which were less than ideal.

This replicated actual work situations where managers were forced to utilize less than adequate resources. An additional constraint on the participant/ manager was the proviso that the manager must utilize all of his/her workers, some of whom had significant professional deficits. Keeping all these restrictions in mind, the participant/manager filled out one day's schedule for his or her unit. The scheduling exercise included a set of instructions, a scenario, a list of tasks, a daily schedule sheet and a list of workers with a description of their professional characteristics. One hour was allotted for this task.

The second part of this exercise was a paper and pencil test focused upon a budgetary problem. It attempted to assess both the rational and non-rational components of problem-solving. To capture these components, the participant is asked to outline the steps in the planning process, the information process and the implementation process that they would use to resolve a budgetary shortfall. The planning exercise assessed the skills of judgment, problem- solving, planning, decision-making and control.

Supervision Instrument

None of the formats consulted singled out supervision as an area important enough to assess. (Russell, Lankford and Grinnell, Jr., 1984) Ideally, a simulation would have worked nicely for this skill. However, certain constraints worked against it. Three out of the four exercises were simulations. The day-and-a-half devoted to this Assessment Center was already highly pressured. Also, another simulation would have required roleplayers, which would have been costly. Therefore, it was decided to create a paper and pencil test for this area of expertise. Two aspects of supervision were chosen to assess. Questions were developed concerning practical administrative problems, and questions concerning policy and procedure. A series of questions was asked in these two areas. The questions were open- ended and qualitative in nature.

Group Participation Exercise Instrument

This exercise was, like the planning exercise before it, a combination of written analysis and group discussion. The exercise focused upon a case study in motivation. A highly frustrated supervisor finds very little to praise in the work of her unit workers. In fact, she complains bitterly about them and consistently finds their work unacceptable.

Participants were given time to read the scenario and review the questions associated with it. The participant could respond in writing to the questions and could use the written material in the discussion. The group was instructed to reach consensus on the problems implicit in the supervisor's attitude and on the question of motivation as manifested by the workers involved.

As to the question of instrument validity, it should be noted that pre-existing validity studies on established instruments would not be relevant to this or to any other Assessment Center. By definition, Assessment Center instruments have to reflect a body of skills to fit the particular organization in which they are used. (McGee & Crow, 1982). Therefore, each set of instruments is unique. The outcomes and particularly the feedback received concerning these instruments will go a long way to establishing their validity and is one of the purposes of this dissertation.

Several procedures were utilized to ensure instrument reliability. Primary among these was standardization. Standardizing the plethora of instruments associated with this assessment center was not an easy task. Nevertheless, it was done to ensure that participant performance could be attributed to skills rather than extraneous variables. (Cohen & Sands, 1978). The researcher incorporated the following standardizations to the instruments in this Assessment Center. The exercise instructions provided the same information to all participants. The verbal instructions were scripted (where possible) to

be repeated in exactly the same way. All time limits were rigidly adhered to. Assessors did not know any of the participants personally. After each assessor independently scored each participant, the final scoring was done by consensus in discussion sessions attended by all assessors. The results of this consensus scoring is collected in Appendix G. Exercise order never varied so that order effects could not contaminate performance. The observations and measurements generated within each exercise reflect only those behaviors that were reliably manifested. These cumulated through the course of the Assessment Center to result in consistent summary evaluations of the participants' strengths and weaknesses. This assured that only appropriate characteristics would be observed in specific exercises. (Wise, 1979).

Finally, the instruments were pretested by a small group of volunteers prior to the actual Assessment Centers.

Assessor/Administrator Role

A unique feature of an assessment center is the use of assessors. Assessors are raters, who both score the paper and pencil exercises and act as observers during simulations. They are trained prior to the center and have a uniform understanding of the criteria utilized in rating the dimensions. Behavioral observation techniques are utilized during the group simulation. Assessor training is also necessary because of the need to standardize scoring tendencies. Ideally speaking, each observer should observe and rate all participants in all the exercises. How to do this and still contain costs? It was decided to reduce the current assessment center to 1½ days. Further, only two assessors would be used, one of whom would also function as the assessment center administrator. These actions substantially reduced costs.

The assessors were given an overview of dimensions and exercises involved. Examples were provided to assessors of participant behavior which represented adequate, inadequate and superior performance for each dimension. The assessors were also trained by exposure to pre-testing of the instruments. Explicit instructions were given to each assessor concerning conduct and behavior of assessors for each exercise. These are collected in Appendix D and are described below.

The assessors were expected to note and/or observe actual behaviors and responses, and to take notes on expression of dimensions. Numerical ratings were taken and were to be supported by the notes taken. Final ratings on the dimensions did represent a consensus of the raters. (Klimoski, Friedman & Weldon, 1980) That is, individual ratings were decided upon and then discussed with the other assessor in a final evaluation or integration session. The integration session generally required 12 to 16 hours of assessor participation for 10 to 12 participants.

The administrator's role was also explicated and defined in the materials developed. The administrator's role was to know the Assessment Center process well enough to be able to facilitate both participants' and assessors' questions and comments. The administrator guided all players through the process.

Administrator's Materials

It was the administrator's responsibility to train the assessor(s) and instruct them on the particulars of each exercise. Written instructions were provided for this purpose. These instructions were written to ensure the assessor's understanding of the dimensions being observed. Some pre-Assessment Center role playing was also performed. The ad-

ministrator was also responsible for finding the assessment center site and setting the assessment center schedule.

In addition to this preparatory work, the administrator also administered the Assessment Centers. These tasks included distribution of exercises, recitation of scripted exercise instructions, answering questions and holding all involved to specific time frames. For the three Assessment Centers conducted the summer of 1989, the administrator was this researcher. She also served as one of the two assessors. All of the administrator's materials are included in Appendix D.

Assessor's Materials

The assessor materials also included a description of the exercises given. However, the instructions to the assessors differ markedly from those given to the administrator. Because assessors must be aware of their feelings and how these inform judgment, their instructions remind them of the parameters of their judgment around these dimensions and give guidance in determining the expression of the skills involved. A number of forms were provided to this end. Each exercise particularized a set of guides for the assessor to meet the objectives of the exercise.

For the In-Basket exercise, a guide was developed to suggest the most appropriate choice to make for each memo. The assessor were not bound by these choices. The assessors were asked to compare the participants' choices with the guide sheet. A similar guide existed for the prioritizing of memos. A comparison chart was developed to allow recording of both the participants' choices and the assessors' choices. These activities were preparatory to the scoring/rating process to be discussed later.

The planning instructions also provided a list of materials and instructions on how to evaluate the exercise. The assessor was advised to evaluate the scheduling piece by using the behavior list provided. This was comprised of a range of behaviors and actions the participant might take in response to the task assigned. A "suggested" schedule was also provided. The exercise itself was written in such a way as to allow for the postponement of certain tasks. A suggested choice of tasks was provided which could be postponed without harm. The fiscal part of the exercise was written out and was to be assessed on the content presented. To help the assessor with this piece, material was presented which gave the assessor information concerning managerial roles. These were to be integrated and used as a frame of reference when assessing the fiscal part of the planning exercise. These materials helped the assessor come to a preliminary determination of overall skill in this exercise, and informed the rating of dimensions.

The supervision exercise was a straight paper and pencil test which required the assessors to have a good understanding of supervisory technique. As in previous exercises, the assessor were given a list of forms associated with this exercise plus materials pertinent to motivational techniques for supervisors, and principles of supervision. In addition, both assessors were familiar with supervisory techniques as they are manifest in human service settings. Using their experience and the materials provided, the assessors made preliminary notes on the responses of each participant on a summary supervision form. This form assessed both the administrative supervisor part and the policy and procedure part of the exercise.

The group simulation exercise utilized a direct observation format and required materials pertinent to observational technique. Instructions to assessors included seating arrangement and technique associated with good observation. Assessors were given a guide which described the characteristics of behavior and the distinctions between per-

sonal feeling, interpretation and objective observation. Guidelines were provided identifying the types of behaviors to look for vis-à-vis the dimensions assessed. Each assessor was provided with observational forms on which to record these findings. A preliminary score guide was provided for immediate assessment once the simulation was concluded. All of the assessor material is included in Appendix D.

Scoring the Dimensions

Once the assessors utilized these preliminary procedures for each exercise, their next responsibility was to score the dimensions for each exercise. For example, the In- Basket examines six dimensions: judgment, problem-solving, planning skills, decision- making, control skills and supervision skills. A definition was provided for each dimension. Then a series of questions was presented with each dimension to give the assessor parameters and direction concerning participant responses. Space was provided beneath each question for assessor comments. Each dimension was then scored.

Scoring for each dimension was based upon a four-point (1- 4) scale. Four (4) was the highest score attainable on a particular dimension and one (1) was the lowest score attainable.

(4) was designated when assessors noted a clear and consistent demonstration of response associated with a particular dimension.

(3) was designated when assessors noted a majority of clear and consistent responses associated with a particular dimension.

(2) was designated when assessors noted neither a clear or consistent pattern associated with a particular dimension. (This score indicated that there was no evidence of positive or negative demonstration of a particular dimension.)

(1) was designated when assessors noted an absence or negative responses associated with a particular dimension.

The assessor was then asked to fill out an Assessor Summary form detailing their rationales for the scores given, and an overall exercise score was given. Up to this point each assessor was working independently. Immediately following the assessment center the assessors were to score the exercises and meet together to compare and discuss their decisions. (Lowry, 1988) Any discrepancy in score was examined and a consensus reached on which score to give the participant for that particular dimension. These final scores were recorded in Appendix G.

Feedback

Two mechanisms were used to insure adequate feedback about the assessment centers. Each of the exercises included evaluation forms which asked the participants for feedback concerning each specific exercise. Each participant was also asked to rate their overall Assessment Center experience. This feedback was the primary focus of this paper and so opportunities to provide it has been built into the process itself.

Equally critical to the assessment center process was development of a mechanism to deliver feedback to each participant concerning their work in the Assessment Center. It was essential that participants be provided with concrete information on skill levels so that they could select developmental areas for future training. To this end, a general

feedback session was provided at the end of each assessment center, and individual feedback sessions were scheduled with each participant after the assessment centers were completed. The feedback form used in these feedback sessions is collected in Appendix E. Feedback will be discussed separately in Chapter 5.

Format/Schedules

Much revision was done to the format of the centers before the final format was developed. These revisions had to do with administering four complex exercises in just one and one-half days. Originally, three of the four exercises were scheduled for the first day, leaving only the group simulation and wrap-up scheduled for the following half-day. Since the size of the group simulation was limited by the number of assessors present, in this case two, it was entirely possible that two group simulations would need to be run on the second day. In order to test this format, and to generate feedback on the content of the exercises, a series of pre-tests were conducted in the fall and winter of 1988. The feedback questions associated with these pre-tests are collected in Appendix F. Three individuals took three exercises under conditions similar to an actual assessment center on two weekends in July 1988. The group simulation exercise was pre-tested by 7 individuals on 12/15/88. Valuable feedback was derived as a result of these pre-tests.

The format was altered as a result. It became clear that the schedule for the first day was too demanding. The supervision exercise was shifted to the second day. By compressing the events of the second day it was possible to do two exercises in half a day. This would put greater stress on the assessors, however, particularly if two half-day sessions had to be scheduled. The final assessment center format was executed as follows:

Social Administration Assessment Center

Agenda

Participant Schedule

Day One

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
9:00-9:30	Introduction to Social Administration Assessment Center
9:30-10:00	Completion of Self-Assessment Instrument
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-10:30	Introduction to In-Basket Exercise
10:30-12:15	In-Basket Exercise
12:15-1:15	Lunch
1:15-1:30	Introduction to Planning Exercise
1:30-3:45	Planning Exercise
3:45-4:00	Feedback
4:00-4:15	Wrap-up

Day Two

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<u>Morning Group</u>	
9:00-9:20	Introduction: Day Two
9:20-9:30	Introduction: Supervision Exercise
9:30-10:15	Supervision Exercise
10:25-10:40	Feedback
10:40-10:50	Introduction: Group Discussion
10:50-12:10	Group Discussion
12:10-12:20	Exercise Evaluation
12:20-12:45	Feedback
<u>Afternoon Group</u>	
1:00-1:20	Introduction: Day Two
1:20-1:30	Introduction: Supervision Exercise
1:30-2:15	Supervision Exercise
2:15-2:25	Feedback
2:25-2:40	Introduction: Group Discussion

2:50-4:10	Group Discussion
4:10-4:20	Exercise Evaluation
4:20-4:45	Feedback

Each of the time frames noted included the following activities.

Day 1

9:00-9:30 AM—Introduction

The purpose and goals of the Assessment Center were explained. Managers were given an opportunity to react to the purposes of the self-assessment and other procedures they were to participate in.

9:30-10:00 AM—Application of Self-Assessment Instrument

Managers rated themselves on the basis of a self-administered set of questions designed to tap both their training and career orientation and development needs.

10:15 AM-12:15 PM—In-Basket Exercise (Judgment, Problem-Solving, Planning, Decision-Making, Control, Supervision)

Participants were given memos, assignments, schedules, etc. and instructed to handle as many problems presented as possible within a specified time limit. Exercise evaluations were completed.

12:15-1:15 PM—Lunch

1:15-3:45 PM—Planning Exercise (Judgment, Problem-Solving, Planning Skills, Decision-Making, Control)

Participants were given schedules, worker profiles, fiscal material and instructed to handle the two-part exercise as per instructions. Exercise evaluations were completed.

3:45-4:00 PM—Feedback

4:00-4:15 PM—Wrap-up

Day 2

9:00-9:20 AM—Introduction to Day Two

9:20-10:25 PM—Supervision Exercise (Judgment, Leadership Skills, Decision-Making, Communication, Supervisory Skills)

Participants were tested in two supervisory areas: education and administration. Exercise evaluations were completed.

10:25-10:40 AM—Feedback

10:40 AM-12:20 PM—Group Exercise (Leadership, Problem-Solving, Communication)

In a small group simulation, participants solved a "crisis-oriented" motivational problem concerning staff utilization. Exercise evaluations were completed.

12:20-12:45 PM—Group Feedback Session

Participants met as a group with assessor to discuss their feelings concerning their experience in the Assessment Center.

Assessors were scheduled to score each exercise for each participant immediately following the conclusion of the Assessment Center. Assessors met to discuss results and tabulate results in preparation for individual feedback sessions.

Pre-test feedback allowed a number of changes to the content of the exercises as well. Inconsistencies were identified and corrected. Questions in the supervision exercise were clarified. The Table of Organization in the In-Basket exercise was adjusted to correspond exactly to the memos and letters. The instructions to the participants in the group simulation were confusing. The instruments were rewritten. There was too much replication and duplication in the assessor's instructions. These were reduced and combined. Some pre-test participants were not aware that a decision was expected as a result of the group simulation discussion. The instructions were changed to clarify the expected outcome of the exercise. These and other adjustments were made to the materials through the winter/spring of 1989. That spring a number of contacts and meetings were held with the potential participants. As a result, three Assessment Centers were arranged the summer of 1989. All three were conducted at the Hunter College School of Social Work. These assessment centers were held on Wednesday and Thursday, July 12 and 13; Wednesday and Thursday, August 16 and 17; and Wednesday and Thursday, September 13 and 14. Feedback sessions with each individual participant were scheduled in October and November 1989.

Evaluation and Data Analysis

The objectives of the Assessment Center were threefold:

- to determine the effectiveness of the Assessment Center program in discerning management development needs on a group and individual basis;
- to determine participant reactions, perceptions and attitudes with regard to the assessment program; and
- to determine the effectiveness of various instructional and assessment methodologies utilized in the assessment program.

This study will judge the effectiveness and success of these objectives based upon two data sources:

Qualitative Data—Feedback was the primary source of data generated by the Assessment Center. Participant data was collected before and after each Assessment Center, on prepared instruments previously described. Questions focused on important job values, next career steps, importance of job skills, general comments about the centers, and specific comments and ratings of the individual exercises and materials.

Quantitative Data—Descriptive statistics were generated as a result of assessor ratings on participant performance. Absolute numbers, averages, percentages and cross-tabulations were generated.

By utilizing these data bases, it was hoped that information would be generated around four critical areas:

1. Overall evaluation of the centers
2. Evaluation of individual exercises
3. Evaluation of participant feedback
4. Evaluation of participant and assessor ratings.

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Chapter 4

Evaluation—Quantitative Data

The data generated by this study will be examined in the next two chapters. This chapter analyzes the quantitative data generated by the Assessment Centers. It looks at the ratings generated for each dimension, and through the use of frequency tables and comparisons, seeks to determine how well the participants demonstrated those dimensions.

The following analysis of Assessment Center results addresses three issues. The first concerns a comparison of the three groups' ratings in each exercise. These results look particularly at participants' scores in each dimension within each exercise. The exercises are presented in the order they were administered. The scores depicted represent a cumulative average for each group in each dimension. Individual participants did score higher and lower than the averages presented. Scores were rated on a zero to four scale. Zero reflects the least efficient and/or competent expression of the dimension, while four reflects the most efficient and/or competent expression of the dimension.

The second issue represented by the data is a comparison of individual scores. This is focused on the individual participant's self-assessed proficiency on the dimension versus their actual scores on the Assessment Center exercises. The report submitted to the agency as a result of these Assessment Centers will be discussed.

Thirdly, the issue of assessor ratings is addressed. The two assessors' ratings were compared to evaluate the influence of this factor on the outcome. These issues will be evaluated with an emphasis on improving or enhancing the instruments and format utilized in these Assessment Centers.

Group Comparisons

Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14 present data showing the average scores of each group in all dimensions by exercise. For example, Table 11 shows group scores for the In-Basket exercise. The letters across the top of the chart denote the dimensions tested in this exercise. They are: judgment, problem-solving, decision-making, control and supervision. (For a summary of the dimensions tested in each exercise, please see Chart 1 on page 63.)

Six dimensions are scored in the In-Basket exercise. Next to each average score there appears a percentage. These percentages represent the average degree of expression of the dimension in that particular exercise for each group. For example, in the In-Basket exercise, group 1 scored an average of 2.5 out of 4 on the dimension for judgment. This represents an average response of 63%, or a little better than the expected mean for this dimension. Perhaps the most significant finding that emerges here is that these human service managers performed best in those dimensions usually identified as human service strengths: that is, communication and supervision. Their weakest dimension was the rationally-driven management skill of control.

TABLE 11
Analysis of Groups By Exercise

	<u>In-Basket Exercise</u>												
	J		PS		PL		DM		C		S		Avg. %
1	2.5	63%	2.3	58%	2.5	63%	2.6	65%	2.2	55%	2.8	70%	63%
2	3	75%	2.7	68%	2.9	73%	2.8	70%	2	50%	2.9	73%	68%
3	2.7	68%	2.8	70%	2.6	65%	2.5	63%	2	50%	2.8	70%	64%

In Table 11, groups 1 and 3 show a better than average expression of skills overall.

Group 2 demonstrated the highest scores on the dimensions in the In-Basket exercise.

The dimensions in this exercise required very rational management choices which needed to be expressed in a tense office simulation. Group 2 was the largest group in the

sample and it was the group with the largest number of directors. Almost 60% of this

group occupied the position of director. Interestingly enough, this was also the group with

the least amount of service in the subject organization. Forty-six percent (46%) of them had less than a year of service within the organization at the time of the Assessment

Centers. It is possible that they brought in more sophisticated administrative skills from the start. These were also individuals who were hired as directors directly from outside

the organization rather than promoted to that position internally. Less than one-quarter of the other two groups include directors. To compound this, almost three-quarters of

groups 1 and 3 had several years of service with the organization. Much feedback within the centers hinted at a dissatisfaction with the lack of internal promotion. It is possible

that the organization had begun to recognize a lack of hard management skills on the part of its in-house staff and had begun to recruit outsiders who did possess them.

Be that as it may, the scores in this exercise would not indicate proficiency in such skills as problem-solving, planning or control. The dimension of control is the skill with the

weakest percentage of expression regardless of demographic differences between groups.

TABLE 12
Planning Exercise

	J		PS		PL		DM		C		Avg. %
1	2.7	68%	2.8	70%	2.6	65%	2.4	60%	2	50%	63%
2	2.9	73%	2.9	73%	3	75%	2.8	70%	1.8	45%	67%
3	2.5	63%	2.5	63%	2.6	65%	2.4	60%	1.7	43%	59%

The Planning exercise was, in execution, the most difficult simulation in the Assessment Centers. It is the subject of Table 12. The planning exercise tested the dimensions of judgment, problem-solving, planning, decision-making, and control. It particularly emphasized planning and control skills. This exercise elicited the weakest expression of management skills generally. The weakest expression is concentrated in the planning and control dimensions. Group 2 again does the best at expressing the skills identified. Group 3 demonstrated the weakest skills in this exercise.

TABLE 13
Supervision Exercise

	J		S		L		DM		C		Avg. %
1	3	75%	3.1	78%	2.8	70%	3.3	83%	3.2	80%	77%
2	3.1	78%	3	75%	3	75%	3.1	78%	3.1	78%	77%
3	3.2	80%	3.1	78%	3.1	78%	3.1	78%	3	75%	78%

The Supervision exercise was a paper and pencil test which depicted management dilemmas within familiar human service contexts. The language of the questions asked was also familiar. The dimensions tested in this exercise were judgment, problem-

solving, planning, decision-making and communication. In Table 13, three of the five dimensions measured were more likely to be included in a repertoire of human service expertise. Add to this the fact that this test was given on the second day of the assessment center when the participants were fresh and were not required to simulate a real-life experience, and these factors probably contributed to the improved scoring on this exercise. All groups did very well, with close to an 80% scoring level on all skills.

TABLE 14

Group Simulation

	PS		L		COM		Avg. %
1	3	75%	2.6	65%	2.8	70%	70%
2	3	75%	3	75%	3.1	78%	76%
3	2.7	68%	2.8	70%	3	75%	71%

The Group Simulation exercise was the only interactive simulation in the assessment centers. It could be assumed that this would be an arena familiar to human service managers. To a large extent this turned out to be the case. Only three dimensions were tested here. They were problem-solving, leadership and communication. In Table 14, the scores in the group simulations were the second highest in the assessment experience. Group 2 again scored the highest among the participant groups. Group 1 scored lowest on the Group Simulation. Of the three groups, they were the least communicative and the least spontaneous. All three groups came to a decision concerning the problem presented. Group 3 was the most spontaneous and the most communicative, but the least willing to listen to other opinion. Group 3 exhibited a higher degree of hostility and frustration, and had the hardest time coming to a resolution. Generally speaking, groups 1 and 3 scored similarly across all exercises.

Generally speaking, there does appear to be an imbalance to the way the dimensions were distributed within the exercises. This appears to be particularly true of the In-Basket Exercise and the Group Simulation Exercise. The In-Basket Exercise contains six dimensions, almost the entire number used in the Assessment Centers. The requirement to concentrate on that many skills could tax any assessor's ability. More importantly, the Group Simulation includes too few dimensions. Although decision-making is an important function of the simulation, it was not included as a dimension in the exercise. Because this is a "live action" exercise, there was a limit to the number of dimensions that could accurately be observed. Nevertheless, decision-making was a clear oversight.

To get a better sense of how the dimensions were distributed across exercises, several tables are presented. Three of the eight dimensions used in the Assessment Centers are represented in three of the four exercises. These dimensions are problem-solving, judgment and decision-making. In Tables 15, 16, 17, and 18, group scores are compared for individual dimensions across those exercises that include them.

TABLE 15
Problem-Solving

	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Sim.</u>
1	2.3	2.8	3
2	2.7	2.9	3
3	2.7	2.5	2.7

In Groups 1 and 2, the degree of expression of this skill increases from one exercise to the next. Since the exercises are in chronological order, this steady increase could have been a function of practice and/or a function of the nature of the exercise. Group 3 did not follow this trend with the problem-solving dimension. This would be consistent with

that group's experience within the Group Simulation, which was more disorganized than the other two groups. Problem-solving was "problematic" for this group, regardless of venue.

The In-Basket and Planning Exercises involved rational and highly coordinated functions. The Group Simulation was interactive, interpersonal and dynamic. The participants could have found this terrain familiar and, consequently, this skill may have been given strong expression in a comfortable milieu. Whether a consequence of familiarity or practice, this skill's inclusion in 3 exercises allowed for ample expression of the skill.

TABLE 16

Judgment

	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Sim.</u>
1	2.5	2.7	3
2	3	2.9	3
3	2.7	2.5	3.2

The dimension of judgment showed no such trend. The expression of judgment was most strongly expressed in the group simulation exercise. Group 2 demonstrated the most proficiency with this skill. The function of judgment was weakest in the planning exercise, for groups 1 and 3, which presented the participants with numerous unsatisfactory choices. Here again, because of ample opportunity for expression, a good cross-section of response is obtained.

TABLE 17

Decision-Making

	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Sim.</u>
1	2.6	2.6	3.1
2	2.8	3	3
3	2.5	2.6	3.1

Table 17 demonstrated similar trends to the previous two tables. As with the problem-solving dimension, there was a gradual improvement in the expression of this skill from exercise to exercise. The In-Basket was predominantly about decision-making, however, and in this exercise this skill had its weakest expression.

The rest of the dimensions in this study were present in two of the four exercises. It is not possible to hint at trends in such a narrow field. The dimension of leadership showed a disappointing rate of expression.

TABLE 18

Leadership

	<u>Supervision</u>	<u>Group</u>
1	2.8	2.6
2	3	3
3	3.1	2.8

This dimension, as well as communication, may have suffered as a result of not being present in the more rational simulations.

Generally speaking, then, future Assessment Center formats could benefit from a more even distribution of dimensions across all types of exercises.

Comparison of Assessor Ratings With Participant Ratings

The first task of each Assessment Center experience was to ask the participants to fill out a self-assessment instrument. One of the questions asked participants to rate themselves on the eight dimensions prior to any exposure to them in the ensuing exercises. These ratings were then incorporated in the feedback instrument which was used in the feedback sessions after all Assessment Centers were concluded. These materials are collected in Appendix E.

The last of the three Assessment Centers was administered in September, 1989. A major component of the Assessment Center process was to give each participant complete feedback concerning their scores and their work in these Assessment Centers. These feedback sessions occurred in November and December of 1989. Each participant was met with individually for approximately one hour. To facilitate these sessions, this evaluator visited the participants' work sites. This necessitated trips to all boroughs of the City, and accounted for the length of time these feedback sessions took to complete.

As part of each individual feedback session, each participant was given a packet of feedback materials. These materials, in part, consisted of bibliographies and graduate school postings. This was in response to participant requests for these items. The primary feedback instrument was also included. The feedback instrument included three types of information. As stated, the self-assessment instrument given to each participant at the start of each Assessment Center requested the participant's appraisal of their proficiency on each dimension. These participant ratings were included as the first piece of feedback on the instrument. The second piece of feedback was a recording of the assessor ratings. This score is a combination of both assessors' ratings on each dimension. These

two feedback components allowed for a basis of comparison and initiated discussion of the dimensions involved.

The third category of feedback was comprised of a series of uniform criteria for each dimension. Each criterion was ranked with a positive, negative or neutral score. This piece of feedback served two functions. It provided a basis for discussion, and it shared with participants those factors upon which ratings were based.

The following 4 tables, Tables 19 to 22, depict a comparison of the combined assessor's ratings for each dimension with each individual's self-assessment for the same dimension. Each number represents the divergence of the individual's score from the assessor's score. A minus score indicates an overevaluation by the participant of his/her proficiency in the skill. A plus score indicates an underevaluation by the participant of his/her proficiency in the skill. For example, for participant A, the assessors scored him or her .7 of a point lower on the judgment dimension than the participant did. In this instance, the participant judged himself/herself to be more proficient in this skill than the assessors found him or her to be. O indicates an identical score. The average score at the bottom of the table indicates the average divergence of individual scores from assessors' scores on each dimension. These averages derive from the individual scores.

TABLE 19
Participant/Assessor Ratings Comparison

		Assessment Center 1							
		J	PS	PL	Dimensions DM	L	Cont.	Comm.	S
P A R T I C I P A N T S	A	-.7	+.3	+.3	-1.5	-1.5	0	+.5	0
	B	0	-.2	-1.6	+.3	-1	+.4	+.2	-.2
	C	+.6	+.5	+1.7	+.8	+.5	-.3	0	+2.3
	D	-.3	-.2	-.7	-1.2	-.7	-1	-.5	-1
	E	-.2	-.7	-.5	-.4	-1.2	-1.5	-1	0
	F	-.2	-.3	-.5	0	+.5	-.7	+.8	+.3
	G	-.3	-.5	-.2	-.2	-1	+.5	-.7	0
	H	0	+.3	-.5	+.2	-1	-1	-.7	-.5
Total		-1.3	-0.8	-2.0	-4.0	-5.4	-3.4	-1.4	+0.9
Avg.		-.16	-.10	-.25	-.50	-.67	-.42	-.17	+.11

Generally speaking, the participants of Assessment Center 1 tended to give themselves higher scores on each dimension than did the assessors. This is indicated by the minus scores totaled for all dimensions except supervision. On some dimensions these differences were small. For example, participant and assessor scores were most similar on the dimensions of supervision and problem-solving. Most participants scored themselves slightly higher on problem-solving than did the assessors, and slightly lower on supervision than did the assessors.

The dimensions which showed the largest discrepancies for the group were those of decision-making, leadership and control. A majority of the eight participants scored themselves higher on these dimensions than did the assessors. There were large

negative discrepancies, particularly for the leadership dimension. This amounted to more than one-half point difference. In essence, the participants rated themselves closer to "good" while the assessors rated them closer to "fair" on this dimension. This group also considered themselves better at the control function than the assessment results would indicate.

The dimensions of planning, communication and supervision contained the most instances of higher (or identical) assessor-to-participant scores. Nevertheless, overall, this group rated themselves higher on these dimensions than they were rated. These managers probably felt more confidence in their skills in these areas. These scores were the ones they found most disappointing in the feedback session.

On the supervision dimension, one participant's score appears to have skewed the average. There was a difference of 2.3 points in one participant's score and the assessor's rating. The participant rated himself or herself at the low range on the supervision dimension, whereas the assessor rating was high. Regardless, this dimension shows the most agreement between participants and assessor scoring. Except for this anomaly, the supervision dimension would have shown the least variation between scores.

TABLE 20
Participant/Assessor Ratings Comparison

Assessment Center 2 (Directors)

		Dimensions							
		J	PS	PL	DM	L	Cont.	Comm.	S
P A R T I C I P A N T S	I	-.3	-.3	-.1	-.3	+1	-2	0	+.7
	J	-.7	+.1	-.5	+.7	-.5	0	-1	-.7
	K	-.7	-.5	-1	-.2	-.5	-1	0	-.3
	L	+.2	+.7	0	0	-.5	0	-.7	0
	M	+.7	+.5	-.4	+.3	0	+1	0	+.5
	N	+.3	+.2	+1	+1.2	0	+.5	0	+.3
	O	+.5	+.5	+1.5	+.2	+1	0	0	+1
	P	+.3	+.2	-1	-.2	0	-.7	-.7	-1.2
Total		+.3	+1.4	-.5	+1.7	+.5	-2.2	-2.4	-.3
Avg.		+.03	+.17	-.06	+.21	+.06	-.27	-.30	-.03

The participants of this Assessment Center (AC2) were divided into two subgroups: directors and middle managers/supervisors. Similarly, the data for this Assessment Center was divided into two tables: one for director data and one for supervisor data.

In comparison with Assessment Center 1, the second A.C. group showed less divergence, generally, from assessors' scores. The Director's group underevaluated themselves on four dimensions: judgment, problem-solving, decision making and leadership. They overevaluated themselves on four dimensions: planning, control, communication and supervision. This result perhaps reflects this group's greater familiarity with the middle management role. They expressed more confidence in those

skills usually assigned to the supervisory role. In any event, the differences between assessor and participant scores was not significant.

TABLE 21
Participant/Assessor Ratings Comparison
Assessment Center 2 (Supervisors)

		Dimensions							
		J	PS	PL	DM	L	Cont.	Comm.	S
P A R T I C I P A N T	Q	+ .2	+1	+ .5	+ .5	+ .3	+ .5	+ .5	+1.5
	R	- .2	0	-2.5	+ .2	+ .3	-1	+ .5	-1
	S	- .5	- .8	- .2	- .8	+1.3	- .7	+ .3	0
	T	0	- .3	0	-1	- .7	-1	- .7	-1
	U	- .7	0	-1.2	- .7	0	0	- .3	0
Total		-1.2	-.1	-3.4	-1.8	+1.2	-2.2	+.3	-.5
Avg.		-.24	-.02	.68	.36	.24	.44	.06	.10

The supervisor's subgroup tended to overevaluate themselves on most dimensions, although these differences were not substantial. The two exceptions were the dimensions of leadership and communication. This subgroup had the only participants to underevaluate themselves on the communication dimension. Even so, these scores most closely reflected the assessors' appraisal of this skill. The overevaluation of all other groups on this dimension may be attributed to the investment in professional self esteem this skill represents to human service managers.

TABLE 22
Participant/Assessor Ratings Comparison

		Assessment Center 3							
		J	PS	PL	Dimensions		Cont.	Comm.	S
					DM	L			
P A R T I C I P A N T S	V	-.8	-1	-.7	-.8	-.5	-1.5	-1	-.7
	W	-.5	-.7	+.3	+.7	-.5	-.5	-.7	-.2
	X	0	-.3	+.5	-.2	0	-.7	-.5	0
	Y	+.2	0	-1	+.3	-1	+.3	+.3	+.7
	Z	0	+1	-.1	-1.3	-1	+1	-1	0
	AA	-.7	-.3	0	-.7	0	0	+.3	-.3
	BB	+.1	-.2	0	-.2	+.3	0	-1	-.3
	CC	-1.2	-1.2	-1.7	-2.2	+.5	-1	-1	-1.7
	DD	+.2	-.3	-1.2	-.2	-1.2	-.2	0	-1
Total		-2.7	-3.0	-4.0	-6.2	-3.4	-2.6	-4.6	-3.5
Avg.		-.30	-.33	-.44	-.68	-.37	-.22	-.51	-.38

The participants of Assessment Center 3 had the widest divergence from the assessors' scores. The widest discrepancy between participant and assessor scores occurred in the decision-making dimension. Most participants scored themselves higher on the dimension than did the assessors. All dimensions were evaluated higher by participants in comparison to the assessors' scores. There was strong divergence on the dimensions of decision-making, communication and planning. The assessors found this group to be weakest in the areas of decision-making and communication. These were areas the participants felt they were strong in. Generally speaking, the assessors found this group the least motivated of the three groups tested.

TABLE 23

Divergence on Ratings

	J	PS	PL	DM	L	Cont.	Comm.	S
AC1	-.16	-.10	-.25	-.50	-.67	-.42	-.17	+.11
AC2 (D)	+.03	+.17	-.06	+.21	+.06	-.27	-.30	-.03
AC2 (S)	-.24	-.02	-.68	-.36	+.24	-.44	+.06	-.10
AC3	-.30	-.33	-.44	-.68	-.37	-.22	-.51	-.38
TOTAL	-.67	-.28	-1.12	-.83	-.74	-1.35	-.92	-.40

Table 23 collects the average divergence for every dimension studied for each Assessment Center group. The skill for which there is the widest discrepancy is the control dimension where participants rated themselves better at this skill by more than 1 full point over the assessors' scores. The same is true for the planning dimension. This is the difference between a rating of "fair" or "good." While the communication dimension is also showing almost a full point divergence, it is felt that the scores in Assessment Center 3 have skewed that figure. These results appear to support the possibility that these human service managers have little experience with rational management technologies.

This data had great impact in the feedback sessions directly. By utilizing this data with each participant, it was possible to quickly focus the participants' concentration on the

issue that most concerned them: their scores. The differences were so plain that little discussion was required about how a participant might have felt about a particular ability. Instead, the discussion quickly turned to the assessor's ratings and why they may not have jived with the participants' assessment. This did make the feedback sessions somewhat more confrontational, but also more useful. Frank discussion was generated concerning skill development, motivation, career development, promotional aspirations and need for change.

The Agency Report

One purpose of the Assessment Centers was to provide the subject organization with an evaluation of their management staffs' training needs. Therefore, in addition to the individual feedback sessions, a report was made to the organization which included general information concerning strengths, needs and trends. The report is included in Appendix G.

Participants were judged to have done well in the expression of judgment, communication and supervision. They demonstrated an average capacity in the expression of decision-making and leadership. Three dimensions were evaluated to be below average expression in these groups. These were problem-solving, planning and control.

Participants demonstrated a lack of awareness of those techniques involved in successfully executing plans of action. Many participants were unfamiliar with setting goals and objectives. There was a lower than average demonstration of the ability to engage in problem-solving activity, to analyze the pros and cons of an issue, and, consequently, to

raise sufficient alternative solutions to solve the problem. The weakest demonstration of skill among the participants was in the area of management control.

Without divulging information about individual participant performance, a number of recommendations were suggested to the agency for the focus of future management training. These included training in planning, control and fiscal techniques. In addition, it was recommended that training be directed to exploration of the assumptions underlying the managerial role in a human service setting. The organization had a rather large number of directors whose skills did not appear to match the responsibilities of the position. Approximately half of these directors were recruited from the social work supervisory ranks. Most participants had many questions concerning the roles of director and supervisor/middle manager. There appears to be role confusion and a blurring of role definition as far as these positions are concerned. Discussion was needed to raise these concerns and allow participants to begin to define themselves incorporating new role definitions. Leadership training was recommended. These recommendations were based upon the results shown in Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Assessor Rating Comparisons

The third area of quantitative data was an examination of the assessors' scores. The way in which the assessors' scored the participants, and, particularly, how their scores differed from each other, will be instructional in how and where to amend the assessment center process as it pertains to human service managers.

This section looks at each exercise and the dimensions tested therein. The numbers in the next four tables represent the average point difference in scoring between the two as-

sessors for each dimension. For the purposes of this discussion, these two assessors will be referred to as the administrator/assessor and the assessor. These distinctions between assessors reflect the differences in the way they functioned within the Assessment Centers. One assessor administered the centers. She was a constant presence in each Center and interacted with the participants on issues of format and process in the administrator role. The other assessor had no direct contact with the participants except for his presence in the Group Simulation exercise, where both assessors functioned as observers.

Table 24 shows the dimensions examined in the In-Basket exercise. Each individual dimension score was averaged in each Assessment Center for each assessor. The two average scores for the dimension were then compared. The difference generated was then recorded for each dimension.

TABLE 24
In-Basket Exercise

	J	PS	Dimensions		Cont.	Super.
			PL	DM		
AC 1	1.6	0.6	1.0	1.6	0.4	0.2
AC 2	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3
AC 3	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.2
Avg.	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.9	0.36	0.23

The above numbers represent the average difference between the individual assessor scores prior to discussion and compromise. In general, the higher the score on the dimensions, the larger the difference between initial assessor scores. The last line of scores represent the average discrepancy between initial assessor scores on each di-

mension. This statistic should allow for some understanding of the varying judgment brought to bear on the skill involved. The underlying assumption being that adequate training of assessors on definitions and expressions of skills will create similar judgments when observed. Extensive negotiation should not be a part of the assessor experience. The greater the discrepancy, the more difficult the negotiation.

The first findings that can be identified are general ones. The statistics seem to identify two trends. Discrepancies between scores are greatest in the first AC and decrease with each Assessment Center. A similar result can be seen in the order of exercises. The first exercise in the Assessment Center has the highest divergence. The Group Simulation exercise has the least. There is a progressive decline in discrepancy from exercise to exercise. It would seem exposure and experience had, at least, as great an impact on assessor judgment as pre-test training did.

The combined scores will be looked at later. Since the combined score represents a compromise score, it is not a true quantitative entity. In numerous cases this negotiated score bridges large differences between assessor scores.

For the in-basket exercise, the largest differences are reflected in the judgment and decision-making dimensions. On average, a full point separates the assessors. Some of this difference could be attributed to insufficient pre-training for assessors on the definitions and criteria for these dimensions. While it was thought to be sufficient, initially, some dimensions did require more training. In addition, some dimensions were more abstract than others, leaving assessors with a more difficult range of choices. This was particularly true of the judgment dimension.

Here again, all differences became smaller from one Assessment Center to the next, indicating a greater common understanding of dimensions derived from practical experience.

The smallest discrepancies were reported for the dimensions of supervision and control. The smallest discrepancy occurred in the supervision dimension, which might reflect the assessors' professional expertise and familiarity with this skill. The assessors came close to agreement on the control dimension as well. While there was a difference in assessor background and expertise vis-à-vis this skill, the control skill lends itself to training techniques. It is a very concrete skill to assess.

TABLE 25
Planning Exercise

	J	PS	Dimensions DM	PL	Cont.
AC 1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	0.6
AC 2	0.83	0.67	0.76	0.37	0.34
AC 3	0.53	0.55	0.6	0.48	0.15
Avg.	0.78	0.77	0.85	0.65	0.36

As with the In-Basket exercise, on the Planning exercise there was a large differential between assessor scores for all dimensions in Assessment Center 1. Once again, these differences decreased with each assessment center. The decision-making dimension showed the largest differential in scores. Judgment and Problem-Solving were not far behind. The Planning exercise itself was rather complex and required a high degree of sophistication as far as expression of dimensions is concerned. This exercise, as well as the In-Basket, were the exercises least familiar to the participants. Both were adaptations

of business assessment technology. Most participants had not been exposed to them prior to this assessment experience.

The same drawbacks with assessor inexperience with specific dimensions that were present in the In-Basket were also present in the Planning exercise. The dimensions of judgment and decision-making created the greatest disagreement between assessors, with problem-solving running a close third.

TABLE 26
Supervision Exercise

	J	PS	Dimensions DM	PL	Cont.
AC 1	0.93	1.20	0.62	0.68	0.81
AC 2	0.42	0.30	0.52	0.40	0.50
AC 3	0.80	0.61	0.73	0.54	0.64
Avg.	0.72	0.70	0.62	0.54	0.65

The Supervision exercise was the only paper and pencil test in the Assessment Center. The questions asked required participants to choose a correct answer from a set of choices. The assessors were given a list of prioritized, acceptable answers. The assessor then took those answers into account when rating participants on a particular dimension. Since this was an exercise with which the assessors were most familiar, it could be expected that differences between assessor ratings could be comparatively small. However, the differences appear to be consistent with the other exercises. Indeed, the differences approximate those of the In-Basket and Planning exercise. More than one-half point separated the assessors on each dimension. The skills of judgment and decision-making show the widest differences.

There is only one dimension that demonstrates a small differential between assessor ratings and that was the Control dimension. In both the In-Basket and Planning exercises, the difference between assessor ratings was .36, among the lowest in all Assessment Centers. But it would be difficult to claim that this similarity reflects commonly held understandings about the definition and criteria for the control skill. Differences on most dimensions were significantly higher than this.

The supervision dimension showed quite a variation between exercises. The closest the assessors came to an identical score occurred on the supervision dimension in the In-Basket exercise. There, the assessors differed by little more than .2 of a point. The assumption supporting this closeness had to do with the individual expertise of the assessors on this dimension. However, this closeness in scores disappears in the Supervision exercise, which shows quite a high discrepancy between assessor scores (.65) on the supervision dimension. These scores would seem to contradict each other. Examination of these two differing scores led to a couple of explanations.

First, it is likely that inclusion of the supervision dimension in the In-Basket exercise was not an effective choice. Conceptually, the In-Basket does not lend itself to a valid examination of the supervision skill. It might have been better to place it in the Planning exercise where supervisee time-management was a key factor. In any event, review and revision of the way dimensions are arranged in the exercises is needed.

The second explanation has to do with the way in which the assessors performed their tasks. As has been described, two assessors scored all the participants. One of the assessors, also acting as the administrator of the centers, was present with the participants in each Assessment Center. A review of the data shows that this assessor scored

participants consistently higher than the other assessor, who was only in the presence of participants for the Group Simulation exercise. This difference in exposure likely influenced ratings to some degree and had an impact on assessor reliability.

TABLE 27
Group Simulation Exercise

	PS	Dimensions L	Com
AC 1	1.00	0.62	0.37
AC 2	0.50	0.47	0.53
AC 3	0.46	0.66	0.68
Avg.	0.65	0.58	0.52

This would seem to be reinforced by the Group Simulation exercise. Since this was the only exercise where both assessors directly observed all participants at the same time, it could be assumed that differences between assessor scores might be substantially lowered. But while this exercise does show the smallest discrepancies between assessor ratings of all four exercises, these differences were not small enough to claim that mutual observation had a significant impact on the discrepancies of the assessor ratings.

Two factors may have worked against the assessors achieving homogeneity. The Group Simulation was the last exercise in the Assessment Center. One assessor, therefore, had the cumulative experience of the participants in the centers weighing on her observations while the other assessor did not. Further, just as the In-Basket assessed too many dimensions, the Group Simulation probably assessed too few. Two of the three dimensions tested were areas with which the assessors were more or less familiar. It is

possible that differences in scoring might have been larger had a dimension like decision-making been included.

The difference between assessor exposure to participants had a further impact on the combined score. The combined score is a compromise score. When assessors meet to discuss scores, both compare their initial scores, then discuss the rationale behind their decisions, if there is a discrepancy between scores. These discussions lead to a single, combined score on each dimension. It is possible that the assessor with the greater exposure to participants would have a greater repertoire of reasons for her scores. This could give one assessor an advantage when it came to deciding upon combined scores. Indeed, in Assessment Center 1, particularly, the difference in initial scores was quite large between assessors.

Table 28 demonstrates this advantage. These numbers represent the combined scores for all 30 participants averaged. Therefore, for the dimension of judgment in the In-Basket exercise, Assessor A gave a score of 2.9, versus 1.3 from Assessor B. The combined scores are closer to the administrator/assessor's ratings than to the second assessor's rating. As was true of other aspects of this study, these differences diminish from Assessment Center to Assessment Center as assessors became more familiar and more confident with the process.

TABLE 28

In-Basket Combined Scores

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Assessor Scores</u>		<u>Combined A/B</u>
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	
Judgment	2.9	1.3	2.5
Problem-Solving	2.3	1.7	2.2
Planning	2.9	1.9	2.5
Decision-Making	3.4	1.7	2.6
Control	2.4	2.0	2.2
Supervision	2.9	2.7	2.7

Quantitative data would suggest consideration of some changes to the Assessment Center process. The exercises need to be evaluated both as to placement in the Assessment Center process, and as to the kinds and number of dimensions assessed. Evaluation of assessor training, and the way the assessors were used, will also need to be reassessed with a view toward amending the process.

Chapter 5

The Qualitative Feedback

While the quantitative data collected for this study is informative and useful, it is the qualitative data that is central to this study and drives its purpose. The difficulties associated with the recording of qualitative information are well known. Chief among these difficulties is that methods of analysis are not well formulated (Miles & Haberman, 1984). An attempt was made in this study to devise a method for examining qualitative data.

Each exercise included an evaluation form which asked the participant to reflect upon the usefulness, the efficiency and the effectiveness of the exercise they had just taken. These evaluation forms usually asked for single word or single phrase responses to keep narrative to a minimum. This was felt to be necessary since the exercises themselves were so intense and often required high concentration. A request for simple responses was more likely to elicit feedback.

Each evaluation requested feedback in three categories. Participants were asked to give feedback about their feelings and concerns about each exercise they had just taken, their suggestions for improving the exercise and then were asked to rate the exercise on an A to F scale. This data was then examined. This process involved making analytic choices concerning which data to highlight or to summarize. In this instance, more data was collected in more categories than the three areas noted. However, it is felt that the categories of usefulness, efficiency and effectiveness go to the heart of the study.

It also became clear in the process of focusing on these categories that a number of questions were redundant and/or provided information which was not useful. The evaluation forms themselves need to be tightened up and made more efficient.

The next methodological step was to decide on the display of the material. A chart format was chosen to display the feedback given in the three categories. One chart includes the "feelings and concerns" feedback and the exercise ratings. The second chart includes all the suggestions made by the participants. The display charts note frequent duplication in the nature of feelings and suggestions. This frequency of data is not reduced. Frequency is an important factor in this feedback as it indicates the priorities of the group as far as the Assessment Centers are concerned.

The second format is the traditional narrative form. Usually, this format can be quite cumbersome. The display charts, however, organized the information in an accessible and compact form. The narrative derived from the displayed information, making it more compact and focused. The function of the narrative in this format is to explain, in a somewhat more expanded way, the data in the displays and to draw conclusions from the data. This chapter contains that narrative. Each exercise will be examined separately.

Participant Feedback on the In-Basket Exercise

The In-Basket exercise received quite a bit of feedback. Several broad areas were commented on by the participants. Significant feedback was received about the prioritization of the memos included in the exercise. Feelings were mixed about the need for this piece of the exercise. One individual found it helpful, while others were confused by it, or didn't understand its function. A couple of participants felt it was their lack of expertise in this area that made them do poorly on this part of the exercise.

This researcher went back to the original planning of the exercise to determine if the rationale was sufficiently thought out, and then to the instructions, to determine if it was sufficiently explained. The instructions were found to be adequate, however there does appear to be a problem with the prioritization part of the exercise. It does not feel like an integral part of the exercise. It feels rather like an extraneous additional request made on the participant. Participants seemed to approach it as a less serious task and put less energy and concentration into its completion. This piece of the exercise needs to be rethought, and perhaps restructured in a more homogeneous way.

A number of participants had some problem with the fact that the organization depicted in the In-Basket exercise was not familiar to them. Some felt the lack of familiarity hampered them in their responses or required too much of them in terms of assimilating information. It should be noted that all participants worked for a child care agency and the example depicted was of a more generic human services system.

In designing this exercise, this researcher's intention was to place the participants in an unfamiliar setting that was still human service related. This is a standard practice with

In-Basket exercises. This technique is purposefully used to induce a stressful circumstance, strong enough to elicit spontaneous responses in the managers to the In-Basket memos. To some extent this type of feedback is specific to the homogeneity of this group. Coming from the same agency, these participants probably harbored an expectation that the Assessment Centers would be tailored to their professional situations. In all likelihood, this expectation would not have been noteworthy if the participants had been recruited from many different work settings. The creation of stress, of course, is elemental to the process of Assessment Centers. It is grist for the mill. Stress creates the environment within which individuals respond, more or less, as they do in similar circumstances in the workplace. (Kotter, 1982)

Other stress factors, however, were present in the setting which were not built into the Assessment Centers. Unfortunately for everyone concerned, air conditioning was not available in the building used for the Assessment Centers. Two of the Assessment Centers were affected in an adverse way. Assessment Centers 1 and 2 had to be conducted under very warm, and therefore distracting, conditions. It is not possible to say how this impacted on participant perception of the Assessment Center process. Another external stress had to do with the consequences of cost containment. The amenities usually associated with Assessment Centers were not present. Food and drink were not present on the premises and had to be brought in. These factors caused distraction, which impacted upon concentration.

In terms of the structure of the In-Basket exercise, there was considerable feedback about the options listed for each memo. These options represented the choices each manager might make in responding to each memo. Some participants wanted more choices listed. Some suggested the inclusion of more personal choices, while others

suggested format changes such as combining the memo and options on the same page. Perhaps one-third of the participants commented upon the option choices.

Initially the memos were separated from the options as a way of making scoring easier. But clearly, for participants it was not efficient. Memos and options should be combined on one form. Likewise, some additional options, in form and kind, could be added. However, there is a problem with creating lists of options which suit everyone. We are confronted daily by inadequate or insufficient choices to problem-solving. Assessment Centers try to mimic these shortfalls by limiting choices somewhat. This is a valid test technique which should be continued.

There was general comment about the clarity of the instructions. There were inconsistencies here and there in the memos, and in the organizational chart. These should be eliminated. Likewise, the exercise evaluation forms are not consistent with each other, and in some places are redundant. These should be corrected.

Some comments reflected the tensions present in participants' workplaces rather than the Assessment Center per se. One comment appears to reflect a participant's feelings concerning her own agency's internal arrangements rather than anything presented in this exercise. The comment had to do with bypassing "Directors" to go directly to top management for decision-making. This alludes to a characteristic of the participant agency with which this researcher was also struck.

Over a third of the participants in these Assessment Centers identify themselves as holding the position of Director. Nevertheless, many of these responded in the As-

assessment Center setting like mid-level personnel. This is reflected in the above statement which does not associate "Directors" with top management.

This issue will arise again, particularly in the planning exercise, when it becomes apparent how few "Directors" had any exposure to fiscal issues. One of the most consistent laments from participants, at all levels in their organization, was their lack of exposure to fiscal matters. It appears in the In-Basket exercise in the form of the overtime memo.

Another function common to middle managers, and certainly Directors, is the function of delegation. Yet a number of "Director" participants became confused with exercise memos which called for delegation responses. There appeared to be some inexperience with management tasks which required oversight within this subject organization.

This is also reflected in the types of skills participants identified as needing improvement. Delegation was one of the most frequently identified areas of weakness. Time management was the second most identified management function needing improvement. This researcher came to believe that many of the directors in this agency (though not all) were functioning, for all intents and purposes, as middle managers. This speaks to the organizational design of the subject organization, which was a recurring theme in the feedback. (Duncan, 1979)

The research concluded that the distribution of dimensions was inconsistent from exercise to exercise. This pertains particularly to the In-Basket and Group Simulation exercises. The In-Basket contained five dimensions, while just three are included in the Group Simulation. It was felt that this put a greater burden on the In-Basket exercise

when it came to assessing managerial skill. Dimensions should be redistributed somewhat so that all venues can be used to observe managerial skills in action.

Numerous format/methodological changes need to be made to the assessment material in the In-Basket exercise. The criteria used to assess the dimensions needs to be revised, particularly in the planning dimensions.

As far as ratings are concerned, almost an equal number of participants judged this exercise to be excellent or fair. Twenty percent (20%) judged it to be excellent, while 17% judged it to be fair. The majority (63%) rated it good. This was in spite of the fact that this exercise presented the participants with considerable difficulty. Participants in Assessment Center 1 rated the exercise highest, with 50% giving it the highest rating. An equal percentage of participants (77%) rated the exercise good in Assessment Center 2 and 3. However, a higher percentage in Assessment Center 3 rated the exercise fair. It could be said that while many participants found the exercise difficult and stressful, they also found it useful. A majority of participants in all Assessment Centers responded with comments and suggestions.

Participant Feedback on the Planning Exercise

Without question, this was the most difficult and stressful exercise in the Assessment experience. In contrast to the In-Basket, which elicited a variety of comments on numerous issues, the Planning Exercise elicited specific, limited, intense feedback. The comments largely fall into three areas. First, most participants found the combination of a scheduling section and fiscal section too much to handle in a two-hour period. Second, most participants, regardless of their rank or status in their organization, had little or no

exposure to fiscal job functions prior to the Assessment Center experience. Related to this, and perhaps driven by it, was a consistent feedback request for more information concerning the fiscal problem. Each of these areas will be looked at separately.

The feeling of excessive stress associated with this exercise was shared by this researcher during the Assessment Center process. In hindsight, it was a mistake to schedule two simulation exercises on the same day which required such a high degree of concentration. Some would have argued that it was really "three" simulations, if you separate the Planning exercise into two distinct parts. This was a weakness in the format which was not anticipated prior to the Assessment Center experience. It was this researcher's opinion that the "three" exercises, following sequentially on the first day, generated more stress than was required to establish the "reality" of the simulation. The fact that the fiscal problem came at the end of the day also impacted negatively on concentration. The format does require reconsideration and rearrangement to create a better balance within each day and between each day.

While the proximity of these two simulations on the first day was problematic, the content of the fiscal problem was not. It was written, as all the exercises were, in such a way as to require the participant to develop solutions with less than adequate information and resources. Initial discussion with the Executive Director of the participant agency indicated that middle managers had had some exposure to budgeting, and that those at the Director level had routine exposure to this function. However, the feedback process revealed a different reality. Most middle managers, including most Directors, had little or no experience with fiscal matters. In this organization's functional arrangement, only a very few, select Directors had responsibility for fiscal decision-making and budgeting.

Consequently, many in this group of managers had trouble understanding the fiscal problem. Many did not understand the fiscal terminology employed.

The feedback associated with this aspect of the exercise highlights one of the problems encountered when one is working with a homogeneous group, in this case participants who were all associated with the same organization. While efforts were made to ascertain the skill, expertise and knowledge of participants prior to the Assessment Center, this effort was restricted to discussions with a couple of top level Directors and the Executive Director herself. These discussions turned out to be not wholly accurate.

Direct interviewing of participants prior to the Assessment Center was not permitted. While these individuals were cooperative and sincere in their descriptions of their staffs' capabilities and needs, in some regards their expectations did not match the actual skills demonstrated. Had these participants been recruited individually from an array of not-for-profit organizations, direct access to their capabilities would have elicited a closer approximation of their real needs as far as managerial skills were concerned. (Campbell, 1983)

There were a number of drawbacks associated with working with participants from one organization. The above is one example. Direct access to participants was very difficult prior to the Assessment Center. Most of the information about the participants came indirectly from top managers who had obvious and subtle investments in the participants. These investments sometimes altered the information presented about the participants.

Nevertheless, the exercise achieved the outcome for which it was designed. The leaders in this organization agreed to the Assessment Center as a means of helping them focus

their training curriculum on those areas where staff skill is weakest. Their interests were cost containment and efficiency. To the extent the fiscal results contradict their own perceptions of their staffs' capabilities, it achieves the intended result by focusing them on the training needs of their staff that were actually manifested.

The content of the fiscal problem can be reviewed to determine if more information is needed for participants to answer it adequately.

Reaction to the first part of this exercise was markedly different from the fiscal part. Although the exercise was presented as a whole with two sections, the participants clearly separated them and treated them as two distinct exercises. While the feedback on the fiscal part was rather negative (focused either on inadequacies in the material or in the participant), feedback on the scheduling section was rather positive. It is this researcher's opinion that the scheduling problem was far more complex and more difficult than the fiscal problem, from a technical point of view. However, the feedback indicates that this opinion was not shared. Perhaps the familiarity of the subject matter enhanced this perception. Also, the scheduling exercise, while technically demanding, severely restricted decision making to a small arena. The participants only needed to match the right workers to the right task. The fiscal problem required decision making of a global nature. This may partially explain the increased anxiety over participant inexperience in fiscal matters.

In the planning exercise some modification to the forms will be required as a result of making two exercises. The "Planning Behavior List" needs to be rewritten in two forms: one for the scheduling exercise and one for the fiscal exercise. All dimension scores would have to be separated along those lines as well. Again, standardization of the questions related to the dimension will be required. The fiscal problem will need

reevaluation. For managers who are supervisors, the fiscal task may have been too complex. Certainly greater clarity and fiscal definition will be required in future applications.

In rating the planning exercise, the same inconsistencies were noted. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants in Assessment Center 1 rated the exercise either excellent or fair. Of this percentage, 50% rated the exercise fair. The Assessment Center 2 participants, however, rated the exercise good by 54%. In contrast to Assessment Center 1, 25% rated the exercise fair. The participants in this Assessment Center were the only ones to split their scores, giving each part of the exercise a separate rating. This further reinforces the need for distinct exercises. Assessment Center 3 rated the exercise 40% good and 60% fair.

Overall, most participants rated this exercise good (40%) or fair (40%) with 6% splitting their ratings between good and fair. Ten percent (10%) rated it as excellent and 4% rated it as poor. In contrast to the In-Basket exercise, where 63% of the participants rated the exercise as good, only 40% did so for the Planning exercise. Even more telling, overall, only 17% judged the In-Basket "fair", over 40% who judged the Planning exercise only "fair." This feedback clearly indicates some problems with the planning exercise that will need to be resolved.

Participant Feedback on the Supervision Exercise

Of the four exercises, this one elicited the least written feedback. Further, the feedback that was given had a quality different from that given on the two prior exercises. For the supervision exercise, the feedback tended to be uncritical of the exercise itself and much

more self-critical in nature. Participants seemed to be more critical of their performance on the exercise, and less critical of the structure and content of the exercise. This may have something to do with the familiarity of this exercise to the participants. This exercise was a traditional paper and pencil test. It comprised a series of multiple-choice questions. This format is so familiar to anyone who has been a student that it may have served as a disincentive to critical examination.

Further, the simplicity of the format discouraged examination. Participants were left, then, to criticize their own choices. We see this in the feedback on this exercise. "I wasn't satisfied with my analysis." "Made me realize I needed more communication skills." "Need to refresh my supervisory skills." This type of feedback also reflects on their feelings concerning the function of supervision as a whole. The task of supervision is probably the management skill most familiar to this group. It is probably the task most familiar to most social work managers. Social work managers are used to, and comfortable with, examining and reassessing this skill on an ongoing, day to day basis. This might also explain the tendency to focus on individual performance in this exercise.

What little critical feedback there was focused upon the request for more information related to the questions' scenarios.

Ratings for this exercise could be predicted as a result of the verbal feedback. All three Assessment Centers rated this exercise as either excellent or good. Only one participant rated this exercise as fair. Assessment Center 1 participants rated the exercise the highest, with 50% judging it to be excellent. Overall, 70% of the participants rated the exercise as good.

On examination, there was very little in this exercise that was challenging. Indeed, this exercise may have come as a relief to the participants after the challenges of the first day. The participants did experience the second day differently from the first. The second day presented two exercises whose formats were both familiar and comfortable. The change in stress level on the second day was noticeable. This relief could have translated into higher ratings for the Supervision exercise.

A description of the second day seems in order. Technically speaking, it was really one-half day. The Supervision and Group Simulation exercises were both given during the morning session of the second day. The exception was Assessment Center 2. The size of this center was such that two Group Simulation exercises had to be scheduled on the second day: one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Both exercises consumed less time than did the first two, and the nature of the kind of concentration needed was different. The Supervision exercise involved participants in issues which they had thought about and dealt with before. The Group Simulation exercise involved participants in an interactive process which most participants experienced as less stressful and more satisfying. All of these differences point to a need to rearrange the exercises over the life of the Assessment Center in a more balanced way. Consideration also has to be given to the total length of the Assessment Center and whether sufficient time and allotted for the entire process.

Participant Feedback on the Group Simulation Exercise

After three exercises which required intense, individual execution, the Group Simulation exercise was a welcomed change. The participants enjoyed talking together and working on a common problem together.

This Group Simulation exercise had a couple of things in common with the Supervision exercise as far as feedback was concerned. The Group Simulation exercise also elicited less feedback overall than either the In-Basket or the Planning exercise. Feedback on this exercise was greater, however, than the Supervision exercise. Like the Supervision exercise as well, a majority of the comments reflected upon the participants' behavior during the process. There was much less concern with the format, although some feedback was focused in that direction. Some felt the session should have been longer, and some felt it should have been shorter. It was this researcher's opinion that the session could have been somewhat longer. This stems from the concerns engendered by the observing assessors.

Two assessors must observe each group to ensure reliability of the observations. To make the Assessment Center cost efficient, one of the assessors also doubled as the Assessment Center administrator. In practical terms, this meant that one of the assessors had greater exposure to the Assessment Center participants than the other. One assessor arrived on the second day just before the exercise was to begin. The exercise was explained by the administrator, the material was distributed and the participants were given time to read the prepared scenario. During this time the administrator prepared a seating diagram for the second assessor to become familiar with. The group interaction would then begin. It was believed that the new assessor could use more time to familiarize himself with the participants, if not by extending the time spent in the group interaction than through some other means. This researcher believes that the arrangement used by assessors in this assessment center was inadequate. Two assessors should have been exposed to the participants equally either by being present throughout the assessment center and sharing the administrative duties, or by utilizing a third person as the administrator. The question of exposure to the participants became more important than initially

believed. Unequal exposure introduced variables which were difficult to control and could potentially skew outcomes.

Some participants expressed a need for a group leader to help focus participants on the issue at hand. This was considered in planning the Assessment Centers but rejected in favor of a leaderless group to better observe the natural development of leaders out of the group discussion. This in fact did occur. Some groups, however, came more easily to a decision concerning the problematic employee than did others. The groups in Assessment Center 2 had a relatively easy time coming to a decision while the group in Assessment Center 3 had quite a difficult time.

Much of the difficulty experienced by the group in Assessment Center 3 could be attributed in part to its constitution. This group brought with it certain tensions which did not appear to be present in the prior two groups. Issues of race and status, as pertains to their own organizational situations, were entered into in this session. Much anger and frustration was expressed toward the organization's use of hierarchy, and the covert racism this group stated it had experienced. It should be noted that this group included many more African Americans than the other two groups. And as was discussed in Chapter Three, the participants in Assessment Center 3 had the fewest Directors present of the three groups. These frustrations found their way into this group's discussion. For a time, it was thought that this group would not be able to fulfill the point of the exercise and come to consensus on a decision regarding the problem. However, they were eventually able to do so.

Some participants had some problems with the format. One comment indicated that in Assessment Center 1, the group included a supervisor and their supervisee. Every effort

was made to avoid that very possibility. It was recognized in the planning of the Assessment Centers that this could be problematic. Groups were arranged to avoid placing supervisors with supervisees. In spite of this, the agency culture operated to undermine this planning. For example, the Executive Director's secretary took it upon herself to change or rearrange participants' schedules to accommodate the need to maximize the number of participants. This was done without the researcher's knowledge prior to the start of the Assessment Centers.

The above examples demonstrate the power of the agency culture upon the most rational and objective of plans. As an outsider, and in spite of the agency's expressed intentions of neutrality, it exerted an influence over these Assessment Centers.

As far as format changes are concerned, this researcher felt the participant instructions to the Group Simulation exercise were not clear enough and needed to be redone. They could actually be replaced by the instructions given in the administrators' section. Some consolidation is required in this exercise to cut down on duplication. "Steps in Group Simulation Exercise" should be combined with "Instructions to Participants" on one page. Similarly, "Instructions For Dimensions" should be combined with the "Assessor Dimension Guide." Likewise, the "Scoring" section should be combined on the same page as the "Exercise Score" sheets.

The suggestion to include role-playing, while not really appropriate for the Group Simulation exercise, is a good one. Role playing could be incorporated into one of the other exercises or incorporated into a redesigned exercise.

The Group Simulation exercise was the second highest scored exercise. Only the Supervision exercise scored higher. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of all participants rated the exercise good, and 33% rated it excellent. Ten percent (10%) rated it fair. Participants in Assessment Center 1 and 3 rated the exercise higher than participants in Assessment Center 2. Assessment Center 3 gave it the highest rating of the three groups. One is tempted to wonder if the frank discussion this group engaged in during this exercise had a cathartic effect on the group. The participants in Assessment Center 2 did not appear to get as much out of this exercise as the other groups. It took this group longer to ignore the presence of the observers, and they were the least spontaneous in their responses. It is hard to identify the reasons for this difference between groups.

Participant Feedback on the Overall Experience

In all three Assessment Centers there was a general request for more breaks, probably motivated by the intensity of the first day and the compressed nature of the Assessment Center generally. The level of consistency in the format from form to form and exercise to exercise needed improvement.

Feedback on the entire Assessment Center experience was consistent on two issues. Most participants felt the first day was too intense and the format needed to be balanced over the two days. The second issue has to do with clarifying the material, eliminating redundancies and streamlining the forms, particularly the feedback forms. Both suggestions are worthwhile and useful.

Overall, 73% of the participants rated the Assessment Center experience as a good one. Twenty-three percent (23%) rated it excellent and 4% rated it fair. These ratings are consistent with the positive feedback included in the participant evaluations.

Assessor Feedback

In addition to the participant feedback, the assessors also discussed their experience in the Assessment Center. In many ways the assessor piece of the Assessment Center carried with it the greatest liabilities. As has been suggested, the decision to incorporate two professionals in the roles of assessor and administrator/assessor was motivated by the need to contain costs and thus create an affordable assessment technology to social work managers. However, this accommodation turned out to be not as useful as initially planned. (Keel, et.al., 1989)

As has been mentioned, the degree of exposure to the participants varied greatly between the two assessors. One assessor had 100% exposure to participants, while the other had perhaps 30% exposure. By exposure is meant face to face experience. What can be ascertained by examination of the scoring completed by both of the assessors was that the assessor who had the greater exposure consistently rated the participants higher than the assessor with less exposure.

This difference in exposure was created out of the decision to combine two roles in one person. Technically speaking, the administrator's role was conceived as completely separate from the assessor function. That is, the functions engaged in by the administrator were different from those of the assessor. Nevertheless, it was not possible to completely segregate these functions. In the process of answering questions, ex-

plaining procedures, and accommodating needs the administrator/assessor came to know the participants in a way the second assessor did not, and this, unintentionally, influenced the ratings.

One way this influence can assert itself is in the process of arriving at a single rating. In the lexicon of this technology, ratings are arrived at through discussion and examination when assessors disagree about the expression of a function. Greater exposure to participants gives the administrator/assessor greater knowledge with which to argue.

Another area of concern involves the timing of the assessor evaluations. Ideally these should occur immediately after each exercise, or at the end of each day. Use of a part-time assessor precluded this arrangement. At the earliest, evaluations could not occur until the close of the Assessment Center, and often it occurred days later. This is another argument for involving both assessors equally, and for extending the length of the Centers.

In other areas, scheduling the sessions used by assessors to score the exercises remained problematic. Initially, all the exercises had to be duplicated and then delivered to the assessors for their individual assessment. This was costly and time consuming. Once the assessors left the environment of the Assessment Center it became burdensome to arrange the follow-up work. In each of the three Assessment Centers, assessor follow-up occurred much later than this researcher would have wished. Even though it would be more costly, the best solution would be to employ the assessors for an additional day and complete the assessment ratings in one eight-hour period.

Other recommendations were to limit the size of the groups doing the Group Simulation exercise. Ten would appear to be the maximum number that the assessors could observe and record. Finally, for all assessor activities, better pre-training sessions need to be developed to ensure commonality of definitions and the meaning of observed behavior.

The Participant Feedback Sessions

Most of this chapter involved the consideration of feedback from the participants to the designer of the Assessment Centers. The last phase of the Assessment Center experience, however, was designed to give the participants feedback about their individual performances. Initially, the plan for these three Assessment Centers was to conclude an entire assessment experience before the next one began. This total experience included giving each participant an individual and confidential feedback session designed to give individuals an appraisal of their performance. Completing one cycle before starting another proved to be overly optimistic. The Assessment Centers were held in July, August and September of 1989. One month separated each Assessment Center. The four weeks between Assessment Centers was barely enough time to complete the rating process and set up for the next Assessment Center. This meant feedback sessions could not be scheduled until all Assessment Centers were completed. Individual feedback sessions were begun in October 1989 and concluded in December 1989. On average then, two months past between participant attendance at an Assessment Center and feedback session.

Additionally, each session was conducted at each participant's workplace. This necessitated trips to various workplaces in Brooklyn and Queens. Each session lasted at least

one hour, and was perceived by both parties as worthwhile and useful. In each session the assessor ratings and comments were discussed as well as participant feelings concerning these. Comparisons were made between assessor ratings and participant self-ratings done prior to the administration of the exercise. Participants also spoke quite freely about their positions in the organization, their plans for the future and, in many cases, their frustration with the system that employed them.

While the feedback sessions were personally satisfying, they were inefficient from a process point of view. Too much time passed between participation and feedback session. Traveling to individual work sites could not be supported from the perspective of cost containment. It was very time consuming, with each feedback session taking half a day to complete when travel time was included. In this case, it would have meant fifteen days of paid participation for the assessor who conducted the interviews. This does not include the time and materials required to produce the feedback packet given to the participant at the feedback session.

It is not clear how to make this phase of the Assessment Center cost effective. Perhaps telephone interviews could be tried and/or written reports sent to the participants.

Individual participants could be scheduled to come to the assessor over a two or three day period. While this is also costly it would certainly be less so than the way it was done for this process.

The participant agency also had a stake in the feedback process. Their cooperation was based upon the promise of greater insight into the managerial competency of their staff and some direction as to their training needs. This promise was addressed in a written report to the agency which gave a general assessment of overall group skills and some

suggestions as to where the agency might focus its in-service training curriculum. That report is included in Appendix G.

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Chapter 6

Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to adapt an existing for-profit management technology to the needs of human service, not-for-profit managers. In doing so, it was hoped that feedback from the manager-participants would allow for creation of an assessment tool geared specifically to their needs. A central assumption of this assessment technology holds that a precise methodology will successfully identify those managerial skills needed by a candidate to successfully negotiate their career ladder. The established Assessment Center technology, from which this study's technology was derived, strives to accurately predict the success of candidates in new jobs or in promotional situations. (Silverman & Wexley, 1987) Prediction was not a goal of this study.

The decision to exclude prediction in this study was based on structural and philosophical concerns. Philosophically, in traditional Assessment Centers, prediction is intimately linked to selection. That is, organizations often utilized assessment centers to give them a rationale for promoting individual managers. (Cascio & Silbey, 1979) This bias on selection turns the Assessment Center experience into a true "test" environment in which participants pass or fail. Whenever an assessment experience is narrowed in this way, it is possible that some capable managers, not comfortable with test environments, could fall by the wayside and be passed over for promotion. This current technology was developed, in large part, to reinforce desire for self improvement.

Further, the emphasis on prediction and selection favors the needs of organizations over individual managers. The purpose of this study was to address the needs of individual

managers first. Individual managers need to know what skills they need for advancement, which skills need improvement and which skills they have mastered. This need speaks more to training and development than it does to selection.

Structurally, the inclusion of prediction requires a rigorous design which would have undoubtedly increased both the time and costs of this study's Assessment Center. Since time and cost appeared to be the two reasons Assessment Centers were not utilized consistently by human service organizations, a further purpose of this study was cost containment. This necessitated streamlining the Assessment Center in terms of time and personnel.

For these reasons, this study's Assessment Center focused upon the training and staff development needs of the individual participants. While participant needs were primary, the organization's need was also considered. Individual results were not shared with the organization, however, a report was generated which identified for the organization those skill areas where training would be most beneficial. Hopefully, this report could constitute both a cost containment and better focused training program for the agency involved.

Two theoretical orientations about management informed this pragmatic study. Its technology is a combination of rational, product-focused scientific management principles (Patti, 1978), and the quality, effectiveness-focused principles of humanistic theory whose most recent expression is manifested in Quality Through Management (QTM). (Martin, 1993). This theoretical marriage between reason and feeling gives Assessment Center technology a unique perspective on execution. It is the position of this study that it was the emphasis on quality/effectiveness that gave this technology its dynamic character,

and offered the best suggestions for growth and change. Consequently, this study took the theoretical position that effectiveness is its primary outcome.

This is a change from traditional Assessment Center technology, which is usually quantitatively focused. Focus on selection and promotion has always made the Assessment Center a highly rational technology. This study adapted this technology to focus on its more qualitative aspects. The theoretical bridge used to merge the concepts of rational and quality management was Dr. Rino Patti's concept of service effectiveness. (Patti, 1987) Dr. Patti's concept views service effectiveness as the primary outcome of managerial work. Issues of efficiency and productivity are subordinate to the effectiveness outcome. For this study, effectiveness outcome was related to improving the instruments themselves, their weaknesses and potential for usefulness. The data was generated toward this end. The effectiveness outcome focused upon the issue of how well we had met the managerial needs of the participants, and what that said about the instruments. If a good job has been done there, then efficiencies are created as a consequence. These efficiencies should allow both managers and participant organizations to tailor training needs and career choices in a cost-saving way.

Consequently, this study focused upon the development of management assessment instruments that accurately reflect the manager/participant skills and experience. It was a formative evaluation of the exploratory descriptive type. It was hoped that this study design would allow development of descriptive knowledge which would inform the structure of the Assessment Center and the satisfaction that participants derived from it.

Because of this emphasis on qualitative feedback, strict principles of validity were not followed. Prediction was not a goal of this study. As was expanded upon in Chapter

Two, Assessment Centers do not lend themselves to strict validity principles in any event. The issues Assessment Centers seek to enlighten are too complex, and often too vague, to satisfy true validity standards. Nevertheless, content validity based upon a job analysis of the participants involved can be achieved. (Joiner, 1987) Those skills selected were incorporated into the exercises that were created. Content validity is present when the measure (the instruments) represent a sample of the skills needed for the job.

Reliability was built into the process by ensuring assessor training and inter-rater observation. Use of these instruments was their first test. The feedback received, hopefully, will lead to additional re-tests in the future which will increase their reliability.

The outcome was a successful assessment experience measured by the qualitative feedback on satisfaction. Further, the knowledge gained should make the experience more effective and efficient. Independent variables included the application of the instruments, the impact of the assessors on the process and the way the Assessment Centers were arranged and administered.

The methodology covered several tracks of development.

1. The development of exercises, assessment tools and instructions for the administrator, assessors, and participants.
2. Recruitment of a participant organization, job analysis, and recruitment of participants.
3. Recruitment and training of assessors, administrator.
4. Development of the site where the centers would be held.

5. Development of the feedback, instruments, and scheduling of the participant feedback sessions.
6. Scheduling and administering of the Assessment Center.

The participant population was recruited from one organization. From an original listing of 41 individuals, 30 managers ultimately participated in 3 Assessment Centers. Since 41 managers constituted the entire management staff of the agency, 30 participants represents 73% of the management of the agency. Those positions included supervisors and directors. Sixty-six percent (66%) of this population fell between 30 to 50 years of age; 93% of all participants had Master's level degrees; 80% of all participants were female. When gender and race were looked at together, white females were the most represented, at 46%. The next most numerous group were black females. Black males were the most underrepresented group in the study. Of the total group, 50% described themselves as supervisors and 50% described themselves as directors.

This group as a whole was probably not as typical as some in its motivation to attend the Center. An Assessment Center can expect to attract highly motivated participants who are keenly interested in moving their careers along or redirecting their careers into new arenas. (Wollowick & McNamara, 1969) This particular group had varying interest in the former and little interest in the latter. This difference stems from the fact that these individuals were recruited from one organization, and to some extent, had to be convinced to attend. Motivation varied according to the way individuals signed up for the Assessment Centers. Those present in the first Assessment Center showed the highest degree of motivation. Those present in the third Assessment Center showed the least. While there was ambivalence about career directions and decisions, all appeared to understand the usefulness of the experience as far as improvement of skills was concerned.

Four exercises were developed to evaluate eight skills, or dimensions, of management function. Each skill was measured at least twice and some were measured in three exercises. Three of the four exercises were simulations and one was a paper and pencil test. The development of all the instruments was the most time-consuming aspect of this study. In addition to the exercises themselves, evaluation forms for each exercise, instructions to the participants, data collection charts, assessor aids, instructions for the assessors, instructions for the administrator, scoring sheets, feedback instruments, feedback data collection forms, the feedback presentation material and Assessment Center evaluation forms all had to be coordinated into a coherent, whole methodology.

Two assessors were used over the course of a day-and-a-half Assessment Center. Limiting the time spent in the Assessment Center was a major purpose of the study, as was the consolidation of assessor functions. Both were adapted and condensed in the interests of cost containment. Explicit instructions were given to the assessors on how to conduct themselves and how to evaluate and score the participants. One assessor also functioned as the Assessment Center administrator.

Feedback was the central purpose of this study. Two types of feedback were solicited from the participants and one type of feedback was given to them. Feedback was requested from the participants in the form of evaluation of the exercises and the Assessment Center experience as a whole. This feedback was formally collected. Additional, informal feedback was received concerning the participants' feelings about the organization they worked for and some inequities they felt they had experienced. Most of this went beyond the scope of this study. Feedback was given to the participants in structured feedback sessions concerning their scores on the skills evaluated.

The task of fitting all this material into one day-and-a-half experience was difficult. The scheduling of a half-day was necessitated by the size of the second Assessment Center. Thirteen individuals was too big a group to be covered by one session, and was split into two groups. For Assessment Center Two, the group simulation exercise was given twice on the second day. Each participant, however, still had a day-and-a-half experience.

The Assessment Centers had 3 objectives. The first objective was to determine the effectiveness of this technology in identifying management training needs. The second objective was derivative of the first: to determine participant reactions and attitudes with regard to the Assessment process. The third objective was to determine the effectiveness of the technologies associated with the Assessment Center process. It was important to get feedback on the clarity of the instructions, and to know if they were understandable and comprehensive.

To make these determinations, two sources of data analysis were utilized. The primary data source was qualitative in nature. The instruments used for this purpose collected feedback data on all aspects of the Assessment Center process: on management function and skills, on managerial values, on career evaluation and advancement and, especially, comments and ratings of the exercises and other aspects of the Assessment Center experience.

Quantitative data were generated from the direct responses the participants gave to the exercises they took. Quantitative data was also generated as a result of the assessors' ratings of those participant responses. These descriptive statistics, in the form of absolute numbers, averages and percentages, give a rudimentary understanding of the participants' managerial skill levels and their abilities in expressing these skills.

Information from these databases generated information on the evaluation of the exercises, the evaluation of the exercise ratings, the assessor process, participant feedback, assessor feedback and evaluation of the overall Assessment Center process.

Major Findings

The results of this study were divided into two major categories of analysis: quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data will be summarized first. It is divided into four sections: exercise results by Assessment Center group; a comparison of assessor ratings with participant self-ratings; a comparison of assessor ratings with each other; and the final report to the agency.

1. Exercise Results By Assessment Center

In the In-Basket exercise, participants performed best in those dimensions usually identified as human service strengths: communication and supervision. They were weakest in that dimension which requires strong administrative skill, the function of control. These findings could have been anticipated. Assessment Center 2 participants scored highest in the In-Basket. This exercise requires highly rational, logical skills, and this group included the largest number of directors. Directors typically focus on more rational administrative skills. Forty-six percent (46%) of all directors in this study had been with the subject agency less than one year and may have brought these skills with them. Nevertheless, even though this group scored highest, they did only slightly better than the rest of the study group. None of the groups scored well in such skills as problem-solving, planning, and control.

The Planning exercise was considered by participants to be the hardest exercise in the Assessment Center format. Participants generally demonstrated the weakest expression of management skills in this exercise. The weakest expression occurred in the dimensions of planning and control.

The Supervision exercise began the second day of the Assessment Center and was the only paper and pencil exercise in the format. All groups did well in this exercise. This exercise generated the highest scores of all the exercises.

The Group Simulation exercise generated the second highest scores of the four exercises given. Group 2 scored highest on this exercise, while Group 1 scored lowest in this exercise as well as the In-Basket. This exercise highlighted a finding of this study concerning distribution of dimensions in all the exercises. Just as too many dimensions seem to have been included in the In-Basket exercise, too few were present in the Group Simulation. Further, the dimensions which appeared most frequently in the exercises tended to be the "rational" skills: those of problem-solving, decision-making, planning and judgment. The "nonrational" skills of leadership, communication, and supervision appear less frequently, and their expression may have been more limited.

2. Comparison of Assessor Ratings With Participant Ratings

When individual assessment scores were compared to assessor ratings, the following was indicated for each Assessment Center. The participants of Assessment Center 1 tended to rate themselves higher on all dimensions than did the assessors. The greatest divergence occurred around the dimensions of planning, leadership, and control. There was a difference of almost one full point on the leadership dimension. A large discrepan-

cy for leadership of almost one full point was demonstrated. Overall, participants rated themselves good while assessors rated them only fair. The one exception was the Supervision dimension, which showed the most compatibility between participant and assessor ratings.

Assessment Center 2 was divided into two subgroups for the purpose of this analysis: directors and managers/supervisors. The director group diverged from assessor ratings most on the planning, control, and supervision dimensions. Directors tended to rate themselves higher on the planning and control dimensions than did the assessors.

They rated themselves slightly lower on the supervision exercise than did the assessors. The greatest congruence occurred on dimensions of problem-solving, decision-making, and communication. For the dimensions of problem-solving and decision-making, assessors tended to rate the directors higher than they rated themselves. For the dimension of communication, there was a high number of identical scores.

For the supervisors group, the divergence is generally greater than that for the directors group. Further, the divergence trends toward higher individual scores than assessor scores. This is particularly true for the planning dimension, where participants scored themselves significantly higher than did the assessors.

Assessment Center 3, as a group, had the least variation in this comparison, generally speaking. However, it had the greatest tendency to rate itself higher than the assessors in most dimensions. Both assessors agreed that the participants in Assessment Center 3 were the weakest in the expression of the dimensions tested. This is particularly true of the "rational" dimensions of planning, control, and problem-solving.

For all Assessment Centers, the dimension of judgment showed the least variation between participant and assessor scores. The planning dimension showed the most divergence. Some of this divergence has to do with the way participants defined the skill. Some is the real difference between perceived skill and actual demonstration of same. While the statistics were not hard enough and the design not vigorous enough to tell us which is the case, both explanations are probably valid.

The purpose for collecting this data was to determine if understanding one's own skill has some realistic counterpart to "objective" assessment of that skill. It was anticipated that, if anything, participants would score themselves lower than assessors on these dimensions, particularly those with which they were most unfamiliar. This was not the case. Participant bias was not taken sufficiently into account, and this had repercussions on the individual feedback sessions. A great deal of disappointment was generated by the comparison of this data in the feedback sessions. Dealing with this disappointment absorbed the majority of time allotted. This heightened the stress of these sessions. Nevertheless, this approach introduced a reality-based assessment which in the long run would be the best guide to career development.

3. Comparison of Assessor Ratings With Each Other

An underlying assumption of assessor training is that pre-training would give assessors common understandings of skill definition and expression sufficient to allow for common judgments about observed behavior. The statistics seem to indicate that large discrepancies existed initially between assessors on the issue of scoring. These initial discrepancies decreased with exposure and experience with the exercises and with the

Assessment Center process itself. It would seem exposure and experience had, at least, as great an impact on assessor judgments as pre-test training did.

In the In-Basket exercise, the greatest agreement (or smallest discrepancy) between assessors occurred in the supervision and control skills. Agreement on the supervision dimension likely reflects the assessors' professional backgrounds and expertise. There was little variation in assessor background and expertise vis-à-vis this skill. The function of control lends itself to rational techniques. It is a very concrete skill to assess. The widest discrepancies occurred on the skills of judgment and decision-making.

The Planning exercise was the most stressful and frustrating for participants. It was also the most difficult exercise to assess in terms of results. The dimensions of judgment and decision-making created the greatest disagreement between the assessors, with problem-solving running a close third.

The Supervision exercise was surprising in this regard. It showed a high degree of discrepancy across all five dimensions tested. There was almost as high a degree of difference between assessor scores for supervision as there was for judgment. This occurred in spite of the fact that the Supervision exercise is a paper and pencil exam of the traditional sort where objective answers can be accepted as right or wrong.

What accounts for this result? It likely demonstrates insufficient pre-training of assessors in this exercise. It was assumed a paper and pencil test would not require the attention given to the simulation exercises. Further, it is likely that inclusion of the supervision dimension in the In-Basket exercise was not an effective choice. This exercise does not lend itself to a valid examination of this dimension.

The roles the assessors played also have to be examined. One assessor played a dual role, and in the process had greater exposure to the participants. This assessor scored participants consistently higher than the other assessor, who was only in the presence of participants for the Group Simulation exercise. This difference likely influenced the ratings.

Finally, one has to question the viability of a paper and pencil examination in this type of a format. The assessment of the skill felt flat and superficial. The dynamic character of the simulations made a paper and pencil test appear inconsequential by comparison.

The Group Simulation exercise was the only exercise where both assessors directly observed all participants at the same time. Assessor scoring was more congruent in this exercise than in the other four.

4. The Agency Report

Based upon the data collected in the above exercises, a report was generated to the sponsoring agency. Without divulging information about individual participant performance, a number of recommendations were suggested to the agency for the focus of future management training. These suggestions included training in planning, control and fiscal techniques. In addition, it was recommended that training be directed to exploration of the assumptions underlying the managerial role in a human service setting. The organization had a rather large number of directors whose skills did not appear to match the responsibilities of the position. Approximately half of these directors were recruited from the social work supervisory ranks. Most participants had many questions concerning the

roles of director and supervisor/middle manager. There appeared to be role confusion and a blurring of role definition as far as these positions were concerned.

Discussion would seem to be needed to raise these concerns and allow participants to begin to define themselves incorporating new role definitions. Leadership training was recommended. (Bailey & Grochau, 1993)

The Qualitative Data

The qualitative findings comprise the heart of the study. These findings were also divided into categories. Three categories of findings were selected. The first comprises the participant feedback on the exercises themselves; the second focuses upon the feedback concerning the way the entire process was experienced by the participants; the third concerns the feedback on the process by the assessors. The formal feedback sessions in which exercise results were shared with participants is also discussed, including discussion of its usefulness as part of the process.

1. Feedback on the Exercises

Some feedback concerned itself with the structure of the exercises. The feedback on the In-Basket exercise focused upon a few areas. The part of the exercise requiring prioritization was found to be awkward and in need of integration. Participants expressed a preference for a combination of memo and options (choices of action) together on one page. Inconsistencies in the body of the memos should be eliminated. The same is true for the evaluation forms.

Feedback indicated a need for a review of the way the dimensions were distributed within the exercises, particularly the In-Basket and the Group Simulation exercises. Distribution of dimensions across the board should be reconsidered.

As currently constructed, the Planning exercise was too demanding. It included two distinct parts, which could be approached as two distinct exercises. Further, there needed to be a better balance achieved within the whole Assessment Center, as far as exercises are concerned. In its present arrangement, day one is too "hard," and day two too "easy," according to feedback.

Participants clearly distinguished between the two separate sections of the Planning exercise. Feedback on the scheduling section was positive, while feedback on the fiscal section was negative. A good part of this negative feedback had to do with the inexperience of the participants with fiscal matters. These sections should be separated and presented as two distinct exercises. Participant ratings of this exercise would support this change.

The feedback on the Supervision exercise was interesting in that very little was forthcoming. A combination of factors could account for this. It was a paper and pencil test, and therefore a format very familiar to students and test takers. It elicited very little feeling, either positive or negative.

This exercise also incorporated those skills in which participants felt themselves to be most expert. Consequently, their feedback tended to be most self-critical in this exercise. Further, its simplicity discouraged examination. On the other hand, this exercise was very favorably rated. This rating needs to be viewed within the context of the whole

Assessment Center, particularly its position in the schedule for the second day. The first day's exercises were perceived as quite difficult. The presence of a paper and pencil test on the second day was quite welcome. This led to two findings that will require attention. First, the format for the Assessment Center should be changed and expanded. More time is required to adequately administer the dimensions listed. At least two full days and possibly three should be considered. Second, the Supervisory exercises should be rewritten to incorporate simulation. Perhaps supervision role-play could be utilized. (Cowan & Kurtz, 1976)

The Group Simulation exercise was perceived as useful, and by many, enjoyable. Some feedback indicates a preference for a group leader. There are pros and cons for this kind of a change. Given the constraints of cost, however, it was felt the leaderless group generated the most information about the dimensions being observed. Most of the problems associated with this exercise had to do with external arrangements such as the use of the assessors. A finding of this study indicated that two assessors were too few to meet the requirements of the Assessment Center format.

2. Feedback on the Assessment Center Experience

The conditions under which the Assessment Centers were conducted were not ideal. Because stress is a component part of any Assessment Center, the environmental conditions should ameliorate some of the stress experienced, ideally speaking. Cost containment would have an adverse effect in this area. Feedback indicated a need for environmental support.

Some of the feedback given concerning the Assessment Center shed light on the participants' work experience in their own agency. There was a fair amount of dissatisfied feedback about the selection and responsibilities of "Directors," and in many cases, confusion about the "role" of Directors. Whether "Director" or "Middle Manager," there appeared to be a uniform lack of exposure to any kind of fiscal responsibilities. This was identified as a major training need of this group. Delegation was another skill identified as one that should be included for training.

A major finding of this experience has been the extent to which the participation of one organization can influence the motivation and the openness of the participants. Free access to the participants was not possible. Consequently, a thorough job analysis was not possible. This surely impacted upon the accuracy of the dimensions. (Veres, et.al., 1987) Further, the problems that participants experience within the organization have a potential for dominating a simulation experience as they did for the third group of participants in the Group Simulation exercise.

For example, it became quickly apparent that the participants in Assessment Center 3 were resistant to participating. They brought anger to the opening minutes of the first session. Their anger generated from the mistaken impression that they were being forced to participate; that they had no choice. This group had delayed the longest in responding to the agency's sign-up lists, and, finally, did sign up because not to would have been perceived negatively by administration. At least, this was the overall perception. They also believed that their individual performances would be reported to the Executive Director.

In spite of the fact that every contact with this agency, in meetings with the Executive Director, in job analysis discussions with executive staff and at the general staff meeting, every effort was made to reinforce the intention that participation be voluntary and that confidentiality regarding individual performance be insured. The Executive Director had made a personal commitment to these principles.

What went wrong? The Assessment Center was delayed about one hour to discuss what had occurred. It appears that the formal, external reassurances were overwhelmed by the informal, internal communication network. The well-intentioned executive secretary passed the word that the Director expected everyone to participate. This was all that was required to jeopardize the voluntary/confidential principles of this study. This informal expression of "implied" authority easily overwhelmed the researcher's reassurances. It is not known if this was, in fact, the Director's wish, or if the secretary assumed it. Either way, the effect on staff was the same; a clear message to attend. The researcher had no knowledge of these events.

This subtle pressure apparently had not adversely affected the participants of Assessment Centers 1 and 2 because they were personally motivated and interested in experiencing this type of assessment process anyway. The participants of Assessment Center 3, however, were angered by the subtle coercion they felt and they were suspicious of the researcher. Assessment Center 3 was very nearly ruined as a consequence.

Once it was clear what was bothering this group and why, the researcher was able to correct the misperceptions of the purpose of the center and to reestablish the guarantee of confidentiality. All participants were given the option of leaving if they so wished, as

anything less than voluntary participation would have invalidated the entire experience for purposes of this study. Everyone chose to stay.

Direct interviewing of participants prior to an Assessment Center experience is essential. This did not happen in relation to this Assessment Center experience. Very little time elapsed between identification of the participants and the scheduling of the first Assessment Center. This arrangement was dictated by the use of one agency to recruit participants. Future Assessment Centers should not link these two. Recruitment should be broad-based and driven by the individual.

Further, because the study was wedded to one agency, the scheduling of the Assessment Centers to some extent reflects the needs of the agency. They needed this assessment information to help them formulate their fall training curriculum. Since this was one of the selling points of the study, this need had to be accommodated. Therefore, the feedback sessions were done all at one time after all the Centers were done. The participants would have benefited from feedback given directly after their Assessment Center experience.

In sum, when you recruit all participants from one agency, in a sense, you also recruit the internal dynamics, the culture, of the system within which they work. These cultural understandings, commonly held, are very powerful and have the potential for distorting the intentions of outside processes such as Assessment Centers. For these reasons, homogenous groups (i.e., from one organization) should be avoided.

The overall evaluation of the Assessment Center experience is consistent with the feedback on the exercises. Most particularly, the feedback recommended a reorganiza-

tion of the Assessment Center format to reflect a more equitable distribution of exercises, over a longer period of time.

3. Feedback From the Assessors

Similarly, assessor feedback supports this finding. Discrepancies in observation, scoring, and exposure to the participants indicated a need for more assessors (separate from the administrative function) with equal exposure to participants over a longer period of time.

Their feedback also indicated a need for a separation of roles. Assessors should function in that role exclusively. The combined role of administrator/assessor incorporates too many tasks to be accomplished efficiently. Further, it gives to the administrator/assessor a different perspective from the other assessor(s) working in the Assessment Center. This different perspective has the potential for disrupting the reliability of the scoring.

4. Feedback on the Feedback Sessions

Most participants found the feedback sessions helpful. However, certain changes need to be adopted as a result of the Assessment Center experience. To be most effective, feedback on scoring needs to occur immediately after each Assessment Center. This was not possible in these series of Assessment Centers. Personnel shortages and cost constraints prevented it. It needs to be remembered that once the assessors finished the Assessment Center proper, all other work had to be done on a part-time basis. That "other" work included duplicating all the materials, evaluating the work, and completing the scoring. Time was then needed for the assessors to meet together and come to

consensus on the scores for each participant in each exercise. After this, the materials had to be prepared and distributed to each participant during the feedback sessions.

Simultaneously, preparations had to be made for the next Assessment Center. It turned out not to be possible to do both in the time frame allotted, and the feedback sessions were pushed back to accommodate the Centers. Ideally, the feedback sessions should be incorporated into the body of the Assessment Centers.

Listing of Major Findings

Quantitative Findings

1. The participants scored well in those dimensions usually considered to be within the expertise of human service managers: supervision, communication, and judgment. Participants scored in the middle range and with inconsistency in the dimensions of decision-making and leadership. They registered below average scores in problem-solving, planning, and control.
2. Participants were largely unfamiliar with technology associated with action plans and management technology. They were unfamiliar with development of goals and objectives.
3. Participants had very little familiarity with the concept of control and were inexperienced in the area of accountability generally.

4. Almost all participants, and in particular the Directors in the groups, had little, if any, exposure to fiscal technique. Very few participants had an understanding of what went into a budget or the meaning of fiscal terminology.
5. Actual scores on dimensions differed from the participants' self-assessment of those same dimensions. The participants scored themselves higher on most dimensions that did assessors. More work needs to be done with participants prior to the Assessment Center to give them an understanding of the definitions of the dimensions assessed.
6. Some dimensions were not sufficiently distributed across all exercises. Too many dimensions appeared in the In-Basket exercise and too few in the Group Simulation exercise. Dimensions associated with rational skills: problem-solving, control, etc. appear more frequently than the "nonrational" dimensions of leadership, communication, and supervision. Consequently, their expression may have been limited.
7. Feedback from organization personnel indicated that the results generated to the agency did help them formulate a training plan for its employees. However, the plan was barely implemented when the agency relocated into new headquarters. The plan, apparently, was not picked up after that time.

Qualitative Findings

1. Several exercises need to be restructured and reformatted. The In-Basket exercise covers too many dimensions and needs to be more efficient and economical in its execution. The supervision exercise needs to be redone to express some aspect of

simulation both to remain consistent with the format of the rest of the Assessment Center and to create a context similar to the other exercises. There was consensus that the planning exercise should be restructured, perhaps broken down into 2 separately administered exercises: one devoted to planning and control functions, and the other to fiscal matters. Feedback indicated three of the four exercises should be rethought or amended.

2. Feedback from all sources advises that the Assessment Center as experienced is too compressed. A better time frame may be two full days, with another half-day for feedback sessions. The feedback component is particularly compromised by this present time frame.
3. In addition to lengthening the Assessment Center, feedback suggests it should be better balanced. Exercises need to be scheduled in such a way as to not drain the participants' energy and concentration on the first day.
4. Recruitment of participants should be broad-based and driven by the individual. When one agency is the source of all participants, certain issues become problematic. Access to participants may be limited or filtered through the agency's management style, which could distort information. Further, it is not possible to ensure participant motivation as separate from the organization's motivation to participate. These factors have serious consequences for job analysis, from which dimensions/skills are derived.

5. Participant feedback on their feedback sessions indicated that they were quite helpful to the participants, both in discussion of weaknesses and direction in terms of training needs.
6. More attention needs to be devoted to assessor training. Insufficient training is partially responsible for the differences noted in initial individualized scoring. Differences in exposure to the Assessment Center process also accounts for this result. If possible, assessor selection should meet certain criteria, such as compatibility of work experience and years of service.
7. The assessor role needs to be re-examined and changed. Combining the role of administrator and assessor most likely skewed the scoring, as that role had three times more exposure to participants than did the assessor role alone. The roles should be completely separated, as they are not compatible.

Discussion

This study was an adaptation of an existing technology. It was also an extension of a human service philosophy as applies to assessment with a refocusing of the outcomes on satisfaction and the potential development of managerial skills rather than a traditional focus on selection for promotion. It was expected that this "new" perspective might remove some of the artifice associated with traditional Assessment Centers because of the strain associated with knowledge that success or failure could mean a promotion. It was hoped a new focus on skills development would create a more natural process.

To a great extent this was accomplished, although not altogether successfully, because of other extraneous variables. While the removal of promotion as an outcome allowed participants to be more open and honest, the intensity of some of the exercises created a very high level of stress and anxiety, probably not quite comparable to a level stimulated by promotion possibilities, but nonetheless significant.

Some compromises were made when it came to the question of who would share the information generated by the feedback. It was hoped that minimal control would be exercised over the participants by the participating organization. It had been agreed beforehand that a non-specific, general report would be generated and shared with the agency for purposes of training development. The idea of this report generated a lot of initial fear and misunderstanding. Although the nature and context of the report were explained to all at a general meeting one month or so before the first Assessment Center, this experience did not hold up against the rumor and innuendo that followed that meeting. Unbeknownst to the researcher, the first group came to its Assessment Center believing individual results would be shared with the agency. This researcher had to correct that impression with each group as it appeared.

The agency exerted control in other small ways. The sign-up process was manipulated. Groups of friends signed up together. Although there was a request not to put supervisors and supervisees in the same Assessment Center, it happened anyway. In one instance a supervisee called to request it. This was not a major problem, as it occurred with only two sets of individuals, but it was nonetheless frustrating.

Even the way in which participants signed up ensured nonrandomness. Those who were eager for the experience signed up earliest. Everyone who did not want to attend but felt compelled to do so because the boss was watching wound up in group three.

Generally, too many of the preliminary stages of the Assessment Center experience were in the control of the agency. In future, other means must be devised to counter these agency effects or the agency should be eliminated from the process.

A major objective of an Assessment Center is to pinpoint that area where desired performance and actual performance converge. The difference between these two is the fertile ground for training curriculum development. It cannot be assumed, however, that expectations are realistic. This researcher made that assumption. It was assumed that the participants would welcome the chance to see what more they would need. In many cases, however, the participants' perception of their skill outstripped the actual performance. Rather than anticipation, disappointment was the key emotion to grapple with, and in some cases, there was anger. These emotions were expressed in the individualized feedback sessions and required quite a bit more interpersonal skill than originally anticipated.

Much Assessment Center literature focuses upon the positive benefits of the feedback process. Very few deal with this side of the issue. Consequently, little research exists concerning the stress levels associated with the feedback session. Since the feedback session is the last step in the assessment process, the feelings a participant takes away about the experience are crucial. It is easy to become demoralized.

This study could not negotiate a close fit between Assessment Center experience and feedback session. The Assessment Centers were scheduled too close together and shortage of staff time would not permit immediate feedback. The longer the distance between Assessment Center and feedback session, the harder to mitigate the effects of disappointment. Reliance on memory rather than direct experience also increases the difficulty of the feedback experience. Feedback should be delivered immediately after the Assessment Center. Participant feedback from the Assessment Center reinforced this point.

The original purpose of this study was to create an adaptation of the traditional Assessment Center which focused upon development issues. This purpose was accomplished. Although material needs to be tightened and made more efficient, the general intent was fulfilled.

Another purpose was to create the methodology in a cost efficient way. This was less convincingly accomplished. This Assessment Center was scaled down too severely. The costs of this abbreviation were evident in the feedback which notes increased levels of stress and distress. The piece of the process most affected was the assessment itself. Assessors were overwhelmed with material that could not be assessed quickly because of the part-time nature of the assessor's role. The fact that one of the two assessors was also the administrator caused distraction and contributed to a compromised reliability of the raters. The roles need to be separated and at least two full time assessors assigned to every exercise. The day-and-a-half Assessment Center needs to be extended to at least twice that time or three days. Individual feedback sessions need to occur as close to the end of the Assessment Center as the process will allow.

A third objective of this study was to generate feedback from the participants sufficient to suggest changes and improvements to the instruments and the Assessment Center process in general. This has been accomplished with a wealth of feedback on every aspect of the Assessment Center process. Finally, a fourth objective of this study was to generate some basic quantitative data as a result of the test taking. The quantitative data was unremarkable. That is, it demonstrated the expected: human service managers tended to do well in those dimensions considered the "domain" of social work, and less well in those dimensions considered rational and administrative.

These purposes were described in an evaluation question which asked if a successful assessment of human service workers could be generated utilizing Assessment Center methodology. This success was to be defined by the participant feedback. That feedback indicates a successful adaptation.

Two theoretical perspectives were identified as having an impact on this technology. Scientific management, which provided the drive to develop the technology, and the human relations theories of participatory management, which seek to give the participant some influence/control over the process. Scientific management focuses on the outcome, and humanistic theory on the means to the outcome. As was identified, one theoretical perspective sought to combine these two principles by making effectiveness a primary outcome. This equation puts worker motivation and performance on a par with product. Current theories involving Quality Management and Quality through Participation (QTP) derive from this orientation.

This Assessment Center study also sought an effectiveness outcome. This effectiveness data resided in the feedback derived as a result of this study. Overall, that feedback

supported the idea that the Assessment Center was an effective (meaningful and important) experience for the participants.

The design of this study would need to be strengthened if future research is intended. The least rigorous definition of validity was used in this study, that of content validity. As stated, content validity is inherent in the Assessment Center process when the situational exercises are developed based on a thorough job analysis. That process was somewhat compromised. Nevertheless, the actual skills/dimensions settled upon were representative of the skills present in the study population. It is understood that an instrument has content validity when the measure represents a sample of the skills present and/or needed for the job. This was the case in this study. Other validity tests did prove effective. Internal consistency was maintained from exercise to exercise.

There were also problems with reliability. The assessors' final ratings are consensus judgments. If the rater's judgments are based on a disproportionate exposure to the participants, then it cannot be assumed that their judgments are based upon similar observations. Their consensus judgment, to this extent, was compromised.

Conclusions

The major conclusions of this study derive from the participant feedback collected at the three Assessment Centers. In addition, conclusions have been drawn from feedback given by the assessors in this process.

1. Feedback on the exercises themselves was generally positive as far as the content was concerned. Recommended changes have to do with making the exercises

more effective. The major conclusion concerning the exercises is that they be distributed within the Assessment Center with an eye toward matching exercises better in terms of tasks and intensity. The Assessment Center should be longer and better balanced as far as its tensions are concerned. This pertains to dimensions as well.

2. It cannot be assumed that participants will have expectations to improve on skills they may be deficit in. Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that participants bring strong feelings about their capabilities and potential to the Assessment Center. Neither can it be assumed that participants will easily accept assessments of their capabilities which differ from their perceptions. Significant skill is required in individual feedback sessions to reassure and neutralize these perceptions so that skill information can be imparted to the participant. Assessor training should include material pertinent to the above.
3. The report generated to the agency concerning general data about the whole participant group was useful in formulating the agency's training curriculum. This was garnered through feedback from top agency personnel a couple of years after these studies were executed.
4. A major conclusion has to do with the sources of recruitment of individual participants. Problems and questions concerning participant motivation, freedom of choice and reliability of effort arose as a consequence of not being able to counter the influence of the parent agency. This is supported by participant feedback both during and after the Centers. It is suggested that participants be recruited from a varied venue.

5. It is concluded that the assessor role should be wholly separated from the administrator role. As conceived, the combined role of assessor/administrator created disproportionate exposure to participants and this may have affected scoring. Further, if possible, assessors should participate in training together and within an established training curriculum. This will minimize the problems encountered with rater reliability.
6. Individualized feedback sessions need to be scheduled close to, if not as an integral part of, the Assessment Center proper. Immediacy is critical to accurate feedback to participants.
7. It is concluded that the goal of cost efficiency was only partially successful. The format used was most likely too compact. It is believed that the time frame can be expanded and roles separated and still contain costs at acceptable levels.

It is estimated that the three Assessment Centers generated a combined cost of about \$15,000. Had these Assessment Centers been funded, the cost might have been broken out as follows:

A.	10 days of Assessment Center set-up by the administrator/assessor at \$300.00 a day	\$3,000.00
B.	4½ days of Assessment Center work at \$500.00 a day per assessor	5,500.00
C.	2 days of exercise review and individual scoring at \$300.00 a day per assessor	1,200.00
D.	1 day of discussions and decisions around final participant scores at \$300.00	600.00

E.	4 days of preparation around feedback sessions at \$300.00 for one assessor	1,200.00
F.	7 days of feedback sessions (4 individual sessions per day) at \$500.00 for one assessor	3,500.00
G.	Materials, supplies, telecommunications, recruitment, etc.	<u>1,000.00</u>
	TOTAL:	\$16,000.00

This averages out to approximately \$5,000 an Assessment Center. Each Assessment Center would have taken approximately one and a half weeks to completely administer. Thirty (30) participants were assessed.

A future Assessment Center would separate the administrator/assessor role. There would be one administrator and two assessors assessing 10 participants. The following projected costs would be:

A.	10 days of Assessment Center set-up by the administrator at \$200.00 a day	\$2,000.00
B.	2 days of Assessment Center administration at \$300.00 a day	600.00
C.	Materials, supplies, telecommunications, recruitment, etc.	1,000.00
D.	2 days of Assessment Center assessments at \$3.00 a day per assessor	1,200.00
E.	1 day of individual scoring @ \$200.00 a day per assessor	400.00
F.	1 day of discussions and decisions around combined scoring @ \$200.00 a day per assessor	400.00
G.	2 days of feedback preparation @ \$200.00 a day per assessor	800.00
H.	3 days of feedback sessions @ \$300.00 a day per assessor	<u>1,800.00</u>
	TOTAL:	\$8,200.00

This is a conservative guess and it would triple the cost of an individual Assessment Center. This is without including potential property costs. Nevertheless, it is still considerably less compared to the cost of for-profit Assessment Centers.

8. It is felt that this study reflects the theoretical propositions of Patti, et.al. Effectiveness was a primary outcome of this study.

The Assessment Center format has application and relevance today as it did 10 to 15 years ago. Its democratic and participatory characteristics place it comfortably within the arena of current technologies such as TQM. Adaptations to the methodology can make it cost efficient while delivering a powerful benefit to future social work managers.

Further research is indicated and would prove useful. It would be interesting to determine what type of adaptation would achieve the right combination of efficiency and effectiveness. A three-day Assessment Center with perhaps two assessors and one administrator, and two days of individualized feedback, might come closer to achieving that correct balance. Further, working with a totally volunteer population drawn from many venues might provide new information about assessment generally. The instruments themselves could be the source of a study in which validity and reliability could be applied more vigorously. Such data could create formal instruments that could be replicated, thereby expanding the availability of the technology for social work managers. Ultimately, this technology could become part of the training systems in agencies, and become a means by which individual managers could create leadership roles for themselves for the future.

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Appendices

1. Appendix A — Description of Assessment Center
2. Appendix B — Participant Lists/Memos
3. Appendix C — Exercises and Evaluation Forms
4. Appendix D — Administrator and Assessors' Material
5. Appendix E — Feedback Material
6. Appendix F — Pre-test Material
7. Appendix G — Agency Report and Follow-up
8. Bibliography

APPENDIX A

Appendix A

Contents

1. Description of an Assessment Center Used as a Presentation to the Agency

Social Administration Assessment Center

Introduction

The Social Administration Assessment Center has been designed to provide a systematic approach to assessing and assisting career and management development to those participants who take part.

Traditionally, the Assessment Center has been used to provide an objective, off-the-job evaluation of participants' abilities, potential, strengths and weaknesses through the observation of their managerial behavior in a variety of test and performance situations. That behavior is then rated on a number of predetermined "dimensions". Conclusions are drawn from these ratings which concern the participant's potential for certain levels of work, and, then, developmental needs are diagnosed. These conclusions are shared with the participant at the end of the Assessment Center.

Some modifications have been made to the traditional Assessment Center format largely because traditional forms have focused upon private business whose management philosophy differs somewhat from human service organizations. This Assessment Center focuses exclusively upon human service management situations and orientations.

Other changes include a shortening of the process. Traditional Assessment Centers take from three to four days to complete. This center will take one and one-half days to complete. Also, traditional Assessment Centers develop 5 to 6 exercises per center; more than half of these simulations. This center will provide four exercises, one of which is a simulation.

These are largely cost-containment changes designed to make assessment centers financially viable to human service organizations.

Lastly, this Assessment Center does not focus upon selection or promotion as do most traditional assessment centers. This Center will focus upon management and career development needs.

Dimensions

Assessment Centers rate participant behavior on a number of predetermined "dimensions". These dimensions are the key working elements of the assessment process. These generate the conclusions reached concerning potential for certain levels and types of work.

The dimensions used in this Assessment Center are:

1. Judgment

The ability to weigh facts and to arrive at decisions in an objective way. The ability to think through situations, the potential impact of decisions upon the organization and the ability to arrive at sound conclusions.

2. Problem-Solving

The ability to analyze and solve organizational problems utilizing information related to the problem, resources on behalf of solutions, and the ability to identify causes and potential consequences to problems.

3. Planning Skills

The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate work processes. The ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

4. Decision-Making Skills

The readiness to make decisions, render judgements, take actions and/or commit oneself to a course of action.

5. Leadership Skills

Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding staff toward task accomplishment. Ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility.

6. Control Skills

Ability in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

7. Communication Skills

Ability to express ideas clearly in verbal form. This includes the ability to communicate with others at all levels in the organization in an appropriate way.

8. Supervisory Skills

Skill in perceiving the impact and implications of decisions on staff and other facets of the organization (incomplete).

Exercises

Four exercises were developed to test the presence and strength of the above dimensions. Each dimension is tested with more than one exercise. In all cases, two or more dimensions are assessed within a single exercise.

The following exercises will be administered in this Center:

1. In-Basket Exercise—Participant is given in-basket memos and organizational charts and instructed to handle as many problems presented as possible in a specified time limit.
2. Planning Exercise—A two-part paper and pencil test requiring participant to handle a scheduling problem and a budgetary problem utilizing expertise in administrative systems.
3. Supervision Exercise—A two-part paper and pencil test requiring the participant to answer questions related to educational and administrative supervision.
4. Group Interaction Exercise—Simulation involving group problemsolving. Participants demonstrate communication abilities, motivation and the effects of various leadership styles on the problem-solving process.

All exercises have strict time-limits.

Assessors

A unique feature of an Assessment Center is the use of assessors. Assessors are, essentially, raters, who both score the paper and pencil exercises and act as observers during simulations. They are trained prior to the center and have, generally speaking, a uniform understanding of the criteria utilized in rating the dimensions. Behavioral observation techniques are utilized during the group simulation.

Scores

Each participant will be rated on the dimensions around which the Assessment Center is organized. Scores will be tabulated to yield an average rating for each exercise. Assessors will tabulate these prior to the end of the Assessment Center.

Feedback

Feedback sessions have been built into the end of the Assessment Center to share with participants the results of the assessor's evaluation of their work. The primary purpose of the Assessment Center is to assist individual managers in diagnosing short-term skill development needs. It is essential that participants be provided with concrete information on skill levels so that they can select developmental areas for future training.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B

Contents

1. Listing of Actual Participants in Three Assessment Centers (B2), identified by letter only.
2. Assessment Center 2: Group Simulation Exercise Groupings
3. Memos Sent to Participants Prior to the Assessment Centers

Appendix B2 — Actual Participants of Assessment Centers

Social Administration Assessment Center

Assessment Center 1July 12 and 13 (Wed./Thurs.)

Day Two of this session will be divided into two groups. Half of the group will attend the morning exercise, and half will attend the afternoon exercise.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
1.	A	Supervisor
2.	B	Supervisor
3.	C	Independent Living Coordinator
4.	D	Supervisor
5.	E	Director
6.	F	Director
7.	G	Supervisor
8.	H	Supervisor

Social Administration Assessment Center

Assessment Center 2August 16 and 17 (Wed./Thurs.)

Day Two of this session will be divided into two groups. Half of the group will attend the morning exercise, and half will attend the afternoon exercise.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
1.	I	Supervisor
2.	J	Director
3.	K	Director
4.	L	Director
5.	M	Supervisor
6.	N	Director
7.	O	Director
8.	P	Director
9.	Q	Supervisor
10.	R	Program Director
11.	S	Assistant Executive Director
12.	T	Supervisor
13.	U	Supervisor

Social Administration Assessment Center

Assessment Center 3September 6 and 7 (Wed./Thurs.)

Day Two of this session will be divided into two groups. Half of the group will attend the morning exercise, and half will attend the afternoon exercise.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
1.	V	Director
2.	W	Supervisor
3.	X	Supervisor
4.	Y	Director
5.	Z	Supervisor
6.	AA	Coordinator
7.	BB	Director
8.	CC	Supervisor
9.	DD	Supervisor

Assessment Center 2: Group Simulation Exercise GroupingsGroup I (9:00 AM - 1:00 PM)

1. I
2. T
3. Q
4. L
5. M
6. U

Group II (1:00 PM - 5:00 PM)

1. O
2. P
3. R
4. J
5. S
6. N
7. K

TO: Participants of July 12-13 Assessment Center

FROM: Jackie Starkey—Assessment Center Coordinator

RE: **Information Concerning Next Assessment Center—July 12-13**

DATE: June 29, 1989

For those attending the next scheduled Assessment Center, August 16-17, please note the following:

1. You may want to bring lunch and/or snacks with you when you attend the center. We start early on both days and the work is concentrated. There are plenty of places to eat in the 79th Street area, however I want to offer you the option. Also bring with you pens, pencils, and scratch paper.
2. Over the last two months, Hunter College School of Social Work has been having some mechanical difficulties with its air conditioning system. While I am hopeful that we will be air conditioned on the 12th and 13th, I cannot guarantee it. Dress comfortably.
3. When you enter the school on the 12th, a security person will ask you your destination. Please advise him/her that you are attending an Assessment Center session on the eighth floor. Give Harold Weissman's name as the contact person. I will also notify the front desk. We will convene in Room 803 on the 8th floor at 9:00 AM. Hunter College School of Social Work is located at 129 East 79th Street.

I am looking forward to working with you.

TO: Participants of August 16-17 Assessment Center
FROM: Jackie Starkey—Assessment Center Coordinator
RE: **Information Concerning Next Assessment Center—August 16-17**
DATE: August 3, 1989

For those attending the next scheduled Assessment Center, August 16-17, please note the following:

1. You may want to bring lunch and/or snacks with you when you attend the center. We start early on both days and the work is concentrated. There are plenty of places to eat in the 79th Street area, however I want to offer you the option. Also bring with you pens, pencils, and scratch paper.
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I am looking forward to working with you.

TO: Participants of September 13 and 14 Assessment Center

FROM: Jackie Starkey—Assessment Center Coordinator

RE: **Information Concerning Next Assessment Center, September 13 and 14**

DATE: September 5, 1989

For those attending the next scheduled Assessment Center, September 13 and 14, please note the following:

1. You may want to bring lunch and/or snacks with you when you attend the center. We start early on both days and the work is concentrated. There are plenty of places to eat in the 79th Street area, however I want to offer you the option. Also bring with you pens, pencils, and scratch paper.
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I am looking forward to working with you.

APPENDIX C

Appendix C

Contents

1. Introduction to the Assessment Center
2. The Schedule
3. The Self-Assessment Instrument
4. The In-Basket Exercise
5. The In-Basket Exercise
6. The Planning Exercise
7. The Planning Exercise Evaluation Form
8. The Supervision Exercise
9. The Supervision Exercise Evaluation Form
10. The Group Simulation Exercise
11. The Group Simulation Exercise Evaluation Form
12. The Assessment Center Evaluation Form

Social Administration Assessment Center

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Social Administration Assessment Center

Agenda
Participant Schedule
Day One

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
9:00 - 9:30 AM	Introduction to Social Administration Assessment Center
9:30 - 10:00 AM	Completion of Self-Assessment Instrument
10:00 - 10:15 AM	Break
10:15 - 10:30 AM	Introduction to In-Basket Exercise
10:30 AM - 12:15 PM	In-Basket Exercise
12:15 - 1:15 PM	Lunch
1:15 - 1:30 PM	Introduction to Planning Exercise
1:30 - 3:45 PM	Planning Exercise
3:45 - 4:00 PM	Feedback
4:00 - 4:15 PM	Wrap-up

Social Administration Assessment Center

Agenda

Participant Schedule

Day One

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<i>Morning Group:</i>	
9:00 - 9:20 AM	Introduction: Day Two
9:20 - 9:30 AM	Introduction: Supervision Exercise
9:30 - 10:15 AM	Supervision Exercise
10:15 - 10:25 AM	Exercise Evaluation
10:25 - 10:40 AM	Feedback
10:40 - 10:50 AM	Introduction: Group Discussion
10:50 AM - 12:10 PM	Group Discussion
12:10 - 12:20 PM	Exercise Evaluation
12:20 - 12:45 PM	Assessment Center Evaluation/Feedback
<i>Afternoon Group:</i>	
1:00 - 1:20 PM	Introduction: Day Two
1:20 - 1:30 PM	Introduction: Supervision Exercise
1:30 - 2:15 PM	Supervision Exercise
2:15 - 2:25 PM	Exercise Evaluation
2:25 - 2:40 PM	Feedback
2:40 - 2:50 PM	Introduction: Group Discussion
2:50 - 4:10 PM	Group Discussion
4:10 - 4:20 PM	Exercise Evaluation
4:20 - 4:45 PM	Assessment Center Evaluation/Feedback

Participant's Name: _____

SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

This instrument is designed to provide you with an opportunity to profile your career development interests and to identify those areas where more training may be needed. This instrument is divided into 6 sections: (1) demographic information; (2) educational background; (3) employment history; (4) major job responsibilities; (5) next career steps; (6) occupation satisfaction.

Your responses to these items will remain confidential. Your name will not be utilized. This assessment will take 30 minutes to complete.

Demographic Information

Please complete the following personal information.

1) Age (please check one)

less than 30 _____

3 - 40 _____

41 - 50 _____

51 - 65 _____

66 and over _____

2) Sex

male _____

female _____

3) Ethnic/Racial Background

Educational Background

4) Check Degrees obtained and identify major area of concentration

Associate _____

Bachelors _____

Masters _____

Doctorate _____

Major Concentration _____

Major Concentration _____

Major Concentration _____

Major Concentration _____

- 5) Other major areas of professional development undertaken—Postgraduate programs, special training programs, etc. Describe curriculum.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Employment History

- 6) Years With Current Employer (check one)

Less than 1 year _____

1-4 years _____

5-9 years _____

10-15 years _____

16 or more years _____

- 7) Years In Present Position (check one)

Less than 1 year _____

1-4 years _____

5-9 years _____

10-15 years _____

16 or more years _____

- 8) What is your position in the organization (TITLE) _____

- 9) Within which category does your position belong:

Direct Service _____

Supervisory/Middle Management _____

Top Management _____

Using a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest), rank yourself in the following areas:

1. Leadership Skills _____
2. Communication Skills _____
3. Planning Skills _____
4. Control Skills _____
5. Supervision Skills _____
6. Decision Making Skills _____
7. Judgment Skills _____
8. Problem Solving Skills _____

Next Career Steps

In your own estimation of your career plans, what do you see as your next step? (check one)

- A) A higher position within your present organization _____
- B) Another position of equal responsibility within another organization _____
- C) A higher position within another organization _____
- D) Other _____

Occupational Satisfaction

Rank the importance of each of the following elements for your present position:

Not Important (0)
Slightly Important (1)
Moderately Important (2)
Very Important (3)

- Job Security _____
- Leadership _____
- Geographic Location _____
- Stimulation _____
- Collegial Relationships _____

Job Recognition _____

Work Independence _____

Competition/Challenge _____

Routine/Predictable Work _____

Opportunity for Advancement _____

Other: _____

Participant's Name: _____

In-Basket Exercise

Participant Instructions: In-Basket Exercise

In front of you are the following items:

1. A set of memos plus organizational charts
2. A set of priority worksheets
3. Exercise Evaluation Form.

Do not touch any of these materials until instructed to do so. When instructed to begin, you are to proceed to go through your in-basket in whatever order and manner you deem consistent with good management practices.

For each memo in your in-basket there is a corresponding worksheet. These worksheets are currently in the same order as the memo to which they correspond in your in-basket. These worksheets include the following:

1. who sent the memo
2. to whom it was sent
3. topic of the memo
4. the date of the memo.

You have "handled" any given in-basket item when you have completed the worksheet corresponding to that item.

There are two parts of the worksheet for you to complete:

1. At the top of the priority worksheet, space is provided for you to identify the sequence in which you are "handling" the set of in-basket memoranda, i.e., if it is the first memorandum you are handling, put a "1" in the space provided; if it is the fifth memorandum you handle, put a "5" in the space, and so on.
2. The worksheet provides a fixed set of optional actions that you might take after reviewing the memoranda. You are to choose the option that you deem most appropriate, given the information available to you. The set of options provided are not exhaustive; nonetheless, you are to choose the most appropriate course of action among those provided.

It is important that you let your subordinates know exactly what you plan to do with each item in the basket, so action can be taken. When instructed to do so, begin to work through your in-basket, using the corresponding worksheets. You will find three organization charts on top of the in-basket memoranda which may be useful to you in this exercise. Do not open the stapled materials until you are instructed to do so. You will have 1 hour and 30 minutes for this exercise.

"The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished."

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation after the in-basket exercise is finished. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

J. STARKEYIn-Basket ExerciseScenario

Your name is Martelo Norte. You are Deputy Director for Community Services, Human Potential, Inc. You have just taken a week's vacation and this is your first day back, Monday, 4/12/88. You have arrived in the office at 8:30 AM, allowing yourself one hour to begin answering those issues raised in your in-basket which have accumulated during your week's absence. You are scheduled to have a 9:30 AM staff meeting to be briefed on the preceding week's activities and plan activities for the balance of the month. April 30 is the end of the fiscal year 87-88, so you expect to have an unusual amount of work in the remaining 15 working days.

Community Services Roster

Lawrence Mazlow - Associate Commissioner
Martelo Norte - Deputy Director

Ann Rieger, Secretary

Gerald Ross - Chief of Service, Residential Management

Ann Rieger, Secretary

STAFF:

Helen Standis, Team Leader, Lower Manhattan (Staff: 50)
Samuel Bernard, Team Leader, Upper Manhattan (Staff: 50)

Martha Cohn, Secretary
Alice Luz, Secretary

Wendy Kitche, Chief of Service, Casemanagement

Ann Rieger, Secretary

STAFF:

Carl Gumble, Team Leader, In Take/Family Support
Glen Hornet, Casemanager
Judy White, Casemanager
Charles Jelico, Social Worker
Stella Manor, Casemanager
Abdaul Rea, Psychologist
Cynthia Raymond, Nurse

Paula Turnell, Secretary

Monte Pastrini, Team Leader, Residential Support
George Lin, Casemanager
Richard Lincoln, Casemanager Asst.
Matilda Ramos, Casemanager
Ann Macek, Casemanager
Ida Schain, Casemanager
Luz Silva, Casemanager

Carol Bolt, Secretary

Arnold Zachery, Chief of Service, Data Management

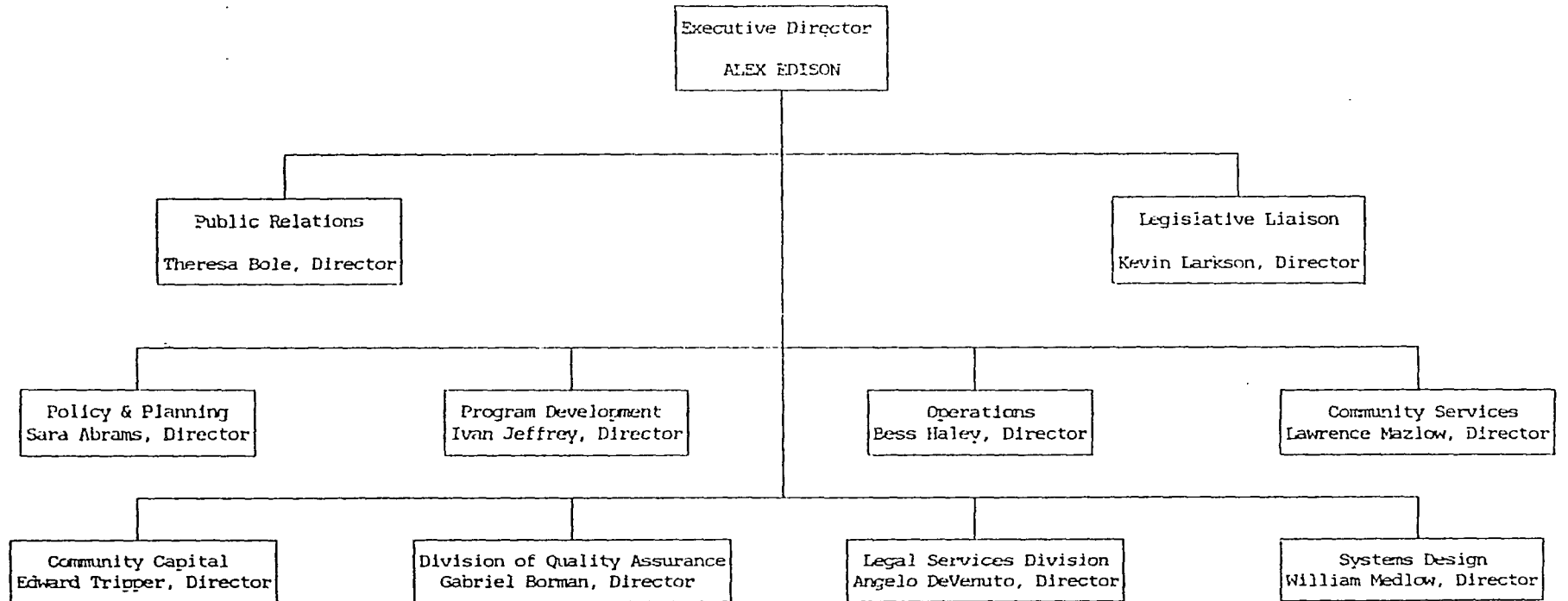
Marion Olson, Secretary

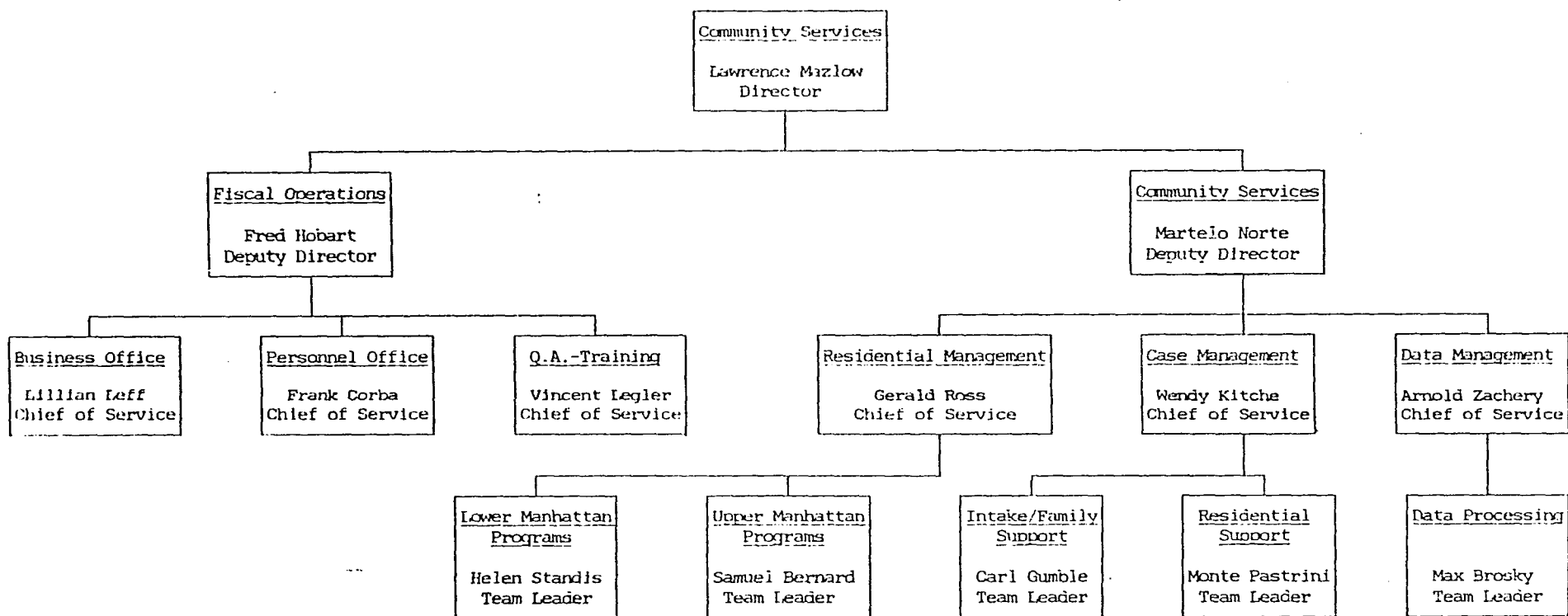
STAFF:

Max Brosky - Team Leader, Data Processing
Susan Natale - Data Processor
Freda Nasarov - Data Processor/Programming
Michael O'Neill - Key Punch Operator
Maria Lopez - Data Analysis/Programming

Marion Olson, Secretary

HUMAN POTENTIAL, INC.





MEMO (1)

TO: Zachery, Chief of Service, Data Management
FROM: Bess Haley, Director, Operations
DATE: April 9, 1988
SUBJECT: Minor Maintenance Report

A lot of pressure is coming from Tripper's office to produce that report on maintenance costs for our state-operated residential programs requested by the Legislature on 2/15/88. At our last meeting, two months ago, you indicated that your staff could develop a report that showed the current need for repairs, house by house, and the costs associated with each facility.

Is there any chance that I can get this Tuesday? I'm scheduled to meet with the legislature on this subject that morning.

cc: Norte, Deputy Director, Community Services

MEMO (2)

TO: Norte, D.D., Community Services
FROM: Kitche, Chief of Service, Casemanagement
DATE: April 9, 1988
SUBJECT: Vacation Request

I would like to request vacation leave from Monday, 4/19/88 through Friday, 4/23/88. I would return to work on Monday, 4/26/88. I have accumulated the maximum allowable vacation days, and I will start losing a day each pay period if I do not use some of my vacation time shortly.

Note: Kitche is your most valued associate.

MEMO (3)

TO: Norte, D.D., Community Services

FROM: Standis, Team Leader, Lower Manhattan Programs

DATE: April 9, 1988

SUBJECT: Work Assignment

As you know, I have received another work assignment, this time to act as coordinator for all overtime utilization. In keeping with this, I have been asked to attend a city-wide meeting on expediting the process associated with overtime use. As you know, we are consistently overrunning our allocations in this area. Mr. Mazlow has asked me to prepare some recommendations representing the Department's viewpoint. Given this assignment, I don't see much chance of our completing the overtime reports by Friday.

Please advise.

MEMO (4)

TO: Norte, D.D., Community Services
FROM: Hobart, D.D., Fiscal Operations
DATE: April 2, 1988
SUBJECT: Expenditures

Unfortunately, I must inform you again of cost overruns in your division. Your expenditures for overtime this quarter are running 30% overbudget. We have not been informed about what will be done to offset this in the balance of the fiscal year, which is a mere four weeks away.

I strongly disapprove of such irresponsible management, and I want the record to show it. No monies, no accounts are now available to you, should you be faced with a year-end deficit.

What do you intend to do about this?

cc: Alex Edison, Executive Director

Note: Hobart is known Department-wide as an alarmist about expenditures. Hobart and you have been on cool terms ever since you joined the Department. Hobart does have the ear of the Commissioner, though.

MEMO (5)

TO: M. Norte, D.D., Community Services

FROM: Samuel Bernard, Team Leader, Upper Manhattan Programs

DATE: 4/2/88

SUBJECT: Employment Status With the Department

This is to advise you that I intend to leave employment with Human Potential, Inc. effective 5/30/88. After 10 years of public service, I have decided to change careers. After the 30th, I will be joining the administration of a private, non-profit provider in Upstate New York. I appreciate your support during my association with the office and, of course, will do everything within my power to facilitate a smooth transition in personnel.

MEMO (6)

TO: M. Norte, D.D., Community Services
FROM: Gumble, Team Leader, Intake/Family Support
DATE: 4/1/88
SUBJECT: Performance Increases

As you know, I have been processing performance evaluations. The following staff under my supervision have received satisfactory evaluations and are eligible for \$800.00 increases in their salaries. Please initial each name you feel should receive an increase in pay. I need your decision within the next 10 workdays in order to process these increases for next pay period.

J. White
C. Jelico
C. Raymond
S. Manor
A. Rea

cc: Ross
Kitche

Note: You have used performance increases in the office effectively to retain your most valued employees. In the past, you have used them to keep community service salaries as much in line with what your staff could command in the private sector. At the moment you are under the gun to restrain salary increases.

MEMO (7)

TO: All Department Chiefs and Deputy Directors
FROM: Sara Abrams, Director, Policy and Planning
DATE: 4/7/88
SUBJECT: Change in Administrative Procedure

Effective immediately, Standard Operating Procedure 393 is amended in part from:

No employee may take personal leave without prior written approval of his/her immediate supervisor 3 days prior to the date requested.

An employee may take personal leave without prior written approval, but must notify supervisor at least 24 hours in advance of the date requested.

Also, personal leave time is no longer cumulative. Employees must take their 3 days within the year that they were earned. For example, any employee who has not taken personal leave for the remaining current fiscal year must do so within the remaining 30 days or lose them. This change is the result of a grievance reviewed by this Bureau, and this change has received the Commissioner's approval.

You should notify your employees immediately of this change.

Further, Budget & Fiscal have informed this Department that no additional part-time or personal help can be hired through the end of the fiscal year.

MEMO (8)

TO: L. Mazlow, Director

FROM: G. Ross/W. Kitche, Chiefs of Service

DATE: 4/10/88

SUBJECT: Turnover Problem

During the past two months, we have lost five of our most experienced staff. According to their exit interviews, the major factor in their deciding to leave H.P. was the lack of opportunity for promotion. They simply saw no place for them to go over the next several years.

Is there any way to stem this talent drain? Is "planning" looking at the problem?

Is this a problem of our two divisions alone, or are other divisions having the same problem?

MEMO (9)

TO: M. Norte, D.D., Community Services

FROM: Ann Rieger, Exec. Secretary

DATE: 4/10/88

SUBJECT: Promotion

I've been with Community Services now for just over 6 years, starting as a Grade 3 Clerk and eventually promoted to secretary. I've been in this position for just over a year. I was eligible for promotion after 12 months on my current assignment and have been told by the other administrators I work for that I would be considered for the first available position.

Why then was the senior secretary position filled by someone from another department? Why wasn't I, at least, sent on an interview for that job? Perhaps you can discuss this with Mr. Martin to find out why girls form our department, and more specifically, why I wasn't considered for the job.

CONFIDENTIAL

Norte

MEMO (10)

TO: M. Norte, Deputy Director
FROM: W. Kitche, Chief
DATE: 4/8/88
SUBJECT:

Marty:

Ann Macek has been under my administrative supervision for over two years. Up to this point her integrity has been unquestionable. Last week she submitted a voucher for my signature for expenses she claimed she incurred while attending a family care workshop in Philadelphia. Most of the expenses were for hotel and meals.

Yesterday, Monte Pastrini mentioned to me that he had overheard Ann talking to her aunt and thanking her for putting her up for the two days she was there for the conference. Monte called the hotel and they say she was never registered there.

How do you think we should handle this?

COALITION OF BLACK SOCIAL ADMINISTRATORS
(CDBSA)

Letter 1

April 13, 1988

Mr. Frank Corba, Chief
Personnel Department
Human Potential, Inc.
819 W. 38th Street
New York, New York 10083

Dear Mr. Corba,

After reading a recent newspaper article about your organization, I was shocked to find that your hiring and promotional practices are so antiquated when dealing with minority employment matters. I find it difficult to comprehend how an organization dedicated to the enablement of human beings can be so callous when it comes to personnel practices. Is it true that only one black employee occupies a position above team leader in your Manhattan office? What must the situation be outside "liberal" Manhattan in your other borough offices?

I believe that you, as personnel director, have an obligation to give this matter serious attention.

I would appreciate hearing from you and learning what your plans are, if any, to correct this situation.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Donald
Chairman

cc: Norte

MEMO (11)

TO: M. Norte
FROM: Ann Rieger
DATE: 4/12/88
SUBJECT: Scheduled Appointment

I called Mrs. Goodson (Chairperson, Women's Action Committee for Parity in Human Services) to cancel your appointment with her today. I explained that your trip came up at the last minute and couldn't be postponed. She insisted you were trying to avoid seeing her, and demanded another appointment immediately. I explained to her that I don't usually make appointments without first checking, but she was so adamant I felt I should. I checked your calendar and saw you have Thursday, the 15th at 1:00 PM open. I made an appointment for you with her at that time.

Hope I didn't cause you any problems.

Ann

Note: The second attempt at a meeting will also have to be cancelled, since you won't be in New York on the 15th. Since today is the 12th, urgent action is needed.

Memo (1) From Haley to Zachery
Subject: Minor Maintenance Report

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memorandum, I will: (check only one)

1. Telephone Haley and suggest that the meeting with the legislature be postponed.
2. Telephone Haley and ask her why she didn't direct her request through you first.
3. Ask Zachery to order his programmers to work overtime through the night to finish the report for Haley.
4. File your copy of the memo, assuming its Zachery's problem and he usually has things under control.
5. Telephone Zachery and ask him to come to your office to discuss the status of this report along with Ross.
6. Inform the Executive Director that a problem may be brewing with the legislature after tomorrow's meeting.

Brief Explanation of Choice:

Memo (2) From Kitche to Norte
Subject: Vacation Request

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (check one only)

1. Take no action on this memo.
2. Approve the request and return it to Kitche.
3. Make a note to myself to see Kitche later.
4. Put it aside and plan to discuss it with Kitche at a later date.
5. Plan to make a decision after the staff briefs me at the 9:30 AM meeting on where we stand for the rest of the month.

In my next interaction with Kitche, I will: (check only one)

1. Criticize Kitche for the short notice on vacation leave.
2. Ask Kitche to postpone vacation if at all possible because Kitche can be a big help in completing special assignments.
3. Sign the approval for vacation in case Kitche feels it cannot be postponed.
4. Direct Kitche not to take vacation time.
5. Ask Kitche to gather information and records relevant to the items in the in-basket so they will be available when Kitche starts vacation.
6. Tell Kitche I am happy she has finally decided a vacation is in order.

Memo (3) From Standis to Norte
Subject: Work Assignment, 4/9/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (check one)

1. Tell Mazlow that Standis will not be available for the meeting because of prior commitments.
2. Ask Standis how much slippage is expected in reviewing past overtime reports.
3. Ask Standis how much time will be required to formulate the Department's recommendations on the overtime process.
4. Assign the recommendation formulation and attendance at the meeting to someone else given Standis' unavailability.
5. Talk to Mazlow about what's expected to transpire at the working group meeting.
6. Note that there will be some delay in reviewing the vouchers.
7. Ask Corba who the other departments are sending to this meeting.

Brief Explanation of Your Choice:

Memo (4) From Hobart to Norte
Subject: Expenditures - 4/2/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (check only one)

1. Ignore the memo.
2. Plan to send a return memo to Fiscal Operations going "on record" that you strongly disagree with the overtime allocations you are given in the budget, reminding the bureau that you told them that the appropriation for this vital function would not be enough.
3. Prepare a detailed expense report to show how funds were expended since the beginning of the quarter.
4. You arrange a meeting with your supervisor to discuss strategy in presenting any expense information to Fiscal Operations before you do anything else.
5. Plan to prepare a formal request to increase appropriations by 50%.
6. Outline a series of staff reductions and other miscellaneous expense cuts and forward to Budget.
7. Apprise my director of the tone and content of the memo from the Fiscal Operations office and seek his guidance.

Memo (5) From Bernard to Norte
Subject: Employment Status, 4/2/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading, I will: (check only one)

1. Forward it to Personnel.
2. Set it aside for later action.
3. Plan to speak to Bernard about the resignation later in the day.
4. Call Personnel to discuss the resignation.
5. Plan to speak to Bernard about the resignation and my interest in retaining the job slot.

In interaction with Bernard, I will: (check only one)

1. Indicate my regrets about the decision to leave the Department.
2. Try to persuade Bernard to stay with the Department.
3. Ask Bernard for a recommendation for a replacement from among his staff.
4. Express my congratulations on the new career opportunity.
5. Ask that we meet sometime soon to discuss transition responsibilities.

Memo (6) From Gumble to Norte
Subject: Performance Increases, 4/1/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading, I will: (check only one)

1. Take no action for lack of information.
2. Put memo in "pending" basket to review later.
3. Initial all names.
4. Initial two names.
5. Request a meeting with Kitche to finalize the recommendations on performance increases for these people.
6. Request a meeting with Kitche and Gumble to finalize recommendations on performance increases for these people.
7. Call Kitche, review the eligible list, and sign off on persons Kitche recommends.
8. Check no names because of budget constraints.
9. Evaluate what the office can afford and instruct Kitche that on her recommendation, I will approve a fixed number of eligibles.

Brief Explanation of Choice:

Memo (7) From: Abrams to All Department Chiefs
Subject: Change in Administrative Procedures, 3/31/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (choose only one)

1. Put memo in "pending" file for action later.
2. Attach a routing slip to all employees to check off their names after reading memo, then return it to the office files.
3. Post on Bulletin Board.
4. Request additional information by asking the Personnel office how it resolved the grievance in this matter.
5. Ask for a listing of employees within my office together with the number of personal leave days they have left in the current fiscal year.
6. Ask each employee how many days he has left and whether s/he intends to take them.
7. Inform my staff that no further personal leave will be granted within the unit.
8. Ask employees to please immediately advise any planned requests for personal leave days for the remaining weeks of the fiscal year.
9. Talk to Mazlow before I do anything else.
10. Review employees' usage of personal days to assess implications for balance of FY before taking any other action.

Memo (8) From Ross/Kitche to Mazlow
Subject: Turnover Problem, 4/10/88

Priority of Memo _____

1. Make a note to include turnover problems on agenda for next staff meeting.
2. Take steps to obtain similar turnover data from other units for general information.
3. Request figures from Ross & Kitche showing the breakdown of their staff according to age, level of education, etc.

Other options:

Memo (9) From Reiger to Norte
Subject: Promotion, 4/10/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (choose only one)

1. Check available reference materials for a policy statement concerning promotions.
2. Make a note to obtain a copy of Ann's employment record to verify her eligibility for promotion.
3. Make a note to check with Personnel to see if, in fact, other secretaries also failed to be interviewed for the job.
4. Make a note to talk to his chiefs to explain why they had promised Ann the next position.
5. Refer memo back to Ann, stating you'd like to discuss it with her.

Letter (1) From J. Donald to F. Corba
Subject: Minority Promotion, 4/13/88

Priority of Letter _____

After reading the letter, I will: (choose one)

1. Write a reply to Donald with a note to Reiger to type and send out.
2. Compile figures for other agency departments Donald questioned to include in reply.
3. Make reference to the number of blacks above the mid-level supervisory level in the organization in your replay to Donald.
4. Forward letter to other departments who might be involved in this issue and request a meeting be set up to discuss.
5. Suggest to Mazlow that it might be more appropriate if he responded.
6. Delay answering until you and Corba can meet with Mazlow to discuss and especially to learn if Manhattan Office has any problems concerning blacks in management.
7. Find out what CDBSA is.

Memo (10) From Kitche to Norte
Subject: Confidential, 4/8/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (choose only one)

1. Write a memo to Kitche and Pastrini setting a time to get together to discuss this matter.
2. Ask Ann to check the files for the voucher in question to see what expenses she claimed.
3. Check personnel practices manual for policy regarding falsification of expense statements.
4. Suggest to Kitche that she confront Macek with the facts and ask for an explanation.

Memo (11) From Rieger to Norte
Subject: Scheduled Appointment, 4/12/88

Priority of Memo _____

After reading the memo, I will: (choose only one)

1. Leave a note for Rieger to call Goodson the first thing Monday morning and once again postpone the meeting.
2. Realize the sensitivity of the issue, and considering the circumstances surrounding the cancellation for a third time, leave a note for Mazlow requesting that he get in touch with Goodson to explain the reasons for having to cancel.
3. Leave a note asking Mazlow if he'd mind meeting with Goodson at 1 PM on Monday.
4. See if Kitche can meet with her.

Exercise Evaluation Form (In-Basket)

Date: _____

1. How well do you feel you handled the material in this exercise?
2. Number of items read _____ Number of items responded to _____
3. What were the most difficult decisions in the in-basket? Why?
4. Did this exercise help you to identify skills which you feel need improvement?
Yes __ No __ Don't Know __

If yes, briefly list those management skills which come to mind in the space below.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

5. Were the instructions for this exercise clear and complete?
Yes __ No __
6. If no, what suggestions might you have to improve them?
7. How could the content of the exercise be improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Participant's Name _____

Planning Exercise

Participant Instructions—Planning Exercise

This is a scheduling and problem analysis exercise. In part one of this exercise the participant is given a number of jobs which must be assigned and scheduled within a specified period of time. The completed schedule is submitted in written form.

The second part of this exercise involves a problem analysis. An organizational objective is stated and the participant is asked to complete three tasks associated with it. These tasks include a delineation of the planning process as it relates to the objective, a description of the information process associated with the objective, and a description of the implementation process associated with the objective.

The scheduling exercise includes:

1. Scenario
2. A list of tasks
3. A daily schedule

The problem analysis includes:

1. Objective
2. Budget Page
3. Fiscal Worksheet
4. The Planning Process Task
5. The Information Process Task
6. The Implementation Process Task
7. The Exercise Evaluation Form

You will have one hour to complete each section of the exercise.

"The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished."

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation form after the planning exercise is finished. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

Exercise	- Scheduling:	60 minutes
	- Problem-Solving:	60 minutes
	- Exercise Evaluation:	15 minutes

PLANNING EXERCISE I - SCHEDULING

Planning Exercise - Scheduling

This is a planning and organization/scheduling exercise. Below, you are given a number of tasks which must be assigned and scheduled within a specified time period.

The amount of time allotted to complete the scheduling exercise will be 60 minutes.

HUMAN POTENTIAL, INC.

Scenario

You are Charlene Garfield, mid-level supervisor for the Queens Office of Human Potential. Until recently, this office consisted of three (3) units whose function was to provide social work and case management services to school-age children referred by the school system. This year, Human Potential was awarded a contract to run a pilot project providing crisis intervention to families where child abuse is suspected or identified. Your organization has proposed setting up a hot-line as the conduit for crisis intervention. As a result of this funding, your unit was created to handle all hot-line interventions. Each of the 4 units in the Queens office now consists of 6 workers. Each unit is headed by a mid-level supervisor.

Of late, the calls have been coming in at a record pace. There is a general policy to respond to calls and/or requests during the working day on which they are made. However, your office has found that most calls are coming in during the evening and late-evening hours. In order to respond to the evening calls, the following procedure has been established:

- 1) Assuming no police or ambulance intervention is required (a separate procedure exists for that contingency), the hot line operator takes the call, records the time the call was received and makes a note of the problem as described by the person making the call.
- 2) At 7:30 AM every morning, Ms. Rembrandt, the Deputy Director, reviews all calls made during the previous evening. She then estimates the time (including travel time) required to accomplish each task and the number of workers who should be assigned. At 8:30 AM she calls you and dictates the information she has organized.

Ms. Rembrandt regrets that she must handle the hot line in this way. Organizational planning had assumed the hot line would be most busy from 9 to 5. It has become clear that 6 PM to 12 midnight is the busiest time. She is working on revising work schedules to cover the evening hours. However, in the interim, she insists that coverage be handled as she has stipulated above. Ms. Rembrandt is very service-oriented and has established a policy that all work resulting from hot line calls received the previous night and all calls received the previous day should be investigated by the end of the next working day. All workers must call in on completion of an assignment. Further, Human Potential is committed to respond to all allegations of abuse, even if the victim is not a child.

One of your responsibilities, then, each day, is to schedule your workers in such a way as to accomplish the work in the most efficient way possible. You are left to your own discretion as far as scheduling is concerned. You are fortunate in that each of your workers has access to an agency car, although 2 of them don't drive.

You have six (6) workers in your unit. The following is a brief description of each:

Michael Lewis - good, reliable worker, but not a good problem-solver

Joan Brinkley - very fast worker. However, her interpersonal skills are poor. She tends not to listen very well.

William Ramos - good case manager, outstanding leadership skills. He is your recommendation for the next supervisory promotion.

Chris Bingham - student - shows promise for becoming very effective and already a good problem solver. However, she's inexperienced and cannot work alone.

Steven Knight - provisional on probation - he is having difficulty with the job. His probation period will be over soon and you will have to make a decision about his continued employment.

Evelyn Walls - approaching retirement - very experienced but often slow, particularly at the end of the day - excellent interpersonal skills.

The union contract stipulates that your workers work an 8-hour day, 35-hour week. Lunch is flexible but should occur between 11:00 and 2:00 every day. Students may not work alone. The work day begins at 9:30 AM and ends at 5:30 PM.

Today is Wednesday, June 15, 1988. It is 8:30 AM. In 60 minutes your workers will arrive and you must have their daily schedules worked out for the complete day. Your secretary has just typed the list of assignments generated by Tuesday's call-ins (day and evening).

Tasks for June 15, 1988

Task
No.

1. Anonymous caller reports loud arguments coming from the next apartment. She also reports she has noticed that children seem to live in the apartment during the day, unsupervised by adults. She suspects neglect and/or abuse. Investigate. File report.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 8:37 PM (Workers: 2 Time: 3 hours)

2. Worker required to follow up on a court disposition held over from Tuesday. An experienced worker is required to testify, generally, about child abuse and the delivery of service to this population.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 2:31 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 4 hours)

3. Arrangements need to be made for placing a child with relatives on a temporary basis. Agreements were obtained from all parties concerned yesterday. Child needs to be placed with relative and appropriate counseling and assistance given to the relative.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 12:30 PM (Workers: 2 Time: 4 hours)

4. Couple called requesting assistance in dealing with a crisis which they fear might lead to abuse. Have worker arrange a meeting, today if possible. Couple have expressed an interest in meeting at the office.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 10:00 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 2 hours)

5. Call from foster parent in our system. Foster child was picked up from visit with natural parents showing signs of abuse. Scratches were noticed on child's face. Visit both homes. Investigate. File report.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 7:42 PM (Workers: 2 Time: 3 hours)

6. Several parents have called expressing interest in starting a support group which would allow them to develop control over angry and stressful impulses. Please ask worker to call these parents and arrange a support meeting, today if possible.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 1 to 4 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 3 hours)

7. Homemaker called to request a case manager accompany her to new assignment. She is unfamiliar with the dynamics in the home and unsure as to how to approach parents.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 3:17 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 4 hours)

8. Wife called requesting help with spouse abuse. She has periodically been abused by her husband. Alcoholism appears to be a factor. Wife prefers to visit office. Investigate. File report.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 11:22 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 2 hours)

9. Call from hospital-pediatric services. Child admitted in need of placement. Extreme abuse indicated. Some indication of the grandparents' willingness to accept temporary placement of child in their home. Investigate. File report.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 2:20 PM (Workers: 2 Time: 4 hours)

10. Spouse called requesting family therapy to help handle potential abuse behavior. Please do intake and refer.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 8:10 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 3 hours)

11. Education counselor called requesting a case conference on a child currently in school who is suspected of being abused. Our attendance is requested.

TIME RECEIVED: Tuesday, 2:15 PM (Workers: 1 Time: 3 hours)

Daily Schedule for Wednesday, June 16, 1988

Indicate the Task Assignment By Placing the Assigned Task Number in the Blocks below:

	9:30 - 10:30	10:30 - 11:30	11:30 - 12:30	12:30 - 1:30	1:30 - 2:30	2:30 - 3:30	3:30 - 4:30	4:30 - 5:30
M. Lewis								
J. Brinkley								
W. Ramos								
C. Bingham								
S. Knight								
E. Walls								

Tasks Carried Over to Tomorrow: _____

PLANNING EXERCISE II - PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Planning Exercise - Problem Solving

This is a planning exercise focused upon the problem-solving process. In the following, you are given three tasks related to an organizational objective.

The amount of time allotted to complete the scheduling exercise will be 60 minutes.

Objective

Ms. Rembrandt has asked you to plan a process for making a 10% cut in the 88/89 fiscal year allocation for the Johnson Office of Human Potential. Each borough office is being asked to submit a similar plan. The cut will amount to \$80,000, approximately, for your office. Next year's budget allocation for the Queens office has been set at \$800,000. However, recent cost projections estimate that your office will incur \$817,000 in expenses. This projection means a deficit next year of \$17,000, making the actual reduction required \$97,000. Rembrandt reminds you that there are some fiscal obligations the office must carry into the next fiscal year. These include administrative support, fringe benefits and telephone expenses.

Original Budget for the Johnson Office (Projected for 88/89)Personnel Salary Expenses

Administrative Personnel	\$ 55,000	
Salaries for Support and		
Direct Service Staff	533,000	
Fringe Benefits	<u>66,000</u>	
Subtotal:		\$654,000

Other Than Personnel Salaries

Administrative:

Insurance	\$ 4,000	
Audit	3,000	
Supplies	15,000	
Telephone	50,000	
Postage	2,000	
Repairs/Maintenance	2,000	
Utilities	2,000	
Incidental Allowance	500	
Administrative Support		
(Ex. rental costs)	60,000	
Client transportation	4,000	
Employee transportation	<u>4,000</u>	
Subtotal:		<u>\$146,500</u>
TOTAL:		\$800,000

The Planning Process

In the space below, in an outline format, and in as great detail as the information available to you permits, outline the steps that you would go through to plan for this audit cut from the time Ms. Rembrandt assigned the task to the time when you would have to brief her. Assume that this is Monday and Rembrandt has asked for a briefing by Thursday morning. Make your outline chronological.

The Information Process

In the space below, identify the types of information you would want to have to assist you in the task (whether or not it is being provided to you), the reasons for wanting that information and how you would use it. From who or where within the organization would you obtain the information?

The Implementation Process

Based on your review of the information available to you, identify as many options as possible for reducing administrative costs. Specify the pros and cons of each option and the implementation requirements and implications of each.

Fiscal Worksheet

Exercise Evaluation Form (Planning)

Date: _____

1. How well do you feel you handled the material in this exercise?
2. What information did you find most useful in making your plan?
3. How satisfied were you with the quality of your analysis?
4. Did anything hinder your analysis of the plan?
5. How could the content of the exercise be improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Participant's Name _____

SUPERVISION EXERCISE

Participant Instructions: Supervision

This exercise has been developed to test two distinct aspects of supervisory responsibility. The exercise is designed to evaluate:

1. Supervision focused upon providing the organizational structure and access to agency resources required to do the job. This includes dealing with organizational barriers to effective service.

This Exercise includes:

2. Questions Concerning Practical Administrative Problems
3. Questions Concerning Policy and Procedure.

The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished.

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation form, after the supervision exercise is completed. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

Exercise time: 60 minutes

Evaluation: 15 minutes

Practical Administrative Problems

- 1) You are put in charge of a small office. In order to cover the office during the lunch hour, you assign employee A to remain in the office between the hours of 12 and 1 PM. On your return to the office at 12:25 PM you notice that no one is in the office and that the phone is ringing. You are forced to postpone your 12:30 luncheon appointment and to remain in the office until 12:50 when Employee A returns to the office.

What is the best action to follow under the circumstances?

- 2) You have a group of employees working under you on a special assignment. One of them is not competent. If you show him his errors, he resents it and says you are discriminating against him. This worker needs close supervision to accomplish his work and yet resents being supervised.

What is the best solution for this problem?

- 3) As supervisor of a unit in a voluntary agency, you have just been told by a subordinate, Mrs. Gail, that another employee, Ms. Percy, deliberately violated an important rule of the agency by taking home confidential client material.

As supervisor, what would be your first course of action?

- 4) A choice has to be made between two employees in the selection of a training officer. Ms. Bench, the older of the two, is even-tempered, patient and methodical in her work. She never appears to be in a hurry and finds time to talk shop with her co-workers. She did not have the advantage of formal education and progressed to her present high position through hard work and diligent study. Mr. Bell is very intelligent and very fast. He has had considerable formal education and is quick to learn anything new. No one has to tell him how to do anything more than once. He does his work well, but seldom talks to his co-workers. He has advanced rapidly in the department, but has spoken of leaving the agency for a better-paying job.

Which employee would you appoint, and why?

Policy and Procedure

- 5) As the supervisor of a unit in a city agency, you have just been instructed to put into effect a new procedure which you know will be disliked by your subordinates. You want to call a meeting of your staff before putting the new procedure into effect.

What is your reason for calling such a meeting?

- 6) "Attempts should be made to permit supervisors to participate in the development of plans which will affect levels in the department other than their own."

Is this a desirable and/or effective policy?

- 7) No matter how elaborate a formal system of communication is in an organization, that system will always be supplemented by informal channels of communication, such as a "grapevine". Although such informal communication is not highly regarded, they are sometimes of value to organizations.

What are the chief values of informal communication?

- 8) The recommendation has been made that a departmental grievance board be set up, which would handle all employee grievances from their inception to conclusion. Comments were recruited from supervisory staff as to the validity of such a policy. Responses fell into one general position:

1. Undesirable - primarily because handling grievances is an integral part of the supervisory process and the immediate supervisor must be afforded the opportunity to deal with the situation.

What is your position on this policy?

Exercise Evaluation Form (Supervision)

Date: _____

1. Did this exercise and related materials help you specify skills which you feel need improvement?

Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____

2. List those management skills which come to mind:

3. Were the instructions for the exercise clear and complete?

Yes ____ No ____

4. What suggestions would you offer to improve them?

5. How could the content of the exercise been improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

- 1. Excellent
- 2. Good
- 3. Fair
- 4. Poor

Participant's Name _____

GROUP SIMULATION EXERCISE

A CASE STUDY

Read the case study, "A Problem of Motivation." A group discussion will follow.

A Problem of Motivation

Two years ago, a community mental health clinic hired six new employees. Under the program, the federal government paid the employees' salaries for a six-month training period, after which the agency had the option of hiring or releasing the employees based upon their performance and the recommendations of their supervisors.

John Timmons, one of the new employees, was placed in the Intake Department. Initially he was very industrious and suggested several improvements in procedures relating to his job. He exhibited a high degree of initiative and performed his duties efficiently. After about six weeks, though, Jane Banks, his supervisor, noticed that he was developing poor work habits, such as long coffee breaks, tardiness and absenteeism.

Banks felt Timmons' poor performance resulted from his association with two employees in another unit of the department. Banks arranged a meeting with Timmons and advised him of the unacceptability of his work behavior. She had received complaints from other employees that he was not carrying his share of the work. "John," she said, "generally your work has been very good but lately your job performance has not lived up to expectations. Although our standards are higher than other sections of this department, the chances for promotion and career advancement are a lot better for the hard-working employee. You can do a lot better than you have been doing!"

After the session with Banks, Timmons' work and behavior immediately improved. He volunteered to assist others whenever his own work was completed and quickly acquired the necessary skills for several other positions in the Department. He often worked as a substitute in the absence of other employees.

At the end of the training period, Banks recommended that the agency hire Timmons at the level of a Social Work Assistant 1. The quality of his work remained consistently high, and he continued to assist others willingly. Six months later, when he had completed a year with the agency, he was promoted to a Social Work Assistant 2 and assigned additional responsibilities. A bright future seemed on the horizon.

About two months later, one of the employees Timmons had been assisting resigned because of a death in her family. The announcement for the newly opened position emphasized that it was limited to employees qualified for Social Work Assistant 3. Timmons was familiar with many aspects of the position. He discussed applying for it with Banks, who advised him that even though he was the only staff member familiar with the job, his chance of being on the list of applicants supplied by the Department of Personnel was small because he had only fourteen months' experience instead of the required two years. She said he would make the list only if there were no applicants with the required experience. This was possible, though unlikely. Timmons decided to apply and hope for the best. There were several applicants with the required experience, and he did not make the list.

Timmons' attitude changed immediately. He became irritable and his relationship with other staff members deteriorated. He developed intense feelings of insecurity. Each time a new employee was hired he felt as though he might be replaced. As a result of this constant fear he developed an ulcer. In another meeting with him, Banks reassured him of his abilities, explained the steps involved in employee termination, and outlined the grievance procedures available to employees should termination occur. Initially he seemed to gain confidence and his work improved, though not to the level of his previous performance. Timmons had become confused and felt angry toward Banks for what he considered to be unwarranted encouragement.

Since Banks felt she could no longer adequately motivate Timmons, she recommended that he be transferred to another supervisor, Janice Tass. After a few weeks, Timmons' work performance and attitude improved considerably, and Tass soon considered him among the best employees she had ever supervised.

The problem in the department appeared to be solved, but Tass might be faced with the same problem as Banks. In the next four months two employees under Tass's supervision are to retire. Both positions are at the Social Work Assistant 3 level. Timmons is now qualified for both, but there are others in the agency better qualified. Even if he makes the list, there is a good possibility that he will not be selected for the position. How would the group approach and resolve this motivational problem?

QUESTIONS

Questions 1 through 6 are posed to help you formulate your thoughts concerning the problem presented. You are not required to answer them in writing nor limit your responses to the issues presented.

1. What are the problems as you understand them?

2. Was transferring Timmons the best course of action Banks could have taken?
3. Should Tass encourage Timmons to apply for a new position when the possibility of not being selected exists?
4. Was Timmons motivated?
5. What can Tass do to prevent the recurrence of the previous situation if Timmons is not selected for one of the Social Work 3 positions?
6. Do rules stating that a person must have two years' experience bear any relationship to the realities of an employee's efficiency and the needs of the organization? Should the rules be reviewed?

Exercise Evaluation Form (Group Exercise)

Date: _____

1. How satisfied were you with the group's performance?
 1. Very satisfied
 2. Satisfied
 3. Slightly dissatisfied
 4. Very dissatisfied
2. Briefly describe your own performance in the group.
 - A. How did you contribute to discussion performance?

 - B. How did you detract from discussion performance?
3. Did anything or anyone hinder your performance and make you less effective than you could have been? Explain.
4. Did this exercise help you to identify skills which you feel need improvement?
Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____
5. If yes, briefly list those management skills which come to mind in the space below:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Assessment Center Evaluation Form

Which Assessment Center exercises were most useful to you in identifying management skills that could be improved through future development? (Check those that apply):

In-Basket Exercise	_____
Planning Exercise	_____
Group Discussion Exercise	_____
Supervisory Exercise	_____

Using the scale provided, please indicate by circling the most appropriate number for your overall rating for the entire Assessment Center:

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Below, please make any comments or suggestions which you feel would be helpful in improving future Assessment Centers:

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Contents

1. Schedule
2. Administrator's Material: In-Basket Exercise
3. Assessors' Material: In-Basket Exercise
4. Administrator's Material: Planning Exercise
5. Assessors' Material: Planning Exercise
6. Administrator's Material: Supervision Exercise
7. Assessors' Material: Supervision Exercise
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9. Assessors' Material: Group Simulation Exercise

Administrator's Material

In-Basket Exercise

Administrator's Instructions - In-Basket Exercise

Determine Dimensions for this exercise.

Train assessors incorporating the following:

- A. Assessors must have an understanding of the meaning of the dimensions being observed.
- B. Assessors must understand all aspects of the problem by participating in a group discussion of possible answers.
- C. Assessors should practice completing the assessor forms.

Create the Participant and Assessor Schedules for the exercise. Provide an order of priority for memos to assessors as a guide.

Secure room and equipment.

Hand out assessor material and Exercise Evaluation Form to each assessor. Inform assessors which participants they are to evaluate. Remind assessors of time limits. Remind assessors to record the names of their assigned participants on their Assessor Report Forms.

Inform participants and assessors where and when to report for the exercise.

Assessors' Material:

In-Basket Exercise

Administration of the Exercise

- 1) Distribute Participant Instructions and In-Basket Exercise to all participants.
- 2) Advise participants of the time frames for the exercise. Reiterate that when participants are finished they are to turn over their papers and wait for further instructions.
- 3) In-Basket Procedures for Participants

In front of you are the following items:

1. A set of memos plus organizational charts
2. A set of priority worksheets
3. Exercise Evaluation Form.

Do not touch any of these materials until instructed to do so. When instructed to begin, you are to proceed to go through your in-basket in whatever order and manner you deem consistent with good management practices.

For each memo in your in-basket there is a corresponding worksheet. These worksheets are currently in the same order as the memo to which they correspond in your in-basket. These worksheets include the following:

1. who sent the memo
2. to whom it was sent
3. topic of the memo
4. the date of the memo.

You have "handled" any given in-basket item when you have completed the worksheet corresponding to that item.

There are two parts of the worksheet for you to complete:

1. At the top of the priority worksheet, space is provided for you to identify the sequence in which you are "handling" the set of in-basket memoranda, i.e., if it is the first memorandum you are handling, put a "1" in the space provided; if it is the fifth memorandum you handle, put a "5" in the space, and so on.
2. The worksheet provides a fixed set of optional actions that you might take after reviewing the memoranda, ~~from among which~~ you are to choose the option that you deem most appropriate, given the information available to you. The set of options provided are not exhaustive; nonetheless, you are to choose the most appropriate course of action among those provided.

Scenario

Say:

"For the next 1½ hours you are going to assume the role of a Director of Community Services within a human services organization called Human Potential, Inc. The following background information describes your present situation.

Your name is Martelo Norte. You have been with Human Potential since 1980. Human Potential is a human service organization with divisions in each of the five boroughs of New York City. It provides the following services: case management and mental health out-patient services; child protective services; family outreach and family support services, including homemaker services; and information and referral services.

You started as a supervisor in the Queens office and worked your way up very quickly. You served for a short time in Brooklyn as an Assistant Director and then transferred to Manhattan when the Director of Community Services position became available. This is a position and a location you very much wanted. You have served in this position for two years.

You have just taken a week's vacation and this is your first day back, Monday, 4/12/88. You have arrived in the office at 8:00 AM, allowing yourself 1½ hours to begin answering those issues raised in your in-basket which have accumulated during your week's absence. You are scheduled to have a 9:30 AM staff meeting to be briefed on the preceding week's activities and plan activities for the balance of the month. April 30 is the end of the fiscal year '87-'88, so you expect to have an unusual amount of work in the remaining 15 working days.

It is important that you let your subordinates know exactly what you plan to do with each item in the basket, so action can be taken.

When instructed to so, begin to work through your in-basket, using the corresponding worksheets. You will find ~~three organi-~~zation charts and a calendar on top of the in-basket memoranda which may be useful to you in this exercise. Do not open the materials until you are instructed to do so.

"The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished."

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation after the in-basket exercise is finished. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

4. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished.

5. When the exercise is finished, hand out Exercise Evaluation Form. Advise participant that they have 15 minutes to complete.
6. Collect the exercise and all papers used by the participants. Inform each participant that they will have a break and advise when they must return for the next exercise (assessors will evaluate the exercise during this period).
7. Provide coffee.

Assessor Instructions - In-Basket Exercise

This is an in-basket exercise simulating the managerial and administrative problems of a service manager. The participant is given a brief description of the situation surrounding the "in-basket", which contains 11 items representative of those which might come to such a manager's desk. The participant's task is to go through the materials within a specified time, determining courses of action.

The time allocated for completing the in-basket is 90 minutes. The participant report form will take another 15 minutes.

INITIAL REACTION

Your initial reaction should be based upon the following areas:

- 1) Understanding of purpose of exercise.
- 2) Execution of instructions.
- 3) Overall appearance and impact of the report.
 - neatness
 - completeness
 - brevity
 - organization
 - method of presentation (point by point, pros and cons, etc.)
 - credibility of proposal and rationale
 - use of substantiating data
 - tone
 - grammar/vocabulary
- 4) Extent of use of data available to participant.

Forms

Forms are provided to enable assessors to record their evaluation of participant performance. An Exercise Evaluation Form, which is a participant's evaluation of the exercise he or she has just completed, will provide the assessor with insights into how each participant views his or her own performance. Assessors will review the exercise immediately following its administration.

Each assessor will review/score 3 participants.

Assessors will receive the following materials:

1. Assessor Instructions (In-Basket)
2. Steps For In-Basket
3. Instructions to Participants (Samples)

4. In-Basket Summary Form
5. Explanation of Dimensions
6. Instructions for Dimensions
7. Assessor Dimension Guide (In-Basket Exercise)
8. 5 Dimensions to Score
9. Scoring/Exercise Score
10. Assessor Summary Form
11. Exercise/Dimension Sheet
12. Exercise Evaluation Form (In-Basket)

Steps For In-Basket Exercise

1. Receive the completed in-basket.
2. Study the general organization of the in-basket and make note of what you see.
 - A. Are related items grouped together?
 - B. Are all items still in the same order the participant received them?
3. Leave the items exactly as the participant has them and complete the In-Basket Priority Summary Form item by item. You will have to do these in the order you find them, not in the order you find them on the Summary Form.
4. Compare the actions taken on each item to the possible courses of action listed on your guide sheet. Compare these to the ones that the assessors have determined to be the most acceptable answers.
5. Enter general comments at the bottom of the In-Basket Priority Summary Forms.
6. This data will inform your judgment when scoring the dimension.
7. Read material on dimensions.
8. Judge each dimension and score.
9. Decide upon overall score for exercise and fill out Assessor Summary Form.
10. Transfer to Exercise/Dimension sheet.

Suggested Course of Action on Memos

Memo 1 - 5
6
1

Memo 2 - 5
(Part I) 3
2

Memo 3 - 5
3
4

Memo 4 - 3
6
2

Memo 5 - 3
(Part I) 5

Memo 6 - 6
7
9

Memo 7 - 2
8
11

Memo 2 - 5
(Part II) 3
2

Memo 5 - 4
(Part II) 5

Memo 8 - 1

Memo 9 - 5
2
3

Memo 10 - 4
1
2

Letter 1 - 6
1
3

Memo 11 - 2
4
1

Numbers correspond to the three best choices to each memo. The first number represents the best choice.

Suggested Memo Priority

4	]	Highest Priority Group 1
6		
8		
L1		

3	]	High Priority Group 2
10		
7		
9		

2	]	Average Priority Group 3
1		
5		
11		

In-Basket Summary Form

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Participant's Order of Memo Priority												
Assessor's Order of Memo Priority												
Participant's Choice of Action												
Assessor's Choice of Action												
A S C S O E M S M S E O N R T ' S S												

Participant Instructions: In-Basket Exercise

In front of you are the following items:

1. A set of memos plus organizational charts/calendar
2. A set of priority worksheets
3. Exercise Evaluation Form.

Do not touch any of these materials until instructed to do so. When instructed to begin, you are to proceed to go through your in-basket in whatever order and manner you deem consistent with good management practices.

For each memo in your in-basket there is a corresponding worksheet. These worksheets are currently in the same order as the memo to which they correspond in your in-basket. These worksheets include the following:

1. who sent the memo
2. to whom it was sent
3. topic of the memo
4. the date of the memo.

You have "handled" any given in-basket item when you have completed the worksheet corresponding to that item.

There are two parts of the worksheet for you to complete:

1. At the top of the priority worksheet, space is provided for you to identify the sequence in which you are "handling" the set of in-basket memoranda, i.e., if it is the first memorandum you are handling, put a "1" in the space provided; if it is the fifth memorandum you handle, put a "5" in the space, and so on.
2. The worksheet provides a fixed set of optional actions that you might take after reviewing the memoranda, from among which you are to choose the option that you deem most appropriate, given the information available to you. The set of options provided are not exhaustive; nonetheless, you are to choose the most appropriate course of action among those provided.

It is important that you let your subordinates know exactly what you plan to do with each item in the basket, so action can be taken.

When instructed to so, begin to work through your in-basket, using the corresponding worksheets. You will find three organization charts and a calendar on top of the in-basket memoranda which may be useful to you in this exercise. Do not open the stapled materials until you are instructed to do so. You will have 1 hour and 30 minutes for this exercise.

"The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished."

Time

This exercise is scheduled to take 1½ hours. An additional 15 minutes will be allotted to complete the Exercise Evaluation Form.

Dimensions (Skills)

Three factors are considered when discussing dimensions. These are:

1. Functions
2. Dimensions
3. Exercises

Generally speaking, functions reflect the actual work typically encountered by managers in the workplace. Dimensions reflect the skills required to perform these functions. Assessment Center exercises test the skills/dimensions in question. Consequently, exercises must closely simulate management functions. The closer the exercises mimic actual functions, the more accurate the assessment will be concerning skills/dimensions. I will, therefore, discuss these three factors together.

I have settled upon 5 managerial/administrative functions which I feel reflect typical human service operations.

1. Planning Activities - as demonstrated at midlevel and/or upper level management positions. Those activities which center upon goal planning and the setting of objectives, and the prioritization and allocation of resources. Those activities which encompass scheduling and delegation of staff tasks and priorities.
2. Administrative Activities - as demonstrated by the knowledge and experience that midlevel managers bring to basic day-to-day operations within the human service organization.
3. Group Interactions - as demonstrated by the amount of time devoted in organizations to interpersonal interaction within the context of meetings, conferences, interviews and training.
4. Supervision Activities - as demonstrated in the amount of time and energy, even on the part of top level administrators, dedicated to direct and indirect supervision of human service staff (refer to R. Patti study).
5. Leadership Activities - as demonstrated in lending direction, motivation and consolidation to organizational activities.

Dimensions

As mentioned above, associated with each of these management functions are sets of dimensions (skills). The skills I find relevant to these functions are as follows:

1. Judgement

The ability to weigh facts and to arrive at decisions in an objective way. The ability to think through situations, the potential impact of decisions upon the organization and the ability to arrive at sound conclusions.

2. Problem-Solving

The ability to analyze and solve organizational problems utilizing information related to the problem, resources on behalf of solutions, and the ability to identify causes and potential consequences to problems.

3. Planning Skills

The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate work processes. The ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

4. Decision-Making Skills

The readiness to make decisions, render judgements, take actions and/or commit oneself to a course of action.

5. Leadership Skills

Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding staff toward task accomplishment. Ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility.

6. Control Skills

Ability in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

7. Communication Skills

Ability to express ideas clearly in verbal form. This includes the ability to communicate with others at all levels in the organization in an appropriate way.

8. Supervisory Skills

Skill in perceiving the impact and implications of decisions on staff and other facets of the organization (incomplete).

Exercises

Four exercises are proposed which emulate the functions mentioned.

<u>Exercises</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Dimensions (Skills)</u>
1. In-Basket	Administrative activities Planning activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control, Supervision
2. Planning	Planning activities Administrative activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control
3. Group Simulation	Group interaction Leadership	Problem-solving, Leadership, Communication
4. Supervision	Supervision Leadership	Judgement, Decision-making, Leadership, Communication skills, Supervision skills

If we look at these exercises as they reflect the dimensions measured, we can see which exercises test which dimensions:

Exercises

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Simulation</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Judgement	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	X
Supervision Skills	X			X

Instructions for Dimensions

1. Read the definition for each dimension.
2. Read each of the questions related to the dimensions. Get a feel for what behaviors you are looking for in relation to this dimension.
3. As you complete each section of the report, assign a score for each dimension before you move to the next.
4. Record your comments under the questions listed for each dimension.
5. Be sure to record enough of the behaviors that you noted to justify the score you have given. Remember to include specific examples and/or statements that support your conclusions.
6. Record these comments/behaviors on the assessor summary form. Be sure to relate them to the dimensions you are looking for.

Common errors made in evaluating a written in-basket:

- a. The assessor should guard against giving the participant a poor rating on certain items because the participant handled the item differently than the assessor would. Only the quality of the decision, not the style, should be questioned, except in the case of determining effective leadership.
- b. Poor writing or grammar should be noted but should not be allowed to bias the in-basket interpretation by affecting observations of judgment, delegation, etc.
- c. A particularly good (or poor) job in one or several portions of the in-basket should not bias the assessor's evaluation of other portions.

Assessor Dimension Guide

This exercise will demonstrate a range of expertise along six dimensions. These are: judgment, problem-solving, planning skills, decision making, and control. A series of questions is presented with each dimension to give the assessor some parameters and direction concerning participant responses. Space is provided beneath each question for assessor comments. A definition for each dimension is provided.

The dimensions tested will be:

- Judgment
- Problem-Solving
- Planning
- Decision-Making
- Control
- Supervision

In-Basket Exercise: Dimensions 1 - Judgment

Judgment: The ability to weigh facts, and to arrive at decisions in an objective manner. The ability to think through situations, potential consequences of decisions and arrive at sound or logical conclusions.

Is the final decision consistent and logical within the framework of information he/she considered?

Does the participant consider the impact upon other individuals and the organization in his/her decisions?

Is the final decision consistent and logical within the framework of information she/he considered?

Does the participant consider staff feelings and morale?

Is there an attempt to include the ideas of others or at least deal with others in order to arrive at an effective solution?

Score: ____

In-Basket Exercise: Dimension 2 - Problem-Solving

Problem-Solving: The ability to analyze problems offering varied sources of information. The ability to sort out information related to a problem, identify consequences to possible solutions, and to identify possible causes of problems, and implement same.

Does participant do what is requested?

What kind of notes does the participant make related to all the information? (This will give some hint to his/her thinking.)

Has participant analyzed the pros and cons of each alternative?

Has the participant taken into consideration political pressure and personal biases?

Score: _____

In-Basket Exercise: Dimension 3 - Planning

Planning: The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate follow-up or control systems on work processes. The ability to efficiently establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

Reads instructions?

Underlines important facts, makes notes, etc. at beginning of exercise?

Determines plans of action at beginning of exercise during first few minutes (at least in notes)?

Finishes on time without evidence of not having enough time?

Score: _____

In-Basket Exercise: Dimension 4 - Decision-Making

Decision-Making: Readiness to make decisions, render judgments,
take actions or commit oneself.

Does participant make a decision(s)?

Are participant's choices positive and to the point, or hesitant
and unsure?

Does participant demonstrate a willingness to make decisions even
though others unclear and/or unwilling to decide?

Score: _____

In-Basket Exercise: Dimension 5 - Control

Control: Skill in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates.
Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

Indicates follow-up systems to assure corrective actions.

Indicates confirming actions in writing.

Proposes establishment of control and monitoring systems.

Indicates concern for how individuals will implement system.

Score: _____

In-Basket Exercise: Dimensions 6 — Supervision

Supervision: Ability to organize and present material/ feelings in a convincing manner.

1. Does participant attempt to elicit discussion from subordinates?
2. Are subordinates encouraged to contribute ideas and suggestions for better productivity?
3. Are attempts made to obtain or utilize information from others to define and help decision-making?
4. How well does the participant delegate work?

Score: ____

Scoring

This exercise, as the others, is based upon a four-point (1-4) scale. Four (4) is the highest score attainable on a particular dimension and one (1) is the lowest score attainable.

(4) is designated when assessors note a clear and consistent demonstration of response associated with a particular dimension.

(3) is designated when assessors note a majority of clear and consistent responses associated with a particular dimension.

(2) is designated when assessors note neither a clear nor consistent pattern associated with a particular dimension. (This score indicates that there was no evidence of positive or negative demonstration of a particular dimension.) (Not clear?)

(1) is designated when assessors note an absence or negative responses associated with a particular dimension.

Using this system, review each dimension by responding to the items asked. If you have seen enough of one dimension to rate it, go ahead and mark down your preliminary score.

Exercise Score

Fill out overall summary in narrative form.

After all dimensions are scored individually, the average score for the exercise will be recorded on the Assessor Summary Form. Since this score will represent the average for all dimensions assessed in this exercise, arriving at a precise 1, 2, 3 or 4 is unlikely. Generally, a high rating falls between 3 and 4, an average rating between 2 and 3 and a low rating of 1 to 2.

Assessor Summary Form

Assessor Name: _____

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Overall Summary

Please summarize the participant's overall performance in this exercise. State strengths, weaknesses and activities meriting special mention. Be as brief as possible, yet still specific enough that other assessors reading this summary would have a good understanding of the participant's performance.

In-Basket Exercise Score: _____

Participant's Name _____

Exercise/Dimension Sheet

DIMENSIONS

E X E R C I S E S		Judgment	Problem- Solving	Planning	Decision Making	Leader- ship	Control	Communi- cation	Super- vision
	In-Basket								
	Planning								
	Supervision								
	Group Process								

Exercise Evaluation Form (In-Basket)

Date: _____

1. How well do you feel you handled the material in this exercise?

2. Number of items read _____ Number of items responded to _____

3. What were the most difficult decisions in the in-basket? Why?

4. What would be your priorities on assuming this position?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Why?

5. Did this exercise help you to identify skills which you feel need improvement?

Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____

If yes, briefly list those management skills which come to mind in the space below.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

6. Were the instructions for this exercise clear and complete?

Yes _____ No _____

7. If no, what suggestions might you have to improve them?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

8. How could the content of the exercise be improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

1. Excellent

2. Good

3. Fair

4. Poor

Administrator's Materials:

Planning Exercise

Administrator's Instructions: Planning Exercise

Determine Dimensions for this exercise.

Train assessors incorporating the following:

- A. Assessors must have an understanding of the meaning of the dimensions being observed.
- B. Assessors must understand all aspects of the problem by participating in a group discussion of possible answers.
- C. Assessors should practice completing the assessor forms.

Create the Participant and Assessor Schedules for the exercise.

Secure rooms and equipment.

Hand out assessor material and Exercise Evaluation Form to each assessor. Inform assessors which participants they are to evaluate. Remind assessors of time limits. Remind assessors to record the names of their assigned participants on their Assessor Report Forms.

Inform participants and assessors where and when to report for the exercise.

Administration of the Exercise

1. Distribute Participant Instructions and Planning Exercise to all participants.
2. Advise participants of the time frames for the exercise. Reiterate that when participants are finished they are to turn over their papers and wait for further instruction.
3. Planning Exercise Procedures for Participants

Say:

In front of you are the following items:

1. Two planning exercises - one on scheduling and one on problem analysis
2. Fiscal worksheet
3. Exercise Evaluation Form.

The fiscal worksheet is included for your use in the problem analysis portion of the exercise. It is there for your

convenience. You are not required to use it. Do all other written work directly on the exercise pages.

Do not look at any of these materials until instructed to do so.

This exercise comes in two parts. The scheduling portion presents a number of tasks which must be assigned and scheduled within a specified time period.

The amount of time allotted to complete the scheduling exercise will be 50 minutes.

The second portion of the planning exercise focuses upon the problem-solving process. In the following, you are given three tasks related to an organizational objective. These tasks include:

1. A section on the planning process
2. The information process
3. The implementation process.

This portion is allotted 50 minutes for completion.

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation at the conclusion of the exercise. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

"The time is now _____. By _____ you should have your exercise finished."

4. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished.
5. When the exercise is finished, hand out Exercise Evaluation Form. Advise participants that they have 15 minutes to complete.

Collect the exercise and all papers used by the participants.

6. Inform each participant that they will have a 20-minute break and advise when they must return for the next exercise. (Assessors will evaluate the exercise during this period.)
7. Provide coffee.

Assessor's Name _____

Assessor's Material:

Planning Exercise

Assessors' Instructions: Planning Exercise

This is a planning and scheduling exercise. It will be a paper and pencil exercise. The participant, in the role of a unit supervisor, is given a number of tasks which must be assigned and scheduled to each of his or her workers within a specified period of time. The completed schedule is submitted in written form. Part II of this exercise also attempts to measure planning ability from a fiscal perspective.

The assessor reviews the exercise using the guidelines furnished in the section. (Please see the explanation on dimensions which follows.)

Forms

Forms are provided to enable assessors to record their evaluation of participant performance. An Exercise Evaluation Form, which is a participant's evaluation of the exercise he or she has just completed, will provide the assessor with insights into how each participant views his or her own performance. Assessors will review the exercise immediately following its administration. Each assessor will evaluate 3 participants.

Assessors will receive the following material:

1. Assessor Instructions (Planning Exercise)
2. Steps in Planning Exercise
3. Instructions to Participants (Planning Exercise)
4. Planning Behavior List
5. Planning Process Evaluation
6. Explanation of Dimensions
7. Instructions for Dimensions
8. Assessor Dimension Guide (Planning Exercise)
9. 5 Dimensions
10. Scoring/Exercise Scoring
11. Assessor Summary Form
12. Exercise/Dimension Sheet
13. Exercise Evaluation Form (Planning Exercise)

Steps in Planning Exercise

1. Receive the completed Planning Exercise.
2. Evaluate the exercise in each of its two parts.
 - A. Scheduling - Evaluate the scheduling exercise against the behavior list provided. Also evaluate against good management principle including these judgments in the comments section of the form.
 - B. Score this part.
 - C. Planning Process - Evaluate this section using the materials provided on managerial roles and general planning procedures.
 - D. Score this part.
3. This data will inform your judgment when scoring the dimensions from this exercise.
4. Read material on dimensions.
5. Judge each dimension and score.
6. Decide upon overall score for exercise and fill out Assessor Summary Form.
7. Transfer to Exercise/Dimension Sheet.

Participant Instructions - Planning Exercise

This is a scheduling and problem analysis exercise. In part one of this exercise, the participant is given a number of jobs which must be assigned and scheduled within a specified period of time. The completed schedule is submitted in written form.

The second part of this exercise involves a problem analysis. An organizational objective is stated and the participant is asked to complete three tasks associated with it. These tasks include a delineation of the planning process as it relates to the objective, a description of the information process associated with the objective, and a description of the implementation process associated with the objective.

The scheduling exercise includes:

1. Scenario
2. A list of tasks
3. A daily schedule.

The problem analysis includes:

1. Objective
2. Budget Page
3. Fiscal Worksheet
4. The Planning Process Task
5. The Information Process Task
6. The Implementation Process Task.

You will have one hour to complete each section of the exercise.

"The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished."

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation form after the planning exercise is finished. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

Exercise - Scheduling	- 60 minutes
- Problem-Solving	- 60 minutes
- Exercise Evaluation	- 15 minutes

Time

This exercise is scheduled to take 1 hour and 40 minutes for the participant to complete, plus 15 additional minutes to complete the exercise evaluation form.

Planning Behavior List

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Decided which items were most important and assigned staff to those first.	_____	_____
2. Used poor judgment as to who she should assign to what projects.	_____	_____
3. Wasn't very decisive.	_____	_____
4. Adhered to Supervisor's directives regarding the schedule whenever possible.	_____	_____
5. Got lost in detail and didn't finish the exercise.	_____	_____
6. Scheduled self to assist new workers on the difficult assignments.	_____	_____
7. Acted on all items.	_____	_____
8. Delegated scheduling responsibility to subordinate.	_____	_____
9. Discussed assignments with workers where possible.	_____	_____

Comments:

Score: _____

Planning Process Evaluation

Based on the demonstration of skill in certain managerial roles as outlined by Mintzberg.

Informational Roles

1. Monitor - receives and collects information enabling manager to develop a thorough understanding of his/her organization.

Activities: processing information
analyzing information
development of ideas

2. Disseminator - transmits special information into her/his organization.

Activities: transmitting factual information
transmitting value statements
delegation

Decisional Roles

3. Entrepreneur - initiates change.

Activities: initiation
delegation
supervision
planning
designing

4. Disturbance Handler - taking charge when his/her organization is threatened.

Activities: conflict management
resource management
problem-solving

5. Resource Allocator - decides where organization will expend its efforts.

Activities: scheduling of time
programming of work
authorizing actions (decisions)

Did the exercise material reference to and demonstration of the above roles/skills?

Score: _____

Sample Schedule

Staff	9:30- 10:30 AM	10:30- 11:30	11:30- 12:30	12:30- 1:30	1:30- 2:30	2:30- 3:30	3:30- 4:30	4:30- 5:30 PM
Lewis	4*	4		5	5	5	5	5
Brinkley	3	3	3	3		7	7	7
Ramos	1	1	1		9	9	9	9
Bingham	1	1	1		9	9	9	9
Knight	3	3	3	3		8	8	
Walls	2	2	2	2		10	10	10

* Task numbers

Tasks postponed: 6
11

Suggested Priority of Planning TasksTask #

1	suspected abuse	}	High Priority
5	suspected abuse		
9	suspected abuse		
2	court disposition	}	Medium Priority
3	placement		
4	counseling request (serious)		
8	counseling spouse abuse		
10	family therapy request		
6	Support Group	}	Relatively low Priority. If need be can be postponed.
7	Site visit		
11	Case Conference		

Dimensions (Skills)

Three factors are considered when discussing dimensions. These are:

1. Functions
2. Dimensions
3. Exercises

Generally speaking, functions reflect the actual work typically encountered by managers in the workplace. Dimensions reflect the skills required to perform these functions. Assessment Center exercises test the skills/dimensions in question. Consequently, exercises must closely simulate management functions. The closer the exercises mimic actual functions, the more accurate the assessment will be concerning skills/dimensions. I will, therefore, discuss these three factors together.

I have settled upon 5 managerial/administrative functions which I feel reflect typical human service operations.

1. Planning Activities - as demonstrated at midlevel and/or upper level management positions. Those activities which center upon goal planning and the setting of objectives, and the prioritization and allocation of resources. Those activities which encompass scheduling and delegation of staff tasks and priorities.
2. Administrative Activities - as demonstrated by the knowledge and experience that midlevel managers bring to basic day-to-day operations within the human service organization.
3. Group Interactions - as demonstrated by the amount of time devoted in organizations to interpersonal interaction within the context of meetings, conferences, interviews and training.
4. Supervision Activities - as demonstrated in the amount of time and energy, even on the part of top level administrators, dedicated to direct and indirect supervision of human service staff (refer to R. Patti study).
5. Leadership Activities - as demonstrated in lending direction, motivation and consolidation to organizational activities.

Dimensions

As mentioned above, associated with each of these management functions are sets of dimensions (skills). The skills I find relevant to these functions are as follows:

Exercises

Four exercises are proposed which emulate the functions mentioned.

<u>Exercises</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Dimensions (Skills)</u>
1. In-Basket	Administrative activities Planning activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control, Supervision
2. Planning	Planning activities Administrative activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control
3. Group Simulation	Group interaction Leadership	Problem-solving, Leadership, Communication
4. Supervision	Supervision Leadership	Judgement, Decision-making, Leadership, Communication skills, Supervision skills

If we look at these exercises as they reflect the dimensions measured, we can see which exercises test which dimensions:

Exercises

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Simulation</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Judgement	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	X
Supervision Skills	X			X

Instructions for Dimensions

For each of the following dimensions:

1. Read the definition for each dimension.
2. Read each of the questions related to the dimension. Get a feel for what behaviors you are looking for in relation to this dimension.
3. Record your comments under the questions listed for each dimension.
4. Record these comments/behaviors on the assessor summary form. be sure to relate them to the dimensions you are looking for.
5. Be sure to record enough of the behaviors that you noted to justify the score you have given. Remember to include specific examples and/or statements that support your conclusions.
6. Record these comments/behaviors on the assessor summary form. be sure to relate them to the dimensions you are looking for.

Assessor Dimension Guide: Planning Exercise

This exercise will demonstrate a range of expertise along five dimensions. These are: judgment, problem-solving, planning skills, decision making and control. A series of questions is presented with each dimension to give the assessor some parameters and direction concerning participant responses. Space is provided beneath each question for assessor comments. A definition for each dimension is provided.

The dimensions tested will be:

- Judgment
- Problem-Solving
- Decision Making
- Planning
- Control

Planning Exercise: Dimension 1 - Judgment

Judgment: The ability to weigh facts, and to arrive at decisions in an objective manner. The ability to think through situations, potential consequences of decisions and arrive at sound or logical conclusions.

1. What actions did the participant propose based upon her/his perception of each situation?
2. Did the participant propose any risks in making and not making assignments?
3. Were they well-calculated risks based upon facts and data?
4. Did the participant recommend any innovations?
5. Would they be successful?
6. Were the decisions associated with the prioritization of the telephone calls sound?

Score: _____

Planning Exercise: Dimension 2 - Problem Solving

Problem-Solving The ability to analyze problems offering varied sources of information. Ability to sort out information related to a problem, identify consequences to possible solutions, and to identify possible causes of problems, implement same.

1. Did the participant understand the instructions?

2. Did the participant demonstrate and understanding of:
 - A. The capacity of their staff?

 - B. On-the-job seniority?

 - C. The expectations of the organization?

 - D. The limitations of any schedule?

 - E. The supervisor's role?

Score: _____

Planning Exercise: Dimension 3 - Decision Making

Decision Making: Readiness to make decisions, render judgments,
 take actions or commit oneself.

1. How quickly did the participant begin making decisions?

2. Were all items acted upon?

3. Is the schedule reasonable and/or persuasive?

4. What was left undone?

5. Was the fiscal decision making adequate?

Score: _____

Planning Exercise: Dimension 4 - Planning

Planning Skills: The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate follow-up on work processes. The ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

1. Did the participant organize the schedule utilizing a discernable plan or did he/she begin with the first worker and/or assignment and go down the list?
2. Were outlines, employee profile charts or other management devices used to help organize the schedule?
3. Did there appear to be an overall format to the schedule or did it appear haphazard?
4. Were tasks prioritized?
5. Did participant plan to speak to any workers prior to scheduling?
6. After scheduling?
7. Was there evidence of appropriate use of supervisor time?

Score: _____

Planning Exercise: Dimension 5 - Control

Control: Skill in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) work processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

1. Was there evidence of time allotted to monitor the schedule?

2. Did the participant schedule his or her time to appear at a critical assignment and/or provide assistance?

3. Was there evidence of some mechanism to evaluate the work in meeting daily goals?

Score: _____

Scoring

This exercise, as the others, is based upon a four-point (1-4) scale. Four (4) is the highest score attainable on a particular dimension and one (1) is the lowest score attainable.

(4) is designated when assessors note a clear and consistent demonstration of response associated with a particular dimension.

(3) is designated when assessors note a majority of clear and consistent responses associated with a particular dimension.

(2) is designated when assessors note neither a clear nor consistent pattern associated with a particular dimension. (This score indicates that there was no evidence of positive or negative demonstration of a particular dimension.) (Not clear?)

(1) is designated when assessors note an absence or negative responses associated with a particular dimension.

Using this system, review each dimension by responding to the items asked. If you have seen enough of one dimension to rate it, go ahead and mark down your preliminary score.

Exercise Score

Fill out overall summary in narrative form.

After all dimensions are scored individually, the average score for the exercise will be recorded on the Assessor Summary Form. Since this score will represent the average for all dimensions assessed in this exercise, arriving at a precise 1, 2, 3 or 4 is unlikely. Generally, a high rating falls between 3 and 4, an average rating between 2 and 3 and a low rating of 1 to 2.

Assessor Summary Form

Assessor Name: _____

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Overall Summary

Please summarize the participant's overall performance in this exercise. State strengths, weaknesses and activities meriting special mention. Be as brief as possible, yet still specific enough that other assessors reading this summary would have a good understanding of the participant's performance.

Planning Exercise Score: _____

Participant's Name _____

Exercise/Dimension Sheet

DIMENSIONS

E X E R C I S E S		Judgment	Problem- Solving	Planning	Decision Making	Leader- ship	Control	Communi- cation	Super- vision
	In-Basket								
	Planning								
	Supervision								
	Group Process								

SAMPLEExercise Evaluation Form (Planning)

Date: _____

1. How well do you feel you handled the material in this exercise?
2. What information did you find most useful in making your plan?
3. How satisfied were you with the quality of your analysis?
4. Did anything hinder your analysis of the plan?
5. Were instructions clear and complete?
6. How could this exercise have been improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

1. Excellent
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Poor

Administrator's Materials:

Supervision Exercise

Administrator's Instructions: Supervision Exercise

Determine Dimensions for this exercise.

Train assessors incorporating the following:

- A. Assessors must have an understanding of the meaning of the dimensions being observed.
- B. Assessors must understand all aspects of the problem by participating in a group discussion of possible answers.
- C. Assessors should practice completing the assessor forms.

Create the Participant and Assessor Schedules for the exercise.

Secure the rooms and equipment.

Hand out assessor material and Exercise Evaluation Form to each assessor. Inform assessors which participants they are to evaluate. Remind assessors of time limits. Remind assessors to record the names of their assigned participants on their Assessor Report Forms.

Inform participants and assessors where and when to report for the exercise.

Administration of the Exercise

1. Distribute Participant Instructions and Supervision Exercise to all participants.
2. Advise participants of the time frames for the exercise. Reiterate that when participants are finished they are to turn over their papers and wait for further instruction.

Supervision Exercise Procedures for Participants

Say:

In front of you are the following items:

1. Descriptions and Questions related to Administrative Supervision.
2. Descriptions and Questions related to Policy and Procedure in Supervision.

You will have a few minutes to read your instructions before beginning. The exercise is in two parts, each written to test an area of supervision.

You will have one hour to complete this exercise. Part 1 is scheduled for 30 minutes. Part 2 is also scheduled to take 30 minutes.

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation at the conclusion of the exercise. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

The time is now _____. By _____, you should have your exercise finished.

3. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished.
4. When the exercise is finished hand out the Exercise Evaluation Form.
5. Collect the exercise and all papers used by the participants. Inform each participant when they may leave. This exercise concludes the first day of the assessment center.

Assessor's Name _____

Assessor's Materials:

Supervision Exercise

Assessors' Instructions: Supervision Exercise

This is a supervision exercise. It will be a paper and pencil exercise. There will be two parts to the exercise: an administrative section which tests the participant's ability to assess the organization's structure and the resources of the organization, and a section on understanding and utilization of organizational policy and procedures.

The assessor reviews the exercise using the guidelines furnished in the section. (Please see the explanation on dimensions which follows.)

Forms

Forms are provided to enable assessors to record their evaluation of participant performance. An Exercise Evaluation Form, which is a participant's evaluation of the exercise he or she has just completed, will provide the assessor with insights into how each participant views his or her own performance. Assessors will review the exercise immediately following its administration.

Assessors will receive the following materials:

1. Assessor Instructions (Supervision Exercise)
2. Participant Instructions (Supervision Exercise)
3. Steps in Supervision Exercise
4. Motivational Techniques for Supervisors
5. Principles of Supervision
6. Suggested Options on Supervisory Questions
7. Supervision Summary Form
8. Explanation of Dimensions
9. Instructions for Dimensions
10. Assessor Dimension Guide
11. Five Dimensions
12. Scoring/Exercise Score
13. Assessor Summary Form
14. Exercise/Dimension Sheet
15. Exercise Evaluation Form (Supervision)

Participant Instructions: Supervision

This exercise has been developed to test two distinct aspects of supervisory responsibility. The exercise is designed to evaluate:

1. Supervision focused upon providing the organizational structure and access to agency resources required to do the job. This includes dealing with organizational barriers to effective service.

This Exercise includes:

2. Questions Concerning Practical Administrative Problems
3. Questions Concerning Policy and Procedure.

The time is now _____. By _____ the time allotted for this exercise will be over. You are to put down your pens whether you have actually finished or not. Any participant who finishes early must wait until all have finished.

You will have 15 minutes to complete the exercise evaluation form, after the supervision exercise is completed. These will be handed out at the end of the exercise.

Exercise time: 60 minutes
Evaluation: 15 minutes

Steps in Supervision Exercise

1. Receive the completed supervision exercise.
2. Read the informational material provided. There are two pieces of informational material. First, Motivational Techniques for Supervisors, is a list of twenty items often used by supervisors to motivate workers and generate effective work. It is expected that you will look for these qualities in the content of the exercise. The second informational piece, Principles of Supervision, should be read and utilized for the sections on administrative supervision and the section on policy and procedure.
3. Summarize comments for each section on the Supervision Summary Form.
4. This data will inform your judgment when scoring the dimensions.
5. Read material on dimensions.
6. Judge each dimension and score.
7. Decide upon overall score for exercise and fill out Assessor Summary Form.
8. Transfer to Exercise/Dimension Sheet.

Time:

This exercise is scheduled to take one hour (1 hour) for the participant to complete plus 15 minutes to complete the Exercise Evaluation Form.

Motivational Techniques for Supervisors

Following is a list of supervisory behaviors meant to stimulate motivation and effectiveness in workers. All of these behaviors need not be demonstrated in the exercise. Some of these techniques will seem comfortable to some supervisors, but not to others. Use these as a guide in assessing the educational supervision part.

1. Recognize accomplishments. Most individuals require some acknowledgment of recognition of their achievements. Supervisors can give this reward even though other rewards may be limited.
2. Reinforce positively and appropriately. Rewards that are perceived as positive to the worker and associated with specific behavior tend to encourage workers to repeat the behavior. Reinforcement should occur as soon after the behavior as possible.
3. Offer choices to your worker. Your worker needs to be involved in making decisions whenever possible and practical. The worker who is not given the opportunity for making choices tends to lose interest in the task.
4. Offer support to your worker. Your worker should know you are willing to help when needed so that he or she will be assured of support and will not be discouraged by having no place to turn. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.
5. Create a climate of trust and open communication. Workers show highest levels of motivation in agencies that encourage openness and trust. Lack of trust and poor communication threaten individual motivation.
6. Explain your expectations and check your worker's understanding of them. Your worker needs to know what you want. Unclear expectations can lead to disappointments to both you and your worker; frequent disappointments often lead to decreased motivation.
7. Model your own motivation. Demonstrate your high motivation through your behavior and attitude. Positive attitudes and actions that show your own energy and enthusiasm can be contagious.
8. Acknowledge improvements in performance, regardless of how small. Recognition of small gains, especially on new tasks, will assure your worker that movement is in the right direction and encourage him or her to seek larger gains. As the worker becomes more proficient, the recognition should be smaller and less frequent.

9. Involve your worker in setting goals. Your worker will feel a stronger commitment for goals developed by himself or herself. Goals set jointly by you and your worker can also be meaningful. The key is involvement.
10. Clarify how your worker's tasks relate to individual unit, and agency goals. Tasks, especially routine tasks, will acquire more meaning if defined in terms of their contribution to a higher-level goal or success. As supervisor, you can help your worker to see the significance and relevance of tasks to the total system.
11. Criticize the behavior rather than the worker. Negative performance evaluation should not focus on the worker as an individual or a personality. Labeling anyone as "insensitive," "passive," or "stupid" can make the statement a self-fulfilling prophecy. Criticism should focus on specific behavior.
12. Allow and encourage your worker to risk new and challenging tasks. You can provide your worker with opportunities that are increasingly more difficult. Such tasks should be within his or her capabilities. (If the supervisor or worker misjudges the difficulty of the task and the worker fails or needs additional assistance, see No. 4.)
13. Allow your worker to assume responsibility equal to job accountability. Appropriate responsibility - that is, responsibility that is neither too small or too large - is a source of stimulation to most workers. It is unfair to hold a worker accountable for tasks that are another's responsibility.
14. Balance extrinsic rewards and intrinsic satisfaction. Extrinsic rewards such as praise, salary increases, benefits and working conditions are not enough to stimulate worker motivation. Such extrinsic factors cannot be ignored, but should be provided in combination with intrinsic factors such as job satisfaction, accomplishment, and achievement.
15. Design tasks and conditions that are consistent with worker needs. As a supervisor, you need to be aware of the needs each worker has and try to meet those needs with meaningful tasks and adequate working conditions. You should know each individual's requirements for affiliation, approval and achievement.
16. Express confidence in your worker. The "self-fulfilling prophecy" is supported in considerable research. The worker who is expected to succeed tends to succeed. The expectations of supervisors and others have great power.
17. Increase the likelihood that your worker will achieve. "Nothing succeeds like success." Supervisors will want to provide workers with the opportunity to experience small successes

as a source of encouragement to achieve larger successes. Supervisors will also want to reduce the negative effect of barriers to the worker.

18. Show interest in each worker and handle conflicts and complaints as they arise. The supervisor who takes the time to know and understand the worker will usually be rewarded with trust and higher productivity. Problems should be dealt with when first noticed so they will be less likely to be blown out of proportion. Each worker is and should be treated as a significant individual with significant concerns.
19. Avoid threats and punishment and reliance on rules. Contemporary motivation theories tend to contradict the effectiveness of punishment. Negative reinforcement teaches avoidance behavior rather than positive behavior. Although rules are necessary, they do not encourage motivation and should not be relied on as an incentive.
20. Individualize your supervision. Each worker is an individual with unique needs, talents, and life experiences. Some workers will require close supervision, others will require little. Optimal performance will occur when the minimum amount of supervision necessary for that individual is used. Supervisors will want to know their workers.

Summary of Key Points

Job motivation refers to effort expended to meet an organizational objective.

High motivation does not inevitably lead to high performance. To achieve goals, intelligence, ability and appropriate resources are also necessary.

Job satisfaction refers to feelings of contentment. Not all satisfied workers are well-motivated and not all well-motivated people are satisfied.

A popular conception of motivation is that people work to satisfy needs. People are best motivated by the opportunity to satisfy higher-level needs, but there are wide individual differences in this regard.

A useful strategy for motivating people is to offer them meaningful incentives for achieving specific goals. People also need to know the likelihood that effort will lead to reward. Feedback on performance is also essential in motivating people.

Much of the motivation theory described in this unit can be applied to yourself as well as others.

Excerpted from The Management Training Manual for New York State Staff.

Principles of Supervision

Effective supervisors possess the personal qualities and attributes that enable them to elicit the best possible work from their subordinates. No individual possesses all of the qualities of a good supervisor in equal degree, but those individuals who recognize what these qualities are and who comprehend what it takes to function effectively as a supervisor are making progress toward achieving their desired goals.

Good supervisors foster mutual respect between themselves and their subordinates. They not only strive to win the respect of their subordinates but also seek ways to demonstrate to their subordinates that they too are respected. Good supervisors establish clear-cut definitions of what is expected of each employee in the performance of his or her job. They let their subordinates know what they are supposed to do to win advancement and they schedule periodic conferences with each subordinate to discuss performance on the job, opportunities for advancement, and obligations to company and co-workers.

Good supervisors observe the details of office administration. They know what work each subordinate is doing each day and how work is handled in their departments. They devote much of their time and thought to work simplification and improvement.

Effective supervisors work toward the achievement of definite goals within prescribed time periods, in an effort to produce definite quantities of work and at the same time maintain qualitative standards. The supervisor is responsible for the development of subordinates who are capable of reaching their true potential. This should enable the organization to improve its productivity, and it will also prepare the subordinates to assume positions with more complex duties eventually. Effective supervision is the tool that makes organizations grow; a stagnant organization is a poor organization.

The supervisor's function as a leader is to develop the individuals under him or her and to integrate them into a cooperative team. To accomplish this end, the supervisor must constantly have subordinates' motives and feelings in mind. Though no individual's motives can be reduced to a formula, the supervisor should have some insight into the reasons other people have for working.

When each member of the organization is interested in his or her work, the foundation of teamwork has been laid. In order to achieve teamwork, cooperation must be obtained from each worker, and this is the result of broadening the interest of the individual to include the whole group. In reaching this goal, the energy and enthusiasm of the leader are very important. Achieved through many months, even years, of right actions, teamwork, interest, cooperation can be easily destroyed by causes that are easily discernible.

Rules

When interest and cooperation have been raised to a really effective level, the question of rules is of minor importance. However, the manner in which orders are given and rules laid down is one important determinant of teamwork.

The guiding principle should be "As few rules as possible." The most efficient supervisors have the smallest quota of rules.

Direction and routine are certainly necessary, for there is a great demand upon energies when workers must continually direct themselves to their labors, but this direction should be given only as new circumstances arise, not continuously, persistently, captiously.

When rules have been made they should be followed. However, the supervisor should not expect blind obedience, but instead an intelligent, understanding respect for the rules which have been established. When rules are not adhere to, the supervisor should discover the reason and if a new procedure makes sense it should be adopted. At the same time, the supervisor should make clear that teamwork demands coordination and that an apparently insignificant point can be of vital importance to someone else in completing the job.

If criticism is necessary, it should not be given in front of fellow workers, for such a procedure violates the sense of loyalty and mutual consideration.

Praise can be given in the presence of others. It should neither be lavish nor stinted. The tendency of most supervisors seems to be to overdo a good thing; to give so much of it that it no longer has any meaning to those who are praised.

Two general methods of speeding up production are:

1. Past "good work" may be praised (not the worker). The difficulty of the present task may be admitted.
2. Reprimand in a disguised form may be employed by challenging the worker's ability to do a task at all or to do it as well as others. Challenge should be applied to the more aggressive individual while encouragement should be given to the submissive type of person.

Excerpted from "Supervisory and Administrative Positions in Civil Service." Hy Hammer, (ed.) ARCO Publishing, 1984.

Supervision Summary FormComments on Administrative SupervisionComments on Policy and Procedure

Suggested Options on Supervisory Questions

- 1) Option A - Ask Employee A why he left the office.
 Option B - Any other reasonable response to the situation.
 Unacceptable responses include:
 ignoring the issue
 immediate punitive action

- 2) Option A - Let subject talk until subject gets it off his/her chest, and then explain the reasons for decision.
 Option B - Indicate why the method being used is not acceptable.
 Option C - Point out instances of unsatisfactory performance of work, show consequences and how to correct.
 Option D - Compliment worker's strong points and try to help employee understand the causes of difficulty.

- 3) Option A - Make sure you have all pertinent information on the case.
 Option B - Make sure rules are understood and then check on their compliance as soon as possible.
 Option C - Obtain compliance with the rule.

- 4) Option A - Insufficient information is given to make a choice between the two employees as to which one should act as training officer.

- 5) Option A - The supervisor will enhance the chances of a new procedure being accepted by employees if he/she is prepared to answer any objections they may raise while presenting it to them.
 Option B - Workers will respect your competence when you can handle their objections on the spot.

- 6) Option A - Desirable - supervisors who participate will understand the department better and will be able to make more useful suggestions in the future.
 Option B - The maintenance of any organization depends upon individual understanding.

- 7) Option A - While the grapevine transmits much in the way of rumor, it also acts to amend, interpret and elaborate upon the supervisor's communications up and down the hierarchical ladder.

Option B - Informal information may be critical to comprehensive decision-making.

- 8) Option A - Substantial agreement with the statement as written.

Dimensions (Skills)

Three factors are considered when discussing dimensions. These are:

1. Functions
2. Dimensions
3. Exercises

Generally speaking, functions reflect the actual work typically encountered by managers in the workplace. Dimensions reflect the skills required to perform these functions. Assessment Center exercises test the skills/dimensions in question. Consequently, exercises must closely simulate management functions. The closer the exercises mimic actual functions, the more accurate the assessment will be concerning skills/dimensions. I will, therefore, discuss these three factors together.

I have settled upon 5 managerial/administrative functions which I feel reflect typical human service operations.

1. Planning Activities - as demonstrated at midlevel and/or upper level management positions. Those activities which center upon goal planning and the setting of objectives, and the prioritization and allocation of resources. Those activities which encompass scheduling and delegation of staff tasks and priorities.
2. Administrative Activities - as demonstrated by the knowledge and experience that midlevel managers bring to basic day-to-day operations within the human service organization.
3. Group Interactions - as demonstrated by the amount of time devoted in organizations to interpersonal interaction within the context of meetings, conferences, interviews and training.
4. Supervision Activities - as demonstrated in the amount of time and energy, even on the part of top level administrators, dedicated to direct and indirect supervision of human service staff (refer to R. Patti study).
5. Leadership Activities - as demonstrated in lending direction, motivation and consolidation to organizational activities.

Dimensions

As mentioned above, associated with each of these management functions are sets of dimensions (skills). The skills I find relevant to these functions are as follows:

Exercises

Four exercises are proposed which emulate the functions mentioned.

<u>Exercises</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Dimensions (Skills)</u>
1. In-Basket	Administrative activities Planning activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control, Supervision
2. Planning	Planning activities Administrative activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control
3. Group Simulation	Group interaction Leadership	Problem-solving, Leadership, Communication
4. Supervision	Supervision Leadership	Judgement, Decision-making, Leadership, Communication skills, Supervision skills

If we look at these exercises as they reflect the dimensions measured, we can see which exercises test which dimensions:

<u>Exercises</u>				
<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Simulation</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Judgement	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	X
Supervision Skills	X			X

Instructions for Dimensions

1. Read the definition for each dimension.
2. Read each of the questions related to the dimensions. Get a feel for what behaviors you are looking for in relation to this dimension.
3. As you complete each section of the report, assign a score for each dimension before you move to the next.
4. Record your comments under the questions listed for each dimension.
5. Be sure to record enough of the behaviors that you noted to justify the score you have given. Remember to include specific examples and/or statements that support your conclusions.
6. Record these comments/behaviors on the assessor summary form. Be sure to relate them to the dimensions you are looking for.

Assessor Dimension Guide: Supervision Exercise

This exercise will demonstrate a range of expertise along five dimensions. These are: judgment, problem-solving, planning skills, decision making and control. A series of questions is presented with each dimension to give the assessor some parameters and direction concerning participant responses. Space is provided beneath each question for assessor comments. A definition for each dimension is provided.

The dimensions tested will be:

- Judgment
- Decision Making
- Leadership
- Communication
- Supervision

Dimensions: Supervision Exercise - Dimension 1

Judgment: The ability to weigh facts, and to arrive at decisions in an objective manner. The ability to think through situations, potential consequences of decisions and arrive at sound or logical conclusions.

1. Did the solutions proposed help resolve the sources of conflict depicted?

2. Does the participant demonstrate a willingness to allow subordinates to solve problems on their own?

3. Does the participant consider the effectiveness of rules and regulations upon subordinates?

Score: _____

Supervision Exercise - Dimension 2

Decision Making: Readiness to make decisions, render judgments,
take actions or commit oneself.

1. Is there a demonstration of participant's understanding of how problems may impact upon employees, organization and other staff in the organization?

2. Does the participant attempt to assess subordinate interactions and ideas as it relates to the identification and solution of problems?

3. Does participant consider new information when it presents itself?

Score: _____

Supervision Exercise - Dimension 3

Leadership: Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding a group or an individual towards task accomplishment. The ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility even though readily accessible to staff.

1. Did participant choices reflect concern for worker morale?
2. Is concern demonstrated for the opinion of top management and budget limitations?
3. Did participant show concern for impact of problem upon the organization?
4. Is participant sensitive to the feelings of others?
5. Does the participant consider the use of reward in motivating workers?
6. Does participant demonstrate an understanding of their authority to direct work activities?

Score: _____

Supervision Exercise - Dimension 4

Communication: Ability to organize and present material/feelings
in a convincing manner.

1. Does participant attempt to elicit discussion from subordinates?
2. Are subordinates encouraged to contribute ideas and suggestions for better productivity?
3. Are attempts made to obtain or utilize information from all subordinates to define problems?
4. Is there a willingness on the participant's part to share information with workers to enable them to be more effective?

Score: _____

Supervision Exercise - Dimension 5

Supervision: The capacity to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the subordinates. This function includes the responsibility to perform administrative, educational and supportive functions in interaction with subordinates in the context of a positive relationship. (Kadushin, 1985)

1. Did participant respect organization's rules and regulations and consider seriously the impact of changes in rules and regulations?
2. Does participant consider the need for equitable enforcement of rules and the need for effective affirmative action, etc.?
3. Does participant show equally high concern for individual rights and needs and for organizational needs?
4. Does participant attempt to clarify and focus problems for subordinates?
5. Does the participant demonstrate an understanding of the benefits of teamwork?
6. Does participant demonstrate the exercise of authority?

Score: _____

Scoring

This exercise, as the others, is based upon a four-point (1-4) scale. Four (4) is the highest score attainable on a particular dimension and one (1) is the lowest score attainable.

(4) is designated when assessors note a clear and consistent demonstration of response associated with a particular dimension.

(3) is designated when assessors note a majority of clear and consistent responses associated with a particular dimension.

(2) is designated when assessors note neither a clear nor consistent pattern associated with a particular dimension. (This score indicates that there was no evidence of positive or negative demonstration of a particular dimension.) (Not clear?)

(1) is designated when assessors note an absence or negative responses associated with a particular dimension.

Using this system, review each dimension by responding to the items asked. If you have seen enough of one dimension to rate it, go ahead and mark down your preliminary score.

Exercise Score

Fill out overall summary in narrative form.

After all dimensions are scored individually, the average score for the exercise will be recorded on the Assessor Summary Form. Since this score will represent the average for all dimensions assessed in this exercise, arriving at a precise 1, 2, 3 or 4 is unlikely. Generally, a high rating falls between 3 and 4, an average rating between 2 and 3 and a low rating of 1 to 2.

Assessor Summary Form

Assessor Name: _____

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Overall Summary

Please summarize the participant's overall performance in this exercise. State strengths, weaknesses and activities meriting special mention. Be as brief as possible, yet still specific enough that other assessors reading this summary would have a good understanding of the participant's performance.

Participant's Name _____

Exercise/Dimension Sheet

DIMENSIONS

E X E R C I S E S		Judgment	Problem- Solving	Planning	Decision Making	Leader- ship	Control	Communi- cation	Super- vision
	In-Basket								
	Planning								
	Supervision								
	Group Process								

SAMPLEExercise Evaluation Form (Supervision)

Date: _____

1. Did this exercise and related materials help you specify skills which you feel need improvement?

Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____

2. List those management skills which come to mind:

3. Were the instructions for the exercise clear and complete?

Yes ____ No ____

4. What suggestions would you offer to improve them?

5. How could this exercise have been improved upon?

6. Were the instructions for this exercise clear and complete?

Yes ____ No ____

7. If no, what suggestions might you have to improve them?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

8. How could this exercise have been improved upon?

Administrator's Material:

Group Simulation

Administrator's Instructions: Group Simulation

This exercise is an unstructured, leaderless group discussion. All participants will read the situation presented and individually make comments on their perceptions vis-a-vis that situation. They will then all come together to discuss the topic. The group must reach a decision in 1 hour. They will each have 20 minutes to consider the problem. The discussion has the potential to elicit behavior related to various dimensions of supervisory and managerial effectiveness.

It is the responsibility of the administrator to inform assessors which specific dimensions they are to observe. (Please see Assessor Material.)

- 1) Train assessors incorporating the following:
 - A. Assessors must have an understanding of the meaning of the dimensions being observed.
 - B. Assessors must have an understanding of all aspects of the exercise problem by participating in a group discussion of possible answers.
 - C. Assessors should practice completing the assessor forms.
- 2) Create the Participant and Assessor Schedules for the exercise.
- 3) Arrange for Physical Space.
- 4) Hand out assessor material and Exercise Evaluation Form to each assessor. Inform assessors of the participants they are to observe. Each assessor will observe all participants. Remind assessors of time limits. Remind assessors to record names of their assigned participants on their Assessor Report Forms.

Inform participants and assessors where and when to report for the exercise.

Administration of Exercise

1. Distribute Participant Instructions and Group Simulation to all participants.
2. Read Instructions aloud.
3. Advise participants of the time frames for the exercise.
4. At the end of the hour, collect Participant Instructions and all other written materials.

5. Hand out Exercise Evaluation Form and inform participants that they have 10 minutes to complete the form.
6. After 10 minutes, collect Exercise Evaluation Form and give participants a break.
7. Arrange a brief meeting with assessors to discuss logistics for afternoon exit interviews.

Group Simulation Procedures for Participants

This exercise is a combination of written analysis and group discussion. The exercise focuses upon a case study on Motivation.

Twenty minutes will be allotted for reading and analyzing the case in writing. Your analysis will be collected at the end of the exercise. You may use your analysis in the discussion.

60 minutes will be allotted for group discussion. The participants will form a group and begin to discuss the case.

Reading/Written Analysis	- 20 minutes
Discussion	- 60 minutes
Exercise Evaluation Form	- 10 minutes

Exercise includes:

1. Case Study on Motivation
2. Questions for Analysis.

Assessor Name _____

Assessor Material:

Group Simulation

Assessor Instructions: Group Simulation

You will be observing all participants in a leaderless, unstructured group setting. You will be observing behavior relating to three dimensions: problem-solving, leadership and communication. Observation will last one hour.

Chairs for the assessors should be located off to the side at a comfortable distance from the participants. Each assessor should be able at all times to see the faces of the participants. Do not begin recording behavior on the Observation Form until you are sure the focus of the group is on interaction around the exercise problem.

Assessors will be informed prior to the exercise who the participants will be. Prior to the exercise, review the Observation Guide and Instructions for Dimensions. Record the names of each participant on the observation form.

Once observation begins, record your comments on the observation form. As soon as possible after the exercise, score these observations on the "score guide".

When the exercise is concluded, and while participants are filling out the Exercise Evaluation Form, assessors will evaluate the exercise, if possible.

Forms

Forms are provided to enable assessors to record their evaluation of participant performance. An Exercise Evaluation Form, which is a participant's evaluation of the exercise he or she has just completed, will provide the assessor with insights into how each participant views his or her own performance. Assessors will review the exercise as soon after its completion as possible.

Assessors will receive the following materials:

1. Assessor Instructions (Group Simulation)
2. Steps in Group Simulation Exercise
3. Instruction to Participants (Sample)
4. Assessors' Observation Guide
5. Observation Form
6. Score Guide
7. Explanation of Dimensions
8. Instructions for Dimensions
9. Assessor Dimension Guide (Group Simulation)
10. 3 Dimensions to Score
11. Scoring/Exercise Score
12. Assessor Summary Form
13. Exercise/Dimension Sheet
14. Exercise Evaluation Form (Group Simulation)

Steps in Group Simulation Exercise

1. Consult the Observation Guide prior to observation. This will act as a guide for the exercise.
2. Make observations and record pertinent data on Observation Form for all participants (item 2 is the only form used by the assessor during the exercise itself).
3. Using the score guide, rate each item on a scale of 1 to 4.
4. This data is to be used to inform your scoring of the dimensions. These scores will inform your judgment on the dimensions involved.
5. Read material on dimensions.
6. Judge each dimension and score.
7. Decide upon overall score for exercise, and fill our Assessor Summary Form.
8. Enter score on Exercise/Dimension Sheet.

Remember you will be giving feedback to participants at the end of the assessment center. This data will inform your discussions.

Instructions to Participants: Group Simulation

This exercise is a combination of written analysis and group discussion. The exercise focuses upon a case study on Motivation. The group will be expected to come to a decision concerning the case by the end of the discussion period.

Twenty minutes will be allotted for reading and analyzing the case in writing. Your analysis will be collected at the end of the exercise. You may use your analysis in the discussion.

60 minutes will be allotted for group discussion. The participants will form a group and begin to discuss the case.

Reading/Written Analysis	- 20 minutes
Discussion	- 60 minutes
Exercise Evaluation Form	- 10 minutes

Exercise includes:

1. Case Study on Motivation
2. Questions for Analysis

Time

This exercise is scheduled to take 1 hour. Exercise Evaluation Form will take an additional 10 minutes.

Assessors' Observation Guide

BEHAVIOR = Any type of action observable by another.

Characteristics of Behaviors:

1. Behaviors may be verbal statements; non-verbal expressions, gestures or movements; or written actions.
2. Behaviors can be displayed in varying degrees of intensity, effect upon others, sophistication, etc.
3. Behaviors can be categorized by their relationship to certain managerial skills. Certain behaviors may relate to only one particular skill or to several different skills with different implications for each skill.
4. Behaviors are observable actions. If you cannot see it and distinguish it from another behavior, it is not valid for use of recording.

Inferences - Assumptions - Judgments - Evaluations:

These are all similar to each other and are quite different from observable behaviors. These are your feelings or interpretations of what another person intended, felt, thought, or expected in any particular instance. You may feel that you observed these but you did not. You observed the behavior and then applied your own reason for it. This is unacceptable in the observation of behavior.

1. Record the name of the participants assigned to you. Those participants on the farthest left should be identified on the left column on the form, the middle participant in the middle column and so forth.
2. Record observations of assigned participants in the appropriate column.
3. Try to record as many direct quotes as possible, especially those that relate to the context of the problem.
4. Do not try to categorize the observations during the exercise.
5. Record the following:
 - a) Amount of time and quality of participation in discussion
 - b) Specific suggestions
 - c) Arguments for suggestions
 - d) Final disposition of suggestions.

6. Try to observe the following:

- a) Initial impact on group
- b) Attempts at organization
- c) Communication skills
- d) Effectiveness of presentation of ideas
- e) Understanding of ideas of others
- f) Use of ideas of others
- g) Helping others by clarification, drawing out ideas
- h) Acts of leadership
- i) Sensitivity to others
- j) Frequency of and willingness to make decisions
- k) Attempts to allocate on structure time
- l) Attempts at structuring groups activities
- m) Attempts to include others in discussion
- n) Balance of concern for the individual and the organization
- o) Role in reaching final decisions
- p) Satisfaction with final decision

Observation Form

1. Participant Name:	2. Participant Name:	3. Participant Name:

4th Participant Name:	5th Participant Name:	6th Participant Name:

7th Participant Name:	8th Participant Name:	9th Participant Name:

Participant's Name _____

Score Guide

Score (4 to 1)

1. Quality of Presentation	
2. Initial Impact on Group	
3. Overall Impact on Group	
4. Effectiveness of ideas	
5. Understanding the ideas of others	
6. Use of the ideas of others	
7. Communication skill	
8. Demonstration of Leadership	
9. Demonstration of Sensitivity	
10. Ability to allocate time	
11. Ability to structure group discussion	
12. Ability to include others in discussion	
13. Role in reaching final decision	
14. Willingness to make decisions	

Dimensions (Skills)

Three factors are considered when discussing dimensions. These are:

1. Functions
2. Dimensions
3. Exercises

Generally speaking, functions reflect the actual work typically encountered by managers in the workplace. Dimensions reflect the skills required to perform these functions. Assessment Center exercises test the skills/dimensions in question. Consequently, exercises must closely simulate management functions. The closer the exercises mimic actual functions, the more accurate the assessment will be concerning skills/dimensions. I will, therefore, discuss these three factors together.

I have settled upon 5 managerial/administrative functions which I feel reflect typical human service operations.

1. Planning Activities - as demonstrated at midlevel and/or upper level management positions. Those activities which center upon goal planning and the setting of objectives, and the prioritization and allocation of resources. Those activities which encompass scheduling and delegation of staff tasks and priorities.
2. Administrative Activities - as demonstrated by the knowledge and experience that midlevel managers bring to basic day-to-day operations within the human service organization.
3. Group Interactions - as demonstrated by the amount of time devoted in organizations to interpersonal interaction within the context of meetings, conferences, interviews and training.
4. Supervision Activities - as demonstrated in the amount of time and energy, even on the part of top level administrators, dedicated to direct and indirect supervision of human service staff (refer to R. Patti study).
5. Leadership Activities - as demonstrated in lending direction, motivation and consolidation to organizational activities.

Dimensions

As mentioned above, associated with each of these management functions are sets of dimensions (skills). The skills I find relevant to these functions are as follows:

1. Judgement

The ability to weigh facts and to arrive at decisions in an objective way. The ability to think through situations, the potential impact of decisions upon the organization and the ability to arrive at sound conclusions.

2. Problem-Solving

The ability to analyze and solve organizational problems utilizing information related to the problem, resources on behalf of solutions, and the ability to identify causes and potential consequences to problems.

3. Planning Skills

The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate work processes. The ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

4. Decision-Making Skills

The readiness to make decisions, render judgements, take actions and/or commit oneself to a course of action.

5. Leadership Skills

Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding staff toward task accomplishment. Ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility.

6. Control Skills

Ability in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

7. Communication Skills

Ability to express ideas clearly in verbal form. This includes the ability to communicate with others at all levels in the organization in an appropriate way.

8. Supervisory Skills

Skill in perceiving the impact and implications of decisions on staff and other facets of the organization (incomplete).

Exercises

Four exercises are proposed which emulate the functions mentioned.

<u>Exercises</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Dimensions (Skills)</u>
1. In-Basket	Administrative activities Planning activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control, Supervision
2. Planning	Planning activities Administrative activities Leadership	Judgement, Problem-solving, Planning, Decision-making, Control
3. Group Simulation	Group interaction Leadership	Problem-solving, Leadership, Communication
4. Supervision	Supervision Leadership	Judgement, Decision-making, Leadership, Communication skills, Supervision skills

If we look at these exercises as they reflect the dimensions measured, we can see which exercises test which dimensions:

<u>Exercises</u>				
<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>In-Basket</u>	<u>Planning</u>	<u>Group Simulation</u>	<u>Supervision</u>
Judgement	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	X
Supervision Skills	X			X

Instructions for Dimensions

For each of the following dimensions:

1. Read over the definition for each dimension.
2. Read each of the questions related to the dimension. Get a good feel for what behaviors you are looking for in relation to this dimension.
3. Go over your observation notes and identify the behaviors related to this dimension.
4. Record these behaviors on the assessors summary form.
5. Be specific. Tell what the person did. What was said. What impact it had on others. Give examples. Relate your observations to time.
6. If the questions do not capture other aspects of the dimensions mentioned, feel free to add them.
7. Be sure to record enough of the behaviors that you noted to justify the score you have given. Remember to include specific examples and/or statements that support your conclusions.

Assessor Dimension Guide: Group Simulation Exercise

This exercise will demonstrate a range of expertise along five dimensions. These are: judgment, problem-solving, planning skills, decision making and control. A series of questions is presented with each dimension to give the assessor some parameters and direction concerning participant responses. Space is provided beneath each question for assessor comments. A definition for each dimension is provided.

The dimensions tested will be:

Problem solving
Leadership
Communication

Participant's Name _____

Group Simulation

Problem Solving: The ability to analyze problems offering varied sources of information. The ability to sort out information related to a problem, information or informational resources to identify consequences to situations to identify personalities, and to identify possible causes of problems.

1. Does participant state the problem accurately?
2. Is there a perception of how the problem potentially impacts upon employee, organization and other staff in organization?
3. Is there consideration for effectiveness of rules and regulations?
4. Is there reference to the material and/or attempts to clarify and pinpoint the problem?
5. Is there an attempt to obtain or utilize information from other group members in order to define the problem?
6. Does participant perceive possible impact of problem and solution upon others, or does participant only narrowly define the problem?
7. Does participant consider new information as it is raised?

Score: _____

Group Simulation

Leadership: Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding a group or an individual towards task accomplishment. The ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility even though readily accessible to staff.

1. How long does it take the participant to attempt to influence group activities?
2. Does participant propose a method of proceeding at beginning of the exercise?
3. Does participant attempt to draw others into the conversation in order to get their ideas or consensus?
4. Do others listen when participant speaks?
5. How do others react to participant? Argue? Ignore?
6. Is the participant sensitive to the feelings of others?
7. Does participant move the group toward an effective conclusion?
8. Is participant disruptive?

Score: _____

Group Simulation

Communication: Ability to organize and present material/feelings in a convincing manner.

1. How confident is participant of his/her actions?
2. How well does participant explain his/her actions?
3. Does participant use facts and/or reason to support his/her actions?
4. Does participant listen to questions and respond appropriately?
5. Does participant argue his/her point of view?

Score: _____

Scoring

This exercise, as the others, is based upon a four-point (1-4) scale. Four (4) is the highest score attainable on a particular dimension and one (1) is the lowest score attainable.

(4) is designated when assessors note a clear and consistent demonstration of response associated with a particular dimension.

(3) is designated when assessors note a majority of clear and consistent responses associated with a particular dimension.

(2) is designated when assessors note neither a clear nor consistent pattern associated with a particular dimension. (This score indicates that there was no evidence of positive or negative demonstration of a particular dimension.) (Not clear?)

(1) is designated when assessors note an absence or negative responses associated with a particular dimension.

Using this system, review each dimension by responding to the items asked. If you have seen enough of one dimension to rate it, go ahead and mark down your preliminary score.

Exercise Score

Fill out overall summary in narrative form.

After all dimensions are scored individually, the average score for the exercise will be recorded on the Assessor Summary Form. Since this score will represent the average for all dimensions assessed in this exercise, arriving at a precise 1, 2, 3 or 4 is unlikely. Generally, a high rating falls between 3 and 4, an average rating between 2 and 3 and a low rating of 1 to 2.

Participant's Name _____

Assessor Summary Form

Assessor Name: _____

Participant Name: _____ Date: _____

Overall Summary

Please summarize the participant's overall performance in this exercise. State strengths, weaknesses and activities meriting special mention. Be as brief as possible, yet still specific enough that other assessors reading this summary would have a good understanding of the participant's performance.

Group Simulation Score: _____

Participant's Name _____

Exercise/Dimension Sheet

DIMENSIONS									
E X E R C I S E S		Judgment	Problem- Solving	Planning	Decision Making	Leader- ship	Control	Communi- cation	Super- vision
	In-Basket								
	Planning								
	Supervision								
	Group Process								

SAMPLEExercise Evaluation Form (Group Exercise)

Date: _____

1. How satisfied were you with the group's performance?

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Slightly dissatisfied
4. Very dissatisfied

2. Briefly describe your own performance in the group.

A. How did you contribute to discussion performance?

B. How did you detract from discussion performance?

3. Did anything or anyone hinder your performance and make you less effective than you could have been? Explain.

4. Did this exercise help you to identify skills which you feel need improvement?

Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____

5. If yes, briefly list those management skills which come to mind in the space below:

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

6. Were the instructions for this exercise clear and complete?

Yes ____ No ____

7. If no, what suggestions might you have to improve them?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

8. How could this exercise have been improved upon?

Using the scale provided, please indicate your overall rating of this exercise (please circle appropriate number):

1. Excellent

2. Good

3. Fair

4. Poor

APPENDIX E

Appendix E

Contents

1. Blank Feedback Form Used in Feedback Sessions

<u>Skills</u>	<u>Participant Ratings</u>	<u>Assessor Ratings</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Judgment			Final decision consistent and logical within the framework of information given. Proposed risk/innovation in making assignments. Demonstrated a willingness to allow subordinates to solve problems on their own.
Problem-Solving			Analyzed the pros and cons of alternatives considered. Took into consideration political pressure and personal preferences. Demonstrated an understanding of the capacity of staff.
Planning			Outlines, charts or other management devices used to help organize responses. Determines plan of action at beginning of exercise. Realistic and organized in setting goals and priorities.
Decision-Making			Considered the impact of decisions upon the organization and upon staff. Decisive enough though situation unclear and/or others unwilling to decide. Demonstrated adequate fiscal decision-making.
Leadership			Effective skills in bringing group to consensus. Effectively communicated own ideas. Demonstrated positive assertiveness.
Control			Proposed establishment of control and evaluation systems. Time allocated to monitor schedules. Indicates follow-up systems to assure corrective action.
Communication			Effective communication skills. Democratic in task accomplishment. Attentive to group's ideas and issues. Solicitation of feedback.
Supervision			Considers the need for equitable enforcement of rules and the need for effective support. Attempts to clarify and focus problems for subordinates. Demonstrates the exercise of authority.

APPENDIX F

Appendix F

Contents

1. Pre-test Materials

Dear Participant

Thank you for pre-testing this instrument.

General Instructions:

1. Please complete each exercise within the time frames specified. Of the four exercises, you will only be able to complete 3½. The group simulation exercise can only be partially completed.
2. Please answer all parts of the exercise, either on the exercise pages themselves or on loose-leaf paper. Please include all your worksheets when you return the exercises.
3. At the end of each exercise is an evaluation of that exercise. Please take 15 minutes to evaluate the exercise immediately after the exercise is completed.
4. At the end of each exercise evaluation, I will be asking for your opinions about the exercise in terms of its problematic aspects. Please be honest: your feedback will help me develop a better instrument.
5. Finally, there is an overall assessment center evaluation at the end of all the exercises. Please fill it out.
6. Prior to the exercises is a self-assessment instrument. Please fill this out before starting. This will give me demographic information on the participants.

I will need this packet returned to me by 7/8/88.

Thanks again.

Pre-Tester

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Would you add anything to this instrument?

Anything you would delete?

Anything you don't understand?

IN-BASKET

In this exercise you will be role-playing the part of a Deputy Director.

You have two hours to complete it. Please stop at the end of two hours if you have not finished. If you finish before the two-hour deadline, please indicate the time it took you to complete.

Pre-TesterIN-BASKET

1. Was the time frame adequate? Did you need more time?
2. How clear was the material?
3. Comments?
4. Did you need more instruction?
5. Was it too hard? How?

Planning Exercise

This exercise has two parts. Part I, a scheduling exercise, takes 45 minutes. Part II is a problem analysis that has been allotted 60 minutes for completion.

Please do both parts together.

The evaluation is allotted 15 minutes for completion.

Pre-TesterPLANNING EVALUATION

1. Did you need more instruction?
2. Did the exercise provide you with enough information to complete it?
3. Did you have enough time?
4. Comments:
5. Was it too hard? How?

Supervision Exercise:

This exercise is in three parts and focused on three aspects of supervisory skill: educational supervision, supervision of day-to-day operations (administrative supervision), and issues of policy and procedure.

Part I is a case study which asks your assessment of your worker's interpersonal skill. It is scheduled to take one hour to complete.

Parts II and III have to do with organizational issues and are scheduled to take one hour.

Please do all segments at one sitting.

The evaluation is scheduled to take 15 minutes.

Pre-Tester:

SUPERVISION

1. Was enough time allotted?
2. Enough information presented?
3. What might you add/delete to the case study?
4. Comments:
5. Was it too hard? How?

Group Simulation

As you will note, you will only be able to complete the first 20 minutes of this exercise.

Your notes, then, are most important for this exercise.

Please complete the evaluation in the 10 minutes allotted.

Pre-Tester:

GROUP SIMULATION

1. Was adequate time allotted for analysis?
2. Was enough information given?
3. Comments:

APPENDIX G

Appendix G

Contents

1. Report to the Agency

Report Concerning Management Staff Training Needs

During the summer of 1989, three Assessment Centers were convened to assess certain management skills of voluntary participants. 30 management staff participated in this assessment experience. Approximately one-half of these staffmembers occupied top management positions (Directors and Assistant Directors), and one-half of the participants occupied middle management positions (Supervisors, Coordinators, etc.).

To review, the assessment centers sought to determine the extent of certain management skills through a demonstration of such skills in four exercises administered over 1½ days. The skills assessed were:

1. Judgment

The ability to weigh facts and to arrive at decisions in an objective way. The ability to think through situations, the potential impact of decisions upon the organization and the ability to arrive at sound conclusions.

2. Problem-Solving

The ability to analyze and solve organizational problems utilizing information related to the problem, resources on behalf of solutions, and the ability to identify causes and potential consequences of problems.

3. Planning Skills

The ability to establish priorities, delegate assignments, determine resources and demands, and to establish appropriate work processes. The ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal, and to make proper assignments of personnel and appropriate use of resources.

4. Decision-Making Skills

The readiness to make decisions, render judgments, take actions and/or commit oneself to a course of action.

5. Leadership Skills

Effectiveness in getting ideas accepted and in guiding staff toward task accomplishment. Ability to establish and maintain clear channels of responsibility.

6. Control Skills

Ability in establishing procedures to monitor (or regulate) processes, tasks or the activities of subordinates. Ability to evaluate the results of delegated assignments and projects.

7. Communication Skills

Ability to express ideas clearly in verbal form. This includes the ability to communicate with others at all levels in the organization in an appropriate way.

8. Supervisory Skills

Skill in perceiving the impact and implications of decisions on staff and other facets of the organization. The ability to direct, coordinate, enhance, and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he/she is held accountable.

Each of the four exercises monitored at least two, and in some cases, three of these skills. The chart below demonstrates how each exercise interfaced with the dimensions involved.

Dimensions	Exercises			
	In-Basket	Planning	Group Simulation	Supervision
Judgment	X	X		X
Problem-Solving	X	X	X	
Planning Skills	X	X		
Decision-Making	X	X		X
Leadership Skills			X	X
Control Skills	X	X		
Communication Skills			X	
Supervision Skills	X			X

Preliminary Findings

While hard data will not be available for a few months, preliminary findings have indicated that participants could benefit from training around certain types of skills. Generally speaking, participants did well in the following skills:

1. Judgment
2. Supervision
3. Communication

Participants expressed average capacities in the following skills:

4. Decision-making
5. Leadership

Participants demonstrated below average capacities in the following skills:

6. Problem-solving
7. Planning
8. Control

The ability to engage in planning activities successfully is an efficient antidote to crisis management. Participants demonstrated a lack of awareness of those techniques involved in successfully executing plans of action. Many participants were unfamiliar with setting goals and objectives.

The precursor to well thought-out plans is the ability to engage in problem-solving. There was a lower than average demonstration of the ability to define the issues involved, to analyze the pros and cons associated with such definition and to raise sufficient alternative solutions to solve the problem. Out of such problem-solving come the plans of action agencies depend upon to meet annual goals.

The weakest demonstration of skill among the participants was in the area of management control. Sometimes referred to as evaluation technique or accountability, it comprises those activities which insure that plans will be implemented successfully. These

activities include the capacity for establishing follow-up and evaluative systems and building in time to monitor work schedules. These tasks, when performed routinely, allow for adequate and timely corrective action, which can often salvage a plan from failure.

Recommendations

The following are recommended as areas to be considered for in-service training:

- 1) Planning Techniques—Problem-solving, planning and control activities can be thought of as a unit, and could be taught together in a training curriculum.
- 2) Fiscal Techniques—Many top managers demonstrated a need for this skill. While it was not one of the skills focused upon, the agency may want to consider this as an area for training.
- 3) Assumptions Underlying the Managerial Role—The development of these rational, managerial skills in social work managers will, inevitably, raise questions related to the role of manager versus the more traditional social work supervisor role. I would suggest some training in the differences between these roles.
- 4) Leadership and Communication Technique—In order to maximize receptivity to new management ideas, I would recommend some leadership and communication training.

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