

1984

A study of the assessment center as a process for identifying prospective school principals and assistant principals

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IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT
PRINCIPALS

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

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A Dissertation

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The Faculty of the School of Education
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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By

Carolyn J. Van Newkirk

April 1984

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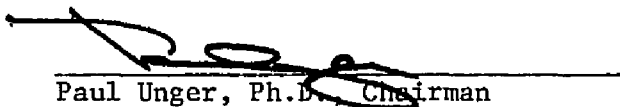
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Abstract

A STUDY OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER AS A PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING PROSPECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

An important factor in the quality of education within a school system is an effective building administrator who establishes a vibrant, innovative, child-centered climate for learning, who sets an optimal level of professionalism, and who creates a center for effective human relations. The difficulty arises when one attempts to distinguish the talented from the untalented in administrative potential.

One procedure for identification of effective educational administrators is known as the assessment center which is a complex series of job-related activities designed to elicit skill behavior identified as essential in the successful performance of a particular job. Candidates simulate on-the-job activities and during the process are evaluated by a team of trained assessors. A standardized evaluation of an individual's behavior is derived from multiple inputs.

The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine reasons for the utilization of assessment centers. It was hypothesized that assessment centers were established because the nature of the process is objective, for reasons of expediency, and because of the predictive elements of the content.

The methodology used in this case study included an examination of records of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, scrutinizing and interpreting writers of the movement, interviews, correspondence and oral testimony involving key people who participated in assessment center activities, observation by the researcher of assessment center procedures, and review and analysis of dissertations related to the topic.

The study reported the design of assessment centers, selecting and training assessors, and validation of assessment centers in six models: NASSP; Dade County Public Schools, Florida; Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada; Broward County, Palm Beach County, and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida; Montgomery County, Maryland; and University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services.

Throughout the study there was significant evidence to support the hypotheses. Objectivity is promoted through utilization of multiple assessors who arrive at a global decision through consensus, through multiple methods of evaluation in a variety of settings, and through cautious selection and intense training of assessors. Objectivity was established through the validation study of the NASSP model. The study confirmed that the process can predict behaviors on-the-job. The assessment center process satisfies the stringent demands of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines and is expedient since it establishes a known talent pool from which school systems can select as needed. Conversely, yet of significance, is that the assessment center process determines those individuals who should not be recommended for promotion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	5
LIST OF APPENDIXES.....	6
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Hypotheses.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	13
Assumptions.....	17
Limitations.....	18
Methodology.....	18
Related Studies.....	20
Organization of the Study.....	34
II. HISTORY OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS.....	35
Introduction.....	35
History of Multiple Assessment in the Military.....	35
History of Multiple Assessment in Business.....	38
History of Multiple Assessment in Education.....	43
Assessment Center - NASSP Model.....	43
Assessment Center - Dade County Public Schools, Florida.....	51
Assessment Center - Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada.....	53
Assessment Center - Broward County, Palm Beach County and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida.....	53
Assessment Center - Montgomery County, Maryland.....	54
Assessment Center - University of Mis- sissippi Bureau of School Services	55
Summary.....	56
III. DESIGN OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS.....	59
Introduction.....	59
Historical Perspective.....	59
Assessment Centers in the Field of Education.....	68

Design of Assessment Center - NASSP Model.....	68
Design of Assessment Center - Dade County Public Schools, Florida	71
Design of Assessment Center - Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada.....	72
Design of Assessment Centers - Broward County, Palm Beach County, Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida.....	73
Design of Assessment Center - Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland.....	77
Design of Assessment Center - University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services.....	78
Summary.....	79
 IV. SELECTING AND TRAINING ASSESSORS.....	 82
Introduction.....	82
Background Perspective - Selecting Assessors.....	82
Background Perspective - Training Assessors.....	84
Selecting and Training Assessors: Educational Assessment Center Models	87
Summary.....	93
 V. VALIDATION OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS.....	 95
Introduction.....	95
Validation Study of NASSP Model.....	96
Summary.....	106
 VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS...	 108
Summary.....	108
Conclusions.....	111
Recommendations.....	114
 APPENDIXES.....	 116
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 142

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Response Frequency to Evaluation Parameters as Reported by Bender.....	63
2. Interrater Agreement of Evaluation as Reported by Coefficient Alpha.....	99
3. Correlation Between Supervisor Ratings of Performance and Assessment Center Ratings.....	101
4. Correlation Between Teacher Ratings of Performance and Assessment Center Ratings.....	102
5. Content Validity Ratios for the Assessment Center Skills Across the Major Performance Dimensions.....	106

LIST OF APPENDIXES

Appendix	Page
A. Standards and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations Endorsed by the VII International Congress of the Assessment Center Method.....	116
B. National Association of Secondary School Principals, Listings of Pilot Assessment Centers, Directors, Numbers of Assessors Trained, Numbers of Participants Assessed.....	132
C. National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessment Center Schedule - Model #1, Schedule - Model #2.....	135
D. Assessor Training Behavior Example Exercise.....	138
E. National Association of Secondary School Principals Assessor Training Schedule.....	140

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

One factor in the quality of education within a school system is an effective building administrator who possesses capabilities for maximizing human resources, who leads subordinates to achieve beyond expectation, and who manipulates, cajoles, directs, and manages the school environment effectively and productively. He/she is an analyst - a catalyst - a synergist. The difficulty arises when one attempts to distinguish the administrator who possesses strong leadership abilities from the general group of leaders. Part of the trouble lies in the fact that state departments of education certify an administrator on the basis of knowledge alone rather than on trying to discern other factors such as talented leadership.

In addition, it has been demonstrated through research that building administrators are neither trained effectively nor inspired to enter the field of educational leadership. Principals have revealed that "administrator training does not always match responsibilities of the job, the role and tasks of principals are seldom clearly defined, systems for evaluating principal per-

formance are often ineffective, and opportunities for continuing development are inadequate."¹

In 1970 the United States Senate Select Committee on Equal Education Opportunity delineated the significance of the building administrator, and emphasized the required talent.

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He is the person responsible for all of the activities that occur in and around the school building. It is his leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morals of teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. He is the main link between the school and the community and the way he performs in that capacity largely determines the attitudes of students and parents about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success.²

In the past school districts have relied heavily on subjective evaluation of administrative candidates -grade transcripts, past job performance, recommendations, interview, politics, and "gut" feelings. These techniques could be interpreted as being biased and as a result a potentially strong candidate could be overlooked. Law-

¹"The School Principal: Recommendations for Effective Leadership", Assembly Education Committee Task Force for the Improvement of Pre- and In-Service Training for Public School Administrators, California, September, 1978, p. 2.

²United States Congress, Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, Toward Equal Educational Opportunity, a report pursuant to Senate Resolution 359 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office) February 19, 1970.

suits charging discrimination in hiring practices flourished during the past decade as courts ruled that all candidates for leadership positions be given equal consideration. Furthermore, the courts have required proof that there was no intent to discriminate. Thus it has become evident that school divisions must develop fair and effective methods for selecting principals and assistant principals.

It is observed that pressure has been brought to bear on school divisions to develop and implement equitable methods in the selection of building principals and assistant principals. Subsequently school divisions have adopted a concept known as the assessment center.

The assessment center is a comprehensive, standardized program in which participants are evaluated for selection, training, or career planning purposes. Multiple observational techniques are used and each participant is evaluated along a number of previously determined management dimensions. A team of assessors observes and evaluates each participant on the dimensions and makes an overall judgment of each participant's potential for advancement, development, or placement.³

Proponents of the assessment center process believe that there is an enormous amalgamation of talent in public educational institutions which is untapped, and which can be developed to further enhance organizational goals. In 1975, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) with assistance from the American

³Barry M. Cohen, Joseph L. Moses, and William C. Byham, "The Validity of Assessment Centers," Journal of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Summer 1973):1.

Psychological Association, put into practice the concept of assessment centers as a method for tapping and identifying these talented administrators. According to Paul Hersey, Director of Professional Assistance, NASSP, "what was once a ripple has become a tidal wave,"⁴ as school divisions become aware of the significance of the NASSP project and seek adoption of the procedure. JoAnn Pritchett, assessor for the Jefferson County (Alabama) NASSP Assessment Center, stated that:

We are accountable for those leaders of our children and (the assessment center) gives us an opportunity to choose the best people...the very legal, vocal public is going to question our administrative appointments and the decisions and actions made by those administrators. (The assessment center) gives us a foundation based on fact rather than political or social pressures and is going to be of great benefit as the years go by.⁵

A three-year validation study of the NASSP assessment center model, completed in fall, 1982, and headed by Professor Neal Schmitt, concluded that "...the assessment center is a valid predictor of the job success of administrative personnel in an educational setting."⁶

The purpose of this study is to investigate and determine reasons for the utilization of assessment cen-

⁴Paul W. Hersey, "Good Schools Require Talented Leadership," Educational Leadership (Fall 1981):5.

⁵Recorded interview with Jo Ann Pritchett, Jefferson County (Alabama) Assessment Center and Principal of Berry High School, Birmingham, Alabama, 4 March 1982.

⁶Paul W. Hersey, The NASSP Assessment Center Project, Validation, New Developments (Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, [1982]), p. 4.

ters. The following questions provided a sense of direction for the study:

1. Have assessment centers been established to fill a void for school systems which must make expedient and intelligent decisions in regard to employing building administrators?
2. Have legislation and/or court decisions establishing equal employment opportunities placed traditional personnel policies in jeopardy? Have assessment centers been established in an effort to attain compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions (EEOC) guidelines?
3. What are the predictive elements of the NASSP assessment center? What are the implications of the NASSP validation study?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses form the basis of the study:

Hypothesis 1: Assessment centers have been established because the objective nature of the process enables the selection of talented administrators.

Clarification: The selection of administrative talent is the result of consensus of several evaluators and is based on a variety of dimensions such as leadership, decisiveness, judgment, and organizational ability. All of the dimensions are job-related.

Sub-hypothesis: Objectivity provides a more accurately measured knowledge of a candidate's abilities as compared to traditional subjective opinions.

Hypothesis 2: For reasons of expediency assessment centers have been established to assist school divisions in identifying talented administrators.

Clarification: Often school systems must move quickly to employ administrators. The assessment center alleviates the time factor by establishing a known "talent pool".

Sub-hypothesis: It is further hypothesized that the "calibration of minds"⁷ in the evaluation of abilities is reliable. The final report of the assessment center, therefore, can be substituted for the traditional and lengthy announcement, first interview, final interview, and notification process.

Hypothesis 3: Assessment centers have been established because of the predictive elements of the content.

Clarification: A horizontal three-year validation study of the assessment center process has determined that future successes in administration can be predicted.

Sub-hypothesis: A positive prediction would encourage school officials to select the individual whereas a negative prediction would discourage such selection.

Significance of the Study

The position of the top building administrator is critical since it is he or she who influences the quality of education provided for successive generations of people. It, therefore, becomes obvious that the selection of this individual must be done through a process based on objectivity and equal opportunity.

There has been a considerable degree of professionalism utilized in the development of assessment centers. The skills or dimensions upon which a participant is evaluated are job-related and are the same skills necessary to carry out the daily operation of an educational institution. The assessors who evaluate participants are professional educators themselves who have been trained

⁷"Calibration of minds" is a term that was used by assessors during a consensus discussion observed by the researcher during the operation of an assessment center in York, PA, 4 October 1982.

to evaluate, judge, and counsel assessees with objectivity and care. Finally, to guide the implementation of assessment centers, ethical and professional standards have been formulated. "Professionally designed and developed centers are viewed by both management and participants as a fair and objective method for identifying potential of an individual."⁸

The assessment center is a process that warrants investigation since the implications for its effectiveness can establish a standard for school divisions to pursue.

Definition of Terms

In order to comprehend and clarify the concept of assessment centers, the following terms unique to the topic are defined, utilizing extensive field research by NASSP and other notable researchers, such as Byham, Cohen, Moses, and Bray:

Assessment Center

The term assessment center generally refers to a process for "identifying individual strengths and weaknesses for some specific purpose such as promotion, upgrade, development, or placement."⁹ Specifically, "an

⁸Joseph L. Moses, "Developing an Assessment Center Program for School Administrators," NASSP Bulletin 61 (September 1977):p. 77.

⁹Joseph L. Moses, "The Assessment Center Method," in Applying the Assessment Center Method, ed. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 3.

assessment center consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs. Multiple trained observers and techniques are used. Judgments about behavior are made, in part, from specifically developed assessment simulations. These judgments are pooled by the assessors at an evaluation meeting during which assessment data are reported and discussed, and the assessors agree on the evaluation of the dimensions and any overall evaluation that is made."¹⁰

Assessee

An administrative candidate for selection, placement, promotion, and/or development within an educational setting: for purposes of this study an assessee is a candidate for a principalship or assistant principalship.

Assessor

"An individual, usually in a practicing administrative role, who is trained in observational techniques and assessment methodology and is responsible for observing the behaviors manifest by candidates on specific assessment exercises. He or she is usually a member of a team of assessors charged with developing a comprehensive profile of the strengths and weaknesses of one or more candidates."¹¹

¹⁰Task Force on Assessment Center Standards, "Assessment Center Defined", Standards and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations (New Orleans, Louisiana: International Congress of the Assessment Center Method, 1979), p. 4.

¹¹Ronald Francis Stone, "Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers: A Descriptive Study Examining the

Assessed Characteristics/Skill/Dimensions

1. Problem analysis - ability to seek out relevant data and analyze complex information to determine the important elements of a problem situation; searching for information with a purpose.
2. Judgment - ability to reach logical conclusions and make high quality decisions based on available information; skill in identifying educational needs and setting priorities; ability to critically evaluate written communications.
3. Organizational ability - ability to plan, schedule, and control the work of others; skill in using resources in an optimal fashion; ability to deal with a volume of paperwork and heavy demands on one's time.
4. Decisiveness - ability to recognize when a decision is required (disregarding the quality of the decision) and to act quickly.
5. Leadership - ability to get others involved in solving problems; ability to recognize when a group requires direction, to effectively interact with a group to guide them to accomplish a task.
6. Sensitivity - ability to perceive the needs, concerns, and personal problems of others; skill in resolving conflicts; tact in dealing with persons from different backgrounds; ability to deal effectively with people concerning emotional issues; knowing what information to communicate and to whom.
7. Stress Tolerance - ability to perform under pressure and during opposition; ability to think on one's feet.
8. Oral Communication - ability to make a clear oral presentation of facts or ideas.
9. Written Communication - ability to express ideas clearly in writing; to write appropriately for different audiences -students, teachers, parents, et al.
10. Range of Interests - competence to discuss a variety of subjects - educational, political, current events, economic, etc.; desire to actively participate in events.
11. Personal Motivation - need to achieve in all activities attempted; evidence that work is important in personal satisfaction; ability to be self-policing.

 Development, Implementation, and Perceived Validity of Florida's Three Centers by Former Assesseees and District Superintendents" (Ph. D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1975), p. 6.

12. Educational Values - possession of a well-reasoned educational philosophy; receptiveness to new ideas and change.¹²

Furthermore, the assessment center technique contains the following characteristics:

1. Multiple assessment techniques must be used. At least one of these techniques must be simulation.

A simulation is an exercise or technique designed to elicit behaviors related to dimensions of performance on the job requiring the participants to respond behaviorally to situational stimuli. The stimuli present in a simulation parallel or resemble stimuli in the work situation. Examples of simulations include group exercises, inbasket exercises, interview simulations, fact-finding exercises, etc.

2. Multiple assessors must be used. These assessors must receive thorough training prior to participating in a center.
3. Judgments resulting in an outcome (i.e., recommendation 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 during the exercises.
5. Simulation exercises are used. These exercises are developed to tap a variety of predetermined behaviors and have been pre-tested prior to use to insure that the techniques provide reliable, objective and relevant behavioral information for the organization in question.
6. The dimensions, attributes, characteristics, qualities, skills, abilities, or knowledge 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.¹³

¹²"Skills to be Assessed" National Association of Secondary School Principals, (Reston, Virginia, n.d.)

¹³Task Force, "Assessment Center Defined," pp. 4-5.

The following kinds of activities do not constitute an assessment center:

1. Panel interviews or a series of sequential interviews as the sole technique.
2. Reliance on a specific technique (regardless whether a simulation or not) as the sole basis for evaluation.
3. Using only a test battery composed of a number of pencil and paper measures, regardless of whether the judgments are made by a statistical or judgmental pooling of scores.
4. Single assessor assessment (often referred to as an individual assessment) - measurement by one individual using a variety of techniques, such as pencil and paper tests, interviews, personality measures or simulations.
5. The use of several simulations with more than one assessor where there is no pooling of data; i.e. each assessor prepares a report on performance in an exercise, and the individual reports (unintegrated) are used as the final product of the center.
6. A physical location labeled as an "Assessment Center" which does not conform to the requirements noted above.¹⁴

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The quality of education in a public educational institution is greatly influenced by the leader of that institution.
2. The selection process for talented leadership mandates objective, fair, and effective techniques.
3. The preferred selection process techniques are job-related.
4. There are within public educational institutions individuals who possess administrative talent

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 5-6.

but whose resources are not being utilized due to faulty or biased selection procedures.

Limitations

1. This study focused on the assessment center technique which is only one method for identifying administrative potential.
2. This study is limited to models currently in operation with particular emphasis on the NASSP model which claims validity as a result of comprehensive research.
3. This study covers the time span from 1975 through 1983, a period of time when interest in application of the assessment center process became apparent with development, implementation, and validation of the NASSP model.
4. This study is limited to models in public educational institutions in the United States and Canada.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study includes examination of records of NASSP, scrutinizing and interpreting writers of the movement, interviews and correspondence with key people, oral testimony of key people, observation by the researcher of assessment center procedures, and review and analysis of dissertations related to the topic.

This study is unique as compared to related studies of assessment centers in that it is designed as a case study with its focus placed on the impact of assessment centers in the identification of principals and assistant principals in public educational settings.

The confirmed content and predictive validity of the NASSP model will provide a strong case for widespread application of assessment center techniques.

Related Studies

Writers of the assessment center movement report a growing interest in applying the assessment center technique to the educational arena since the early seventies. In 1973, Merino¹⁵ reported a comparison study of thirty-eight individuals who 1) participated in assessment center activities, and then 2) were rated by subordinates and superordinates in a work environment. The relationship between the two activities was subjected to statistical analysis in an attempt to determine the suitability of utilizing the assessment center technique for analyzing behaviors of school administrators. The researcher concluded that administrators who were given high ratings by assessors were also given high ratings by local individuals in a school district. The assessment center process was perceived by the participants as being a true and meaningful experience, a good evaluator of skills, and a preferred method of selection rather than a personal interview by a personnel director or committee, tests, or recommendation. An outcome of Merino's study is similar to one of the hypotheses in the current study, i.e., success in assessment center activities can predict success in a work environment. A dissimilarity of Merino's study and the current study is that Merino's study

¹⁵Alfred Merino, "The Development of an Assessment Center for the Selection of School Administrators" (Ed. D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1973), pp. 18-20, 119, 177-178.

was based on pure research with $n=38$, whereas the current study is a case study of all assessment centers known to be in existence with n in excess of 1000. A large n will produce a more accurate appraisal of the assessment center concept.

In 1975 Streitman¹⁶ compared simulation-based techniques in a one-day Jaffee assessment center, which is a commercially prepared program developed for use in assessing managerial potential in business, to a "Block-of-Time" program, a two quarter course which assesses school administrative potential at Georgia State University. Thirty-four subjects participated in both the non-educationally oriented Jaffee assessment center and the "Block-of-Time" program and the results produced comparable evaluations. Streitman's study is similar to the current study in that techniques to identify potentially effective educational administrators are investigated. However, Streitman's study was based on pure research and the current study is a case study. The two studies are different in that Streitman compared the results of two specific models, the "Block-of-Time" program and the Jaffee assessment center, whereas the current study surveys all models known to exist. Another dissimilarity between the two studies is that Streitman

¹⁶William Henry Streitman, "The Use of Simulation Techniques to Identify Potentially Effective Educational Administrators," (Ph. D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1975), pp. 42-54, 75.

utilized a technique known as the Jaffee assessment center, which was specifically designed for business, not education. The current study investigates models designed only for education.

In 1975 Stone¹⁷ described Florida's three administrative assessment centers and perceived validity, which were initiated in compliance with the Florida Educational Leadership Training Act of 1969. Broward County, Palm Beach County and the Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative created and field tested unique approaches in assessing educational administrative talent modeled after designs utilized in industry. Results of a Florida administrative assessment center survey indicated that the participants perceived that the assessment center had potential in staff development, professional renewal and personal growth, but it remained doubtful that assessment centers could ever supersede present promotion and selection practices. Stone collected data on the Florida centers by interviewing key people, participating in assessment center activities and by surveying 67 district superintendents and 131 former assessees. His study and the current study have similar methodologies in that the current researcher also interviewed key people and participated in assessment center activities. The two studies are dissimilar in that Stone studied assess-

¹⁷Stone, "Florida's Administrative Centers," pp. 29-52 passim, 109.

ment centers in the state of Florida, whereas the current study investigates assessment centers in all areas of the United States and Canada. Concurring with a dissimilarity enumerated in Streitman's study, the number of people surveyed in the current study far exceeds the study completed by Stone (n in excess of 1000 vs. n=198), thereby producing a more accurate appraisal of the assessment center technique.

In 1976 Zubay¹⁸ compared ratings of 42 administrative students in a one-day assessment center with ratings received during the "Block-of-Time" program at Georgia State University previously referred to by Streitman. Admission to the Department of Educational Administration program at Georgia State University is conditional until the student has successfully completed the ten-hour "Block-of-Time" course. If similar evaluations were obtained from the one-day assessment center, then the admission process could be accelerated, and the student could be admitted to the program without taking the ten-hour course allowing "faculty members, at a much earlier time, the opportunity to plan graduate programs of study and to devote more time to other graduate teaching assignments and research".¹⁹ In developing the assessment center, Zubay utilized an educationally-oriented assess-

¹⁸Alan Hunt Zubay, "The Use of the Assessment Center to Identify Potentially Effective Educational Administrators" (Ph. D. dissertation, Georgia State University, 1976), pp. 5-17 passim, pp. 64-65.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 60.

ment center created by William Britt and added a conflict management exercise and SRA verbal test. He concluded that the one-day assessment center and the "Block-of-Time" evaluation had a moderately high relationship. Zubay's study and the current study are similar in that Zubay utilized an educationally oriented assessment center as a selection technique as does the present study. The two studies are dissimilar in that Zubay utilized the assessment center technique to select administrative students whereas the current study utilizes the assessment center technique to select principals and vice principals. The studies are also dissimilar in that the number of participants in Zubay's study (n=42) is miniscule compared to the present study (n in excess of 1000).

In 1977, noting inadequate selection procedures when appointing building level administrators, Reighard²⁰ constructed an assessment center model for identifying elementary school principals incorporating research based on six questions:

1. What are the duties and responsibilities of the elementary school principals?
2. Which skills and characteristics distinguish effective from ineffective elementary school principals?
3. What are the most recent criteria reported as important to the selection of successful elemen-

²⁰Cynthia Hamilton Reighard, "A Procedural Model for Selecting Elementary School Principals Utilizing the Assessment Center Technique" (Ph. D. dissertation, Miami University, 1977), pp. 128-129, 131, 280-291.

tary principals?

4. What are the procedures and devices typically used by school district personnel to select elementary school principals?
5. What are the components of the assessment center process used to select middle managers in business organizations?
6. What simulation activities have been developed to select or train educational administrators?

The model was submitted to professional educators at Miami University and to a jury of seven persons considered to be authorities in the field of elementary school administration, who offered suggestions as to its fidelity, consistency, and completeness. While the procedural model's face validity has been substantiated by the jury, in question is its predictive validity since the study was limited to its development, not implementation. Reighard's study is similar to the current study in that the assessment center model is based on selection of building administrators. However, the two studies are dissimilar in that Reighard narrowed the selection technique to elementary principals only, whereas the current study examines the assessment center technique in identifying elementary and secondary vice principals and principals. The studies are also dissimilar in that Reighard developed, but did not implement an assessment center model, whereas the current study is concerned with not only development but also implementation of assessment center models, which will provide predictive validity, a

concern raised by Reighard.

From a study of an industrial assessment center utilized in managerial selection and development, in 1978 Gallagher²¹ drew implications from this method and applied them to the selection of school principals, noting that the assessment center technique had not been adequately tested in the selection of educational administrators. Top management served as assessors of six candidates in the two-day pilot assessment center, known as the "Management Skills Workshop". Drawing from her experience with the technique, Gallagher developed a case for the use of the assessment center method in the selection of school principals as it relates to the quality of leadership in the schools, compliance with EEOC regulations, community involvement in the decision-making process as it pertains to the school principal, and cost effectiveness as it reduces the likelihood of selection of inadequate management. She suggested that professional expertise needed to administer an assessment center could be shared by school districts and/or university placement services. The researcher warned that without careful introduction, the assessment center method can be seen only as an evaluative tool, and as such, a threat. Gallagher summarized her study by stating that the as-

²¹Margaret Gallagher, "The Development and Pilot Operation of an Assessment Center with Implications for the Selection of School Principals" (Ed. D. dissertation, Western Michigan University, 1978), pp. 49-60 passim, pp. 119-130 passim.

assessment center method improves management's ability to predict successful managerial performance. Gallagher's study and the current study are similar in that they both deal with the selection of quality building administrators. The studies are dissimilar in that Gallagher gleaned the basis for implications in education on her experience with a two-day business-oriented assessment center operated by a Fortune 500 company, whereas the current study focuses on assessment centers operated by educationally-oriented organizations. Simulations and activities in assessment centers investigated during the present study are job-related, and it stands to reason that an educational assessment center should feature activities related to the job itself, i.e. to education, even though leadership behaviors in business and education could be more alike than different. In addition, the number in Gallagher's investigation equalled 6, whereas the current study is in excess of 1000.

In 1978 Boyer²² reported on the operation of a rural cooperative assessment center in Mississippi run by a group of school districts which was designed to identify individuals in rural school districts who had administrative potential, but little or no opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. Eighteen participants and

²² Roscoe A. Boyer, Use of Assessment Center in the Selection and Training of School Administrators (Toronto, Canada: ERIC Document Reproduction Service 161134, 1978) pp. 2-11 passim.

nine assessors were the maximum number involved in any one assessment center. The assessors consisted of school board members, junior and senior high school counselors and principals, junior college professors, and personnel from the state department of education. Training of assessors was accomplished throughout the day on which the assessment center was held. The assessment center lasted one full day with two additional sessions of two hours each. The full day was spent in training assessors and evaluating candidates. Each candidate was given a report of his/her evaluation approximately three weeks later in a two hour session at which time the participant could decide whether the center should make the file available for placement purposes. A final session, held two weeks later, was designed to develop programs for professional advancement of the participant. Boyer cautioned that whereas the major accomplishment of the assessment center was diagnosis of weaknesses, the emphasis should be on treatment of those weaknesses. He suggested that as the assessment center expands, guidelines need to be formulated for writing prescriptions, monitoring treatments and destroying out of date information, and that validation is long overdue. Boyer's study reports on one assessment center in one state. Whereas his study and the current study both examine the assessment center technique to identify administrative potential, the studies are dissimilar in that the current one investigates

all assessment centers known to be in existence, which will result in a truer picture of the value of the assessment center technique. Boyer's observation that validation is long overdue is timely, since the basis of the current study is a three year validation study of the NASSP assessment center.

Facing as many as twelve openings for school principals in a year, the Montgomery County, Maryland, school system developed a principal candidate's assessment center which set as its goal to give administrators a close and realistic look at those persons who want to become school principals. Candidates were practicing assistant principals currently employed by the school district who expressed a desire to be promoted to the position of principal. In 1978 McKay²³ described the two day assessment center at which time twenty-four principal candidates were assessed by twelve evaluators (two school principals and ten administrators). The main exercises involved drafting an action plan to a hypothetical principal's problem, simulating supervision utilizing a videotaped lesson, preparing and delivering an oral presentation, and organizing a principal's inbasket. The evaluators completed and reviewed detailed rating forms on each candidate as an aid in clarifying assignments and defining goals. In evaluating the assessment center

²³A. Bruce McKay and Robert G. McCord, "Consider This Neat Little Way to Size up Your Would-be Principals", American School Board Journal, 165 (April, 1978):p.37.

process, assessors rated the program somewhat higher than did the candidates, who were critical of the high-powered pace, but both groups said that the experience had a tangible value. McKay's report of an assessment center reveals that the technique was utilized to select potential school principals. The current study differs in that the assessment center technique is utilized to select potential assistant principals and principals. In addition, McKay describes one assessment center in one particular community; the current study describes many assessment centers in many different communities.

Capitalizing on research in which a relationship is drawn between administrative behavior and school productivity, in 1980 Geering²⁴ reported the need for principals to participate in a staff development program that would identify areas of need and enhance professional skills. Furthermore, because of less job mobility due to stable or even declining positions in many school districts, Geering contended that "training and retraining of principals must become a high priority so that schools can meet the challenges of the future,"²⁵ and therefore, examined the potential of assessment centers as a device for selecting and developing school principals. Citing a survey completed by Bener in 1973 of thirty-four organi-

²⁴Adrian D. Geering, An Examination of the Use of Assessment Centers to Select and Develop Principals (Australia: ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 201 033, 1980) pp. 2-28 passim.

²⁵Ibid. p. 6.

zations in the United States and Canada utilizing assessment centers, the characteristics of assessment centers were identified. Geering recommended refining assessment center technology by conducting research on "construct validity, content validity, predictive validity, and reliability of assessment center design, practices, and operation."²⁶ Geering's report and the current study are similar in that both emphasize the selection of educational administrators, however, Geering theorized the importance of assessment centers without the benefit of practicing assessment center research. The current study is dissimilar with Geering's in that practicing assessment centers currently in operation form the nucleus of the study. Furthermore, the current researcher will present results of extensive research on "construct validity, content validity, predictive validity and reliability of assessment center design, practices, and operation,"²⁷ as recommended by Geering.

In a paper presented to the American Educational Research Association, Donald Musella²⁸ described a pilot program of an "assessment centre" involving the Peel Board of Education in Toronto, Canada. The concept evolved from original ideas in industry and from NASSP.²⁹ Data

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Donald Musella, "Improving Administrator Selection Procedures," a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, California, 16 April 1981.

²⁹Donald Musella to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, 3 March 1982.

collected on the candidates was to be used in a summative sense - for the purpose of advancement. Musella was cautious about the subjectivity of the evaluations - the contamination of personal style and the influence of one's experience on the perception of another. He, therefore, emphasized thorough and careful training of assessors and monitoring of candidate's scores. Due to reorganization of the Peel Board, the assessment center was not used other than for a training function, however, early data on the pilot was considered most successful and valuable.³⁰ Musella's study and the current study both deal with the assessment center as used for advancement within a school setting. Musella's study and the current study are not similar in that Musella's assessment center was used only for training in one school division, whereas the current study investigates the development and utilization of numerous assessment centers. The current case study is unique because it is based on operational assessment center and no other study of this type has been executed to date.

In summarizing, it is generally felt that there is a definite relationship between the evaluation of school administrative potential as identified through assessment center techniques and on-the-job performance. The assessment center model must be characterized by a representation of skills, activities and dimensions selected

³⁰Ibid.

as a sample used in the operation of public educational institutions. Development of the assessment center requires careful analysis with emphasis on selecting criteria for successful managerial performance, on designing activities which elicit behavior reflective of those criteria, on intense training of assessors to achieve high degree of agreement, and on communicating objectives of assessment centers to participants to avoid the process as being perceived as a threat and thus, tainting results.

In reviewing the related studies, there appeared little, if any, information on the objectivity and expediency factors of assessment centers, which comprise two of the hypotheses of the current study. The current study is, therefore, vital as these two areas warrant investigation.

A need for longitudinal validation studies of assessment centers is indicated in the literature. Such validation studies would track assessees in their professional careers and would prove or disprove evaluations. The current study is unique in that the results of a three-year longitudinal validation study of the NASSP assessment center will be reported which will provide predictive credibility in this identification process of school administrators.

Organization of the Study

The purpose of Chapter I has been to state the problem, to present the hypotheses that form the basis of the study, and to enumerate the significance, the assumptions, limitations, review of related studies and the organization of the dissertation. In order to test the hypotheses as they relate to reasons for the use of assessment centers, it is necessary to review the history of assessment center in Chapter II. Chapter III will present the design of assessment center as they evolved during the development. Chapter IV will examine the selection and training of assessors. In Chapter V there will be a discussion of the validation of assessment centers. Chapter VI will contain the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

History of Assessment Centers

Introduction

The development of assessment centers can be traced to three sectors: first, the military sector which utilized the technique to select intelligence personnel during World War II; second, the business sector which selected managers and supervisors using a similar process; and third, the public sector, specifically the field of education, which identified administrative personnel to operate elementary and secondary educational institutions. The purpose of Chapter II is to present the history of assessment centers. This will be done through a study of these sectors with emphasis on the relationship of the hypotheses of the current study to the reasons for utilization of the assessment center process in the three sectors mentioned.

History of Multiple Assessment in the Military

The concept of multiple assessment in the United States originated in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), later known as the Central Intelligence Agency, which involved the selection of personnel to carry out intelligence activities during World War II. Plagued

with too many cases of bad recruitment, the assessment and selection program developed as a result of genuine need. The head of the OSS, General William Donovan, visited a War Office Selection Board (WOSB) in Britain, which conducted an imaginative program that had been devised by a team of psychiatrists and psychologists for selecting officer candidates for the British Army. Impressed with the technique, the concept was proposed and accepted by the OSS staff who hastily and miraculously designed an assessment program with implementation in slightly more than two months. 5391 men and women recruits were studied intensively at assessment headquarters known as "stations"¹, and were evaluated in one and/or three day programs as to mental, emotional, and physical abilities. These assessments occurred between the years 1943 and 1945. In developing the OSS assessment program, the following characteristics of the system of assessment were advocated as essential:

1. SOCIAL SETTING: The whole program is conducted within a social matrix composed of staff and candidates, which permits frequent informal contacts and, therefore, many opportunities to observe typical modes of response to other human beings.
2. MULTIFORM PROCEDURES: Many different kinds of techniques are employed, running all the way

¹"Stations" is a term used to identify the location of facilities where evaluation occurred, e.g. "station S" (S was synonymous with secret) was located on a country estate forty minutes outside Washington, D.C., "station W" was set up in Washington, D.C., "station WS" was set up on a Pacific beach. OSS Assessment Staff, Assessment of Men (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1948) pp. 3-5.

from standardized tests to uncontrolled situations, special attention being given to the interview, to projective techniques, and to performance tests.

3. **LIFELIKE TASKS:** Assesseees are given lifelike tasks in a lifelike environment: the tasks are complicated, requiring for their solution organization of thought at a high integrative level, and some of them must be performed under stress in collaboration with others.
4. **FORMULATIONS OF PERSONALITY:** Sufficient data are collected and sufficient time is available to permit conceptualization of the form of some of the chief components of the personality of each assessee, this formulation being used as a frame of reference in making recommendations and predictions.
5. **STAFF CONFERENCE:** Interpretations of the behavior of each assessee are discussed at a final meeting of staff members, and decisions (ratings and recommendations) are reached by consensus.
6. **TABULATION OF ASSESSMENTS:** The formulations of personality, the ratings of variables, and the predictions of effectiveness are systematically recorded in a form which will permit statistical treatment and precise comparisons with later appraisals.
7. **VALID APPRAISAL PROCEDURES:** Special attention is devoted to the perfection of appraisal techniques, so that reliable measures can be obtained of the validity of each test in the assessment program and of the ratings of each variable.²

Early reports on the OSS assessment program were favorable and generated interest in the use of the assessment center method "not only for predicting future performance, but also as a research method for the inten-

²OSS Assessment Staff, Assessment of Men (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1948) p. 464.

sive study of highly effective individuals."³ The program also provided a known talent pool of personnel who were expediently placed into intelligence situations. Furthermore, objectivity of the evaluations was promoted by several methods: recruits were dressed in Army fatigues to deprive assessors of cues commonly utilized in judging character, and each invented a pseudonym to retain anonymity.⁴ In addition, assessment was completed by a team of evaluators utilizing a variety of techniques with final evaluation reached by consensus which promoted objectivity. Both expediency and objectivity form the bases of hypotheses in the current study.

History of Multiple Assessment in Business

The application and experimentation of multiple assessment procedures in industry is credited to The American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) with the "Management Progress Program". A longitudinal study of the program began in 1956 and assessed the developmental managerial potential of young men in American business. Reasonable predictive validity was established and the foundation for future application of the assessment center technique was ensconced.⁵

³Donald W. MacKinnon, An Overview of Assessment Centers (Greensboro, North Carolina: Center for Creative Leadership, 1975) p. 2.

⁴OSS, Assessment of Men, pp. 21-22.

⁵Douglas W. Bray and Donald L. Grant, "The Assessment Center in the Measurement of Potential for Business Management," Psychological Monographs, vol. 80, no. 17 (1966), pp. 1-24 passim.

Michigan Bell began operating assessment centers in 1958 and results were so promising that the process was established in over 50 centers throughout the Bell System. Approximately 8,000-10,000 candidates were tested annually.^{6&7} Standard Oil (Ohio) began an adaption of the assessment center process in 1963, followed by International Business Machines (IBM), General Electric, Sears Roebuck, and Co., and J. C. Penney Co.

Cohen, Moses and Byham have divided the history of the development of the assessment center applications into three separate periods: Initial, when multiple assessment methods were introduced and a foundation was established; Early Industrial Period, which began in the mid 1950's when assessment centers were utilized and researched in industry; and General Application Period, which began in the late 1960's when a widespread adoption of assessment centers appeared in governmental agencies and numerous industries.^{8 9 & 10} Programs to identify managerial potential were initiated in agencies across the United States with variations and adaptations in imple-

⁶Douglas W. Bray and Richard J. Campbell, "Selection of Salesmen by Means of an Assessment Center," Journal of Applied Psychology, vol. 52, no. 1 (1968), pp. 36-41.

⁷Robert C. Albroom, "How to Spot Executives Early," Fortune, July 1968, pp. 106-111.

⁸Cohen, Moses and Byham, "Validity of Assessment Centers," pp. 4-5.

⁹W. C. Byham, "Assessment Center for Spotting Future Managers," Harvard Business Review, July-August 1970 pp. 150-160.

¹⁰D. W. Bray and J. L. Moses, "Personnel Selection," Annual Review of Psychology, vol. 23 (1972) pp. 545-576 passim.

mentation. Byham reports that one thousand or more organizations throughout the world are making use of the assessment center method, at least 30,000 individuals are assessed yearly, and that the method is expanding rapidly.¹¹

Cohen, et al. presented summaries of nineteen validity studies of assessment centers in industrial settings. Among the business represented in the report were AT&T, IBM, Caterpillar Tractor Co., Standard Oil (Ohio), Sears Roebuck and Co., three manufacturing organizations and a bank combined into one study, and a hospital. The studies occurred between 1964 and 1972. The number of participants totaled 9301, and the studies revealed "strong relationships between assessments and job performance,"¹² which supports the hypothesis of the current study that assessment centers have been established because of the predictive elements of the content.

MacKinnon¹³ questioned why there had been an explosion of interest in the assessment center method in the seventies. He hypothesized that perhaps the increasing need for effective managers and the realization of how costly it was to hire managers who failed demanded more

¹¹William C. Byham, "Application of the Assessment Center Method," in Applying the Assessment Center Method, ed. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), pp. 31-32.

¹²Cohen, Moses, and Byham, "Validity of Assessment Centers," p. 25.

¹³Donald W. MacKinnon, An Overview of Assessment Centers (Greensboro, North Carolina: Center for Creative Leadership, 1975) pp. 4-5.

efficient methods of selection over traditional ones. He believed that the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which preceded the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines, had a significant impact on forcing employers to seek fair (objective) and effective selection techniques.

Such a technique is the assessment center. He also credited an increasing interest in assessment center to the establishment of numerous consulting companies who are prepared to set up assessment centers in any type of business or public service organization.

Huck and Bray¹⁴ researched the objectivity of assessment center evaluations of minority groups, and reported that the "assessment center method is especially attractive for affirmative action, such as the accelerated advancement of minority groups and women... Subjects in this study, both white and black, who were rated high at assessment showed excellent job performance and high potential for advancement with almost four times the frequency of those rated low. The assessment center method appears to be highly useful in providing opportunity to the most capable in an unbiased manner."¹⁵

¹⁴James R. Huck and Douglas W. Bray, "Management Assessment Center Evaluations and Subsequent Job Performance of White and Black Females", Personnel Psychology, vol. 29, (1976) pp. 13-29.

¹⁵Ibid. p. 29.

Moses and Boehm¹⁶ researched the objectivity of assessment center performance of women and reported that, "...the assessment process predicts the future performance of women as accurately as it does that of men...Since the proportion of males and females who do well in assessment centers are nearly identical, the assessment center method appears to be a logical means for providing equal opportunity to women for promotion into management positions and advancement within managerial levels."¹⁷

It is significant to note that by 1973, at the first meeting of the International Congress of the Assessment Center Method, it was disclosed that rapid growth had taken place in assessment center technology, and practitioners deemed it advisable to establish standards and/or guidelines for implementation. Therefore, the Third International Congress on the Assessment Center Method meeting in Quebec (May, 1975) established a primary set of guidelines.¹⁸ Based on professional experience with the guidelines and expanded usage of the technique, the original standards were revised in 1979 to

¹⁶Joseph L. Moses and Virginia R. Boehm, "Relationship of Assessment Center Performance to Management Progress of Women", Journal of Applied Psychology, vol. 60 no. 4 (1975) pp. 527-529.

¹⁷Ibid. p. 529.

¹⁸Edgar A. Kelley, "The Use of Assessment Center Techniques for Personnel Decisions in Preparation Programs and Career Planning Programs for Educational Administration: Needed Research and Development," paper prepared for University Council for Educational Administration, Columbus, Ohio, January, 1980.

include further definitions, clarification of impact on organizations and participants, expanded guidelines on training, additional information on validation and a special section on rights of the participant.¹⁹ The report is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix A.

History of Multiple Assessment in Education

Assessment centers applied to the field of education and utilized to identify administrative personnel to operate elementary and secondary educational institutions appeared in the seventies. The assessment centers reported to be established and subject to scrutiny in the current study are as follows:

1. Assessment Center, NASSP model which is in operation in nineteen locations in the United States
2. Management Assessment Center, Dade County Public Schools, Florida
3. Assessment Center, Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada
4. Assessment Centers, Broward County, Palm Beach County, and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida
5. Assessment Center, Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland
6. Assessment Center, University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services

Assessment Center - NASSP Model

In 1974, buoyed by the success of the assessment

¹⁹Task Force on Assessment Center Standards, Standards and Ethical Considerations for Assessment Center Operations, Endorsed by the VII International Congress of the Assessment Center Method, New Orleans, Louisiana, June, 1979.

center concept in the business world, the American Psychological Association's Public Policy and Social Issues Committee in Action developed a strategy to share their expertise in an arena in which services of industrial psychologists would not be available. This strategy consisted of offering professional services, on a small scale, to an agency in the public sector which subsequently could enhance that sector's organizational effectiveness. The project which became known as the Technical Assistance Program (TAP), was managed by a subcommittee headed by Joseph L. Moses, Director of Research and Development, AT&T. The objectives of TAP were to develop and provide professional services and to serve as a model and provide training opportunities to a public agency. Guidelines were established and the search for a "host" agency was undertaken. TAP wanted to work with a nationally based organization which had adequate resources for replication and continuity of their services and one that had considerable influence in a major public area. After many meetings with representatives of candidate organizations, TAP members chose NASSP as the recipient agency, an organization which not only met all the criteria, "...it appeared to offer the climate and resources of a dedicated public service agency, impacting on virtually every community in America."²⁰

²⁰Joseph L. Moses, Bernard M. Bass, Brenda D. Gurel, George W. Henderson, Hal W. Hendrick, Thomas A. Jeswald, The Technical Assistance Program, A Review of the Public

Discussions with NASSP ultimately led to an assessment center pilot project, directed by Paul W. Hersey, Director of Professional Assistance for NASSP, who formally accepted the TAP offer in August, 1975. Two target school districts, Prince William County, Maryland, and Charlottesville, Virginia, were identified and two separate but similar assessment programs were initiated: one program emphasized selection of administrators and the other focused on developmental needs of current administrators. Twelve practicing administrators were trained as assessors and a director was named for each center.

Thomas Jeswald, a member of the TAP committee and Manager of Selection and Placement for R. R. Donnelly and Sons, supervised the design of the model (described in detail in Chapter III) that was implemented within an educational context.

The culmination of the pilot assessment center was the compilation of a comprehensive report on each assessee which was produced by a team of assessors after carefully directed observations and discussions of those observations. The report itemized strengths and weaknesses of the assessee based on the targeted characteristics and became a part of the personnel file in the candidate's organization. One of the pilot school divi-

Policy and Social Issues Committee in Action, report for distribution at the Division 14 business meeting, 84th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., Sept. 4, 1976.

sions established the following guidelines in regard to the utilization of the reports:

1. The assessment report is reviewed with the participant within one week after the assessment.
2. The report becomes a part of the participant's personnel file for two years. After that period, it is considered obsolete and is destroyed.
3. As administrative openings occur, assessment reports will be part of the information considered. However, participation in an assessment center does not guarantee a person's selection. Likewise, persons who do not participate are not automatically excluded from consideration.
4. Although the assessment center is designed to bring out administrative strengths and areas where improvement is needed, there are no "pass-fail" standards that apply to all openings in the district. For some positions, strength in certain areas could compensate for weakness in others.²¹

By December 1983, the NASSP assessment program had expanded to include nineteen centers situated throughout the United States. 588 assessors had been trained and the centers had processed 1432 "threshold" administrators.²²

In 1979 a three-year validation study of the project was initiated, partially financed by the Rockefeller Family Fund and the Spencer Foundation. The team of psychologists who conducted the study were composed of

²¹Thomas A. Jeswald, "A New Approach to Identifying Administrative Talent", NASSP Bulletin 61 (September, 1977):pp. 82-83.

²²Report of NASSP National Assessment Center Activities to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, 1 December 1983 (Typewritten.)

Neal Schmitt, Chairman, Raymond Noe, Ronni Meritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson. When the study concluded its report in the fall of 1982, Schmitt et al. announced, "...the assessment center is a content valid procedure for the selection of school administrators."²³ A comprehensive report of the validation study is presented in Chapter V.

Refer to Appendix B for a listing of NASSP pilot assessment centers, directors, assessors trained and participants assessed as of December, 1983.

The Administrative Assessment Center (NASSP model) is one of seven components which comprise the Austin, Texas, Independent School District's Administrative Leadership Program. For two or three days, twelve candidates are observed by six trained assessors to evaluate general administrative skills. A written report and recommendation about the candidate is composed and remains confidential and is available only to the candidate and to district administrators responsible for filling vacant positions. An overall rating scale from 1 to 5 is used with successful completion identified as a 4 or 5. Candidates who received a "successful" rating have their files placed into the district's administrative "bank", providing a known "talent pool" for expediency, and are

²³Neal Schmitt, Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson, Criterion Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center (Michigan State University: n.d.) p. 2.

considered for future vacancies and in addition, have the opportunity to do an internship and plan a personal professional development program.²⁴ In the fall of 1983, all administrative vacancies at the level of assistant principal, principal, and supervisor/coordinator were filled by candidates who successfully completed the assessment center.²⁵ The assessment center is also seen as having great potential as a professional development process for administrators already on the job.²⁶

The Jefferson County, Alabama, Education Assessment Center (JEFCOED) (NASSP model) is designed to pinpoint specific strengths and weaknesses, rather than evaluate on a pass/fail basis. It helps the school system in placing the right person in the right job and promotes professional growth. The six-member assessment team, carefully selected to provide balance in three areas -male/female, black/white, elementary/secondary principals, spends 65-70 hours evaluating each assessee's performance. Those participants who receive favorable recommendations are given preference in job promotions.²⁷ By 1982 JEFCOED had run nine assessment centers and evaluated eighty-four participants. Their only modification was to lower the number of assessees to be processed at

²⁴Austin Independent School District's Administrative Assessment Center (Austin, Texas n.d.)

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Jim W. Patterson to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, 5 March 1982.

²⁷Better School Management: The JEFCOED Assessment Center (Birmingham, Alabama n.d.).

one time to six.²⁸ It was made clear to JEFCEOD that they did not just join the NASSP assessment center program, they had to apply and be accepted through visitation to NASSP headquarters in Reston, Virginia, and in effect, they had to sell themselves to Mr. Hersey, in that they were genuinely interested in the assessment center concept.²⁹ Jones and Pritchett both emphasized the assessment center as to its objectivity. "Even those candidates who are unhappy with their performance express appreciation for the objective process used in gathering data."³⁰ "As an assessor I am forced to be completely objective in my approach."³¹ The NASSP assessment center has been credited as being "a very competent guide toward the development of better administration..."³² in the Jefferson County Public Schools.

Portsmouth, Virginia, began an assessment center (NASSP model) in 1978 which features activities that are keyed to practical work situations. Assessors look for manifestations of managerial, educational, and interpersonal skills. A benefit of the assessment center, as viewed by administrators, is that it diffuses emotions in the promotion process, and advances objectivity. Tradi-

²⁸Ron Jones, Director of JEFCEOD Assessment Center, in a recorded interview, 4 March 1982.

²⁹William Dodson, Assessor JEFCEOD Assessment Center, in a recorded interview, 4 March 1982.

³⁰Ron Jones, "NASSP's Assessment Center," NASSP Bulletin 64 (October, 1980): p. 95.

³¹JoAnn H. Pritchett, "NASSP's Assessment Center", NASSP Bulletin 64 (October, 1980):p. 97.

³²Ibid.

tionally, vacancies are advertised and expectations are raised; unsuccessful applicants are disappointed. Assessment centers are scheduled at times of the year when vacancies do not occur, therefore, expectations are not raised. A more accurately measured knowledge of a candidate's abilities is supplied. Principals and supervisors participating as assessors are pleased by the objective way the process works to identify prospective talent without bias. "I wouldn't have believed that the system would have worked with seven assessors as different as we were, but it did work," said one.³³ Portsmouth officials contend that assessment centers have withstood the scrutiny of the courts, in fact, a federal court in New York appointed a consultant firm to set up an assessment center for New York City's schools, establishing the basis that the assessment center is fair in techniques.

The assessment center provides information about candidates which normally would not be available, thus allowing the employer to make better judgments about hiring and promoting. In addition, the information generated by the center identified areas for individual improvement, which could be used in planning employee training and inservice.³⁴

The San Diego County, California, Assessment Center

³³Unidentified assessor, The Assessment Center Toward More Practical Promoting (Portsmouth, Virginia: n.d.).

³⁴Raymond A. Hale to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, 19 February 1982.

(NASSP model) was organized because of a large number of retiring administrators and the subsequent need for a known "talent pool" of candidates, because of the Dennis Mangers Task Force Report which issued a strong recommendation for educational institutions to take a look at the assessment center as a possible means for selecting personnel, and because they currently run a prescriptive administrative training center, and therefore the assessment center would be a logical diagnostic preceding step. Eventually the goal is to provide an assessment center to assess practicing school administrators, to allow that person to have their needs and skills identified, and then be able to develop a professional growth plan to help them acquire the skills they need in order to do the job better.³⁵

Assessment Center - Dade County Public Schools, Florida

In the spring of 1982, Dade County Public Schools established a Management Assessment Center, and have, to date, conducted a total of 655 assessments. Kenneth G. Michaels,³⁶ director of the center, stated that he sees nothing wrong with traditional selection procedures, such as, application forms, personal interviews, or written evaluations. However, from this information one "...must

³⁵Ronald W. Hockwalt to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, 24 March, 1982.

³⁶Kenneth G. Michaels, "Our Assessment Center Benefits the Entire Management Team", Executive Educator, November 1983 pp. 23-25.

infer...how well a candidate will perform as a principal or assistant principal...none of the usual selection methods gives candidates a chance actually to function in the role - to be observed objectively in that role, and to be rated on uniform performance criteria. An assessment center...provides that opportunity."³⁷ Because the simulations in the assessment center are job-related and the exercises require skills that have been identified as essential in the successful management of a school, the results will definitely predict performance on the job. In addition, requirements set forth by the EEOC's "Uniform Guidelines for Employee Selection Procedures" dictate that criteria used to select candidates must be job-related. The process is objective in that each candidate is observed by a different member of a three-member assessment team during each exercise. The assessment teams meet to discuss their candidates' performances and agree on an overall score for each one, which provides for a more accurately measured knowledge of a candidate's abilities. When a principalship or assistant principalship vacancy occurs, the system has a ready pool of talented candidates to be considered for the position, which expedites the selection process. Objectivity and expediency form the bases for two of the hypotheses of the current study.

³⁷Ibid. pp. 23-24.

Assessment Center - Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada

Responding to a concern with a less than desirable selection process that was being used to appoint principals, the Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada, agreed to serve as a pilot school district in the establishment of an 'assessment centre' which was designed to improve that selection process. Musella³⁸ reported that procedures needed to be developed which would, "...provide some assurance that judgments (were) based on data that (were) job-related (validity) and consistent (reliability)." ³⁹ He felt that if careful attention is paid to training assessors, and to monitoring the sessions in which consensus decisions take the form of candidate scores then subjectivity would be minimized, and objectivity increased. Furthermore, care was taken to develop real-life experiences for the candidate to ensure a high degree of content validity which would predict behaviors on the job.

Assessment Centers - Broward County, Palm Beach County, and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida

The Florida Educational Leadership Training Act of 1969 encouraged research and development of administrative competencies and as a result three assessment centers were established to identify school principals.

³⁸Musella, "Improving Procedures", pp. 3, 6-8.

³⁹Ibid. p. 3.

Stone⁴⁰ surveyed superintendents and assessees who were involved with the assessment centers and reported findings which involved the establishment of a known "talent pool" which would provide applicants in an expedient manner when a vacancy occurred, referring to one hypothesis in the current study. However, this was viewed negatively by assessees in Broward County in that many more individuals were assessed than the district could possibly place in a reasonable span of time. In the Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative assessment center, the relatively low turn-over rate of administrators in this rural and sparsely populated district makes it impractical to assess and train prospective administrators, knowing that they may never be promoted. In Palm Beach County candidates felt that they had received relatively objective evaluations on their performance since assessors had been selected from outside Palm Beach County. Furthermore, 91 percent recommended that assessment center performance be used as a criterion for selection of school administrators in the future.

Assessment Center - Montgomery County, Maryland

The aim of the assessment center established in Montgomery County, Maryland, Public Schools, as reported

⁴⁰Stone, "Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers," pp. 28, 111, 115, 119.

by McKay,⁴¹ & 42 is to give administrators a close and realistic look at those persons who want to become school principals. The school division faces up to twelve openings for school principals per year and therefore, it is essential that a "bank" of known administrative talent be established which makes reference to one of the hypotheses in the current study. In one assessment program twenty-four principal candidates were assessed by twelve evaluators. Using this method the selection of administrative talent was the result of consensus of several evaluators which provides for objectivity and thus a more accurately measured knowledge of a candidate's abilities which again makes reference to one of the hypotheses in the current study. The exercises and simulations are job-related and are used to identify candidates who possess competencies needed by effective principals. With this method behaviors on the job can be better predicted.

Assessment Center - University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services

A cooperative assessment center was established in Mississippi to identify individuals in rural school districts who had little opportunity to demonstrate administrative abilities. Whenever eight or more participants

 41A. Bruce McKay, "The Montgomery County Public Schools Assessment Center", Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing Newsletter vol. 5 no. 1 (September 1979) pp. 11-12.

42McKay and McCord, "Consider this way," p. 37.

are nominated by a superintendent, a center is established. Boyer⁴³ reports that the assessment center has allowed school divisions to establish a bank of known talent and has encouraged a system for weeding "...out of the applicant pool those unqualified for administrative positions, and (has) made available on regional and state levels the names of those so qualified - thus making it easier to coordinate the supply of administrative talent to administrative need."⁴⁴ Administrators perceive another benefit of assessment centers to be the objective nature of the process. Not more than eighteen participants and nine assessors are involved in any one assessment center. The final report is a result of consensus which provides objectivity in the evaluation. The simulations and exercises are related to activities on the job. Therefore, success in the assessment center can predict success on the job. The Mississippi model promotes expediency and objectivity which are two of the hypotheses of the current study.

Summary

In reporting on the history of assessment centers, three sectors were studied: the military sector, the business sector, and the public sector. The three sectors were analyzed in relationship to the hypotheses of the current study and the reasons for the utilization of

⁴³Boyer, Use of Assessment Centers, pp. 3-6.

⁴⁴Ibid. p. 3.

the assessment center process in each sector.

The current study hypothesizes that assessment centers have been established because of the objective nature of the process, the expediency factor, and the predictive elements of the content. In the military sector these were found to be true as multiform procedures for assessment were developed and the final evaluation was the result of consensus of staff members which promoted objectivity; a known talent pool was developed through the assessment process and solved the need for hasty and perhaps inappropriate evaluations and thus promoted expediency; lifelike tasks and simulations were designed in a lifelike environment which could be used as valid predictors of behavior in a real situation.

In the business sector two of the hypotheses were also found to be true. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was cited as having a significant impact on employers in developing objective selection techniques. A study dealing with evaluations of minority groups and another dealing with assessment center performance of women were reported and supported the hypothesis that the assessment center technique promotes objectivity. Other studies were reported that determined that the process has predictive validity, i.e., that there is a strong relationship between assessments and performance on the job.

In the public sector the hypotheses were also found to be true. Assessment center models that were

developed to identify potential educational administrators were reported as objective in nature, i.e., evaluation is the result of consensus of several evaluators which provides for a more accurately measured knowledge of abilities. Objectivity is also established in that the assessment center process diffuses emotions in the promotion process. The hypothesis dealing with expediency was supported as true with the reports of the establishment of banks of known administrative talent through the assessment center process; perhaps of equal importance is that the process "weeds out" those candidates unqualified for administrative positions. The third hypothesis which refers to the predictive nature of the process was confirmed with the validation study of the NASSP model. Other educational models reported that success in the assessment center can predict success on the job.

CHAPTER III

Design of Assessment Centers

Introduction

The design of assessment centers which identify administrative potential is known as the "master plan" and comprises several essential components. The skills to be assessed or dimensions as they may be labeled, are critical ingredients, and may vary depending upon the objective of the assessment center. The exercises or activities which are designed to elicit the targeted dimensions are preferred to be job-related and thus, should reflect routines and tasks which are characteristic of the desired position. Other factors included in the design of assessment centers are purpose, length of time, personnel involved, and evaluation profile. The purpose of Chapter III is to describe the designs of six educational assessment centers in the United States and Canada. Since this identification process was adapted from designs initiated in the military and business sectors, an historical background is presented to establish a frame of reference.

Historical Perspective

During the time of crisis in World War II, when it

became critical to select only the most effective intelligence personnel to ensure the survival of the United States, a selection process for same was devised and implemented which was later copied and modified by businesses, industries, and many sectors of public service, including the field of education. This selection process, for the purposes of the current study known as the assessment center, which is utilized to identify supervisory potential, spread to many fields in response to demands for accountability and organizational effectiveness.

It is appropriate to investigate the design of the OSS assessment program in order to comprehend the impact of its implementation into other fields.

The OSS assessment team consisted of psychologists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists, and psychiatrists. The team ironically agreed on a systematic scheme of assessment: "multiform" because it involved a large number of procedures and "Gestalt" because it took the results of these procedures and used them to arrive at a picture of personality as a whole. Utilizing this information made it possible to predict one's behavior in a given situation. The scheme was set forth as a series of eight steps:

Step 1. Make a preparatory analysis of all the jobs for which candidates are to be assessed.

Step 2. On the basis of the preparatory analysis of jobs list all the personality determinants of success or failure in the performance of

each job; and from this, list the variables to be measured by the assessment process.

- Step 3. Define (in words that are intelligible to the personnel officers and administrators of the organization) a rating scale for each of the personality variables on the selected list, as well as for the one over-all variable Job Fitness.
- Step 4. Design a program of assessment procedures which will reveal the strengths of the selected variables.
- Step 5. Construct a sufficient formulation of the personality of each assessee before making specific ratings, predictions, and recommendations.
- Step 6. Write, in non-technical language, a personality sketch of each assessee, which predictively describes him as a functioning member of the organization.
- Step 7. At the end of the assessment period hold a staff conference for the purpose of reviewing and correcting the personality sketch and of deciding on the ratings and recommendations of each assessee.
- Step 8. Construct experimental designs as frames for assessment procedures so that all the data necessary for the solution of strategic problems will be systematically obtained and recorded.¹

AT&T was the first to apply the assessment technique in 1956 in its Management Progress Study, in an attempt to evaluate managerial ability. Bray² reported on the effectiveness of the assessment center method, which was a modification of the OSS "model", and pointed out the steps that had been taken in designing the process: thorough study of the total situation for which the assess-

¹OSS, Assessment of Men, pp. 28-56 passim.

²Bray and Grant, "The Assessment Center in Measurement," 80: 3-4.

ment was being made, variables derived for which judgments were to be made, definition of assessed characteristics, methods developed for eliciting behaviors, selection and training of competent assessors, selection of assessees, evaluation of assessees, and evaluation of results of the assessment.

Cohen, Moses and Byham³ simplified the design of assessment centers into three steps:

1. determining the dimensions to be assessed by conceptualizing worker requirements for the positions studied
2. judging the assessee's standing on those dimensions from assessment center performance
3. combining these judgments into a global, overall prediction

The skills to be assessed or dimensions or parameters as they may be labelled, are those viewed as important for success on the job. The standard parameters and frequency of their use, as identified by Bender, are listed in Table 1.

³Cohen, Moses, and Byham, "Validity of Assessment Centers" p. 4.

TABLE I
 RESPONSE FREQUENCY TO EVALUATION PARAMETERS
 AS REPORTED BY BENDER

Evaluation Parameter	Response Frequency
Oral Communication Skills	30
Leadership	29
Organizing and Planning	27
Decision-Making Skills	25
Problem Analysis	24
Resistance to Stress	24
Written Communication Skills	23
Energy	21
Use of Delegation	21
Oral Presentation Skills	21
Behavioral Flexibility	21
Forcefulness	19
Impact	18
Creativity	17
Perception	16
Salesmanship	16
Management Control	16
Risk-Taking	16
Independence	14
Range of Interests	12
Listening Skill	12
Attitude Toward Peers	12
Attitude Toward Superiors	11
Self-Evaluation	11
Inner Work Standards	10
Attitude Toward Subordinates	8

SOURCE: J.M. Bender, "What is Typical of Assessment Centers?" Personnel, 50, 50-57.

Once the skills to be assessed are established, the next step in designing an assessment center is to select the methods or exercises which will elicit targeted behaviors. Crooks⁴ reported on types of exercises commonly used as inbasket exercises, management games, leaderless group discussions, analysis/presentation/group discussion exercises, interview simulations, other interviews, fact finding and decision making, writing exercises, and pencil-and-paper tests.

Kelley and Wendel⁵ described activities and exercises that could be included in the design of an assessment center:

1. Inbaskets. In an inbasket exercise, a participant is asked to respond to a number of written memoranda, letters and notes within a specified period of time. The participant assumes a specific role, and is given the opportunity to display skill in several behavior dimensions related to on-the-job performance.
2. Leaderless group discussions. Participants are given background information for study and are then asked to perform a specific task or reach consensus on a decision. Participants may be assigned a specific role in a competitive leaderless group exercise or may, instead, have no particular role to fill. These exercises are usually designed to measure leadership behaviors and other behavior dimensions.
3. Interview simulation. In this type of exercise, a participant may be asked to conduct a one-on-one interview with an irate customer or

⁴Lois A. Crooks, "The Selection and Development of Assessment Center Techniques" in Applying the Assessment Center Method, eds. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), pp. 72-77.

⁵Edgar A. Kelley and Frederick C. Wendel, The Use of Assessment Center Processes for Personnel Selection and Career Development in Educational Administration (Reston, VA: NASSP, August 1983), pp. 13-14.

client, an insubordinate employee, a candidate for a job, an employee with a problem, or similar interpersonal situations.

4. Schedule making. Because managers frequently schedule the work of others, this type of exercise provides participants with an opportunity to demonstrate this type of supervisory and managerial skill.
5. Case studies. The use of case studies permits participants to analyze data about a specific situation, prepare alternate strategies to resolve the issue presented in the case study, and select one or more rational solutions. There are several variations on how participants may be asked to present their findings, ranging from written reports to superordinates to giving an individual oral report to an assessor who interviews the participant about the report presented.
6. Management games. These games often use teams of participants in investing or managing a company's stock in trading or acquiring orders, other businesses, etc.
7. Background interviews. In an assessment center, a background interview serves as an information gathering technique. The assessor who conducts the interview may provide a written report which offers information about several dimensions of behavior. A structured interview format is usually used to establish consistency in the types of information gathered by assessees.
8. Paper-and-pencil tests. Tests and inventories on personality, intellectual ability, verbal and quantitative skills, aptitudes and interests, as well as other aspects of personnel psychology may be used to provide information about participants.
9. Fact-finding exercises. This type of exercise requires the participant, working alone, to read a brief description of a problem, seek additional information from an assessor who serves as a resource person, and then arrive at a decision and solution for the problem. A report must be prepared and given. The report is given to the assessor who serves as an observer in this type of exercise. Usually the differing phases of this exercise are timed, and the participant is expected to complete activities within the al-

lotted time. Analysis and stress behaviors are two common behavior dimensions assessed by this type of exercise.

10. Staff meeting. In the staff meeting exercise, the participant assumes the role of a unit head and meets with several staff of the unit (with these roles being played by trained personnel) to obtain information prior to a meeting with the chief executive of the agency or firm.
11. Negotiation. This type of exercise generally requires an assessee to bargain with another person (an assessor or a person trained for the role) who portrays a superordinate, subordinate, peer, or someone external to the work unit of the assessee.

Not all the parameters or exercises are included in all assessment centers. The aforementioned are a representative sample.

A critical step in the design of assessment centers is the selection and training of assessors. The major aim of this training is to ensure fair and objective evaluation of assessees, so that the end results will reflect a high degree of acceptability. (Training of assessors is extensively described in Chapter IV.) Byham and Wettengel⁶ report that a typical center has one assessor to every two participants with a six-to-twelve ratio most common.

An important phase in the design of an assessment center is the evaluation report and how it is disseminated. The profile of strengths and weaknesses is the

⁶William C. Byham and Carl Wettengel, Assessment Centers for Supervisors and Managers, (Public Personnel Management, Sept.-Oct. 1974; reprint ed., Pittsburgh, PA: Development Dimensions, Inc.) p. 353.

result of lengthy consensus discussions by the assessors. As a group, they evaluate the overall potential of the assessee and render a global decision about the assessee's performance during the center.⁷ Byham⁸ reports that companies handle dissemination in different ways; candidates can request feedback (between 60% and 90% ask for it), some companies give feedback to all candidates automatically, most companies plan career development strategies. Feedback can occur prior to the candidate leaving the center as in some companies or a candidate must wait weeks. It is obvious that the sooner the feedback, the greater the impact of the assessment center.

⁷Ibid.

⁸William C. Byham, "Assessment Centers for Spotting Future Managers", Harvard Business Review, July - August 1980, p. 158.

Assessment Centers in the Field of EducationDesign of Assessment Center - NASSP Model

The NASSP assessment center model was designed by a team of industrial psychologists headed by Thomas A. Jeswald who integrated the model into an educational context. The design of the pilot program addresses the issues of the major objective of the center, assessees and assessors, compilation and dissemination of reports, feedback interview and possible outcome of the evaluation. Also included in the overall design are skills to be assessed, exercises which elicit specified behaviors, and role of assessors.

The design is reproduced accordingly:

1. The objective of the NASSP Assessment Center is to assess the potential of candidates for assistant principal and principal positions.
2. The pool of eligible participants for the Center includes all current district employees who have attained (or will soon attain) the legal qualifications and credentials for the position of assistant principal or principal.
3. A team of six assessors for each scheduled Center will include principals and other district administrators. An administrator in the district's personnel and/or staff development office will act as the director of the Assessment Center program.
4. Twelve participants will be assessed at each Center.
5. Assessment reports will be written by the assessors with the assistance of the director of the Assessment Center. Each assessment report will contain:
 - (a) A summary of the participant's strengths and improvement needs.
 - (b) Developmental suggestions for the

participant.

(c) A recommendation from the assessor team as to whether the participant should be placed as an assistant principal or principal.

A positive recommendation by the assessors will indicate that a Center participant is considered to have significant strengths overall and is likely to succeed as an assistant principal or principal. A participant who is not recommended by the assessors may, nevertheless, be placed in an administrative position, if that individual has specific abilities which are required.

6. Each participant will receive a confidential feedback interview, in which strengths and improvement needs are discussed. During this interview, a copy of the assessment report will be provided to the participant.
7. An additional copy of the assessment report will be kept in the district's Assessment Center file for a period of 4-5 years. Besides the Assessment Center director and participant, the following persons will have access to this report: the superintendent, directors of instruction, and the principal or other supervisor under whom an administrative opening has occurred.
8. Center participants who perform poorly will not be disqualified for future job opportunities. Participants who request to be assessed a second time will be required to wait at least two years after their initial assessment.
9. Potential participants will be notified through posted announcements when Centers are to be held. Scheduling of Centers will be done irrespective of the occurrence of administrative openings.⁹

The skills to be assessed and definitions of the NASSP model were enumerated in Chapter I, page 15. However, it is deemed appropriate to list the skills again (definitions have been deleted):

1. Problem analysis
2. Judgment
3. Organizational ability

⁹"NASSP Assessment Center General Design Model" Reston, VA. n.d. (Typewritten.)

4. Decisiveness
5. Leadership
6. Sensitivity
7. Stress Tolerance
8. Oral Communication
9. Written Communication
10. Range of Interests
11. Personal Motivation
12. Educational Values¹⁰

To assess these skills NASSP designed five exercises - four simulations and a semi-structured personal interview. The entire set of exercises requires the participant to be on task for ten hours. Of that time six hours are observed by assessors. Two of the simulations are "inbasket" exercises, in which a package of mail, reports, etc. are presented for organization and decisions; another involves analysis and group discussion of a case study, which concerns the problems faced by a fictitious school. The fourth simulation is a fact-finding and decision-making exercise; the participant is given a small amount of information about a problem and must proceed to investigate the situation to arrive at a solution. Refer to Appendix C for daily schedules of assessment center activities.

After the assessors observe the participant during the exercises, they record their observations of behavior and later meet as a team to discuss and compile an evaluation profile. The final written report describes strengths and weaknesses of the candidate in relation to the

¹⁰ "Skills to be Assessed," NASSP, (Reston, Virginia, n.d.)

twelve skills.¹¹

The director of the assessment center shares the final report with the assessee in a two and one half hour meeting within two weeks after the completion of the center.¹²

Design of Assessment Center - Dade County Public Schools, Florida

Dade County Public Schools contracted with Assessment Designs, Inc. of Orlando, Florida, to create the design of their Management Assessment Center, which is used to identify potential principals and assistant principals. Nine skills are considered essential for satisfactory performance as a building administrator:

1. Leadership
2. Organizing and Planning
3. Perception
4. Decision Making
5. Decisiveness
6. Interpersonal Relations
7. Adaptability
8. Oral Communication
9. Written Communication

Three simulations are used to assess the skills; an inbasket exercise, a parent conference exercise, and a teacher observation exercise. In the inbasket exercise the would-be principal is given two hours to deal with an accumulation of memoranda, letters, and reports that range in importance and urgency. Thirty minutes of that

¹¹Jeswald, "A New Approach," 61:82.

¹²Jack C. Van Newkirk, NASSP Trainer of Assessors, interview in York, Pennsylvania, 1 December 1983.

time is observed by assessors who interview the participant to clarify decisions. In the parent conference exercise the participant reviews background information for thirty minutes dealing with a behavior problem, and then role plays the part of a principal. An assessor takes the part of the parent and follows a carefully designed plan - one that introduces conflict. In the teacher observation exercise the participant role plays the part of a principal and evaluates instruction by a teacher via a videotape.

The three simulations take one full day to complete. During one assessment center, twelve candidates and twelve assessors participate. After the candidate completes the simulations, the assessors meet on the second day to discuss individual performances on each skill. They prepare an evaluative profile on each candidate in the form of a written report. Feedback to the candidate is provided at the end of the second day.¹³

Design of Assessment Center - Peel Board of Education,
Ontario, Canada

The Peel Board of Education considered ten skills to be assessed in an 'assessment centre':

1. Decision-making
2. Judgment
3. Teacher evaluation
4. Communication.
5. Problem solving
6. Organization
7. Motivation
8. Planning

¹³Michaels, "Assessment Center Benefits," p. 24.

9. Program implementation and evaluation
10. Team-building

Five exercises were developed to elicit behaviors which would indicate levels of competence: inbasket, structured interview, leaderless group, teacher evaluation, and program implementation and evaluation. The 'assessment centre' was developed into a three-day workshop-like format, including a pre-session orientation and a post-session review. Assessors would be trained in observation and evaluation techniques and would write a report on each candidate eliciting performance, strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for development.¹⁴ (The Peel model was utilized as a study model, since it did not reach an operational stage.)

Design of Assessment Centers - Broward County, Palm Beach County, and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida

Three assessment centers were initiated at about the same time in 1973-74 as a direct result of the Florida Educational Leadership Training Act of 1969 and amended in 1973 to encourage development of programs to identify administrative and supervisory personnel. Matching funds were made available to participating agencies and workshops were held to explore methodologies in the identification process. Three assessment centers were established by mid-1974 and since the design and organi-

¹⁴Musella, "Improving Procedures", pp. 7-9, 15-17.

zation of each center were subject to scrutiny by the Florida Department of Education before funding was approved, many similarities exist and therefore, it is appropriate to report the designs of each center under one global heading.

Broward County sought the expertise of Nova and Florida Atlantic Universities in designing the format of its assessment center. Competencies were selected and corresponding exercises were created in the initial stages of development. The five exercises and a description of each are as follows:

1. Madison Public Schools Inbasket Series. The candidate role plays the part of a building principal and then responds to a variety of routine administrative tasks.
2. Leaderless Group Discussions. Assesseees are placed in a group situation in which they must persuade other members to vote in favor of sending their particular candidate to a workshop. The purpose of this simulation is to identify emergent leadership behavior.
3. Grant Exercise. Six assesseees interact, within a ninety-minute period, in a hypothetical situation in which a grant proposal must be drafted according to established parameters.
4. Scheduling Exercise. Six assesseees cooperatively develop the schedule of classes utilizing a set of variables.
5. Paper and Pencil Testing. Four intelligence and psychological testing batteries were administered. Each was specifically designed to provide data to round out the personality profile.

Assesseees were observed by teams of trained assessors during the first four simulations. The entire assessment process was accomplished in a two-day,

concentrated period.¹⁵

Palm Beach County combined the resources of both the school district and Florida Atlantic University when their assessment center was designed. Five functions were identified as essential to district administrators:

1. Administration, management and supervision
2. Educational program development
3. Public relations
4. Interpersonal relations
5. Research and evaluation

The functions generated sixteen competencies or personality factors which were elicited by ten exercises:

1. Administrative Inbaskets. The candidate role plays a principal who must establish a school advisory committee.
2. Oral Presentation. The candidate role plays a principal who must address his school advisory committee on some educational concern.
3. Written Communication. Candidate is required to write memoranda, letters, reports and announcements relating to establishment of school advisory committee.
4. Program Evaluation. Candidate must design an action plan in regard to lag in an instructional program.
5. Leaderless Group Discussions. Candidate interacts as a member of groups of assessees charged with resolving various educational tasks.
6. Goal Ranking Exercise. Candidate is member of a group who ranks through consensus priority items formulated by school advisory committee.
7. Scheduling Exercise. Candidate is a member of a group of four who plan schedule of classes for hypothetical school.
8. Supply Room Simulation. Candidate is member of group of four who draft a memorandum to a hypo-

¹⁵Stone, "Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers," pp. 37, 39-41.

thetical faculty regarding abuse of supplies.

9. Keeping Informed of Educational Practices. Candidate lists sources of educational information and current topics of interest.
10. Structured Interviews. Candidate is interviewed for purpose of evaluating knowledge of field of education, personal and oral communication skills.

Groups of twenty assessees completed the evaluation process in two days. Assessors were assigned in pairs to evaluate and record data objectively yet with professional subjective judgment.¹⁶

The Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative (PAEC) was organized to serve a nine district area of northwest Florida, and worked cooperatively with University of West Florida in designing the assessment center. Prepackaged materials developed by Developmental Dimensions, Inc. were adapted to the assessment of educational administrators.

Exercises which elicited dimensions are listed:

1. Background Interview. The candidate completed a Background Information Form which covered educational and work history, future plans, values and attitudes.
2. Personnel Director Inbasket Exercise. Candidate simulates activity of a personnel director of the hypothetical Woolex Company and reviews and organizes letters, requests, and reports. This activity requires decision making, delegation, writing ability, planning and scheduling.
3. The City Council Leaderless Group Discussion. Candidate simulates role of a member of a branch of city government and is given assignment of persuading other members of a six-member group to allocate to his branch all or much of a one

¹⁶"Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers" pp. 46-48.

million dollar federal grant.

4. Writing Report on Collective Bargaining. Candidate writes clear and concise document related to role of principal in collective bargaining.

Through consensus the assessors rated candidates. The assessment center itself was conducted over a five-day period, two of which involved candidates in exercises, and three of which involved consensus-seeking by assessors and writing of the final report.

Three assessors rated six candidates or six assessors rated twelve candidates, twelve being the maximum number served at one time.¹⁷

Design of Assessment Center - Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland

The Montgomery County Public Schools selected five behaviors to be assessed in the design of an assessment center to select school principals:

1. Skills in group problem solving and communication
2. Supervisory skills
3. Oral presentation
4. Written communication skills
5. Organization and management skills

To evaluate the behaviors, five exercises were designed:

1. Principal's Problem. The candidate is a member of a six-member group who must discuss and then draft a written outline of solutions to a problem.
2. Exercise in Supervision. The candidate role plays a principal who analyzes a lesson plan and conducts a teacher conference.
3. Oral presentation. The candidate prepares and

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 49-52.

delivers a ten-minute talk explaining pupil achievement scores for a hypothetical school.

4. Written Reaction Task. The candidate composes a written response to the problem of how to improve and implement a reading program.
5. Principal's Inbasket Exercise. The candidate reviews and organizes a packet of materials, assigns priorities, makes recommendations, and supplies rationale for actions.

Twenty-four candidates are evaluated by twelve assessors in the two-day exercise. The assessors completed detailed rating forms on each candidate and shared them with the participants in an individual interview.^{18&19}

Design of Assessment Center, University of Mississippi
Bureau of School Services

An assessment center design organized by the Mississippi Bureau of School Services, identifies twenty variables or skills:

1. General Education
2. Oral Communication Skills
3. Written Communication Skills
4. Forcefulness
5. Likability
6. Perception
7. Self-Objectivity
8. Adaptability
9. Need Approval of Superiors
10. Need Approval of Peers
11. Inner Work Standards
12. School Attitude
13. Resistance to Stress
14. Range of Interests
15. Energy
16. Organizing and Planning
17. Decision Making
18. Leadership Skills
19. Racial Relations

¹⁸McKay, "Montgomery Assessment Center," 5:11-12.

¹⁹McKay and McCord, "Consider this Way," p. 37.

20. Demeanor

Six different exercises have been developed to elicit desired behaviors:

1. Simulated exercises in groups
2. Inbasket exercise
3. "I've got a secret" exercise conducted with a student and parent
4. Problem finding
5. Standardized tests
6. Interview

The maximum number of people involved are eighteen participants and nine assessors in any one assessment center. The assessment center occupies one full day and two additional sessions of two hours each. Approximately three weeks following the full-day assessment, a reporting session is held with the candidate. Questions are answered, reports are edited, and the candidate signs a consent form to file his record and make it available for placement purposes, if he so desires. The final session, held several weeks later, is designed to share developmental plans to enhance the administrative potential of the participants.²⁰

Summary

The purpose of Chapter III was to present the design of assessment centers as an integral part in the process of identifying administrative potential. Five operational models and one study model were described as to skills to be assessed, exercises that elicited these skills,

²⁰Boyer, Use of Assessment Center, pp. 5-6, 10.

ratio of assessors to assessees, length of time involving assessors and assessees, compilation of final reports and methods of assessing. The six models were as follows:

1. NASSP
2. Dade County Public Schools, Florida
3. Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada
4. Broward County, Palm Beach County and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida
5. Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland
6. University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services

The skills to be assessed and exercises which elicited specific behaviors were similar in all the models reported and they were all job-related. This would support the hypothesis of the current study that assessment centers were established because of the predictive elements of the content; behavior in job-related simulations could parallel or predict behavior on-the-job. The numbers of the skills to be assessed ranged from 5 to 20, however, the smaller number listed topics that covered broader areas such as organization and management skills, whereas, the larger number listed very specific areas such as forcefulness and adaptability, which could account for the discrepancy in numbers. The exercises which were developed to uncover certain behaviors were more alike than different. All the models had at least one inbasket exercise, simulations in oral and written communication and problem solving leaderless group exercises. Three of the models used teacher observation and evaluation as a simulation and three (plus two of the

Florida models) utilized semi-structured and/or structured interviews. Two of the models employed standardized tests as an evaluative tool.

All of the models used the consensus method in compiling the final evaluation report. The culminating written profile is the result of a synthesis of data by multiple assessors which encourages objectivity and supports one hypothesis of the current study, i.e., assessment centers were developed because the objective nature of the process enables the selection of talented administrators. Objectivity is also promoted in that a variety of skills are assessed through a variety of activities. The process is multiform: several different techniques are used in a variety of settings. Through these methods a global picture of a candidate's abilities can be derived rather than a narrow, subjective judgmental evaluation completed by one person should traditional selections procedures be utilized.

CHAPTER IV

Selecting and Training Assessors

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter IV is to present a background of methodologies in assessor selection and training programs that were initiated in the business sector and then proceed to describe the process as it applies to the six educational assessment center models under study. The selection and training of assessors is an important element in the design of assessment centers. Byham¹ reports that a lack of emphasis in assessor training can lead to unreliable judgements by assessors and thus lower the validity as assessment centers. Thus it is critical to devote time and space to this component. Two of the hypotheses in the current study, assessment centers have been established because of the objective nature of the process and because of the predictive elements of the content, will be discussed as they relate to selecting and training assessors.

Background Perspective - Selecting Assessors

Assessors in the business sector have been tradi-

¹William C. Byham, "Assessor Selection and Training" in Applying the Assessment Center Method, Eds. Joseph L. Moses and William C. Byham (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. 30.

tionally two or three levels above the candidate being assessed. Byham² reports that by selecting assessors at these levels, they are more familiar with the jobs for which the participant is being assessed and can therefore better judge the participant's abilities. He also reports that involvement of a higher level person as an assessor greatly increases the acceptance of the program by peers and by the candidates themselves. Furthermore, exposure to the assessment center as an assessor increases familiarity with the process and guarantees the most effective use of the results.

MacKinnon³ adds that not only can assessors be two or three levels above the assessees (managers), assessors can also be psychologists or a combination of psychologists and management. Byham⁴ states that some organizations include personnel department staff as assessors.

In the assessment center known as Bell System's Management Progress Study (AT&T)⁵, the assessors were primarily persons who had been trained professionally in observational techniques. Later a few company managers served as assessors, however, none had been in the same division as the assessees. A clinically trained psychologist reviewed the assessor reports and subsequently

²William C. Byham, The Assessment Center as an Aid in Management Development (Training and Development Journal, Dec. 1971; reprint ed., Pittsburgh, PA: Development Dimensions, Inc.) p. 13.

³MacKinnon, An Overview, p. 13.

⁴Byham, The Assessment Center, p. 13.

⁵Bray and Grant, "The Assessment Center," pp. 4-5.

prepared individual reports on each participant.

Background Perspective - Training Assessors

Training of assessors varies and there is little consensus on how assessor training should be conducted or how much is required. In the AT&T model assessors were taken from their jobs for a six-month period to work full time as assessment center staff. Due to this commitment, AT&T spends three weeks in training assessors and they reach a near-professional status in their expertise in observational techniques. On the average most organizations pull their assessors from their regular jobs one to four times per year. A typical training period requires a minimum of three days and a maximum of one week.⁶

The most efficient ratio of assessors to assessees is one-to-two. This ratio may vary due to limited staff, limited number of dimensions being evaluated, or little need for extensive documentation.⁷

Assessors traditionally work in teams of two or three and in some models an assessor staff of six can meet during the evaluation period to share results and reach consensus.⁸

The concept that assessors work in teams and rotate individually or as a group among the assessees during the assessment process, minimizes individual judgmental bias

⁶Byham, "Assessor Selection," pp. 90, 96, 98.

⁷Ibid. p. 96.

⁸Ibid. p. 98.

and therefore encourages a fair and objective evaluation, which supports one of the hypothesis of the current study in that assessment centers were established because of the objective nature of the process.

Assessor training focuses on the following skills required in the assessment process:

- Understanding the organization's dimensions
- Observation of behavior in exercises
- Categorization of behavior by dimensions found important to the organization
- Rating behavior by dimension
- Processing information from various exercises to reach consensus among the assessors for a quality or quantity rating on each dimension.
- Determination of overall judgments relative to participants, promotability, training needs, etc.⁹

Tasks which may be assigned to assessors during training in order to generate the desired behaviors may include:

- Conducting a background interview
- Playing the role of an employee being interviewed in a simulation
- Conducting an inbasket interview
- Playing the role of a resource person in a fact-finding exercise
- Playing the role of a top executive receiving a report from a subordinate in an analysis exercise.¹⁰

In essence assessor training involves many of the same activities that assessees experience.

The critical skill that is taught in assessor training is observing and recording behavior - what a person says or does during the simulation. Byham¹¹ states

⁹Ibid. p. 101.

¹⁰"Assessor Selection"

¹¹Ibid., pp. 102-103.

that it is not acceptable for an assessor to say, "Mr. X was definitely the leader in the group." He must give examples of how that leadership behavior was revealed. An example of a behavior exercise is reprinted in Appendix D. In addition, multiple exercises evaluated by several assessors and shared in an assessor discussion will help to formulate a more global picture of the assessee.

Once behaviors have been observed and recorded, they must be categorized by dimensions in order to make the assessment center meaningful. After this has been done, the next step in most assessment center programs is for the assessors to rate the dimensions according to observed behavior. Byham suggests the following 1 to 5 rating scale:

- 5 - a great deal of the dimension was shown (excellent)
- 4 - quite a lot was shown
- 3 - a moderate amount was shown (average)
- 2 - only a small amount was shown
- 1 - very little was shown or the dimension was not shown at all (poor)
- 0 - no opportunity existed for the dimension to be shown¹²

Byham further states that assessment center directors report good consensus by assessors in assessor training programs as to appropriate behavior ratings. In effect a set of standards develops during the course of assessor training programs and reliability increases.

The training of assessors in observational tech-

¹²Ibid., p. 108.

niques and the complex processing of that information into a structured set of concrete ratings form the basis for evaluation that are objective and relatively free of bias. This supports one of the hypotheses of the current study, that being objectivity as a reason for the development of assessment centers.

A final phase of assessor training is to simulate assessment of candidates. This can be accomplished by live actors or videotapes. Regardless of the method used, some practice should be provided.

In many centers an assessor manual is issued to evaluators. It may contain schedules, dimensions, exercises with answers, copies of forms given to assessees, general information about the center, hints on observations, etc.¹³

Not all assessor training programs contain all the variables described, however, the aforementioned provides a preferred "sense of direction".

Selecting and Training Assessors: Educational Assessment Center Models

In the NASSP model assessors are selected from practicing administrators within each school system. They are initially screened and selected by the participating school district and must have maintained an outstanding record as a school administrator, functioning at

¹³ Ibid. p. 113.

least two levels above the center participants.¹⁴

In the Dade County model assessors are selected who are already at or above the level of the position being assessed and therefore, are principals, area directors, and central office staff personnel.¹⁵

In the Peel Board of Education model, assessors were to be personnel who through training sessions were to be instructed in observation techniques.¹⁶

In the Broward County model, individuals selected to serve as assessors consisted of principals and central office staff personnel from Broward County proper. The rationale for the selection of these assessors was that the best assessment of performance in an administrative capacity could only come from practicing administrators who understood the complexities of the system being served.¹⁷

In the Palm Beach County model, assessors for the most part were selected independent of the school system and of their cooperating consultation agency, Florida Atlantic University. The assessors were chosen because of their known expertise in the field of educational administration.¹⁸

¹⁴Paul W. Hersey, "The NASSP Assessment Center," Clearinghouse for Applied Performance Testing Vol. 5, No. 1 (September 1979):14.

¹⁵Michaels, "Assessment Center Benefits," p. 25.

¹⁶Musella, "Improving Procedures", p. 12.

¹⁷Stone, "Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers," p. 38.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 45-46.

In the Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative model, the assessors were practicing administrators who served as principals, assistant principals, assistant superintendents, and other central office personnel.¹⁹

In the Montgomery County model, assessors are practicing administrators who are classified as principals and administrators.²⁰

In the University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services model, assessors are personnel currently serving in responsible educational positions, such as school board members, junior and senior high school counselors and principals, junior college professors, and personnel from the state department of education.²¹

Generally assessors are managerial personnel who are one or two levels above the desired position for which candidates are to be assessed. Employees in these aforementioned categories possess a knowledge of the necessary skills for the desired position and have an understanding of what is required for job success. The selection of these people to serve as assessors helps to promote valid evaluations as they are in prime positions to predict success on the job. This supports an hypothesis of the current study in that assessment centers were established because of the predictive elements of the process.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 50.

²⁰McKay and McCord, "Consider this way," p. 37.

²¹Boyer, Use of Assessment Center, p. 4.

The training session for assessors in the NASSP model is in the form of a rigorous three-day program which concentrates on observational techniques and writing objective reports. "The major purpose of the training program is to prepare individuals who can provide valid and reliable observations of assessee behaviors pertinent to the targeted skill dimensions."²² Furthermore, the training program should seek to develop for the assessors:

1. An understanding of the meaning of each skill dimension and an understanding of the "look fors" in the exercises used in the assessment center.
2. Observational skills related to both the skill dimensions and to each activity or exercise included in the assessment center.
3. Skill in classifying or categorizing behaviors observed.
4. Skill in rating behaviors, i.e., differentiating between varying levels of skill on the part of assessees.
5. Skill in assuming roles necessary for the operation of the assessment center, e.g., as a resource person in a fact-finding exercise or as a subordinate in a "staff meeting" exercise.
6. Skill in writing reports which carefully record and document the behaviors demonstrated by assessees.
7. Skill in evaluating and integrating data related to a skill dimension, when the data are from multiple activities or exercises, and when overall ratings of skill levels must be made during the "jurying" of assessee performance.
8. Skill in providing recommendations for inclusion in reports to participants, including recommendations about selection, promotion, or development.²³

²²Kelley and Wendel, The Use of Assessment Center Processes, p. 15.

²³ibid..

Uniform processes such as training manuals and standardized report forms are provided to increase reliability of observations and written reports.²⁴ NASSP recommends that trained assessors be used in that role frequently (two or three times per year) so that the training in observational skills and writing objective reports remains current and up-to-date.

For a detailed schedule of NASSP assessor training, see Appendix E.

In the Dade County model, potential assessors are given forty hours of training in observing, recording and rating, and are also briefed on the center's materials and procedures. Dade County utilized the services of a consulting firm, Assessment Designs, Inc., to conduct the training and certification of those who showed ability and aptitude for the task. A few of the original one hundred candidates did not meet certification requirements.²⁵

In the Peel Board of Education model, the major objectives of assessor training were (1) to reach high reliability in scoring, (2) to become familiar with the materials and criteria to be used, and (3) to be skilled in the process required. Assessors were to be put through the same procedures as assessees, using the same materials. Role-play simulations and videotapes were

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Michaels, "Assessment Center Benefits," p. 25.

utilized in the practicing process, in order to achieve a high degree of reliability in observation and reporting.²⁶

In the Broward County model, assessors were trained through encountering simulations and testing that was identical to that of assessees. Two days are spent "walking through" the exercises followed by in-depth analysis of the process.²⁷

In the Palm Beach County model, no formal training of assessors was provided, however, orientation in the selected materials and simulations was conducted to familiarize the assessor with the process.²⁸

In the Panhandle Area Education Cooperative model, assessors were trained with respect to assessment techniques, behavioral observation methods, utilization of assessment exercises and writing the narrative report.²⁹

In the Montgomery County model, assessors (known in this model as evaluators) met in advance of the assessment center program to discuss their roles and responsibilities and to examine the process of the evaluation program. It was emphasized, "...that the judgments of the centers' evaluations be applied fairly and equally to each candidate."³⁰

²⁶Musella, "Improving Procedures," p. 8.

²⁷Stone, "Florida's Administrative Assessment Centers," p. 38.

²⁸Ibid., p. 45.

²⁹Ibid., p. 50.

³⁰McKay and McCord, "Consider this way," p. 37.

In the University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services model, there is no formalized training of assessors. Instead, on the day of the assessment center, the assessor is presented a notebook containing all the examination forms, guidelines for completing the forms, and detailed descriptions of the exercises. After a brief study of this notebook, the assessment center begins. Throughout the day the director of the center conducts brief training sessions for assessors.³¹

Summary

The selection and training as assessors in educational assessment centers was described in Chapter IV. A background of assessor selection and training in the business sector was initially presented, to establish a standard for educational models to follow.

The review of assessor selection procedures reveals a wide range of techniques yet commonalities used in assessor selection and training in the six selected educational models. The assessors range from practicing administrators within a school division, to school board members, junior and senior high school counselors, junior college professors, and state department of education personnel. Training of assessors can range from a brief orientation of a manual or exercise to forty hours of intense formalized training through simulation of identi-

³¹Boyer, Use of Assessment Center, p. 4.

cal exercises of assesseees and through instruction in observational techniques.

It is generally agreed from the study of the selection of assessors, that these designated personnel be knowledgeable in the field of education and be in supervisory, specialist, or practicing administrative positions within an educational institution. Selection of assessors in these categories will encourage accuracy of observations in the job-related simulations and should insure a fair and objective assessment, which supports one of the hypotheses of the current study, i.e., assessment centers have been established because of the objectivity of the process.

Furthermore, the training of these assessors in observational techniques and the transferral of those observations into concrete categories that can be applied to the prediction of behavior confirms another hypothesis, i.e., assessment centers have been established because of the predictive elements of the content.

CHAPTER V

Validation of Assessment Centers

Introduction

The process known as assessment center which has been utilized to identify talented public school principals and vice principals as report in the current study, must possess credibility in order to encourage widespread applications. It is imperative that that credibility be established through a strong research base which confirms its effectiveness.

In the business sector are a respectable number of validity studies which have been reported on the assessment center process and they reveal that success in an assessment center can predict success on the job. In the public sector, specifically in the field of education, there has been reported to date only one validation study of an assessment center model. A three-year longitudinal validation study of an educational assessment center model developed by NASSP began in 1979 in an effort to confirm outcomes.

The purpose of Chapter V is to report the validation study of the NASSP model and relate findings to two of the hypotheses of the current study: assessment cen-

ters have been established because of the objectivity of the process and because of the predictive elements of the content.

Validation Study of NASSP Model

A three-year validation study of the NASSP assessment center model which was begun in 1979 was conducted by a team of researchers at Michigan State University headed by Neal Schmitt, professor of industrial psychology. He was assisted in the study by associates Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson.

The study reported four areas of interest: internal validity (is there interrater agreement? are the skill dimensions appropriate? are there demographic differences?), criterion-related validity (does performance in an assessment center predict performance on the job?), climate ratings (how do peers and subordinates rate climate as related to assessment center ratings?), and content validity (do skills and tasks in an assessment center parallel skills and tasks on the job)?¹

The subjects were 425 individuals who had been assessed through the NASSP assessment center model that was in operation at the following locations: Prince William County, Virginia; Portsmouth, Virginia; Lee County, Florida; Pinellas County, Florida; Jefferson

¹Schmitt, Noe, Merritt, Fitzgerald, and Jorgensen, Criterion-Related pp. 1-64 passim.

County, Alabama; San Diego County, California; and Howard County, Maryland.

Of the 425 individuals, performance data in at least one area was collected on 167 individuals who had either been promoted or were in an administrative role at the time the study was conducted. Performance evaluations were gathered on fifteen work dimensions plus an overall rating from the individual's immediate superior, two teachers, two support staff and the individual himself. In addition for each of the 167 individuals there were seven dimensions which related to school climate and were evaluated by four students, two teachers, and two support staff. Content-validity was determined by eighteen assessor-administrators.

Internal validity: This category was divided into three sub-areas: 1) interrater agreement, 2) appropriateness of skill dimensions, and 3) the effect of race, sex, and job experience. In order to determine interrater agreement, ratings on skills given by one assessor to a particular candidate were correlated with another assessor's ratings on the same candidate. Correlations of ratings among assessors were high, with most in excess of .60. Utilizing a coefficient alpha (α) which can range from 1.00 to .00, there was a relationship of all skill dimensions at .90 or greater which translated means there was significant agreement among assessors as to skill

ratings of individuals. A listing of skill dimensions and interrater agreement as determined by coefficient alpha is reported in Table 2.

There was a significant correlation among rating abilities of assessors. This could be attributed to the intense training of assessors as described in the design of the NASSP assessor training model in Chapter IV.

In effect a standard in evaluating candidates evolves among assessors during high quality assessor training and ensures reliability of judgments. Because of this significant correlation an assessee can be comfortable that an evaluation will be objective. This re-confirms one of the hypotheses of the current study, i.e., assessment centers have been established because of the objective nature of the process.

The appropriateness of skill dimensions in the assessment center was established by determining the degree of correlation between them. A low correlation would indicate a difference existed which is desirable whereas a high correlation would indicate sameness (not desirable). Correlations ranged from approximately .30 to .60 indicating low to moderate relationship. It is interesting to note that intercorrelation of judgment was .70; the intercorrelation of organizational ability was .65; it would be difficult to separate these two skills as they are naturally homogeneous.

TABLE 2
 INTERRATER AGREEMENT OF EVALUATION
 AS REPORTED BY COEFFICIENT ALPHA (α)
 N=340

Skill Dimensions	Interrater Agreement
Problem Analysis	$\alpha = .93866$
Judgment	$\alpha = .92935$
Leadership	$\alpha = .95605$
Oral Communication	$\alpha = .91872$
Written Communication	$\alpha = .93785$
Organization Ability	$\alpha = .93375$
Sensitivity	$\alpha = .91850$
Educational Values	$\alpha = .90529$
Stress Tolerance	$\alpha = .92894$
Personal Motivation	$\alpha = .91686$
Placement Recommendation	$\alpha = .96503$

SOURCE: Neal Schmitt, Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson, Criterion-Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center (Michigan State University: n.d.) pp. 6-9.

Relationship between assessment center ratings and participants who were male/female, white/non-whites and job experience (counselor/non-counselor, assistant principal/non-assistant principal, teacher/non-teacher) was analyzed. It was determined that female assessees received higher ratings than males in the areas of judgment, educational values, oral communication and written communication. White assessees were ranked higher than non-whites in the areas of problem analysis, judgment, decisiveness, leadership, written communication, organizational ability, and placement recommendation. Non-teaching personnel ranked higher than teaching personnel.

Criterion-related validity: Performance ratings of assessment center participants who were promoted to administrative positions or who held administrative positions at the time of assessment were statistically compared to ratings derived from an assessment center. Fifteen rating scales plus an overall rating were developed during the planning stages of the validation project and were used to solicit evaluations by the candidate's supervisor, two teachers, and two supportive staff. Tables 3 and 4 report the correlations of two of these ratings, i.e., those completed by supervisors and teachers.

In the supervisor's ratings there is a significant relationship between performance ratings and assessment center ratings in the areas of leadership, oral communi-

TABLE 3

CORRELATION BETWEEN SUPERVISOR RATINGS OF PERFORMANCE AND ASSESSMENT CENTER RATINGS

	Assessment Center Ratings										Placement Recommendation		
	Problem Analysis	Judgment	Decisiveness	Leadership	Sensitivity	Educational Values	Stress Tolerance	Oral Communication	Written Communication	Organizational Ability		Range of Interests	Personal Motivation
Curriculum: Objectives	.22 (110)	.14 (108)	.21 (109)	.31 (108)	-.01 (107)	.03 (109)	.13 (85)	.18 (111)	.21 (111)	.34 (105)	-.06 (83)	.07 (89)	.31 (116)
Curriculum: Individual Progress	.13 (102)	.05 (100)	.22 (101)	.23 (100)	.03 (99)	.02 (101)	.17 (79)	.14 (103)	.20 (103)	.31 (97)	-.01 (77)	.17 (83)	.30 (107)
Student Activities: Supervision	.01 (97)	-.01 (96)	.01 (96)	.23 (94)	-.11 (95)	-.07 (96)	.02 (76)	.02 (97)	-.08 (98)	.14 (93)	-.04 (73)	-.01 (78)	.11 (104)
Student Activities: Participation	.08 (110)	.01 (109)	-.04 (110)	.20 (108)	-.04 (108)	.02 (110)	.03 (86)	.12 (111)	.02 (111)	.18 (106)	-.08 (83)	.01 (89)	.21 (115)
Support Services	.24 (104)	.23 (102)	.18 (103)	.29 (102)	.13 (101)	.16 (103)	.15 (79)	.22 (105)	.17 (105)	.27 (99)	-.06 (77)	.10 (83)	.34 (109)
Directing Student Behavior	.06 (110)	-.02 (108)	.11 (109)	.19 (108)	-.03 (107)	-.01 (109)	.10 (86)	.14 (111)	.13 (111)	.23 (105)	-.02 (81)	.01 (90)	.18 (116)
Staff Evaluation	.13 (110)	.01 (108)	.07 (109)	.20 (108)	-.10 (107)	.02 (109)	.14 (85)	.22 (111)	.03 (111)	.20 (105)	.02 (83)	.09 (89)	.26 (116)
Developmental Activities	.11 (107)	.01 (105)	.01 (106)	.23 (105)	-.10 (104)	-.01 (106)	.06 (83)	.12 (108)	.13 (108)	.10 (102)	.10 (81)	.06 (87)	.17 (113)
Community Relations	.26 (105)	.26 (103)	.20 (103)	.34 (102)	.09 (102)	-.04 (103)	.18 (80)	.24 (105)	.17 (106)	.33 (100)	-.04 (78)	.07 (83)	.29 (107)
Interpersonal Effectiveness	.12 (113)	.05 (111)	.13 (112)	.24 (111)	.05 (110)	.02 (112)	.04 (88)	.11 (114)	-.01 (114)	.24 (108)	-.07 (86)	.04 (92)	.14 (120)
Community Relations: Parents	.16 (105)	.17 (103)	.19 (104)	.31 (103)	.03 (102)	.04 (104)	.23 (80)	.23 (106)	.12 (106)	.38 (100)	.06 (78)	.09 (84)	.24 (108)
Coordination with Districts	.22 (105)	.18 (103)	.17 (105)	.29 (102)	-.05 (102)	-.08 (103)	.05 (80)	.23 (105)	.09 (106)	.26 (100)	-.08 (78)	-.05 (83)	.31 (109)
Fiscal Management	.35 (91)	.24 (89)	.18 (90)	.26 (88)	.01 (89)	-.03 (90)	.08 (66)	.15 (91)	.04 (92)	.16 (87)	-.06 (65)	-.22 (69)	.30 (90)
Maintenance of School Plant	.19 (107)	.19 (105)	.22 (106)	.30 (105)	.12 (104)	-.07 (106)	.10 (84)	.24 (108)	.09 (96)	.31 (102)	-.16 (82)	-.05 (86)	.29 (116)
Structures Communications	.19 (111)	.10 (109)	.13 (110)	.26 (109)	-.06 (108)	-.17 (110)	.10 (86)	.21 (112)	.03 (112)	.26 (106)	-.07 (84)	.02 (90)	.18 (115)
Overall Rating	.21 (112)	.20 (110)	.16 (111)	.35 (110)	.08 (109)	-.08 (111)	.15 (87)	.23 (113)	.19 (113)	.40 (107)	.01 (85)	.04 (91)	.25 (120)

* Numbers in parentheses are the number of cases on which the correlation was computed. Underlined correlations indicate statistical significance ($p < .05$).

SOURCE: Neal Schmitt, Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson, Criterion-Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center (Michigan State University: n.d.) p. 29.

TABLE 4

CORRELATION BETWEEN TEACHER RATINGS OF PERFORMANCE AND ASSESSMENT CENTER RATINGS

	Assessment Center Ratings										Placement Recommendation		
	Problem Analysis	Judgment	Decisiveness	Leadership	Sensitivity	Educational Values	Stress Tolerance	Oral Communication	Written Communication	Organizational Ability		Range of Interests	Personal Motivation
Curriculum: Objectives	.07 (92)	.17 (91)	-.04 (93)	.03 (91)	.09 (90)	.09 (92)	.03 (71)	.12 (94)	.12 (93)	.18 (88)	-.08 (67)	.03 (73)	.27 (99)
Curriculum: Individual Progress	.18 (47)	.27 (46)	.01 (47)	.10 (45)	-.06 (47)	.05 (47)	.06 (40)	.25 (47)	.37 (48)	.20 (45)	.10 (38)	.17 (40)	.29 (62)
Student Activities: Supervision	.11 (66)	.26 (65)	-.03 (66)	.06 (64)	.09 (64)	-.12 (65)	.12 (59)	.16 (67)	.15 (67)	.19 (62)	-.24 (51)	-.05 (55)	.27 (81)
Student Activities: Participation	.18 (87)	.21 (86)	-.12 (87)	.12 (85)	.09 (85)	.02 (86)	.02 (70)	.11 (88)	-.02 (88)	.19 (83)	-.14 (66)	.10 (71)	.18 (94)
Support Services	.01 (78)	.05 (77)	-.05 (80)	.02 (78)	.01 (78)	-.03 (79)	.03 (60)	.08 (80)	.10 (79)	.17 (76)	.08 (57)	.12 (61)	.11 (79)
Directing Student Behavior	.18 (106)	.19 (105)	.03 (106)	.17 (104)	.05 (104)	.09 (106)	.05 (84)	.11 (107)	.05 (107)	.28 (102)	-.06 (81)	-.02 (87)	.25 (114)
Staff Evaluation	.09 (87)	.21 (86)	.01 (87)	.20 (85)	.05 (85)	.09 (87)	.11 (66)	.11 (88)	.19 (88)	.19 (83)	-.04 (63)	.14 (69)	.21 (93)
Developmental Activities	.16 (89)	.26 (88)	.01 (89)	.21 (87)	.10 (87)	-.04 (89)	.17 (70)	.21 (90)	.21 (90)	.21 (85)	-.01 (67)	.04 (73)	.32 (95)
Community Relations	.23 (68)	.42 (67)	.06 (68)	.17 (66)	.17 (66)	-.05 (67)	.06 (53)	.25 (69)	.06 (69)	.41 (64)	-.04 (49)	.04 (54)	.35 (74)
Interpersonal Effectiveness	.21 (106)	.25 (105)	.09 (106)	.24 (104)	.19 (104)	.13 (106)	.15 (84)	.15 (107)	.12 (107)	.28 (102)	-.10 (81)	.08 (87)	.33 (114)
Community Relations: Parents	.14 (80)	.21 (79)	-.03 (81)	.12 (79)	.15 (78)	.01 (80)	.08 (66)	.20 (82)	.19 (81)	.23 (76)	-.16 (62)	.02 (68)	.31 (90)
Coordination with Districts	.06 (49)	.21 (48)	-.10 (51)	.25 (49)	.01 (49)	-.12 (50)	.04 (36)	.12 (51)	.14 (50)	.18 (47)	.19 (33)	-.05 (37)	.15 (54)
Fiscal Management	.11 (51)	.22 (50)	-.07 (51)	.07 (50)	.05 (50)	-.23 (50)	-.30 (33)	-.16 (52)	.02 (52)	.10 (48)	-.32 (29)	-.50 (33)	.04 (50)
Maintenance of School Plant	.01 (80)	.11 (79)	-.10 (80)	.05 (80)	-.01 (79)	.06 (79)	-.03 (66)	.08 (81)	.23 (81)	.03 (77)	-.09 (62)	-.02 (66)	.11 (91)
Structures Communications	.20 (101)	.22 (100)	.01 (102)	.15 (100)	.18 (99)	.04 (101)	.03 (80)	.07 (103)	.09 (102)	.22 (97)	-.13 (76)	-.02 (82)	.29 (110)
Overall Rating	.14 (101)	.17 (100)	-.04 (101)	.15 (99)	.07 (99)	.10 (101)	.03 (80)	.08 (102)	.14 (102)	.22 (97)	-.02 (77)	.04 (83)	.30 (110)

*Numbers in parentheses are the number of cases on which the correlation was computed. Underlined correlations indicate statistical significance ($p \leq .05$).

SOURCE: Neal Schmitt, Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson, Criterion-Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center (Michigan State University: n.d.) p. 30.

cations, organizational ability, problem analysis, judgment and decisiveness. In addition curriculum as it related to objectives, support services, community relations, and community relations as it relates to parents, coordination with districts and the overall rating are most frequently related to assessment center ratings.

In the teachers' ratings there is a significant relationship between performance ratings and assessment center ratings in the areas of judgment, organizational ability and leadership. Additionally developmental activities, community relations, parents, structures communication, interpersonal effectiveness and overall rating are most frequently related to assessment center ratings.

It has been demonstrated that ratings of an individual on the skill dimensions derived during an assessment center evaluation are significantly related to performance ratings of that same individual by supervisors and teachers which means that performance in an assessment center parallels performance on the job. Stated in another way, one can predict how an individual will perform in an administrative position based on one's performance in an assessment center. This confirms one of the hypotheses of the current study, i.e., assessment centers have been established because of the predictive elements of the content.

Climate ratings: "Climate", which refers to the atmosphere of a school, was examined in relationship to ratings in an assessment center by four students, two teachers, and two supportive staff in each school. It was felt that evaluation of a building administrator should include a climate rating since it is the person in that position who establishes the tone or atmosphere in the school. Nine climate dimensions were identified as: curriculum and instructional leadership, student activities, support services, staff selection, evaluation and development, community relations, coordination with district and other schools, fiscal management, school plant maintenance and structures communication. In correlating these to assessment center ratings, it was determined that the areas of problem analysis, judgment, written communication, and sensitivity were most strongly related to climate ratings. In essence all the assessment center dimensions were related significantly to one of the climate dimensions. This supports the hypothesis of the current study that assessment centers have predictive validity, i.e., high ratings derived for an individual in an assessment center will parallel the positive climate he or she establishes in a school.

Content validity: The content validity of assessment centers, or determining whether the assessment center skills parallel skills on the job, was determined by an

evaluation performed by 18 "experts" in the field of education. In the preliminary job analysis of a principal's job, nine major dimensions were identified. A statistical procedure which resulted in a content validity ratio (CVR) was used to determine relationships. CVR ranges from +1.00 to -1.00 with +1.00 indicating high correlation and -1.00 little or no correlation. Table 5 relates assessment center skills to dimensions as reported in CVRs.

It is noted that all of the assessment center dimensions are rated as important to at least one of the performance dimensions. This means that the assessment center does indeed measure skills needed to be a building administrator. In short the assessment center is content valid. This supports the hypothesis in the current study that assessment centers have been established because of the predictive nature of the content. The assessment center does simulate behaviors on the job, therefore if an individual does well in an assessment center then it can be predicted that the individual will do well as a building administrator.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter V was to report on the validity of educational assessment centers. To date there has been only one reported study: the NASSP assessment center model was analyzed over a three-year period and it was concluded through statistical research that the as-

TABLE 5

CONTENT VALIDITY RATIOS FOR THE ASSESSMENT CENTER SKILLS ACROSS THE
MAJOR PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS

Task Dimension	Problem Analysis	Judgment	Organizational Ability	Decisiveness	Leadership	Sensitivity	Range of Interests	Personal Motivation	Stress Tolerance	Educational Values	Oral Communication	Written Communication
1. Curriculum & Instructional Leadership	.88	.88	.88	.55	.88	.55	-.33	-.11	-.22	.55	.66	.66
2. Coordination of Student Activities	.33	.77	.88	.55	.77	.77	-.33	-.33	.22	.44	.55	.55
3. Direction of Support Services of the School	.66	.77	.88	.77	.77	.77	-.66	-.44	.00	-.11	.55	.77
4. Staff Selection Evaluation & Development	.55	.88	.77	.66	.88	.88	-.11	-.44	.11	.66	.77	.66
5. Development & Maintenance Community Relations	.88	.88	.66	.55	.88	.88	.22	.11	.55	.11	.77	.77
6. Coordination With District & Other Schools	.33	.55	.88	.11	.55	.44	-.66	-.44	.00	-.11	.66	.66
7. Fiscal Management	.77	.88	.88	.66	.66	-.22	-.88	-.44	.11	.00	-.22	.66
8. Maintenance of School Plant	.77	.88	.66	.55	.44	.33	-.77	-.33	-.11	-.44	.22	.33
9. Structure Communication	.66	.88	.77	.66	.77	.88	-.11	-.22	.22	.11	.77	.88

*The larger the value, the greater the extent to which the skill was judged "essential" or "necessary" but not essential as other skills, for the adequate performance of tasks in the dimension.

SOURCE: Neal Schmitt, Raymond Noe, Ronni Merritt, Michael Fitzgerald, and Cathy Jorgenson, Criterion-Related and Content Validity of the NASSP Assessment Center (Michigan State University: n.d.) p. 52.

assessment center model is content valid and also has criterion-related validity.

It was determined that the NASSP model is objective due to its high interrater reliability and can predict behaviors on the job due to its criterion-related validity. Therefore there is substantial evidence that two of the hypotheses of the current study are true, i.e., assessment centers have been established because of the objective nature of the process and because of the predictive elements of the content.

CHAPTER VI

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate and determine reasons for the insurgence in popularity of assessment centers as a technique to identify talented public school principals and assistant principals. Assessment centers are multiform: they utilize multiple evaluation strategies to assess behavior and performance through simulations of on-the-job activities. Multiple trained assessors critique assessees using a variety of techniques and arrive at judgments on predetermined skill dimension through consensus.

It was reported that assessment centers were initially begun in the military sector during World War II when personnel who were to carry out intelligence activities were selected through intense one and three-day assessment programs. The concept was later adapted by the business sector, when in 1956 AT&T began identifying managerial potential through its "Management Progress Program". The process spread rapidly in the late 1960's to many industries and governmental agencies. It was reported that by the mid 1970's at least 30,000 individu-

als were evaluated per year through the assessment center process.

The assessment center as a technique to identify talented educational building administrators was first reported in the mid 1970's. In 1974 NASSP initiated a pilot program in two school divisions, Prince William County, Maryland, and Charlottesville, Virginia, to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of the process. The number of pilot assessment centers in the NASSP project expanded as the process was adopted by school divisions across the United States. By December, 1983, NASSP reported that there were nineteen operational assessment centers in all sections of the United States utilizing the model designed by that organization. The idea spread to other educational agencies during the time span from 1974 through 1983. Models of educational assessment centers that had developed were reported by the following agencies:

1. NASSP
2. Dade County Public Schools, Florida
3. Peel Board of Education, Ontario, Canada
4. Broward County, Palm Beach County, and Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative, Florida
5. Montgomery County, Maryland
6. University of Mississippi Bureau of School Services

In the current study the education models were described as to the design of the assessment center, training and selecting assessors, and validation of the process.

Related studies reported interest in the utilization of assessment centers in the field of education. In 1975 Streitman compared a "Block-of-Time" program at Georgia State University to a non-educationally oriented assessment center in order to assess educational administrative potential. He found that the evaluations were comparable. In 1975 Stone described three educational administrative assessment centers in Florida and reported that the assessment center process had potential in staff development, professional renewal, and personal growth. In 1976 Zubay also compared the "Block-of-Time" program at Georgia State University to a one-day assessment center and found they had a moderately high relationship. In 1977 Reighard constructed an assessment center model and submitted it to a jury of seven authorities in the field of education who substantiated its face validity. In 1978 Gallagher studied an industrial assessment center, drew implications from the method, and applied them to the selection of school principals, reporting that the process did indeed have merit.

These studies provided support for the current study in that the sample sizes as reported by the six educational assessment centers are significantly greater than in related studies. A larger sample will more accurately appraise the assessment center process.

In speculating the reasons that educational assessment centers have become popular the following hypotheses form the basis of the study:

1. Assessment centers have been established because the objective nature of the process enables the selection of talented administrators.
2. For reasons of expediency assessment centers have been established to assist school divisions in identifying talented administrators.
3. Assessment centers have been established because of the predictive elements of the content.

Conclusions

Throughout the study evidence was presented to support the first hypothesis that assessment centers were established because of the objective nature of the process. In an assessment center, judgment of an individual's performance in the various activities is determined by several evaluators who discuss strengths and weaknesses and through consensus arrive at a global decision. This process promotes objectivity and assures an assessee of a fair evaluation. The consensus variable was reported as integral in the development of assessment centers in the military and business sectors. It was an important feature of the OSS design and was a factor that appeared in the educational assessment center designs under study.

It was reported that because of the objectivity of the process, the assessment center satisfies stringent demands of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission guidelines. Research reports were cited which stated that the assessment center method appears to offer equal

opportunity to minorities in an unbiased manner.

Objectivity is also promoted through assessment centers because the technique utilizes several different methods in a variety of settings, as compared to traditional methods of selection which are unilateral. All of the designs of educational assessment centers reported at least three different activities such as an inbasket simulation, leaderless group exercise, and written and oral communication activities.

The selection of assessors from the field of education and the training of these assessors in observational techniques also promote objectivity of the results. The assessors are seasoned "experts" in the field. Their extensive knowledge in behaviors unique to education encourages fair observations. The training of assessors is vital according to experts in the field and concentrates on understanding the organization's dimensions, observing behavior, categorizing and rating behavior according to the dimensions, and the processing and sharing of that information in consensus-seeking discussions. Due to the complexity of the training high interrater agreement can be achieved which produces substantial objectivity of observations.

The validation study of the NASSP model confirmed that the process is indeed objective because of the significant correlation among rating abilities of assessors (.9 and above as reported by coefficient alpha).

The second hypothesis stated that assessment centers were established for reasons of expediency. School systems must move quickly to employ administrators and the assessment center provides a known "talent pool" from which to choose. This hypothesis was confirmed in most of the models under study. Conversely, yet of significance, the assessment center technique "weeds out" those unfit for administrative positions.

The third hypothesis, which states that assessment centers were established because of the predictive elements of the content, is confirmed throughout the study with particular emphasis in the validation study of the NASSP model. In the designs of the six education models, care has been taken to create job-like simulations. Behavior in the simulations should parallel behavior on the job which means that the assessment center can predict job success or failure. NASSP's validation study referred to the predictive content as criterion-related validity. There were significant relationships between ratings derived in an assessment center and performance ratings on the job. The study also reported that the NASSP model is content valid, that it measures skills needed to be a building administrator. When one combines these two validities it can be stated with confidence that if an individual is judged as a high performer in assessment center activities that simulate job-related skills and behaviors, that that individual should be

successful as a principal or assistant principal.

Recommendations

It has been revealed that the assessment center process is a technique that was proven to be successful in the military and business sectors and subsequently spread to the educational arena. The concept has been documented as valid in the business world but there is only one reported research study in the field of education. The process is in its infancy stage in the educational area, yet warrants consideration. As the process expands, several recommendations are sanctioned:

1. There is a need for additional longitudinal validation studies to substantiate the effectiveness of the assessment center selection process.
2. There is a need for continuous "quality control" of the internal mechanics of an assessment center to ensure consistency and validity of the outcomes. Assessors should be utilized frequently to keep the techniques fresh in their minds, refresher training should be offered to them, and the rotation of assessor personnel among centers should be encouraged. Over a period of time the skills to be assessed in the design of the assessment center should be re-evaluated as to appropriateness.

Times change, people change and the position of principal or assistant principal may change, therefore, the need for a reappraisal of content.

3. There should be encouragement in the development of regional assessment centers so that smaller school divisions and private schools could utilize the concept.
4. There is a need for security of assessment center activities. It is possible that an individual could obtain copies of the simulations and exercises and therefore, could "study" for the assessment center. This could contaminate results.
5. There is a need for research into utilizing the results of an assessment center as a developmental tool for professional growth. Once the strengths and weaknesses of an individual are identified, processes to remediate those weaknesses should be developed.
6. There appears a need to establish a centralized placement service for successful assessment center participants. As the number of individuals who are assessed increases then a need for placement of those individuals into administrative positions develops. Along with this need is a paralleled requirement that school boards be made aware of and recognize the assessment center as a vital method in selecting talented principals and assistant principals who will ultimately affect the quality of educational systems throughout the world.

APPENDIX A

STANDARDS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERA-
TIONS FOR ASSESSMENT CENTER OPERA-
TIONS ENDORSED BY THE VII
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE AS-
SESSMENT CENTER METHOD

**STANDARDS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
FOR ASSESSMENT CENTER OPERATIONS**

TASK FORCE ON ASSESSMENT CENTER STANDARDS

**Endorsed by the VII International Congress of the Assessment
Center Method, New Orleans, June 1979**

115.00

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. TASK FORCE MEMBERS	1
B. BACKGROUND	2
C. PURPOSE	3
D. REFERENCES	3
E. ASSESSMENT CENTER DEFINED	4
F. ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT	6
G. ASSESSOR TRAINING	7
H. INFORMED PARTICIPATION	10
I. VALIDATION ISSUES	12
J. RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS	13

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B. Background

The rapid growth in the use of the Assessment Center method in recent years has resulted in a proliferation of applications in a variety of organizations. Assessment Centers are currently being used in industrial, educational, military, government, and other organizational settings. Practitioners have raised serious concerns which reflect a need for standards or guidelines for users of the method. The Third International Congress on the Assessment Center Method Meeting (May 1975) in Quebec endorsed the first set of guidelines. These were based on the observation and experience of a representative group of professionals representing many of the largest users of the method.

Recent developments concerning Federal guidelines related to testing, as well as professional experience with the original standards suggested that the standards should be evaluated and revised. The revised standards do include the essential items from the original standards. The changes made have been in the direction of:

1. Further definitions
2. Clarification of impact on organizations and participants
3. Expanded guidelines on training
4. Additional information on validation

C. Purpose

This document is intended to establish minimum professional standards and ethical considerations for users of the Assessment Center method. Principles which may be adapted to meet both existing and future applications are included. This document is intended as an aid, not a set of restrictive prohibitions. These standards do not prescribe specific practices nor do they endorse a specific format or technique.

D. References

The standards have been developed to be compatible with the following documents:

American Psychological Association, American Educational Research Association, and National Council on Measurements in Education. Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests. Washington: American Psychological Association, 1974.

Division of Industrial-Organization Psychology (Division 14), American Psychological Association. Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures. Dayton, Ohio: The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist, 1975.

E. Assessment Center Defined

An Assessment Center consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple inputs. Multiple trained observers and techniques are used. Judgements about behavior are made, in part, from specifically developed assessment simulations.

These judgements are pooled by the assessors at an evaluation meeting during which assessment data are reported and discussed, and the assessors agree on the evaluation of the dimensions and any overall evaluation that is made.

The following are the essential elements which are necessary for a process to be considered an Assessment Center:

1. Multiple Assessment techniques must be used. At least one of these techniques must be a simulation.

A simulation is an exercise or technique designed to elicit behaviors related to dimensions of performance on the job requiring the participants to respond behaviorally to situational stimuli. The stimuli present in a simulation parallel or resemble stimuli in the work situation. Examples of simulations include group exercises, In-Basket exercises, interview simulations, Fact Finding exercises, etc.

2. Multiple assessors must be used. These assessors must receive thorough training prior to participating in a center.
3. Judgements resulting in an outcome (i.e., recommendation 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 during the exercises.
5. Simulation exercises are used. These exercises are developed to tap a variety of predetermined behaviors and have been pre-tested prior to use to insure that the techniques provide reliable, objective and relevant behavioral information for the organization in question. The simulations must be job related.
6. The dimensions, attributes, characteristics, qualities, skills, abilities or knowledge 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.

The following kinds of activities do not constitute an Assessment Center:

1. Panel interviews or a series of sequential interviews as the sole technique.
2. Reliance on a specific technique (regardless of whether a simulation or not) as the sole basis for evaluation.
3. Using only a test battery composed of a number of pencil and paper measures, regardless of whether the judgments are made by a statistical or judgmental pooling of scores.
4. Single assessor assessment (often referred to as individual assessment) - measurement by one individual using a variety of techniques such as pencil and paper tests, interviews, personality measures or simulations.

5. The use of several simulations with more than one assessor where there is no pooling of data; i.e., each assessor prepares a report on performance in an exercise, and the individual reports (unintegrated) are used as the final product of the center.
6. A physical location labeled as an "Assessment Center" which does not conform to the requirements noted above.

F. Organizational Policy Statement

Assessment Centers need to operate as a part of a human resource system. Prior to the introduction of a center into an organization, a policy statement should be prepared and approved by the organization. This policy statement should address the following areas:

1. Objective - This may be selection, development, early identification, affirmative action, evaluation of potential, evaluation of competency, or any combination of these.
2. Assesseees - The population to be assessed, the method for selecting assesseees from this population, procedures for notification, and policy related to re-assessing should be specified.
3. Assessors - The assessor population, limitations on use of assessors, number of times assigned, evaluation of assessor performance and certification requirements where applicable should be specified.
4. Use of Data - The flow of assessment reports, who receives reports, restrictions on access to information, procedures and controls for research and program evaluation purposes, feedback procedures to management and employee, and the length of time data will be maintained in files should be specified.

5. Qualification of Consultant(s) or Assessment Center Developer(s)

The internal or external consultants responsible for the development of the center should be identified and their professional qualifications and related training listed.

6. Validation - There should be a statement specifying the validation model being used. There should be a time schedule indicating when a validation report will be available.

G. Assessor Training

Assessor training is an integral part of the Assessment Center program. The following are some issues related to training:

1. Training Content - Whatever the approach to assessor training, the objective is obtaining accurate assessor judgments. A variety of training approaches may be used, as long as it can be demonstrated that accurate assessor judgments are obtained. The following minimum training goals are suggested:
 - a. Thorough knowledge and understanding of the assessment techniques used, including the kinds of behaviors elicited by each technique, relevant dimensions to be observed, expected or typical behaviors, examples or samples of actual behaviors, etc.
 - b. Thorough knowledge and understanding of the assessment dimensions including definitions of dimensions, relationship to job performance, examples of effective and ineffective performance, etc.
 - c. Skill in behavior observation and recording, including knowledge of the forms used by the center.
 - d. Thorough knowledge and understanding of evaluation and rating procedures, including how data are integrated by the Assessment Center staff.

- e. Thorough knowledge and understanding of assessment policies and practices of the organization, including restrictions on how assessment data are to be used.
- f. Thorough knowledge and understanding of feedback procedures where appropriate.

b. Length of Training

The length of assessor training may vary due to a variety of considerations that can be categorized into three major areas:

1. Trainer and Instructional Design Considerations

- The instructional mode(s) utilized
- The qualification and expertise of the trainer
- The training and instructional sequence

2. Assessor Considerations

- Previous knowledge and experience with assessment
- The use of professional psychologists (i.e., licensed or certified psychologists) as assessors
- Experience and familiarity with the organization and the target position(s) or target level
- The frequency of assessor participation

3. Assessment Program Considerations

- The level of difficulty of the target position
- The number of dimensions or skills to be rated
- The anticipated use of the assessment information (immediate selection, broad placement considerations, development, etc.)
- The number and complexity of the exercises
- The division of roles and responsibilities between assessors and others on the assessment staff

It should be noted that length of training and quality of training are not synonymous. Assessor training, however, is an important aspect of an assessment program. The true test of training quality should be provided by the performance standards and certification outlined below.

C. Performance Standards and Certification - Each Assessment Center should have clearly stated minimal performance standards for assessors. These performance standards should, as a minimum, include the following areas.

1. The ability to administer the exercises and techniques the assessor uses in the center.
2. The ability to recognize, observe, and report the behaviors measured in the center.
3. The ability to classify behaviors into the appropriate behavior or skill.

Some measurement is needed indicating that the individual being trained has the capability of functioning as an assessor. The actual measurement of assessor performance may vary and could include data in terms of (1) rating performance, (2) critiques of assessor reports, (3) observation as an evaluator, etc. It is important that assessor performance is evaluated to insure that individuals are sufficiently trained to function as assessors, prior to their actual duties, and that such performance is periodically monitored to insure that skills learned in training are applied.

Each organization should prepare to demonstrate that its assessors can meet minimal performance standards. This may require the development of additional training or other action for assessors not meeting these performance standards.

H. Informed Participation

The organization is obligated to make some form of announcement prior to assessment so that participants will be informed as completely as possible about the program. While the actual information provided will vary from organization to organization, the following basic information should be given to all prospective participants before getting their agreement to participate in the program.

Ideally, this information should be made available in writing prior to the center. A second option is to use the material in the opening statement of the center.

1. Objective - The objectives of the program and the purpose of the Assessment Center.
2. Selection - How individuals are selected to participate in the center.
3. Choice - Any options the individual has regarding the choice of participating in the Assessment Center as a condition of employment, advancement, development, etc.
4. Staff - General information on the assessor staff to include composition and assessor training.
5. Materials - What Assessment Center materials are collected and maintained by the organization.
6. Results - How the Assessment Center results will be used. The length of time the assessment results will be maintained on file.

7. Feedback - When and what kind of feedback will be given the participants.
8. Reassessment - The procedure for reassessment (if given).
9. Access - Who will have access to the Assessment Center reports and under what conditions.
10. Contact - Who will be the contact person responsible for the records. Where will the results be stored.

I. Validation Issues

A major factor in the widespread acceptance and use of Assessment Centers is directly related to an emphasis on sound validation research. Numerous studies have been conducted and reported in the professional literature demonstrating the validity of the Assessment Center process in a variety of organizational settings.

The historical record of the validity of this process cannot be taken as a guarantee that a given assessment program will or will not be valid in a given setting.

Ascertaining the validity of an Assessment Center program is a complicated technical process, and it is important that validation research meet both professional and legal standards. Research should be conducted by individuals knowledgeable in the technical and legal issues pertinent to validation procedures.

In evaluating the validity of Assessment Center programs, it is particularly important to document the selection of the dimensions, attributes or qualities assessed in the center. In addition, the relationship of assessment exercises to the dimensions, attributes or qualities assessed should be documented as well.

The technical standards and principles for validation appear in "Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures" (Division 14, 1975) and "Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests and Manuals" (APA 1974).

J. Rights of the Participant

The Federal Government enacted the Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act of 1974 to insure that certain safeguards are provided for an individual against an invasion of personal privacy. Some broad interpretations of these acts are applicable to the general use of Assessment Center data.

Assessment Center activities typically generate a volume of data on an individual who has gone through an Assessment Center. These assessment data come in many different forms ranging from observer notes, reports on performance in the exercises, assessor ratings, peer ratings, paper and pencil tests, and final Assessment Center reports. This list, while not exhaustive, does indicate the extent of collection of information about an individual.

The following guidelines for use of these data are suggested:

1. Assesseees should receive a comprehensive feedback on their performance at the Center and informed of any recommendations made.
2. For reasons of test security, Assessment Center exercises are exempted from disclosure, but the rationale and validity data concerning dimensions, ratings and recommendations should be made available on request of the individual.
3. If the organization decides to use assessment results for purposes other than those originally announced, the assesseees involved must be informed.
4. The organization should inform the assessee what records and data are being collected, maintained, used, and disseminated.

APPENDIX B

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

LISTINGS OF

PILOT ASSESSMENT CENTERS

DIRECTORS

NUMBERS OF ASSESSORS TRAINED

NUMBERS OF PARTICIPANTS ASSESSED

as of December, 1983

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

<u>Assessment Center</u>	<u>Assessors Trained</u>	<u>Participants Assessed</u>
<u>Virginia</u>		
Prince William County Director: Dr. David Lepard	38	114
Portsmouth Director: Horace Savage	19	94
<u>Maryland</u>		
Howard County Director: Noel Farmer, Jr.	19	84
Anne Arundel County Director: Carol Dunigan	20	24
<u>Florida</u>		
Lee County Director: Weaver Hipps	17	156
<u>California</u>		
San Diego County Director: Diane A. Yerkes	84	289
Orange County Director: Dr. Walter F. Beckman	1	12
<u>Alabama</u>		
Jefferson County (Southern Assessment Center Consortium) Director: Dr. Ron Jones	31	132
<u>Nebraska</u>		
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Director: Dr. Edgar A. Kelley	44	100
Lincoln Public Schools Director: Dr. Elizabeth Dillon-Peterson	7	54
<u>Texas</u>		
Austin Director: Dr. James Patterson	30	72

NASSP (cont'd)

<u>Assessment Center</u>	<u>Assessors Trained</u>	<u>Participants Assessed</u>
<u>Utah</u>		
University of Utah Director: Dr. Rodney T. Ogawa	42	80
<u>Maine</u>		
University of Southern Maine Director: Dr. Charles F. Smith	55	59
<u>Pennsylvania</u>		
York Director: Dr. Jack C. Van Newkirk	17	36
<u>Kansas</u>		
Wichita State University Director: Dr. M. Claradine Johnson	42	36
<u>South Carolina</u>		
Columbia Director: Dr. Jim Ray	49	54
<u>Wisconsin</u>		
Madison Director: Dr. Robert Gomoll	23	12
<u>North Carolina</u>		
Raleigh Director: Dyane Marks	26	12
<u>Oregon</u>		
Salem Director: Dr. Wayne Robbins	24	12
Totals	588	1432

Source: Report of NASSP activities to Carolyn J. Van Newkirk, December 1983 (Typewritten).

APPENDIX C

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

ASSESSMENT CENTER

SCHEDULE - MODEL #1

SCHEDULE - MODEL #2

NASSPAC SCHEDULE - MODEL #1

<u>First Day</u>	<u>ASSESSORS</u>	<u>PARTICIPANTS</u>
8:00 - 8:30 am	Welcome and Introductions	Welcome and Introductions
8:30 - 9:00 am	Formal Introduction of Center	Introduction/Schedules Assigned
9:00 - 9:45 am	Review Leaderless Group Exercise and Prepare to Observe	Prepare Leaderless Group Exercise
9:45 - 10:30 am	Observe Leaderless Group Exercise	Perform Leaderless Group Exercise Groups of Six
10:30 - 11:00 am	Break	Break
11:00 - 1:00 pm	Write Leaderless Group Exercise	Complete In-Basket I
1:00 - 2:30 pm	Lunch	Lunch
2:30 - 4:30 pm	Evaluate In-Basket I	Complete In-Basket II
Evening	Complete Leaderless Grp. & Inbasket I reports (if not finished during the day)	(Participant day ends)
	Evaluate In-Basket II and Prepare In-Basket/Personal Interview (to the extent possible)	
<u>Second Day</u>		
8:00 - 9:00 am	Observe Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise	Three Perform Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise
9:00 - 10:00 am	(Three Assessor Teams	Three Perform Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise
10:00 - 11:00 am	with Two Assessors	Three Perform Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise
11:00 - 12:00 am	Working on Each Team)	Three Perform Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 - 3:30 pm	Individually Conduct In-Basket/Personal Interviews	Six Are Interviewed
3:45 - 6:15 pm	Interviews Continue (Assessor day ends)	Six Are Interviewed (Participant day ends)
<u>Third Day</u>		
8:00 - 10:00 am	Prepare Exercise Reports	Free Day
10:00 - 1:00 pm	Consensus Discussions and Final Ratings	
1:00 - 2:00 pm	Lunch	
2:00 - 6:30 pm	Continue Discussions/Ratings	
6:30 - 7:30 pm	Dinner	
7:30 - 10:00 pm	Continue Discussions/Ratings	
<u>Fourth Day</u>		
9:00 - 12:00 noon	Finish Discussions/Ratings	Feedback
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch	(Within one week of the interview on the second day--arranged by the Center director)
1:00 - 4:30 pm	Write Final Reports	

107
NASSPAC SCHEDULE -- MODEL #2

<u>First Day</u>	<u>ASSESSORS</u>	<u>PARTICIPANTS</u>
8:00 - 8:30 AM	Welcome and Introduction	Welcome and Introduction
8:30 - 8:45 AM	Prepare to Observe Leaderless Group Exercise #1	Study Leaderless Group Exercise
8:45 - 9:45 AM	Observe Leaderless Group Exercise #1	Perform Leaderless Group Exercise (Groups of Six)
9:45 - 10:00 AM	Break	Break
10:00 - 12:00 Noon	Write Leaderless Group Exercise Reports	Complete In-Basket I
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 - 1:45 PM	Evaluate In-Basket I and Write Exercise Reports	Study and Prepare Likron
1:45 - 2:30 PM	Observe Leaderless Group Exercise #2	Perform Leaderless Group Exercise
2:30 - 2:45 PM	Break	Break
2:45 - 4:45 PM	Write Leaderless Group Exercise #2 Reports	Complete In-Basket II (Participant day ends)
Evening	Complete Exercise Reports Evaluate In-Basket II and Prepare In-Basket and Personal Interview	
<u>Second Day</u>		
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Observe Individual Stress/Fact Finding Exercise (Three Assessor Teams)	Three Perform Individual Stress Fact Finding Exercise
9:00 - 10:00 AM		Three Perform Individual Stress Fact Finding Exercise
10:00 - 11:00 AM	with Two Assessors	Three Perform Individual Stress Fact Finding Exercise
11:00 - 12:00 Noon	Working on Each Team)	Three Perform Individual Stress Fact Finding Exercise
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 - 3:30 PM	Individually Conduct In-Basket and Personal Interviews	Six Are Interviewed
3:45 - 6:15 PM	Interviews Continued	Six Are Interviewed
<u>Third Day</u>		
8:00 - 10:00 AM	Prepare Exercise Reports	Free Day
10:00 - 1:00 PM	Consensus and Final Ratings	
1:00 - 2:00 PM	Lunch	
2:00 - 6:30 PM	Continue Discussions/Ratings	
6:30 - 7:30 PM	Dinner	
7:30 - 10:00 PM	Continue Discussions/Ratings	
<u>Fourth Day</u>		
9:00 - 12:00 noon	Finish Discussions/Ratings	Feedback (Within one week of the interview on second day; arranged by Center director)
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lunch	
1:00 - 4:30 PM	Write Final Reports	

APPENDIX D
ASSESSOR TRAINING
BEHAVIOR EXAMPLE EXERCISE

BEHAVIOR EXAMPLE EXERCISE

Imagine yourself in an assessor discussion session. Suppose an assessor makes the statement provided below and offers no further data on the behavior in question. If you consider the statement a good example of behavior (i.e., you would be willing to use it in arriving at your evaluation of the dimension being discussed) place a mark in the "good example" column. If you consider it too vague, general, judgmental, etc., and not something you should use in arriving at a conclusion about a participant's skill along a dimension, place a mark in the "poor example" column.

Good Example	Poor Example	Statement
_____	_____	1. Led the group to accomplish its goal.
_____	_____	2. Told the foreman to go ahead and fire the tardy employee.
_____	_____	3. When the arguments became heated, he broke down under pressure.
_____	_____	4. Was very creative in his solutions to the inbasket problems.
_____	_____	5. Suggested that they not invest all of their money during the first trading period.

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Answers to the exercise are: #1, poor example (PE), #2, good example (GE), #3, PE - didn't describe how heated or what "broke down" means, #4, PE, and #5, GE.

APPENDIX E
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
ASSESSOR TRAINING SCHEDULE

ASSESSOR TRAINING SCHEDULE

First Day

- 8:00 - 8:30 am ● Welcome and Introductions
- 8:30 - 9:30 am ● Historical review of assessment concept
- Overview of the assessment process used in NASSP Assessment Centers
- Discussion of skill dimensions assessed
- 9:30 - 12:30 pm ● Discuss leaderless group activity
- Perform one of these exercises
- 12:30 - 1:15 pm ● Lunch
- 1:15 - 2:30 pm ● Discussion of behavior recording
- 2:30 - 5:00 pm ● Discussion of In-Baskets
- Introduction of fact-finding, stress exercise
- Evening Assignment (2 hours) ● Evaluation of an in-basket
- Review fact-finding stress exercise

Second Day

- 8:00 - 9:30 am ● Discuss assignment and In-Basket Interview
- 9:30 - 12:00 noon ● Personal interview training
- 12:00 - 1:00 pm ● Lunch
- 1:00 - 1:45 pm ● Students prepare leaderless group activity
- Assessors discuss fact-finding, stress exercise
- 1:45 - 2:30 pm ● Students perform leaderless group activity
- Assessors observe
- 2:30 - 2:45 pm ● Break
- 2:45 - 3:45 pm ● Students perform fact-finding, stress exercise
- Assessors observe
- 3:45 - 4:45 pm ● Assessors critique fact-finding, stress work
- 4:45 - 5:30 pm ● Review report writing
- Evening Assignment ● Write two Exercise Reports (One in-basket and one other)

Third Day

- 8:00 - 9:30 am ● Review Exercise Reports
- 9:30 - 12:30 pm ● Consensus discussions and rating of a student
- 12:30 - 1:30 pm ● Lunch
- 1:30 - 4:00 pm ● Discussion of and writing Final Reports
- 4:00 - 4:30 pm ● Wrap-up comments and question/answer period

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