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Context effects in a group interaction exercise

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CONTEXT EFFECTS IN A GROUP INTERACTION EXERCISE

by

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Context Effects in a Group Interaction Setting
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Abstract

Context effects are a robust finding in psychology and are manifested in the form of assimilation effects and contrast effects. Assimilation effects occur when judgments of a target stimulus are biased toward the level of non-target, context stimuli. Contrast effects occur when judgments of a target stimulus are biased in the opposite direction of non-target context stimuli and are much more prevalent than assimilation effects. Limited research has been conducted on contrast effects in the area of industrial/organizational psychology and no study has yet examined contrast effects when target and non-target stimuli are observed simultaneously. The purpose of this study was to examine contrast effects in a group interaction setting (a leaderless group discussion (LGD) exercise of an assessment center) where all stimuli were observed simultaneously. Two factors were manipulated: the performance level of non-target stimuli (above standard and/or below standard candidates) and observation condition of the target stimulus (a standard candidate). In addition, the order in which the standard candidate was rated was counterbalanced. It was hypothesized that (1) contrast effects would occur in the LGD.

One hundred, eighty-seven undergraduates were trained as raters and then viewed a videotape of a leaderless group discussion
exercise in which a standard candidate was interacting either with
two above standard candidates, two below standard candidates, or
an above standard and a below standard candidate. Each videotape
contained the same footage of the standard candidate; consequently,
her performance was identical across conditions. Participants were
assigned to observe one of the three candidates (the target
candidate or one of the non-target candidates). During the rating
session when the assessors discussed the performance of the
candidates, performance of the standard candidate was discussed in
either the first, second or third position. Individual ratings and
consensus ratings were collected and analyzed.

At the individual rating level, contrast effects were present in
leaderless group discussion exercise ratings. Specifically, the
standard candidate was rated significantly higher when performing
with below standard candidates than with above standard
candidates. The observation assignment had no significant influence
on the magnitude of contrast effects; however, a leniency effect
occurred for those assessors who were assigned to observe the
standard candidate. Contrast effects were not present in the raters'
consensus ratings. Conclusions, suggestions for future research, and
implications for the study are discussed.
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This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my grandmother,
Mrs. Edna E. Bentley
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CHAPTER I
Context Effects in a Group Interaction Setting

One of the most replicable findings in the area of psychology is that ratings of a target stimulus differ as a function of the context in which the target stimulus is presented (Berkowitz, 1960; Manis, 1967). The tendency for individuals to evaluate a target stimulus based on the total array of stimuli in the surrounding field, rather than based solely on the target stimulus being judged, is termed a context effect (Grey & Kipnis, 1976; Helson & Kozaki, 1969; Ivancevich, 1983; Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1971; Manis, 1967; Sherman, Ahlm & Berman, 1978). Context effects influence judgments of size and weight of objects (Helson, & Kozaki, 1969; Sherif, Taub, & Hovland, 1958), attitude development and change (DiVesta, 1961; Herr, Sherman & Fazio, 1983; Zimbardo & Ebbeson, 1969), impression formation (Simpson & Ostrum, 1976), judgments of crime severity (Pepitone & DiNubile, 1976), communication strategies (Manis, 1967), etc. In fact, research related to industrial/organizational psychology has suggested that hiring decisions, job performance evaluations, salary, promotion, and other reward practices may be as much a function of the behavior of persons in the surrounding field as are actual levels of employee competence (Grey & Kipnis, 1976; Ivancevich, 1983; Rain & Steiner, 1988; Rowe, 1967; Smither, Reilly & Buda, 1988; Murphy, Balzar, Lockhart & Eisenman, 1985).
Two types of context effects, assimilation effects and contrast effects have been studied. Assimilation effects occur when judgments of a target stimulus are biased toward the level of non-target, context stimuli. That is, judgments of a target stimulus are assimilated towards stimuli in the surrounding field. Contrast effects occur when judgments of a target stimulus are biased in the opposite direction of non-target, context stimuli.

Literature related to category accessibility in social perception has been used to explain the occurrence of assimilation effects (Herr et al., 1983; Higgins Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Wyer & Srull, 1981). According to this literature, evaluation of a target stimulus is partially determined by category accessibility and not solely by behavioral or dispositional information about the target stimulus (Higgins et al., 1977). That is, stimuli in the surrounding environment activate a particular category and judgment of a target stimulus is biased in the direction of the category activated. Judgments of a target stimulus are often affected by events that increase the accessibility of a concept that has previously been activated (Wyer & Srull, 1981). In most all cases where assimilation effects have been found, the context stimuli have been presented prior to the target stimulus (Berkowitz, 1960; Herr et al., 1983; Higgins et al., 1977; Wyer & Srull, 1981). According to research on category accessibility, concepts relevant to the context of stimuli previously presented are activated upon presentation of the target stimulus. Consequently, the evaluation of the target
stimulus reflects the evaluative aspects of previously presented stimuli. Judgments of a target stimulus will therefore be biased towards the characteristics of the context stimuli since categories related to the context stimuli have recently been activated (Wyer & Srull, 1981).

Another explanation for assimilation effects involves Bayes' theorem of optimal, rational decision making which suggests that people do not revise prior information or opinions about a stimulus to the extent that they should when given new information regarding the stimulus (Slovic & Lichenstein, 1971). Specifically, when an opinion about a stimulus is formed and new information is presented, an individual will only partially revise his/her opinion regarding the stimulus. Therefore the rating assigned to a target stimulus will be biased in the direction of other non-target stimuli. This explanation for assimilation effects is especially relevant to assimilation effects that occur in within person judgments where ratings of present performance are biased in the direction of ratings of past performance (Murphy et al. 1985; Pardaffy, 1989; Smither et al., 1988).

Research in two areas, perceptual contrast theories and shifts in judgmental standards, has been used to explain the occurrence of contrast effects. Perceptual contrast theories focus on the effect of a salient, discrepant stimulus on rater attention and encoding (Helson, 1947; Helson & Kozaki, 1968; Murphy et al., 1985; Simpson & Ostrum, 1976). According to perceptual contrast theories, the
presentation of several stimuli at a uniform level enables the rater to become accustomed to that particular level of presentation (Helson, 1947). Then when a stimulus occurs at a different level, raters devote more attention to properties of the stimulus that deviate from the pre-established level, since these properties are novel (Hastie, 1980). In addition to receiving greater attention, stimulus properties deviating from pre-established levels are encoded in greater detail than stimulus properties consistent with the pre-established level (Hastie, 1980; Murphy et al., 1985). Consequently, when rating a discrepant stimulus raters will focus on the dissimilarities of the discrepant stimulus from the other stimuli, exaggerate the differences in the two levels, and rate the target stimulus inaccurately.

There is also evidence that contrast effects may be due to shifts in judgmental standards rather than to selective attention and encoding of the characteristics of a discrepant stimulus (Berkowitz, 1960; Kopelman, 1975; Manis, 1965; Murphy et al, 1985; Pepitone & DiNubile, 1976; Wexley, Yukl, Kovacs, & Sanders, 1973). This shift in judgmental standards is based on a semantic rather than a perceptual effect. Although the rater’s perception of the target stimulus is not affected, the use of the rating scale is affected. For example, the meaning of verbal anchors such as “very good” or “very bad” may change both as a function of the stimuli that are being evaluated and of the range of scale anchors being used. According to this explanation of contrast effects, raters
become accustomed to a frequently occurring level of stimuli and this level will become the level to which the target stimulus is compared. If most stimuli lie along one end of the continuum of the rating scale, the rater will position the response scale toward that end of the continuum. Consequently, a target stimulus that differs from the level of the context stimuli will be rated on the opposite end of the rating scale (Herr et al., 1983).

**Review of the Literature on Context Effects**

Both assimilation and contrast effects have been found in judgments of weights (Sherif et al., 1958), judgments of size of real and unreal animals (Herr et al., 1983), attitude change (Hovland, Harvey & Sherif, 1957; Zimbardo & Ebbeson, 1969) and in judgments of others (Higgins et al., 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1980). Although context effects have been found in a wide variety of research settings, the occurrence of contrast effects is much more prevalent than that of assimilation effects (Herr et al. 1983; Manis, 1967; Srull & Wyer, 1980). Contrast effects have been found in such diverse areas as visual perception of size of objects (Helson, 1947; Helson & Kozaki, 1968), estimates of line length (Krantz & Campbell, 1961), judgments of musical pitch (Campbell, Lewis & Hunt, 1958), running speed of rats (Black, 1968; Crespi, 1942), ratings of importance of political issues (Sherman et al., 1978), attitude development (DiVesta, 1961), perceptions of crime severity
(Pepitone & DiNubile, 1976), essay evaluation (Daly & Dickson-Markman, 1982; Hales & Tokar, 1975), judgments of physical attractiveness (Kenrick & Gutierres, 1980), and social perception (Berkowitz, 1960; Manis, 1967; Rowe, 1967; Simpson & Ostrum, 1976).

Researchers who have investigated context effects in industrial/organizational psychology have studied the areas of employee selection based on resumes or interviews and performance appraisal and, in most cases, have found contrast effects. Selection studies have used both written and videotaped presentation of applicant qualifications, and both moderate and extreme levels of context stimuli. In addition, several selection studies have examined the effect of context on the total amount of variance due to contrast effect rating errors in the final selection decision.

Carlson (1968) found that contrast effects in ratings of favorability of job applicants occurred as a function of the method of applicant presentation. Unfavorable applicants were rated significantly lower by managers when they were presented as a group in the context of other favorable applicants than when they were presented individually. On the other hand, favorable applicants were rated significantly higher when they were presented as a group in context with unfavorable applicants than when they were presented individually. Carlson (1968) also noted that a greater percentage of managers remained undecided on the favorability of an applicant in the individual presentation condition than in the group
presentation condition. Thus, the managers may have had difficulty rating applicants without the context of the qualifications of other applicants to use as a comparison standard.

Several studies have examined the amount of variance in the final selection decision due to contrast effects: mixed findings have resulted. In studies where applicant qualifications (e.g., test scores, resumes) were presented in written form, contrast effects occurred, but accounted for trivial amounts of variance (2-4%) in the final selection decision (Carlson, 1970; Hakel, Ohnesorge & Dunnette, 1970; Landy & Bates, 1973). In fact, Landy and Bates (1973) failed to find any contrast effects in employment decisions based on applicant resumes. Based upon their findings, they discouraged further research on context effects in artificial settings (i.e., resume scanning or vicarious interviewing in laboratory settings) and suggested that real life rather than artificial settings be used.

Wexley, Yukl, and Sanders (1972) and Kopelman (1975) attempted to use a more realistic selection setting through the use of videotaped interviews. Wexley et al. (1972) found that contrast effects accounted for 80 percent of the variance in final selection decisions. In a follow-up study, Wexley, Sanders and Yukl (1973) attempted to minimize contrast effects via a training program and succeeded in doing so only with an intensive workshop incorporating basic learning principles. As a result of this intensive workshop, the amount of variance in the final selection decision due to
contrast effects decreased to only 3 percent. Kopelman (1975) criticized the Wexley et al. (1972; 1973) studies because only extreme, unrealistic levels of good and bad interview performance were evaluated. Kopelman (1975) used moderate, realistic levels of interview performance in a similar study and found that contrast effects accounted for 11 percent of the variance in final selection decisions. Kopelman concluded that, although contrast effects affect final selection decisions, their influence is less than the actual ratings of the qualifications of applicants for a job.

Unlike the mixed findings on the influence of context effects on selection decisions, results of performance appraisal studies have consistently found that the context in which an employee is rated has a significant effect on employee evaluation and rewards. Context effects in performance appraisal have been examined in both within- and between-person rating situations. The majority of studies in this area have focused on context effects between persons and have examined how unsatisfactory subordinates present in a work unit affect rewards and evaluations given to satisfactory subordinates.

Several industrial simulation studies have reported that the presence of a hostile, non-compliant worker has a positive effect on ratings of compliant subordinates. Participants in these studies tended to give more pay increases (Fodor, 1973; Goodstadt & Kipnis, 1970; Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1971) and higher performance evaluations (Fodor, 1974; Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1971) to compliant
workers when a hostile, non-compliant worker was present in the work area than when all workers were compliant. Moreover, Kipnis & Vanderveer (1976) noted the inability of participants to distinguish differences in the performance of compliant workers when a hostile employee was present — compliant workers received rewards regardless of their performance level.

Industrial simulation studies concerning the effect of non-compliant workers on rewards given to compliant workers were replicated in actual organizational settings by Grey & Kipnis (1976) and Ivancevich (1983). Overall performance ratings, recommendations for promotion, suggested pay raises, and actual pay raises given to clerical employees were predicted as a function of the proportion of non-compliant workers present in the work unit (Grey & Kipnis, 1976). Correlations between the rewards given to compliant employees and the proportion of non-compliant employees in a work unit ranged from $r = .25$ to $.48$. Grey & Kipnis (1976) point out that psychological tests rarely predict performance criteria as successfully as did the proportion of non-compliant employees in the work unit. Ivancevich (1983) reported that the number of inept engineers in a work unit was directly proportional to performance ratings, private recognition of performance, and percentage of merit salary increases given to satisfactory engineers. However, contrast effects did not occur with a sample of scientists. Ivancevich (1983) proposed that the absence of a context in which to compare scientists may have contributed to the lack of significant findings
for the scientist sample since, unlike engineers, scientists often have an internalized set of work standards and often work independently.

Another issue investigated in the performance appraisal area in between-person rating situations is the influence of moderate and extreme levels of non-target levels of performance on the occurrence of contrast effects in ratings of average performance. Rain and Steiner (1988) found that contrast effects in ratings of average performance occurred with both moderately good and poor and extremely good and poor levels of non-target performance and accounted for 21 percent of the variance in performance ratings. Rain and Steiner (1988) also investigated the effect of order when rating average performers. In most contrast effect studies the target stimulus is rated last. In this study, participants rated the average performer last in the ordered condition; in the non-ordered condition, participants were given performance information for all employees and were allowed to rate the stimuli in any order. Contrast effects were found in both the ordered and non-ordered conditions. The authors suggested that further research incorporating non-ordered rating conditions be conducted since the non-ordered rating condition closely approximates rating methods used in actual work settings.

As mentioned earlier, context effects in ratings of performance have also been examined in within-person situations. These studies have focussed on the effect of the context of prior
performance information on the performance ratings of present performance. In two studies (Murphy et al. 1985; Smither et al. 1988) prior performance was used as the non-target context stimuli and consisted of either good or bad levels of performance; the present level of performance was used as the target stimulus and consisted of an average level of performance. Results indicated that participants who were exposed to videotapes of a lecturer's poor prior performance gave significantly higher performance ratings to the lecturer's present, average level of performance than did participants who were exposed to the same lecturer's good prior performance. However, the magnitude of contrast effects disappeared over time because weak non-significant contrast effects resulted when participants viewed all stimuli in one session but rated the target stimulus (present performance) one day after viewing the tape.

In their study, Smither et al. (1988) also examined the influence of direct versus indirect presentation of prior performance on context effects in ratings of present performance. They reported strong contrast effects when participants viewed and rated both prior and present levels of performance (direct presentation condition) of a ratee. However, when participants were given prior performance ratings of a ratee that were assigned by another rater (indirect presentation condition), and were only allowed to view and rate present performance, present performance ratings were assimilated toward prior performance ratings, even
when the discrepancy between prior and present performance was great.

Pardassy (1989) found that the magnitude of discrepancy between prior and present performance influenced whether an assimilation or a contrast effect was likely to occur in ratings of a lecturer's present average performance. She reported that ratings of present performance were biased toward the levels of that lecturer's past performance if the discrepancy between past and present performance was small (assimilation effect). On the other hand, a contrast effect occurred in ratings of the lecturer's present performance if the discrepancy between past and present performance was great.

**Prediction of the Occurrence of Assimilation Vs. Contrast Effects**

Although it is sometimes difficult to predict which type of context effect will occur in a particular situation (Alba & Hasher, 1983; Murphy et al, 1985; Smither et al., 1988), there are a few guidelines concerning the circumstances in which an assimilation or a contrast effect will occur. Variables related to the prediction of which type of context effect will occur include the psychological distance of the target stimulus from the context stimuli, whether or not the context stimuli are directly observed, the relevancy of the target stimulus to the context stimuli, the ambiguity of the target stimulus, and the length of time between presentation of a stimulus.
set and judgment of the target stimulus in that set. These factors are guidelines that are based upon general findings in the literature and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Each of these variables are discussed below.

**Psychological Distance**

Psychological distance is defined as the perceived discrepancy between a target stimulus from non-target, context stimuli in the surrounding field (Berkowitz, 1960). Generally speaking, assimilation effects are found when there is little discrepancy between a target stimulus and the context stimuli. As the discrepancy between the target stimulus and context stimuli increases, the likelihood of producing contrast effects increases (Berkowitz, 1960; Herr et al., 1983; Hovland et al., 1957; Pardaffy, 1989; Rowe, 1967; Sherif et al, 1958; Wexley et al., 1972; Zimbardo & Ebbeson, 1969). Sherif et al. (1958) reported that the presentation of anchored, non-target weights immediately above or below that of a target stimulus resulted in displacements of the judgments of the target stimulus weight in the direction of anchored, non-target weights (i.e., assimilation effects). Moreover, as anchors were placed at increasing distances from the target stimuli, displacements of the judgment of the target weights were in the direction opposite to that of the anchored, non-target weights (i.e., contrast effects). Similar findings in the area of attitude change regarding prohibition were reported by Hovland et al. (1957).
Specifically, when a communicated position was far removed from subjects' own attitude regarding prohibition a contrast effect occurred: participants perceived the communication as being further away from their own position than it actually was. Conversely, when the communicated position was near participants' own attitude toward prohibition, an assimilation effect in perceptions of the direction of the communication occurred, although the assimilation effects were much less pronounced than the contrast effects (see also Zimbardo & Ebbeson, 1969).

The effect of psychological distance on context effects of judgments of people has also been examined. Research indicates that when a target stimulus is judged as an integral part of the context stimuli (close psychological distance) either weak contrast effects or assimilation effects occur. Berkowitz (1960) reported that when traits were presented as belonging to one person, contrast effects were much lower than when the same traits were presented as belonging to different people. Herr et al. (1983) found that assimilation effects occurred when a set of stimuli was first judged as a collective whole and then one member of the stimulus set was subsequently judged as the target stimulus. On the other hand, contrast effects occurred when the same target stimulus was presented with a set of stimuli but judged independently of the set of stimuli. As discussed earlier, Pardaffy (1989) found assimilation effects in rating of present performance when the discrepancy between past and present performance was small and contrast
effects in ratings of present performance when discrepancies between past and present performance was great.

The influence of psychological distance on context effects may also be affected by the novelty or inconsistency of a target stimulus. The novelty or inconsistency of a target stimulus may heighten the psychological distance of the target stimulus from the context stimuli in that an incongruent target stimulus automatically receives more attention than other stimuli in the surrounding environment (Alba & Hasher, 1983; Feldman, 1981; Jones & Goethals, 1972; Hastie, 1980). The tendency to respond to novel rather than to familiar stimuli has been documented by Berlyne (1951). Greater memory discrimination for items atypical rather than typical of role schemata has been reported by Woll & Graesser (1982). Moreover, greater recall for incongruent information about a person’s character occurred in a series of experiments concerning impression formation (Hastie, 1980). Feldman (1981) reported that when a group had only one minority group member (black or female) the minority group member was perceived as more influential to the group than when the minority group member was in a group consisting of individuals of the same minority group.

**Direct Observation of Context Stimuli**

Whether or not context stimuli are directly observed has been found to influence the occurrence of an assimilation or contrast effect. To reiterate a study discussed earlier, Smither et al. (1988) found that when raters received indirect indication of the prior
performance of a lecturer from another rater's earlier appraisal of the lecturer, they tended to assimilate their ratings towards those of earlier appraisals, even if differences between the level of performance in prior and present lectures were great. On the other hand, when ratees were able to actually observe the lecturer's prior performance, contrast effects occurred in ratings of present performance.

Smither and colleagues proposed that, in the direct condition, the actual viewing of a lecturer's prior performance provided an explicit standard against which present performance could be judged. Present behavior could therefore be directly contrasted with prior behavior. Raters could identify behaviors that clearly deviated from prior performance levels, attend to and encode these behaviors in more detail than behaviors consistent with prior performance, and the ratings of present performance could be contrasted with ratings of prior performance. On the other hand, they proposed that assimilation effects occurred when participants were given information on past performance provided by other raters because the absence of an explicit standard by which to judge prior performance made it difficult to determine if present behavior was clearly discrepant from prior performance. As a result, the present behavior may have been encoded in terms of the performance category made accessible by prior performance ratings, resulting in an assimilation effect.
It should be noted that there is at least one other possibility for the occurrence of assimilation effects in the indirect presentation condition. Assimilation effects toward prior levels of performance might have occurred because of social effects of other raters on the target rater's evaluation (see Dipboye, 1985). Ratings of prior performance might have approximated prior levels of performance due to the perceived credibility of other raters: subjects might have simply conformed their ratings to approximate those of other credible raters.

**Relevancy of Context Stimuli**

Relevancy of context stimuli to the target stimulus may also determine whether an assimilation or a contrast effect is likely to occur. When stimuli in the surrounding field are relevant to the judgment of the target stimulus, a contrast effect is likely to occur; when context stimuli are irrelevant to the target stimulus, an assimilation effect is likely to occur.

Two studies have found that priming subjects with a list of traits prior to having them complete a seemingly unrelated, irrelevant task (i.e., evaluating characteristics of people described in a paragraph containing ambiguous information) resulted in assimilation effects (Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1980). Participants consistently described the stimulus person in the direction of traits that had been primed, rather than in terms of the ambiguous information that had been presented about the
stimulus person. However, Liden and Mitchell (1983) reported that contrast effects in ratings of performance were significantly higher when work group members were presented as highly interdependent than when the same work group members were presented as independent of one another.

Ambiguity of Target Stimulus and Rating Scales

The level of ambiguity of both the performance level of a target stimulus and the ambiguity of rating scales can influence whether a contrast or an assimilation effect will occur. Contrast effects are likely to occur when ambiguous performance, defined as behavior that is not clearly good or bad, is being rated; assimilation effects are more likely to occur when non-ambiguous performance, defined as being either clearly good or bad behavior, is rated (Kopelman, 1975; Murphy et al., 1985; Wexley et al., 1972). Additionally, Krantz & Campbell (1961) found that contrast effects were greater when ambiguous scales, such as the verbally anchored scales frequently used in psychological studies, were used. However, contrast effects occurred to a lesser degree when non-ambiguous scales, with direct measurement values (i.e., inches) were used.
Length of Time Between Presentation of Stimulus Set and Presentation of Target Stimulus

The length of time between presentation of context stimulus material and judgment of the target stimulus can influence whether an assimilation or a contrast effect will occur. Contrast effects tend to occur when judgments of a target stimulus are made shortly after presentation of the stimulus set. When the interval between presentation of the stimulus set and judgment of the target stimulus is longer, however, weak contrast effects or assimilation effects are more likely to occur (Manis & Moore, 1978; see Srull & Wyer, 1980). Murphy et al. (1985) and Smither et al. (1988) found strong contrast effects when subjects rated a target stimulus directly after viewing it. However, when subjects rated the target stimulus one day after viewing it, weak non-significant contrast effects occurred. Srull and Wyer (1981) found that assimilation effects occurred when raters experienced a time delay between activation of a trait category and judgment of a seemingly unrelated target stimulus.

Prediction of the Magnitude of Contrast Effects

Since few studies have reported assimilation effects, it is not possible to determine which variables determine the magnitude of an assimilation effect. As mentioned earlier, contrast effects occur more frequently than assimilation effects. Review of contrast
effect studies revealed that negative information presented as a part of the context stimuli influences the magnitude of contrast effects.

Research in several different areas of psychology suggest that people are more sensitive to negative information than to positive information when making evaluations (Bolster & Springbett, 1961; Kanouse & Hansen, 1972). That is, the overall evaluation of stimuli that have both positive and negative attributes is biased toward a negative rather than a positive rating. Kanouse and Hansen (1972) propose that this bias occurs because negative attributes in everyday life frequently interfere with enjoyment of positive attributes, but positive attributes seldom reduce the experience of negative aspects of a situation. Moreover, negative outcomes are often more extreme than positive outcomes. For example, the cost of selecting or promoting someone who subsequently is unsuccessful in the job (e.g., false positive) often is greater to an organization than the cost of not hiring/promoting someone who would have been successful in the job (e.g., false negative).

With the exception of Black (1968), no study has investigated specifically the magnitude of negative versus positive contrast effects. Black (1968) showed that negative contrast effects were significantly greater than positive contrast effects when studying the relationship between food reward and the running speed of rats. That is, the tendency of rats to slow down their running speed when shifted from a large to small food reward was greater than the
tendency of rats to increase running speed when shifted from a small to large food reward.

Although the weighting of negative over positive information has been specifically examined in only one contrast effect study, it has been observed in several contrast effect studies (Daly & Dickson-Markman, 1982; Murphy et al., 1985; Rain & Steiner, 1988; Smither et al., 1988). Daly and Dickson-Markman (1982) found only negative contrast effects in the evaluation of essays. That is, contrast effects occurred when an average paper (target stimulus) was preceded by low quality essays but not when the average paper was preceded by high quality essays. In another study, Rain and Steiner (1988) reported both positive and negative contrast effects in evaluation of job performance but the magnitude of the negative contrast effects was greater. Moreover, both Murphy et al. (1985) and Smither et al. (1988) found that contrast effects were greater when participants viewed poor rather than good prior performance.

**Summary**

The tendency to rate a target stimulus based upon stimuli in the surrounding field is termed a context effect. Context effects occur either when evaluations of a target stimulus are biased toward the level of stimuli in the surrounding field (assimilation effect) or when they are biased in the opposite direction of stimuli in the surrounding field (contrast effect). Social perception theories related to category accessibility have been used to explain the
occurrence of assimilation effects. Proponents of these theories argue that stimuli in the surrounding environment activate a particular category and judgment of a subsequent target stimulus is biased in the direction of the category activated. The occurrence of assimilation effects may also be explained by the failure of individuals to revise new information about a stimulus to the extent that they should in relation to previously presented information (Bayes' Theorem). Both perceptual contrast theories and shifts in judgmental standards have been used to explain the occurrence of contrast effects. Perceptual contrast theories involve actual bias in perception of the target stimulus whereas shifts in judgmental standards do not require a bias in perception of the target stimulus, only the use of the rating scale is influenced.

Context effects have been examined in a wide variety of areas and it has been found that contrast effects are more prevalent than assimilation effects. Context effect research in industrial/organizational psychology has focused on the areas of selection and performance appraisal. Findings regarding the influence of contrast effects on final selection decisions have been mixed. Both contrast effects and assimilation effects have been reported in the performance appraisal area (Grey & Kipnis, 1976; Ivancevich, 1983; Murphy et al., 1985; Pardaffy, 1989; Rain & Steiner, 1988; Smither et al., 1988).

There are several factors which seem to influence whether an assimilation or a contrast effect will occur. Assimilation effects
are more likely to occur if the psychological distance between context stimuli and the target stimulus is small, if participants do not view or rate context stimuli, if context stimuli are irrelevant to the judgment of the target stimulus, if the target stimulus or rating scales are clearly defined, and if time elapses between the presentation of stimuli and rating of the target stimulus. On the other hand, contrast effects are more likely to occur if the psychological distance between context stimuli and the target stimulus is distinct, if participants actually view and rate context stimuli, if context stimuli are relevant to the target stimulus, if the target stimulus and/or rating scales are ambiguous, and if the target stimulus is rated directly following presentation of the stimulus set.

Research has shown that the magnitude of a contrast effect can be influenced by the amount of negative information conveyed in the context stimuli. Specifically, several studies have reported that negative contrast effects are significantly greater than positive contrast effects (Black, 1968; Daly & Dickson-Markman, 1982; Murphy et al., 1985; Rain & Steiner, 1988; Smither et al., 1988).

The Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to expand the research in the area of context effects in four ways. First, context effects were examined in a group interaction situation where stimuli were presented simultaneously rather than serially. Second, research in
industrial/organizational psychology was expanded by looking at context effects in both individual and consensus ratings of performance in an assessment center setting. Third, the influence of observation condition of the target stimulus on context effects in ratings of the target stimulus was investigated. Finally, the order in which the target stimulus was rated was counterbalanced as part of the study. Each of these issues is discussed below.

**Context Effects In a Group Interaction Situation**

Although much research on context effects has been conducted, context effects have not been examined in a group interaction setting where the performance of individuals is observed simultaneously. In previous studies on context effects, stimuli have been presented in a serial fashion: one stimulus was presented and evaluated prior to presentation and evaluation of the following stimulus. The major purpose of the present study was to examine the occurrence of context effects when stimuli (job candidates) were presented and viewed simultaneously in a group interaction situation. A group is defined as two or more persons who interact with one another in such a manner that each person influences or is influenced by the other members of the group (Shaw, 1981). Group interaction is very prevalent in our society and it is important to examine how evaluation of one member is influenced by other members' behavior. In real life situations, people often interact with one another in group situations and the perception and
evaluation of a particular individual in a group setting is partially dependent on the behavior of other individuals in the surrounding environment (Shaw, 1981). For example, managers must often rate the performance of several members of a work group.

In a group interaction situation, the performance level of non-target stimuli was expected to be even more salient than in studies where stimuli are presented serially. In the present study it was predicted that context effects would be particularly likely in ratings of performance of group members in a group interaction situation because in order to rate the performance of one group member, the rater must know the context in which behaviors are exhibited: to some extent the rater must be aware of the activities of those group members whom he/she is not directly observing.

In this study, context effects were examined using a group interaction simulation exercise of an assessment center in which three candidates for a job discussed the development of an organizational policy. (Details on the assessment center process are included in the next section). Three performance conditions, an above standard (ASTD) condition, a below standard (BSTD) condition, and a mixed performance condition were used in the study. Each group consisted of three performers. The ASTD condition consisted of two ASTD performers and a standard (STD) performer. The BSTD condition consisted of two BSTD performers and a STD performer. The mixed performance condition consisted of an ASTD performer, a BSTD performer, and a STD performer. The mixed performance
condition was included because it is unrealistic to expect that in real life situations an average performer will always be rated with only above standard or only below standard performers. The STD performer served as the target stimulus in all three conditions.

Contrast effects, rather than assimilation effects, were expected to occur in the group interaction exercise. This prediction was based on past research regarding the mode of context stimuli presentation (whether or not context stimuli were directly observed), the psychological distance between context stimuli and the target stimulus, the relevancy of the target stimulus to the context stimuli, the ambiguity of the target stimulus, and the length of time between presentation of the stimulus set and evaluation of the target stimulus.

First, as discussed earlier, in a group interaction setting, the context in which behaviors occur must be observed in order to evaluate a member of a group. Therefore, the performance of members of a group whom the rater is not directly observing must be observed to some extent. Second, the STD performer was observed in context with ASTD and/or BSTD performers. Therefore, the psychological distance between the context stimuli (ASTD performer or BSTD performer) and the target stimulus (STD performer) was distinct. Third, the context stimuli (BSTD performer or ASTD performer) were relevant to the target stimulus since in order to evaluate the group members' performance in the group interaction exercise, the raters had to know the context in which behaviors
demonstrated by each member occurred. Fourth, participants evaluated members of the group shortly after observing their performance.

Contrast Effects in the Assessment Center

The second major purpose of the study was to expand the limited focus of research on context effects in industrial/organizational psychology. Previous research on context effects in industrial/organizational psychology has focused exclusively on the selection (based on interviews or resumes) and performance appraisal areas. In this study context effects were investigated in a group interaction exercise of an assessment center. Assessment centers are frequently used to select and develop employees; consequently, the examination of context effects in this type of setting is important for practical reasons. Specifically, it will be helpful to examine the extent to which a candidate's evaluations reflect a comparison to the performance levels of other candidates participating in the same assessment center rather than his or her own level of performance. The magnitude of context effects in both the individual and consensus ratings obtained during the assessment center process is also important to explore. A brief discussion of the assessment center process is included below.
The Assessment Center Method. An assessment center is a comprehensive, standardized process that uses multiple assessment techniques to evaluate employees for several purposes: selection, early identification of future potential, placement, promotion, career development counseling, training, and development. The assessment center is most popular for evaluating managerial potential: more research has supported the use of assessment centers for managerial assessment than any other evaluation procedure in the field of industrial/organizational psychology (Thornton & Byham, 1982). Thornton & Byham's (1982) review of all published and unpublished studies related to the assessment center provides considerable support for the reliability, content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity of the assessment center process.

In an assessment center, candidates participate in situational exercises or job simulations. Examples of exercises that are often incorporated in an assessment center include leaderless group discussions, in-basket exercises, business games, interview simulations and scheduling exercises. As assessment center candidates participate in the exercises, raters (termed assessors) observe candidates and document the behaviors exhibited. Individual assessors do not observe each candidate in every exercise but usually observe each candidate in at least one exercise. After observing a candidate, the assessors sort behaviors into categories - dimensions of performance, which are related to important
aspects of the job (e.g., oral communication, decision making skill, stress tolerance). Following this sorting process, assessors discuss each candidate’s performance in the assessment center using a standardized behavior reporting method, reach a consensus decision on each candidate’s performance, and make recommendations regarding the candidates (i.e., promotion decisions, diagnosis of training needs, etc.). An administrator guides the candidates and assessors through the entire process and insures that all participants adhere to the assessment center method.

There are several aspects of the assessment center process which should mitigate the occurrence of context effects: the assessor training program, the separation of the observation, reporting, and evaluation of candidate behavior into three distinct stages, and the role of the assessment center administrator. These will be discussed below.

Prior to evaluating candidates in an assessment center, assessors participate in a training process that can range from a few hours to two weeks (Thornton & Byham, 1982). The training program differs among assessment centers but often involves having assessors become more familiar with the performance dimensions, assessment center exercises and the process of integrating and evaluating information. Also, the assessors may practice and receive feedback in making behavioral observations and rating candidates. In addition, assessors are often trained to avoid comparing one candidate’s performance with another candidate’s
performance through use of an absolute rating scale (Thornton & Byham, 1982). That is, assessors are trained to evaluate candidates by comparing their behaviors to minimal standards required for performance on the job. Minimal standards consist of specific behaviors that are related to each dimension being evaluated in the assessment center. For example, the minimal standard “took notes during the discussion” might be indicative of the dimension planning and organizing. In order to be rated as acceptable, a candidate must exhibit all minimal standards related to a particular dimension. Thus, the focus of the rating process is the comparison of candidates’ performance to the minimal standards rather than comparison with the performance of other candidates.

In addition to a thorough training program, the assessment center process incorporates the clear separation of the distinct functions of (1) observing behavior, (2) reporting behaviors to others, and (3) making a final decision. During the observation process no one assessor evaluates all individuals in one exercise; therefore, context effects resulting from assessors comparing the performance of candidates within an exercise should be minimized (Thornton & Byham, 1982). Also, assessors document verbal and non-verbal behaviors of the candidate during the observation process, but do not document whether the behavior was indicative of good or poor performance. Judgments of performance on each dimension and judgments of overall performance are reserved until after the assessors have shared their information in the integration
session; therefore, formulations of general impressions or predictions about a person prior to the rating session should be minimized.

In the integration session, all information about the performance of one candidate is presented and all ratings are completed on that candidate prior to discussing the next candidate. For example, in the frequently used behavior reporting method (Adams & Thornton, 1982), an assessor reads his/her behavioral observations relevant to a performance dimension for one candidate while the other assessors record what he/she is saying. After each assessor shares his/her behavioral observations relevant to that dimension for a candidate, each assessor independently rates the candidate on that performance dimension based upon the reported behavior. If ratings of the assessors are discrepant, they are discussed until consensus is reached. This process is repeated for each performance dimension and for the evaluation of overall performance for one candidate prior to discussing the next candidate. Thus, direct comparison of candidates should be reduced because candidates are evaluated one at a time. In addition, in the integration session, assessors are required to justify ratings based upon specific behavioral observations.

Throughout the assessment center process, the administrator acts as a quality control person by insuring that the rating process runs smoothly and that standardized procedures are followed. The administrator insures that all observations reported are
behaviorally based. This checking process is designed to eliminate biases and stereotyping which occur when individuals make evaluations based on general impressions rather than specific behaviors. In summary, several aspects of the assessment center process may attenuate context effects: the nature of assessor training, the behavioral observation of candidates, the standardized reporting in the integration session, and the monitoring of the evaluation process by an administrator. These factors suggest that assessment center evaluations should be based on a fixed, predetermined standard for the job, and therefore may not be influenced by performance levels of other candidates.

The assessment center exercise chosen for this study was a leaderless group discussion exercise. A leaderless group discussion exercise is often used as an evaluation component of the assessment center method and involves candidates interacting with one another while discussing an issue as a group (Thornton & Byham, 1982). No one is designated as the leader of the group: candidates interact with one another on an equal status. Past research on leadership discussion exercises has shown that performance can be reliably evaluated and that leaderless group discussion ratings predict subsequent performance and progress on the job (Thornton & Byham, 1982).

It was expected that although contrast effects in assessment center ratings might be mitigated due to the standardized and thorough observation and evaluation process, they would still occur,
given the prevalence of contrast effects in past studies. Even though assessors were trained to rate candidates using an absolute scale, to record and report specific verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and were under the guidance of a well-trained administrator, their ability to evaluate a target candidate was predicted to be hampered when the performance level of other candidates was either below or above that of the target candidate.

The Effect of Candidate Observation Assignment on the Magnitude of Contrast Effects

The third purpose of this study was to compare contrast effects of assessors who made behavioral observations of the STD candidate with contrast effects of assessors who made behavioral observations of a non-standard candidate. In a typical assessment center, all assessors evaluate the performance of all candidates, but all assessors usually do not observe every candidate in all exercises. Yet, in a group interaction situation, assessors cannot help but be aware of the performance of other candidates. With the exception of Smither et al. (1988), investigation of context effects in ratings of those who are not assigned to observe and evaluate a target stimulus has not been addressed. Furthermore, in Smither and colleagues' study, subjects were given the ratings of the non-target performers and a within subject design was used. However, in the present study, participants were assigned to focus on one candidate, and to take notes on her performance but were also simultaneously
observing the other candidates in a less direct manner, given the
group interaction nature of the LGD. In addition, the effect of
observation condition of the standard performer was examined in a
between person rating situation.

Research in the area of social influence is relevant to
predicting whether observation condition will affect the magnitude
of context effects. Specifically, in his discussion of the
performance appraisal process, Dipboye (1985) proposed that
evaluation of employees may be based on opinions of others as well
as on the opinions of the rater. (For example, the reliance on other
raters' evaluation of prior performance in order to make ratings of
present performance was discussed earlier (Smither et. al., 1988)).
Additionally, research regarding social influence has shown that
communication by credible others affects other individuals' perceptsions and ratings: individuals often change opinions to
conform to those of a credible source (Berkowitz, 1966; Wrightsman
& Deaux, 1981). In the present study, all assessors participated in
the same training program and were familiar with the assessment
center process; therefore, it was assumed that assessors would
perceive the other assessors as credible sources of information.

Based upon these findings, it may be that contrast effects
occur both for assessors who are assigned to observe the standard
candidate and those who are assigned to observe a non-standard
candidate. It should be noted that it is not possible to propose a
hypothesis for observation condition since, in effect, the null
hypothesis would be proposed. Moreover, the manipulation of observation condition in this study where context stimuli are viewed simultaneously is weaker than the manipulation where participants do not view the context stimuli at all (as in the Smither et al., 1988).

The Counterbalancing of Order in Which the Target Candidate is Discussed.

A final contribution of this study was the counterbalancing of order in which the standard candidate was rated. Previous researchers of contrast effects have typically presented the target stimulus at the end of a series of stimuli, forcing the rater to rate the target stimulus last. In only one study (Rain & Steiner, 1988) have participants been allowed to rate stimuli in the order of their choice. As mentioned earlier, these researchers found that contrast effects occurred regardless of the order in which the target stimulus was rated. Furthermore, no prior study of contrast effects has counterbalanced the order in which the target stimulus is rated, nor has any study separated order of rating as independent of order of presentation. In the group interaction setting of this study all participants were observed simultaneously but the order in which the target stimulus was rated was counterbalanced. Specifically, participants rated the target stimulus (STD performer) in either the first, second, or third position during the integration session.
Hypotheses

Based upon findings discussed in previous sections, contrast effects are hypothesized to occur in the ASTD and BSTD conditions. Specifically, it is proposed that the standard candidate will be rated significantly greater in the context of below standard candidates than above standard candidates. The influence of observation condition of the target stimulus on the magnitude of contrast effects was also explored in this study.
CHAPTER II
Method

Participants
The participants (hereafter, referred to as assessors) were 187 undergraduates from two universities. They were enrolled in psychology courses and received course credit for their participation. Eighty-three males and 104 females participated in the study. The age of the assessors ranged from 17 to 47 years of age with a mean age of 20 years. Thirty-four percent of the assessors were freshman, 29% were sophomores, 18% were juniors, 14% were seniors, and 5% had attended college full-time for more than four years. The results of a MANOVA using university affiliate as a covariate indicated that the location in which assessors participated in the experiment did not significantly effect the results (F(1,143)=.12, p=.72).

Experimental Procedure
A minimum of three assessors was needed to conduct each group interaction session. In order to insure that the sessions would be full, more than three participants were scheduled for each session. All assessors received training, observed a videotape and made behavioral observations on a different candidate. Assessors then classified behaviors recorded into one of four performance dimensions: oral communication, sensitivity, leadership, and
assertiveness. Assessors then met to integrate the data using the behavior reporting method (Adams & Thornton, 1988). Candidates were discussed and evaluated one at the time in the following manner.

1. The assessor who observed a candidate shared his/her behavioral observations of that candidate's performance on one dimension while the other assessors listened and took notes.

2. Assessors asked questions for clarification but discussion was limited.

3. All assessors independently rated the candidate on the dimension.

4. If dimension ratings differed, assessors discussed the candidate's performance and reached consensus.

5. Steps 1-4 were repeated for each dimension.

6. Assessors independently rated the candidate's overall performance in the leaderless group discussion.

7. If overall ratings differed, the assessors discussed the candidate's performance and reached consensus.

8. Steps 1-7 were repeated for the other two candidates.

Excess assessors did not evaluate the candidates but instead were given the task of observing the rating process of the assessor team.

After assessors completed the session, they completed a post-experimental questionnaire. The exercise session lasted about one
hour. The materials used in the exercise session are included in Appendix A. A copy of the post-experimental questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

**Training for Assessors.**

Before participating in an exercise session, assessors participated in a training session. The goals of the training session were fourfold: (1) to familiarize assessors with the assessment center process and the leaderless group discussion exercise; (2) to provide assessors with thorough knowledge of the job of student assistant and of the performance dimensions; (3) to instruct assessors in recording behavioral observations and classifying behaviors into relevant dimensions including practice and feedback; and (4) to teach assessors how to make ratings and integrate data using the assessment center process. The training sessions lasted for about one hour. Training materials are included in Appendix C. After participating in the training session, assessors were given a five minute break before participating in the exercise session.

**Research Design**

The research design was a 3x2 between subjects factorial design. There were three performance conditions (BSTD, ASTD, and mixed condition) and two observation conditions (observation of target or non-target candidate). Assessors were assigned randomly to either the ASTD, BSTD or mixed performance condition and then they were
assigned randomly to observe a target candidate or a non-target candidate.

**Selection of Target Job**

A leaderless group discussion exercise was developed for the job of student assistant of a university resident hall. There were several reasons for selecting the job of student assistant: (1) it was assumed that the assessors would be familiar with the job because most students would have worked with a student assistant, and (2) it is a managerial job position and the target job of most assessment centers is managerial. Furthermore, college students have successfully served as assessors for the job of student assistant in prior research (Gaugler & Thornton, 1989)

**Selection of Group Interaction Exercise**

The leaderless group discussion exercise, one of the most frequently used assessment center exercises, was selected as the group interaction situation. The leaderless group discussion exercise simulates important aspects of the student assistant job. The results of a thorough analysis of the student assistant job indicated that student assistants often meet as a group to discuss problems related to university policy, dormitory rules and regulations, student relations, etc. (Gaugler, 1987).

In this study, the leaderless group discussion exercise involved the development of a policy to deal with the increasing
amount of alcohol abuse on campus. The candidates worked together to derive possible solutions to this problem.

**Development of Stimulus Materials**

**Scripts.** Three sets of scripts were developed — one set for the above standard condition, consisting of two above standard and one standard candidate, one set for the below standard condition, consisting of two below standard and one standard candidate, and one set for the mixed performance condition consisting of one above standard, one below standard, and one standard candidate. Behaviors relevant to the four performance dimensions, oral communication, sensitivity, assertiveness, and leadership were incorporated into the scripts. These dimensions were chosen because they are relevant to the job of student assistant (Gaugler, 1987) and because they are highly observable in leaderless group discussion exercises (Thornton & Byham, 1982). Minimal standards for each dimension which consist of all the behaviors a candidate must exhibit in order to be given an acceptable rating were developed based on previous minimal standards designed for the job of student assistant (Gaugler, 1987). The minimal standards were used as a guide in developing the script for the standard performer. Dimension definitions and minimal standards are included in Appendix D.

The script for the standard candidate was identical in the ASTD, the BSTD, and the mixed performance conditions and was constructed to include behaviors indicative of a standard level of
performance for all dimensions. The scripts for above standard candidates were constructed to include behaviors that are significantly above standard on one dimension, above standard on one dimension, and standard on two dimensions. Conversely, the scripts for the below standard candidates were constructed to include behaviors that are significantly below standard on one dimension, below standard on one dimension, and standard on two dimensions. Varying the levels of performance on the four dimensions for the ASTD and BSTD scripts was expected to prevent the occurrence of unrealistically, extreme levels of performance and should closely approximate the performance level of typical above standard and below standard candidates.

In order to determine (1) appropriate behaviors to be incorporated into the scripts, (2) performance levels of the behaviors, and (3) dimensions to which the behaviors are related, the following process was used. Four naive raters who were not trained in the assessment center method were given background information on the Leaderless Group Discussion (LGD), a copy of the minimal standards and performance dimension definitions, and a list of behaviors that could occur in the LGD (e.g., “started the group discussion”, “did not take notes during the discussion”). They received oral instructions on the meaning and purpose of the dimension definitions and minimal standards. Following these instructions, the raters classified each behavior into one of the four
performance dimensions and indicated the performance level of each behavior using a five-point Likert scale.

Only those behaviors that had been sorted into the same performance dimensions by at least three of the four raters and for which there was substantial agreement of the performance level were incorporated into the scripts. After the scripts were developed the same four raters read them aloud to ensure that the contents were clear and that they flowed smoothly. A copy of the scripts is included in Appendix E.

**Videotapes.** Leaderless group discussion videotapes for each performance condition were developed professionally. The job candidates were female undergraduate and graduate student role players at another university; therefore, any confound arising from assessors knowing the "candidates" were eliminated. One week before the videotaping session, those who played the role of candidates were given a copy of the scripts to memorize and general guidelines to use when playing each part. A copy of the general guidelines for playing the roles is in Appendix F. Role players were also briefed on the purpose of the study and were instructed not to ad lib, but to follow the scripts. Prior to being videotaped, role players practiced performing without scripts using teleprompters. Teleprompters were also available to the role players during the videotaping session.
After videotaping, the film was edited so that performance of the standard candidate would be held constant in all conditions. Specifically, in order to insure that the target stimulus (STD performance) was identical in all three conditions, the same footage of the standard candidate was edited into all three performance conditions.

Two sets of videotapes using different role players were developed for each condition in attempt to control for stimulus effects (Fontenelle, Phillips, & Lane, 1985). Stimulus effects occur when a stimulus is rated based on factors unrelated to the study. There were two sets of tapes each with a different set of role players. The parts of role players were rotated such that each role player playing the part of a non-standard candidate served as both an above standard and a below standard candidate in the videotapes.

To check for stimulus effects, expert raters validated the performance levels of the candidates. The assumption was that if one of the performers was rated by expert raters on the basis of factors extraneous to the study (i.e., presentation style, physical attractiveness, poise) rather than on her performance, she might receive identical ratings (e.g., ASTD or BSTD ratings) in all three conditions. If stimulus effects appeared with one of the standard role players, the tapes in which she participated were to be excluded from the study. Two complete sets of videotapes (two tapes for each performance condition) were developed for this purpose.
Expert Ratings

In previous context effect studies where stimuli were presented serially rather than simultaneously expert ratings were usually obtained by having experts rate only one stimulus without viewing the other stimuli. This process avoided context effects that occur when several stimuli are rated in a short amount of time (Murphy et al, 1985; Rain and Steiner, 1988; Smither et al, 1988). In the present study, however, expert ratings could not be obtained in this manner due to the nature of the group exercise where candidates interacted with one another and stimuli had to be viewed simultaneously. Because of the prevalence of contrast effects in previous studies it was determined that even expert raters might succumb to contrast effect rating errors in this study because they would have to view all candidates simultaneously, as would the participants in the study.

Consequently, experts determined the performance levels of non-standard candidates in relation to the standard candidate's performance. As discussed earlier, the scripts were developed by incorporating behaviors for which there had been considerable agreement on (1) performance dimensions to which the behaviors were related and (2) levels of performance indicated by the behaviors. In the above standard scripts, above standard behaviors were included and in the below standard scripts, below standard behaviors were included. Ratings of experts were collected as an additional verification that the below standard candidates were
perceived as performing below the level of the standard candidates and that above standard performers were perceived as performing above the level of the standard candidates.

A psychophysical scaling technique was used in which the standard candidate was assigned a rating of "100" on each performance dimension and on overall performance. Expert raters were asked to independently evaluate each candidate in relation to the standard candidate. Six graduate students who did not know the purpose of the study, but who had participated in a advanced level graduate seminar on assessment centers served as expert raters. These expert raters had also served as assessors prior to the study and had helped develop an assessment center. First, the experts observed a tape, made behavioral observations and sorted behaviors into the appropriate dimensions for the standard performer. Next, they watched the tape again, made behavioral observations of the third candidate, sorted behaviors into the appropriate dimensions and rated one of the other two candidates using the rating of "100" assigned to the standard candidate as a reference. Finally, experts observed the tape a third time, made behavioral observations, sorted behaviors into dimensions and rated the final candidate using the standard candidate as a reference. This process was repeated for all video tapes. Expert ratings were averaged for each nonstandard candidate and for each tape.

Although expert raters verified the performance levels incorporated into the scripts in both sets of videotapes, they
consistently reported that one set of tapes looked more professional than the other set of tapes. Therefore, only the better set of videotapes was used in the study. For the better set of tapes, average overall performance ratings for the above standard candidates in the ASTD condition were $M=118$ and $M=114$. Mean overall performance ratings for the below standard candidates were $M=48$ and $M=62$. For the control condition the mean overall performance rating was $M=110$ for the above standard candidate and $M=55$ for the below standard candidate.

**Administrator Training**

In most of the sessions, the experimenter served as the administrator. In some sessions, however, undergraduates who were blind to the purpose of the study served as assessment center administrators and received course credit for their assistance. Before running the sessions they became familiar with the assessment center process and participated in a rigorous training program. This training involved (1) participating as an assessor in an assessment center unrelated to the present study, and (2) administering an assessment center (under the guidance of an experienced administrator) and receiving individual feedback on their performance. The results of a MANOVA using administrator (the experimenter versus undergraduate administrators) as a covariate indicated that type of administrator did not significantly affect the results ($F(1,143)=.22$, $p=.64$).
CHAPTER III
RESULTS

Analysis of Group Effects

As discussed earlier, the assessors participated in the study as part of a group, rather than on an individual basis. Therefore, it was necessary to test for the violation of the assumption of independence (Kinney and LaVoie, 1985, p.342). In order to do this, a MANOVA was conducted on the consensus ratings where the group factor was introduced as a random effect nested within performance condition. A MANOVA was also conducted on the individual ratings where the group factor was introduced as a random effect nested within performance condition and mode of observation. Results of these analyses are presented in Appendix G. In both cases, tests of the group effect was not significant; consequently, it was appropriate to analyze and interpret individual scores.

Manipulation Checks

As mentioned earlier, each role player, with the exception of the individual who played the role of the standard performer, acted in the role of both an above standard and a below standard performer. As a manipulation check, a MANOVA for each non-standard role player was conducted to determine whether above standard candidates were rated significantly higher than below standard candidates across the three performance conditions. Both
of these role players were rated significantly higher on overall performance and on each performance dimension when they played an above standard performer than a below standard performer (role player 1: \( F(2,159)=24.21, \ p<.0001 \), role player 2: \( F(2,159)=32.87, \ p<.0001 \). Assessors perceived the above standard candidates to be better performers than the below standard candidates as intended by the performance manipulation. These results also indicated that role players were rated based upon their performance in the videotapes rather than on factors extraneous to the study. The results of Scheffe tests of the differences between the means of each dependent variable for each role player are presented in Appendix H.

**Individual Ratings**

The correlations between the individual dimension and overall performance ratings of the standard performer are presented in Table 1. The correlations between the individual dimensions range from \( r=.07 \) for sensitivity and leadership to \( r=.42 \) for assertiveness and leadership. The average correlation between dimensions is .27. The correlations between the overall performance ratings and the dimension ratings range from \( r=.35 \) for sensitivity and overall performance to \( r=.60 \) for oral communication and overall performance. The average \( r \) among dimensions with overall performance is .64.
Table 1

Intercorrelation Matrix for Performance Dimensions and Overall Performance for Individual Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oral</th>
<th>Sens</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Assert</th>
<th>Overall</th>
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<td>Oral</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sens</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assert</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Oral = oral communication; Sens = sensitivity; Lead = leadership; Assert = assertiveness; Overall = overall performance; N=162; * = p<.05.
The magnitude of the correlations among dimension ratings indicates that although the dimensions are related they represent somewhat different constructs. Therefore, the individual ratings were not combined into a composite score: a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted using all four performance dimensions and the overall performance ratings as dependent variables and performance condition and observation condition as independent variables.

**Contrast effects in the LGD.** As predicted in hypothesis 1, the performance condition in which the standard candidate was observed had a significant effect on ratings of the standard candidate \((E(10,304)=3.16, p<.001;\) see Table 2). Univariate analyses indicated that \(E\) values were significant for overall ratings of performance and for three of the four of the performance dimensions: oral communication, sensitivity, and leadership. Detailed results of the univariate analysis for overall performance and each of the dimensions are presented in Appendix I. For the main effect of performance condition, Scheffe's test was used to test for significant differences between the means on each dependent variable. Results of the Scheffe tests and univariate tests are summarized in Table 3.

Identical patterns of results were found for overall performance and oral communication. The standard performer was rated significantly lower in the ASTD condition (overall performance
Table 2
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Individual Ratings of the Standard Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>significance of E</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Condition (P)</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Condition (O)</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PXO</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>.850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

Results of Scheffe Tests and Univariate F Values for the Main Effect of Performance Condition for Individual Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Performance</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>ASTD</th>
<th>BSTD</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Eta</th>
<th>Direction of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.26***</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>BSTD &gt; ASTD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed &gt; ASTD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.61***</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>BSTD &gt; ASTD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed &gt; ASTD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.11*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>BSTD &gt; Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.25***</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>BSTD &gt; ASTD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ASTD = above standard condition; BSTD = below standard condition; Mixed = mixed performance condition; Direction = Direction in which means for ratings of standard candidate were significant; *** = $p<.001$; * = $p<.05$
: $M=3.31$; oral communication: $M=3.19$) than in the below standard condition (overall performance: $M=3.89$; oral communication: $M=3.76$) or the mixed performance condition (overall performance: $M=3.68$; oral communication: $M=3.57$). Assessors perceived the standard candidate as performing worse on overall performance and oral communication in the ATSD condition than in the BSTD or the mixed performance condition, even though the standard candidate was identical in all three conditions.

For sensitivity, the standard candidate was rated higher in the BSTD condition ($M=4.04$) than in the mixed performance condition ($M=3.63$). That is, the standard level of performance was perceived as higher when the standard candidate interacted with two below standard candidates than when she interacted with an above standard and a below standard candidate. For the leadership dimension, the standard candidate was rated significantly higher when she performed with below standard performers ($M=3.83$) than when she performed with above standard performers ($M=3.18$). The standard candidate's leadership was perceived as higher when she performed with below standard performers rather than above standard performers.

Performance condition did not have a significant influence on assertiveness ratings of the standard candidate.
Influence of observation on magnitude of contrast effects. The influence of observation condition on contrast effects was tested in two ways. First, the interaction between performance condition and observation condition was tested by multivariate analysis of variance. Second, the main effect of observation condition within each performance condition was examined.

As indicated in Table 2, the interaction between performance condition and observation condition was not significant ($E(10,304)=.55$, $p=.85$). Contrast effect rating errors were similar for those who were assigned to take notes on the behavior of the standard candidate and those who were assigned to take notes on the behavior of a non-standard candidate.

For each performance condition, a MANOVA was conducted using observation condition as the independent variable and performance ratings as the dependent variables. Whether an assessor took notes on a standard candidate did not significantly effect the magnitude of contrast effects in the BSTD condition ($E(5, 48)=1.30$, $p=.28$), the ASTD condition ($E(5,48)=1.58$, $p=.18$), or the mixed performance condition ($E(5,48)=1.27$, $p=.29$). As predicted in hypothesis 2, the mode of observation of the standard candidate did not significantly influence the magnitude of contrast effects.
It is interesting to note that the main effect of observation was significant ($F(10, 152)=2.43, \ p<.04$). Univariate analysis indicated that $F$ values were significant for oral communication ($F(1,144)=5.70, \ p<.05$) and sensitivity ($F(1,144)=4.71, \ p<.05$). Detailed results of the univariate analyses for the dependent variables are presented in Appendix I. Results of pairwise $t$-tests (see Table 4) indicated that the mean rating of the standard candidate was higher for those subjects who directly observed her (oral communication: $M=3.70$; sensitivity: $M=4.00$) than those who recorded observations of non-target candidates (oral communication: $M=3.39$; sensitivity: $M=3.69$). Thus, a leniency effect occurred in ratings of oral communication and sensitivity for the standard candidate for those who recorded observations of her performance.

Univariate analysis of the performance ratings of non-standard candidates indicated that no leniency effects occurred for these candidates ($F(5, 152)=.25, \ p=.94; F(5, 152)=.54, \ p=.74$). For both of the non-standard candidates, there were no significant differences between ratings of those who were assigned to observe and those who were not assigned to observe them.
### Table 4
Results of Pairwise T-test and Univariate F Values for the Main Effect of Observation Condition: Individual Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Observation Condition</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>Non-standard</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral</strong></td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>5.96*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sensitivity</strong></td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.33*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertiveness</strong></td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Oral=oral communication; * = p < .05
Consensus Ratings

The correlation matrix for the consensus ratings is presented in Table 5. Correlations between the performance dimensions range from $r = .25$ for leadership and assertiveness to $r = .59$ for oral communication and leadership. The average $r$ for correlations between dimensions was .45. The correlations between the consensus overall performance and consensus dimension ratings ranged from $r = .63$ for leadership and overall performance ratings to $r = .74$ for oral communication and overall performance. The average correlation between dimensions and overall performance consensus ratings was .67. As would be expected, correlations among consensus ratings were higher than correlations among the individual ratings. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the correlations among consensus dimension ratings indicates that the dimensions represent somewhat different constructs. Consequently, the consensus ratings were not combined into a composite score: all four performance dimensions and the overall performance ratings were used as dependent variables in the multivariate analysis of variance.

The results of the multivariate analysis of variance of the consensus ratings is presented in Table 6. It should be noted that a one way factorial design was used to analyze consensus ratings because the mode of observation could not be manipulated at the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oral</th>
<th>Sens</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Assert</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sens</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>0.59*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assert</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>0.45*</td>
<td>0.50*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
<td>0.65*</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
<td>0.64*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Oral = oral communication; Sens = sensitivity; Lead = leadership; Assert = assertiveness; Overall = overall performance; N=54; * = p<.05.
Table 6
Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Consensus Ratings of the Standard Candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>Significance of E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance Condition (P)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order STD Evaluated (E)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PXE</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
group level (i.e., each rater team was comprised of two raters who
did not take notes on the target candidate and one rater who
did take notes on the target candidate). The results indicated
that contextual performance of non-target candidates did not
influence evaluations of the target candidate.

**Relationship Between Individual Ratings and Consensus Ratings**

In order to examine the relationship between individual
ratings and consensus ratings of the standard candidate, the
individual ratings were averaged within each group. These
mean individual ratings were correlated with the consensus
ratings by performance condition as well as across all
performance conditions. The correlations for dimension and
overall ratings are included in Table 7. Correlations range
from \( r = .62 \) between average individual ratings and consensus
ratings for leadership in the control condition to \( r = .98 \)
between average individual overall ratings and consensus
overall ratings in the ASTD condition. In summary, the
relationship between averaged individual ratings and
consensus ratings is quite high.

The relationship between independent ratings made by
those assessors who took notes on the standard candidate,
independent ratings made by those assessors who did not take
notes on the standard candidate, and group consensus ratings
of the standard candidate was also examined. The rationale
Table 7  
Intercorrelation Matrix for Averaged Individual Ratings and Group Consensus Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oral</th>
<th>Sens</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Assert</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Across</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
<td>0.79**</td>
<td>0.74**</td>
<td>0.80**</td>
<td>0.87**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>0.93**</td>
<td>0.76**</td>
<td>0.84**</td>
<td>0.95**</td>
<td>0.98**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSTD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>0.83**</td>
<td>0.88**</td>
<td>0.67*</td>
<td>0.74**</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>0.89**</td>
<td>0.80**</td>
<td>0.62*</td>
<td>0.64*</td>
<td>0.87**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Oral = oral communication; Sens = sensitivity; Lead = leadership; Assert = assertiveness; Overall = overall performance; **=p<.001; *=p<.01  
N=54 for across performance conditions  
N=18 for the ASTD, BSTD and control conditions
behind this analysis was based on a rather large body of research on group decision making suggesting that group decisions are only as effective as the decision of the best individual within the group (Shaw, 1981).

If the assumption is made that those who took notes on the standard candidate are the "best" individuals within the groups, then these ratings would more closely approximate the consensus (i.e., group decision) ratings than those who did not take notes on the standard candidate. Results of a MANOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between the consensus ratings made by the group, individual ratings of those who took notes on standard candidate, or individual ratings of those who took notes on a non-standard candidate (F(10, 151)=.46, p=.81). Consequently, the "best" individual's ratings were not significantly different than the ratings of other members in the group: all ratings closely approximated the group consensus ratings.
CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Contrast effects influenced ratings of performance of a standard candidate participating in a group interaction exercise. For most of the performance categories, the standard candidate was perceived as performing better when she interacted with below standard candidates than when she interacted with above standard candidates. The magnitude of contrast effects observed was not influenced by observation condition: contrast effects occurred both for those who were assigned to take notes on the target candidate and those who were assigned to take notes on a non-target candidate. Unexpectedly, assessors who took notes on the target candidate evaluated her significantly higher than assessors who did not take notes on the target candidate. Contextual factors did not affect the consensus ratings. The theoretical, empirical and practical implications of these findings are discussed below.

Contrast Effects in the Group Interaction Exercise

Contextual factors influenced assessors’ evaluations of the standard candidate in the group interaction exercise. The standard candidate was rated significantly higher when she was evaluated with below standard candidates than with above standard candidates. These findings are consistent with the majority of previous research discussed earlier, suggesting that contrast effects are quite robust (Rain & Steiner, 1988;
Pepitone & Dinubile, Wexley et al., 1973). Moreover, contrast effects occurred in this study even though assessors were trained to use an absolute scale when evaluating candidates, to record specific behaviors, and were under the guidance of an administrator. Results of this study suggest that assessors' ability to rate the standard candidate was influenced by the different performance level of the non-standard candidates. It should be stressed that the factors thought to attenuate contrast effects which were present in this study (i.e., thorough training program, presence of an administrator, etc.) are most often not present in performance evaluation and selection workplace settings; consequently, contrast effects may be even greater in real life settings where these attempts to attenuate contextual factors are not incorporated.

In addition, the finding that contrast effects occur when stimuli are presented in a serial fashion has been replicated with the simultaneous presentation of stimuli. It is suggested that contrast effects may be greater when people are evaluated in a group interaction setting because in order to evaluate one group member, statements and actions of the other group members must be taken into account. In the present study, the performance levels of the non-target stimuli may have been more salient to the assessors since they were observed performing with the standard candidate rather than before or after the standard candidate. Future
research should examine the relative magnitude of contextual factors in group interaction situations and in situations where raters are presented individually.

Contrast effects did not influence consensus ratings. One explanation of this finding is that, although contrast effects influence individual ratings, their influence diminishes in the assessment center behavior reporting session when consensus is reached on the performance of candidates. Specifically, the structured nature of the consensus session where assessors discuss and rate the performance of one candidate prior to discussing the next candidate may reduce the tendency to directly compare performance across candidates. Additionally, the focus of the consensus discussion on specific behaviors of the candidates rather than general impressions may encourage more accurate accounts of the 'true' behavior of the person. Even if individual ratings reflected comparison of candidates' performance, the consensus process focuses concentration on specific behaviors exhibited by that candidate.

**Observation Condition of the Standard Candidate**

Whether an assessor took notes on the behavior of the target or a non-target candidate did not affect the magnitude of contrast effects found in this study. However, assessors in all performance conditions who took notes on the standard candidate rated the standard candidate significantly higher on
two of the four performance dimensions than those who took notes on an above standard or a below standard candidate. The amount of variance due to ratings of the standard candidate ranged from 3 % for sensitivity to 4 % for oral communication.

On the other hand, the results of these analyses for non-target candidates indicated that there were no significant differences in ratings of the non-target candidates based on whether assessors were assigned to observe them. Thus, leniency effects were found in ratings of those who took notes on the standard candidate but not for those who took notes on a non-standard candidate. The tendency for leniency effects to influence ratings of the standard candidate may be related to factors inherent in "average" performance. Specifically, "average" or "standard" performance may be seen as ambiguous since it is not clearly good or bad, so those who observed a standard candidate may have given the candidate the "benefit of the doubt" and inflated her ratings. On the other hand, above standard or below standard performance is less ambiguous, hence performance level may have been more apparent to the assessors who took notes on a non-standard candidate than for those who took notes on the standard candidate. There may have been no opportunity to give non-standard candidates the "benefit of the doubt"; consequently, leniency effects did not influence ratings of the above standard or below standard candidates.
Suggestions for Future Research.

The finding that contrast effects influence individual ratings of standard candidates in a group interaction exercise has several implications for future research. These implications revolve around specific components and factors related to group processes; particularly those found in the assessment center process.

The magnitude of contrast effects in group interaction situations where raters are not trained is one area of investigation. It is possible that contrast effects would be magnified if raters were not trained to focus on specific behaviors when observing candidates or not informed of the tendency to make contrast effect rating errors. As mentioned earlier, Wexley et al (1973) reported that an intensive training session decreased the occurrence of contrast effects in interview performance ratings. It is also suggested that improvement of the training session might mitigate the occurrence of contrast effects. Although the training session given to assessors in this study was brief, it was similar to that often given to assessors in a real world setting. However, one element of rater training not included in this study was practice and feedback in making ratings of average candidates who perform with above standard and below standard candidates. Practicing and receiving feedback on the accuracy
of ratings in situations where candidate performance is heterogeneous may minimize contrast effects.

The consensus rating process is another component of the assessment center that might mitigate contrast effects. Although contrast effects did not occur for consensus ratings in the present study, future research should address this issue using a larger number of groups than was used in this study. A current development in the assessment center area has lead some practitioners to abandon the consensus process and instead use statistical combination of individual ratings of performance to derive a composite rating of performance (Sackett & Hakel, 1979). Proponents of statistical rather than clinical combination of assessment ratings argue that high correlations between statistical and clinical ratings are frequently obtained. Consequently, there is limited value added in the time consuming consensus process. However, if contrast effect rating errors are reduced by the consensus decision making process, it may be that other biases such as halo may also be reduced; consequently, it would be premature to abandon the consensus process.

In addition to training and the consensus process, there are several other elements central to the assessment center process which may attenuate contrast effects (presence of an administrator, rating candidates based on specific requirements for the job, etc.) that are not often found in
performance appraisal and other selection systems. If contrast effects are greater in conditions where these factors are not present, researchers could then try to identify the specific components of the assessment center process (e.g., training program) which lessen contrast effects. At this point, we do not know which aspect of the assessment center process would lessen contrast effects. If contrast effects are attenuated by the assessment center process, it should be determined whether some aspect of assessor training or some other element of the assessment center process minimizes contrast effects.

The stage in the evaluation process where contrast effects occur: the behavior observation stage, the behavior classification stage, or when performance is evaluated is also a subject for future research. If the stage(s) in which contrast effects occur can be identified, a training program designed to help raters avoid contrast effect rating errors could be targeted at the specific stage(s) in which they occur. As mentioned earlier, findings of this study indicate that contrast effects might have been present at the behavioral observation stage, since 95% of the participants reported that they noticed the performance level of the other candidates as they were observing the videotape. This explanation would be consistent with Balzar's (1986) finding that contrast effects were present in the observation stage where subjects took
notes on a lecturer's performance prior to rating his/her performance.

Another area for investigation includes examining contrast effects in assessment centers that are used for purposes other than selection and promotion. The present study looked at contrast effects in ratings of performance in a selection paradigm. However, assessment centers are frequently used to help tailor specific training and development experiences for participants. Specific strengths and weaknesses of an assessor must be outlined before structuring a training and development program. It is possible that contrast effects may not occur when very specific feedback is a result of the assessment center. The process of having to provide feedback in the form of specific behaviors rather than overall performance ratings may reduce the occurrence of contrast effects because it would provide an additional "check" to ensure that recommendations based on assessment center results are based on specific behaviors rather than general impressions.

In addition to the purpose of the assessment center, the experience level of assessors may also influence the magnitude of contrast effects. Specifically, it is possible that contrast effects might not occur with more experienced raters since they probably have observed more variance in the performance of candidates than novices. Whether contrast
effects occur with assessors who are experienced is a another topic for future research.

Another point for investigation is the occurrence of contextual factors across multiple exercises. To date, it is not known whether contrast effects would disappear or would be increased for overall ratings when they are made based on performance in several exercises. However, in a complete assessment center, potential for confounds might inhibit the investigation of contrast effects across several exercises and candidates. If contrast effects occurred it might be difficult to pinpoint which exercises and performance levels of candidates contributed to the rating errors.

Finally, the present study examined the influence of contextual factors on evaluations of multiple candidates. Whether contrast effects occur within candidates of an assessment center is an area for future study. Past research in the performance appraisal area has indicated that contrast effects occur for evaluations of a lecturers’ present performance in relation to past performance (Murphy et al., 1985; Smither et al., 1988).

Practical Implications

Since this study was conducted in the laboratory, it was possible to control for variables that could not be controlled in a field setting (i.e., performance levels of the candidates,
content of assessor training, random assignment of participants to conditions). Moreover, the results have practical implications for assessment centers since numerous attempts were made to ensure that the study was realistic as possible.

First, assessors participated in a training program and observed and evaluated a candidate under the guidance of an administrator using a method similar to that used in actual assessment centers. Second, in actual assessment centers, it is recommended that, in order to reduce bias, assessors should not be extremely familiar with candidates (e.g., assessors should not be direct supervisors of the candidates). Also, assessors are often discouraged from interacting with candidates during the assessment center process and discussing candidates' performance until the integration session. In the present study assessors were warned not to discuss candidate’s performance until the integration session, they did not know the candidates, nor were they able to interact with them.

Third, raters viewed a group discussion on the problem of alcohol abuse on campus, a problem of concern on college campuses nationwide. The solutions suggested to this problem were realistic (i.e., informing students of the prevalence of the problem via the school newspaper, taking into account students probable reactions to a new policy on alcohol abuse).
Therefore, although the candidates were observed on videotape, the content of the group discussion was developed to be as realistic and relevant to college students as possible.

The results of this study indicate that contrast effects occur in individual ratings of assessment center performance. One practical implication of this finding is that ratings of candidates who meet the minimal requirements for the job might fluctuate based upon the performance level of other candidates. For example, when an assessment center is used for selection purposes, a candidate who meets the requirements for the job may be rejected if he/she performs with above standard candidates. Conversely, the same standard candidate may be accepted if he/she performs with candidates who clearly do not meet the minimal standards.

Finally, it is recommended that those who frequently evaluate people in group interaction settings (i.e., supervisors who evaluate members of a work group) need to be made aware of the robust nature of contrast effects. In real life situations, supervisors must often rate performance of work group members. The performance evaluation and rewards given to a group member may be significantly influenced by the performance level of other members of the group. Also, in situations where applicants are selected based on a group interview, contrast effect rating errors are likely to occur and may significantly influence selection decisions made on the
basis of an interview. Perhaps a training program incorporating practice and feedback in rating a group member whose performance varies from others in the group would minimize contrast effects.
References


Appendix A
ASSESSMENT CENTER ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

I. PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

Before you start make sure you have a copy of all forms, the timetable, condition form, and a list of subjects.

Close door and put up do not disturb sign.

Introduce yourself to the subjects; make sure they are in the correct room. Give each subject an envelop of materials. tell them:

Please do not put your name on any of the materials, put your social security number on the materials instead.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER

(a) As you heard in the training session, we are here to evaluate a new technique for hiring residence hall student assistants called an assessment center.

(b) A residence hall student assistant, known as an SA, is an upper level undergraduate who is assigned a floor section of a residence hall or college. SAs are responsible for working closely with other SAs to develop and maintain an atmosphere which promotes academic, personal, and social growth in the residence hall.

(c) Although universities have a number of really good SAs, some perform their jobs so poorly that they should have never been hired. I hope the assessment center that you are going through will help universities hire the best SAs possible. But, before universities can start using the assessment center to hire SAs, we need your help in evaluating it to make sure it will work.

(d) Today, each of you will be observing SA candidates in a group discussion about a policy change.

Refer to assessment center timetables and ask subjects to refer to this table also. Go over the highlights of the assessment center timetable.

Working quickly, but thoroughly and accurately is very important. Please note that the time allotted for the assessment center is tight.

Do you have any questions?
III. REVIEW OF HOW TO RECORD BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATIONS

(a) During the training session, you practiced making behavioral observations. You were given several reasons why it is important to make good behavioral observations. Good behavioral observations enable you to make accurate observation of others and allow you to successfully communicate to the other assessors what the candidate actually said and did.

Refer them to their copy of "tips for observing and recording observations" and read this as they follow along.

Pass out their critiqued practice forms.

(b) Feedback on your behavioral observations is included on the behavioral observation sheet. Most of the feedback focused on encouraging you to record more detail and pay closer attention to nonverbal behavior.

(c) Do you have any questions about how to make good behavioral observations or about the feedback you received on your practice observation forms?

(d) Please note that if a person says or does the same thing several times during an exercise, you don’t have to write it down every time. You can just write the the SA said or did particular thing several times. For example you can write “He nodded his head several times while listening to the students”.

(e) Again, remember to write down details; write down verbatim quotes if possible, and note the context of things the SA said so that you will later be able to interpret what the person said.

(f) Do you have any questions?

IV. REVIEW OF DIMENSIONS

(a) Please refer to the dimension list that we discussed in the training session.

Hold up dimension list.

(b) Again, read each dimension and its definition. Do you have any questions?

V. OBSERVATION OF EXERCISE

(a) In this exercise, the student assistants have gotten together to come up with recommendations on how to best enforce the alcohol policy in the residence halls.
Tell them what form to use (the behavioral observation form) and assign each subject a candidate. **MAKE SURE THAT EACH SUBJECT OBSERVES A DIFFERENT CANDIDATE.**

(b) Please be sure to write the candidate's name, your social security number, and today's date on this form. Do not discuss the tapes with each other. It is important that your observations not be influenced by others.

Start the first tape. As soon as the group discussion is over, stop the tape.

VI. REVIEW OF CLASSIFICATION OF BEHAVIORS

(a) Now let's talk about how to classify behaviors under dimensions. Now you should classify the behaviors under the appropriate dimension using the behavior classification form. There is one form for each candidate.

**Hold up the behavioral classification form and point to the appropriate space underneath as you are discussing it.**

(b) You will use one behavioral observation form. Since you have just watched the group discussion exercise, classify the behaviors which represent Oral Communication under that category. Then classify the behaviors which represent Sensitivity under the "sensitivity" label. You will then classify behaviors under Leadership and Assertiveness.

(c) You may classify a particular behavior under more than one dimension if you feel that the behavior is indicative of more then one dimension. Also, some behaviors may not be classifiable under the dimensions. If you feel that a behavior doesn't fit any of the dimensions, then don't classify it and don't report it to the other assessors.

**Hold up a copy of the minimal standards.**

(d) To help classify the behaviors under the proper dimension, refer to the minimal standards of performance. Examples of behaviors that represent each dimension are given. If you notice a particular behavior on the minimal standards that a candidate exhibited, but you forgot to record, go ahead and classify that behavior under the appropriate dimension. However, do not simply transfer the behavior examples form the minimal standards to your behavior classification forms. You must be able to support them.

(e) Do you have any questions? You will have 15 minutes to classify behaviors. Remember, you need to work quickly but accurately.
(f) Go ahead and classify the behaviors you just observed on the videotape, using the minimal standards for the group discussion as a guide.

**Give them a two-minute warning.**

**VII. RATER TRAINING**

**Go over the rating scale. Put it on the blackboard ahead of time.**

- "1" — low performance on the dimension
- "2" — fairly low performance on the dimension
- "3" — acceptable performance on the dimension, not low, not high
- "4" — fairly high performance on the dimension
- "5" — high performance on the dimension

(a) Please note that a "3" denotes acceptable performance, not average performance. If you give someone a "3" you are saying that the candidate has performed at an acceptable level on that dimension.

(b) Remember to evaluate the candidate against the standard of the scale, not against each other.

**Have the subjects separate their minimal standards from the rest of their forms.**

(c) Use the minimal standards of performance to help you evaluate each candidate's performance on the dimensions. The behaviors listed under each dimension are indicative of performance on that dimension. If a candidate exhibits most of the behaviors listed under that dimension, she is "acceptable" on that dimension and receives at least a rating of "3". However, if a candidate does not meet these requirements, she has performed "below standard" on that dimension and therefore should usually be rated a "1" or a "2" on that dimension.

(d) In some instances, however, a candidate does not meet the minimal standards but may still earn a "3" rating. If a candidate exhibits half or more behaviors indicative of acceptable performance on the dimension really well, assessors may use their own judgment to decide whether that compensates for not exhibiting "minimal" behavior.

(e) If a candidate meets the minimal standards and exhibits additional behaviors indicative of good performance on the dimension, she is "above standard" on that dimension and should receive a rating of a "4" or a "5".

(f) Do you have any questions?
VII. INTEGRATION SESSION

(a) Now you will share observations and rate the candidates on the dimensions, one candidate at a time. You will first share behavioral observations and rate name of first person on administrator condition list's performance on oral communication. You will then independently rate name of first person on administrator condition list's oral communication. If the ratings differ, you will discuss name of first person on administrator condition list's performance on oral communication and agree on a consensus rating. You will repeat this process for each dimension. Then you will independently rate name of first person on administrator condition list's overall performance, and arrive at consensus. Then you will share behaviors and rate name of second person on administrator condition list and then name of third person on administrator condition list.

(b) Here are the ground rules for the integration session. You are to listen to the assessor's report and take notes on what he/she says. At this point, you are not to discuss what the assessor reports, even if you disagree with what the assessor said. You are to only ask questions on what the candidate said or did.

(c) If the reporting assessor reports a behavior which you feel is not indicative of the dimension under discussion, you are free to classify the behavior under the dimension or dimensions you think are appropriate.

(d) You will have three minutes to read your observation and then everyone has one minute to make their ratings. You do not have to write down everything the reporting assessor says. However, you do need to take enough notes so that you can make your ratings.

IX. OBSERVER TRAINING

THE FOURTH PERSON IN YOUR ROOM IS AUTOMATICALLY THE PROCESS OBSERVER. GIVE THAT PERSON A COPY OF THE OBSERVER FORM.

(a) Your observations and classifications from the tapes will still be used but instead of sharing your observations and ratings, you are needed to observe the other assessors make their reports. You are to evaluate the presentation quality of each assessor's presentations, but you don't need to write down everything the assessors say and do. Please use one form per assessor.

MAKE SURE THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSOR TEAM FACE ONE ANOTHER. OBSERVERS ARE TO SIT OFF TO THE SIDE.

X. RUNNING THE INTEGRATION SESSION

Please refer to your the sheet labelled "Steps in the integration session" which outlines how you are to discuss each candidate.
FOLLOW THESE STEPS IN THE INTEGRATION SESSION

1. SHARE OBSERVATIONS ON **THE FIRST PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST'S** PERFORMANCE IN THE GROUP DISCUSSION. FIRST DISCUSS OBSERVATIONS RELATED TO ORAL COMMUNICATION.

2. INDEPENDENTLY RATE **THE FIRST PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST'S** ORAL COMMUNICATION.

3. IF RATINGS DIFFER DISCUSS **THE FIRST PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST'S** PERFORMANCE AND ARRIVE AT A CONSENSUS.

4. REPEAT STEPS 1-3 FOR EACH DIMENSION.

5. RATE **THE FIRST PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST'S** OVERALL PERFORMANCE IN THE GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE.

6. IF RATINGS DIFFER DISCUSS THE **THE FIRST PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST'S** PERFORMANCE AND ARRIVE AT A CONSENSUS RATING.

7. REPEAT THIS PROCESS FOR **THE SECOND PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST** AND THEN THE **THE THIRD PERSON INDICATED ON YOUR CONDITION LIST**.
XI. TIPS FOR RUNNING THE INTEGRATION SESSION

* The first time that the assessors in your group disagree about a rating, assure them that it is alright for them to disagree.

* When discussion is needed to reach consensus, do not tell the assessors how to run the discussion, just tell them to discuss the evidence among themselves and get a consensus rating.

* Encourage assessors to ask clarification questions and to ask the reporting assessor whether the candidate met the minimal standards for each dimension.

* Make sure that no one assessor dominates the discussion. Be sure to ask for everyone's opinion and behavioral evidence when resolving rating discrepancies.

* Remind students to use their minimal standards as a guide when making their ratings.

* Make sure that assessors do not compare one candidate's performance with another candidate's performance.

* Make sure that all statements regarding a candidate's performance are behaviorally specific.

* Don't let assessors take more than 3 minutes to arrive at a single rating.

XII. CLOSING

Thank you so much for participating in this experiment. I really appreciate your input. It seems like you all did a good job. You will receive a memo by mail, debriefing you about the experiment after all data has been collected.

HAVE THEM FILL OUT THE POST-EXPERIMENTAL INQUIRY

COLLECT ALL MATERIALS.
SIGN THEIR CREDIT CARDS. THE STUDY IS CALLED "ASSESSMENT CENTERS" (#62) AND THEY SHOULD RECEIVE 2 CREDIT HOURS.

REMINDERS

1. Be enthusiastic !!!!!!!!!

2. Go slowly: Remember that this is probably the assessors' first experience with being an assessor.

3. Impress upon the assessors the need to do well and to feel free to ask questions. Ask for questions several times during the assessment center.

4. Be friendly but task-oriented.

5. Double check your packets to make sure they contain the correct forms.

6. Make sure the assessor's social security number is on each form.

7. Make sure that the subjects are using the correct forms at all times.

8. Do not allow the assessors to take any materials from the room.

9. If an assessor wants to know if a behavior they recorded is a good behavioral observation, refer them to their copy of "Tips for Observing and Recording Behaviors".

10. Neither you nor any of the other assessors are to help an assessor classify behaviors into the dimensions. However, you may clarify and help assessors understand the dimension definitions and the minimal standards. The schedule is very tight so time each segment. If you fall behind, you will probably not be able to catch up later on.

11. Do not sign their 'credit cards' until after the assessment center is over.
12. If an assessor reports a behavior that did not occur, don't say anything about it.

13. Dress professionally (no jeans, shorts or sweats)


15. Put a "do not disturb" sign on the door. The room assignments have been doubled checked. If a professor or graduate student hassles you, tell him/her that you have reserved the room through appropriate university channels and they are to contact Dr. Gaugler (ext. 3419) if they any problems. Do not give up the room. Write down his/her telephone number.

16. Hold up each form as they are to use it. Continually check to make sure subjects are using the correct forms.

17. You can read while they watch the tapes and classify behaviors but don't make noise.

18. If only 1 or 2 people show up to watch your tapes, go to the other rooms and take one of their overflow assessors. If their are no overflow subjects available, take them to the other administrators. They will participate as overflow assessors in the other room and observe a candidate and be an observer during the integration session.
### ASSESSMENT CENTER TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Observe one candidate in group exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Classify behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>Integration session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TIPS FOR OBSERVING AND RECORDING BEHAVIORS

Recording Observations

- Write down specific behaviors and comments made. Grammar and sentence structure are not important

- Avoid generalizations. Saying that "he was hostile towards the students" does not give the assessors much information about what the SAs actually said and did.

- Use the Behavior Observation Form

Characteristics of Good and Poor Behavioral Observations

Good observations:

- State what a person says or does
- Are specific rather than general
- Are descriptive rather than evaluative
- Are confirmable by others

Poor observations:

- Make general classification statements
- Interpret actions
- Impart feelings
- Describe underlying personality makeup
LIST OF DIMENSIONS

Oral Communication: The ability to effectively express oneself in group situations; includes gestures and other non-verbal behaviors; conveys thoughts clearly and concisely.

Sensitivity: The ability to accurately appraise the needs, feelings, skills and competencies of others and act accordingly.

Leadership: The ability to establish an appropriate course of action, for self or others, to accomplish a specific goal; to take tasks and/or resources and to structure them in a meaningful and useful manner.

Assertiveness: The ability and willingness to take action in a positive, firm, yet nonaggressive manner.
BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION FORM FOR GROUP EXERCISE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _______________________

NAME OF CANDIDATE __________________________ DATE
BEHAVIOR CLASSIFICATION FORM FOR GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Social Security No. ___________ Candidate: ___________
Date: ________________

Oral Communication:

Sensitivity:

Leadership:

Assertiveness:
Dimension Definitions and Minimal Standards of Performance

**Oral Communication:** The ability to effectively express oneself in group situations; includes gestures and other non-verbal behaviors: conveys thoughts clearly and concisely.

- Presented ideas in a logical fashion
- Spoke clearly, concisely, and fluently
- Spoke loud enough to be understood
- Maintained eye contact with others when speaking
- Used good grammar

**Sensitivity:** The ability to accurately appraise the needs, feelings, skills, and competencies of others and to act accordingly.

- Listened attentively (did not interrupt frequently; had forward posture, nodded, looked interested in what the speaker was saying
- Did not manipulate the conversation
- Showed evidence and awareness of the probable reactions of students to the new policy (e.g. ideas showed an awareness of students' probable reactions to the policy)
- Incorporated ideas of others in group when suggesting solutions to problems
- Asked others to share ideas

**Leadership:** The ability to establish an appropriate course of action, for self or others, to accomplish a specific goal; to take tasks and/or resources and to structure them in a meaningful and useful manner.

- Showed evidence of managing the group's time
- Ensured that the discussion moved along
- Stuck to the point of the discussion: did not go off on tangents
o Showed at least one piece of evidence of a methodical, orderly way of handling the problem (e.g. took noted during the discussion; organized group's consensus into a clear, concise summary)

Assertiveness: The ability and willingness to take action in a firm, positive, yet nonaggressive manner.

o Criticized or supported ideas of others in an effective manner (e.g. provided evaluative feedback to others; feedback reflected both strengths and weaknesses of ideas)

o Used first person pronouns in stating opinions (e.g., "I think", "I don't agree")

o Prompted others to participate
Rating Scale

"1" — low performance on the dimension
"2" — fairly low performance on the dimension
"3" — acceptable performance on the dimension, not low, not high
"4" — fairly high performance on the dimension
"5" — high performance on the dimension
RATING FORM FOR CANDIDATES IN GROUP DISCUSSION

**Oral Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Rating</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sensitivity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Rating</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Rating</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assertiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Rating</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Performance Rating**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Rating</th>
<th>Consensus Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OBSERVER FORM

Social Security Number of Observer _______ Date _________

I. Name of first assessor observed

Quality of Presentation Rating: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Very
Poor

II. Name of second assessor observed

Quality of Presentation Rating: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Very
Poor

III. Name of third assessor observed

Quality of Presentation Rating: 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
Very
Poor

* Note: In making your quality of presentation rating, be sure to consider the reporting assessor’s (1) clarity of presentation, (2) persuasiveness and (3) credibility.
STEPS IN THE INTEGRATION SESSION

1. The assessor who observed a candidate shares his/her behavioral observations of that candidate on oral communication while the other assessors listen and take notes.

2. Assessors may then ask questions for clarification but discussion is limited.

3. Assessors independently rate the candidate on the dimension.

4. If dimension ratings differ, assessors will discuss the candidate’s performance and reach consensus.

5. Steps 1-4 are repeated for each dimension.

6. Assessors independently rate the candidate’s overall performance in the leaderless group discussion.

7. If overall ratings differ, the assessors discuss the candidate’s performance and reach consensus.

8. Steps 1-7 are repeated for the other two candidates.
CONDITION FORM FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Tape Label: AAS, ABS, BBS
(Note: I will circle one of these for the administrator)

Order candidates are to be discussed in integration session.
(Note: I will circle one of these for the administrator)

1. Chris
2. Pat
3. Lee

1. Pat
2. Lee
3. Chris

1. Lee
2. Pat
3. Chris

1. Pat
2. Chris
3. Lee

1. Chris
2. Pat
3. Lee

1. Lee
2. Chris
3. Pat
MATERIALS FOR EACH ASSESSOR

TRAINING SESSION

1 consent form
1 Behavior Example Practice Exercise
1 practice Behavioral Observation Form
1 List of Dimensions and Dimension Definitions
1 Behavior Classification Form
1 Steps in the Integration Session

EXERCISE SESSION

1 Assessment Center Timetable
1 Tips for Making Good Behavioral Observations
1 List of Dimension and Dimension Definitions
1 Behavior Observation Form
1 Behavior Classification Form
1 Minimal Standards for the Group Discussion
1 Rating Scale
1 Steps in the Integration Session
1 Rating form to make individual and consensus ratings

MATERIALS FOR EACH ADMINISTRATOR

Administration instructions
1 Copy of everything in the exercise session given to assessors
1 condition sheet with tape label and order of candidate
discussion circled by me
1 observer form
1 credit slip for each assessor
1 pencil for each assessor
Extra forms, pencils, and questionnaires
Appendix B
POST-EXPERIMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Social Security Number: __________________________
Date: __________________________

1. Sex
   Male ________  Female ________

2. Year in school
   Freshman ____; Sophomore ____; Junior ____; Senior ____; Fifth Year ____

3. Age ________

4. Have you ever participated in an assessment center study before? Yes ____;
   No ____
   If so, when? __________________________  __________________________
   (semester) (year)

5. During the videotape session (not the integration session) whom did you observe?
   Chris ________  Pat ________  Lee ________

6. While you were observing the videotapes did you notice the performance levels of the
   candidates for whom you were not making behavioral observations?
   Yes ____; No ____

7. Did you feel that the training session helped you learn how to make behavioral
   observations accurately? Yes ____; No ____
   Comments:

8. How easy was it for you to classify behaviors into dimensions?
   Very easy ____; Easy _____; Difficult ____; Very Difficult ____

9. Do you think that the minimal standards helped you in classifying behaviors into
   dimensions and in rating the candidates? Yes ____; No ____
   Comments:

10. Did you know any of the assessors in the room with you prior to this experiment?
    Yes ____; No ________

11. Did you know the administrator prior to this experiment?
    Yes ____; No ________

12. Do you think that a leaderless group discussion would be effective in helping to
    select student assistants? Yes ____; No ________
    Why or why not?
Appendix C
TRAINING PROGRAM FOR ASSESSORS

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND GIVE EACH STUDENT A PACKET
HAVE SUBJECTS SIGN CONSENT FORMS

The purpose of this project is to evaluate a new technique for hiring resident hall assistants. This technique is called an assessment center.

SHOW OVERHEAD 1

An assessment center is not a place. It is a method used to make employment decisions, such as the hiring of a job applicant, the promotion of an employee, or training and development of an employee. In an assessment center, the candidates, who are usually called 'assesseees' are observed by trained people, called 'assessors', under controlled conditions for a specific amount of time.

Today you will be trained as assessors so that you can evaluate student assistant candidates. I appreciate your help as an assessor in this research project and your willingness to help
this research project succeed so that universities will have the best system possible for hiring residence hall student assistants.

Now I would like to describe the job of student assistant.

SHOW OVERHEAD 2

A student assistant, known as an SA, is an upper level undergraduate who is assigned to a floor section of a residence hall or college. SAs are responsible for working closely with other SAs to develop and maintain an atmosphere which promotes academic, personal, and social growth in the residence hall.

An SA's duties entail helping develop university and residence hall policies, communicating and enforcing residence hall policies and procedures, promoting consideration of individual needs in a group living environment, coordinating educational and social/recreational programs for students, ensuring that students develop an appropriate atmosphere on the floor, counseling students, and promoting security awareness.

Now I would like to discuss the assessment center in which you will be participating as an assessor.
Assessment Center Process

SHOW OVERHEAD 3

The three phases of the assessment center in which you will participate are (1) behavior observation; (2) classification of behavior; and (3) the integration session in which you will actually evaluate candidates on their performance.

I. Observation

In the observation stage, you will observe one candidate for a student assistant position who will be discussing a university policy with two other candidates. You will take notes on everything the candidate says and does. This will include both verbal and non-verbal behavior.

Now we will focus on how to accurately observe and record behaviors.

It is very important to make good behavioral observations of others. Good behavioral observations enable you to make accurate evaluations of others and allow you to successfully communicate to the other assessors what the student assistant candidate actually said and did.
SHOW OVERHEAD 4

(a) Good observations:

State what a person says or does (e.g., "He said to the student, ‘I don't have time to discuss your problem")

Are specific rather than general (e.g., "She suggested a follow-up meeting in 10 days)

Are descriptive rather than evaluative (e.g., "The students kept talking when he was trying to start the discussion)

Are confirmable by others (e.g., "He took notes throughout the meeting")

(b) Poor observations:

Make general classification statements (e.g., "She was sensitive")

Interpret actions (e.g., "The student was getting on the SA's nerves")

Impart feelings (e.g., "He was angry")

Describe underlying personality make-up (e.g., She is paranoid)

Are there any questions?
A. Practice in identifying good behaviors

Now you are going to practice identifying good and poor behavioral observations. Take out the sheet labelled "Behavior Example Practice Exercise" and determine whether each of the 10 behaviors listed are indicative of a good or a poor behavioral observation.

HOLD UP THE CORRECT FORM. GIVE THEM 3 MINUTES TO FILL OUT THIS FORM. AFTER TWO MINUTES IS UP, SHOW OVERHEAD 5. DISCUSS EACH OF THE 10 EXAMPLES AND HAVE THEM INDICATE WHETHER EACH IS A GOOD OR A POOR BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION. REITERATE WHY EACH BEHAVIOR IS A GOOD OR POOR BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATION.

Are there any questions?

B. Practice in recording behavioral observations

Now, you will practice recording behavioral observations by watching a tape of a group of people who must decide how to allocate money to various employees. Each candidate represents a different employee. You are to observe and write down both non-verbal and verbal behaviors of the person on the screen (not the person he/she is representing). You will be critiqued and will get feedback on your performance. Please
remember that making good behavioral observations is one of the most important things that you will do. Keep in mind that you will have to write very quickly to record the gist of what the person says and does. You need to write down details; write down verbatim quotes if possible, and note the context of things to help interpret what the person says. I will now model the first person to give you an example of how this is done.

MODEL NANCY, THE FIRST PERSON, FOR 30 SECONDS

Now, please take out your behavioral observation form. It looks like this.

SHOW THEM A SAMPLE FORM

You will observe Pat, the man on the far left, for two minutes. Please remember to write down everything on this form in as much detail as possible. Start now.

PLAY TAPE FOR TWO MINUTES. COLLECT OBSERVATION FORMS AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TAPE
II. Classification of behavior

Now, I would like to discuss the performance dimensions you will be using in this assessment center when you rate candidates. Please take out your list of dimensions and your behavior classification form.

HOLD THEM UP.

SHOW OVERHEAD 6
READ OUT THE DEFINITIONS OF THE DIMENSIONS AND ELABORATE ON THEM

Oral communication is defined as the ability to express oneself in group situations including gestures and other non-verbal behaviors and conveying thoughts clearly and accurately. Please note that both verbal and non-verbal behavior is included in this dimension.

Sensitivity is defined as the ability to accurately appraise the needs, feelings and competencies of others and act accordingly. It would involve such things as listening attentively, not interrupting, and incorporating others ideas into a discussion.
Leadership is defined as the ability to establish an appropriate course of action for self or others; to accomplish a specific goal; to take tasks and/or resources and structure them in a useful manner. Leadership deals with activities related to planning and handling matters in an orderly fashion. This might involve suggesting a plan for discussion and organizing the group's time.

Assertiveness is defined as the ability and willingness to take action in a positive, firm, yet non-aggressive manner. Behaviors related to assertiveness might involve criticizing others and prompting other people in a group to participate.

Now please refer to your behavior classification form. It looks like this.

SHOW OVERHEAD 7

A. Classifying behavior into dimensions
As I mentioned earlier, the second phase of the assessment center process involves classification of behavior into the performance dimensions. Now, I will give you examples of how to do this.

GIVE EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS THEY SHOULD HAVE RECORDED IN THE PRACTICE SESSION. POINT TO THE DIMENSIONS ON OVERHEAD 7 AS
YOU ARE DOING THIS. TRY TO GET SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PHASE

When you observed Pat several minutes ago, you probably noticed that he said "uh" several times. He also maintained eye contact and used his hands throughout the discussion (he counted on his fingers as he made his points). These behaviors are indicative of oral communication. When classifying behavior, you would write down these behaviors under the oral communication category.

Pat also showed consideration for the needs and feelings of Dick by stating that Dick cut his vacation short to work on a stockholder's report. Pat also noted that despite his low salary, he still works hard for the company. These behaviors would be classified under the sensitivity category.

A behavior that could be classified under leadership is that Pat went through the discussion in a methodological manner and did not go off on tangents. Pat started out the discussion pointing out that Dick had exemplified himself in a number of ways and discussed these points (i.e., his responsibility has doubled, he is result-oriented, he received a national award).

A behavior related to the assertiveness dimension is that Pat made it clear to the group that the president of the company had asked him to represent Dick.
Are there any questions on how to classify behaviors into dimensions?

III. Integration session

Now we will go over the third stage in the assessment center process - the integration session.

A. Steps in the integration session

SHOW OVERHEAD 8

Please take out the sheet labelled "Steps in the integration session".

HOLD UP SHEET. READ OUT STEPS AS THEY FOLLOW ALONG.

B. Use absolute scale when rating candidates

When you are discussing a candidate's performance during the integration session you should never compare his/her performance with that of other candidates. You should use the following rating scale.

SHOW OVERHEAD 9 AND HAVE THEM REFER TO THEIR SHEET CONTAINING THE RATING SCALE
On this scale an acceptable rating (a rating of 3) does not mean average. It means that the candidate has met the minimal requirements for acceptance for the job.

**C. Use minimal standards as a guide**

You should use the minimal standards for performance when rating a candidate. You will be given a copy of the minimal standards later.

**SHOW OVERHEAD 9 AND OVERHEAD 10 SIMULTANEOUSLY. GIVE EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF RATINGS THAT COULD BE GIVEN**

The minimal standards for oral communication are: **READ THEM OUT.**

If a candidate meets all of these minimal standards he or she would be receive a rating of "3". If a candidate exceeds the minimal standards, he would receive a higher rating. For example, if a candidate meets the minimal standards and uses hand gestures to make points, he might receive a rating of "4". If a candidate does not meet the minimal standards (e.g., speaks in an incoherent manner, looks at the floor instead of maintaining eye contact with others) he might receive a rating of "2".
Are there any questions at this point?

Conclusion
Now you will have a ten minute break. Please go to room number ___ after your break. Please arrive at your assigned room by ____.

GIVE SUBJECTS THEIR ASSIGNED ROOMS AND THE TIME THAT THEY SHOULD ARRIVE.

COLLECT ALL MATERIALS.
Assessment Center

- used to make employment decisions (hiring, promotion, etc.)

- candidates participate in job-related simulations

Candidates are called 'assessees'

Those who observe and rate behavior are called 'assessors'
WHAT IS A STUDENT ASSISTANT (SA) ?

* An upper level undergraduate who is assigned to a floor section of a residence hall or college

* Is responsible for developing and maintaining an atmosphere which promotes academic, personal, and social growth in the residence hall

* Duties entail:

  — Aiding in development of policies
  — Communicating and enforcing policies and procedures
  - Promoting consideration of individual needs in a group living environment
  — Coordinating educational and social/recreational programs for students
  — Developing an appropriate academic atmosphere on the floor
  — Counseling students
  — Promoting security awareness
PHASES OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER

1. Observation of behavior
   - Observe one candidate in a group discussion
   - Take detailed notes on what the candidate says and does

2. Classification of behavior
   - Classify behaviors into performance dimension categories

3. Integration session
   - Follow steps in the integration session
   - Rate candidates on a absolute scale; do not compare performance across candidates
   - Use minimal standards as a guide
GOOD OBSERVATIONS:

- State what a person says or does
- Are specific rather than general
- Are descriptive rather than evaluative
- Are confirmable by others

POOR OBSERVATIONS

- Make general classification statements
- Interpret actions
- Impart feelings
- Describe underlying personality make-up
Overhead 5

BEHAVIOR EXAMPLE PRACTICE EXERCISE

Read each statement below and decide whether it is a behavioral statement or it is too general, vague, subjective, etc. The statement may be an example of something “effective” or “ineffective”.

Imagine that you were listening to someone report observations from an exercise. If the observer actually made that statement, would you know what the student assistant actually said or did? If you think it is a behavioral statement, put an “X” in the “good example” column. If you consider it too vague or general put an “X” in the “poor example” column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOOD EXAMPLE</th>
<th>POOR EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Got up and moved his chair closer to the student.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wrote down the student’s suggestions.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Her argument broke down.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. He was very sensitive to the student’s request.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. She suggested going to a movie.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Directions for performing the task were unclear</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Told the SA he wasn’t being clear.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Began the presentation by identifying the problem</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. She was too sympathetic</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gave the students opportunities to suggest reasons for the problem</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF DIMENSIONS

Oral Communication: The ability to effectively express oneself in group situations; includes gestures and other non-verbal behaviors; conveys thoughts clearly and concisely.

Sensitivity: The ability to accurately appraise the needs, feelings, skills and competencies of others and act accordingly.

Leadership: The ability to establish an appropriate course of action, for self or others, to accomplish a specific goal; to take tasks and/or resources and to structure them in a meaningful and useful manner.

Assertiveness: The ability and willingness to take action in a positive, firm, yet nonaggressive manner.
BEHAVIOR CLASSIFICATION FORM FOR GROUP
DISCUSSION EXERCISE

Assessor:___________

Candidate:__________

Date:

Oral Communication:

Sensitivity:

Leadership:

Assertiveness:
Overhead 8

STEPS IN THE INTEGRATION SESSION

1. The assessor who observed a candidate shares his/her behavioral observations of that candidates on oral communication while the other assessors listen and take notes.

2. Assessors may then ask questions for clarification but discussion is limited.

3. Assessors independently rate the candidate on the dimension.

4. If dimension ratings differ, assessors will discuss the candidate’s performance and reach consensus.

5. Steps 1-4 are repeated for each dimension.

6. Assessors independently rate the candidate’s overall performance in the leaderless group discussion.

7. If overall ratings differ, the assessors discuss the candidate’s performance and reach consensus.

8. Steps 1-7 are repeated for the other two candidates.
Rating Scale

"1" — low performance on the dimension
"2" — fairly low performance on the dimension
"3" — acceptable performance on the dimension, not low, not high
"4" — fairly high performance on the dimension
"5" — high performance on the dimension
MINIMAL STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

**Oral Communication:** The ability to effectively express oneself in group situations; includes gestures and other nonverbal behaviors; conveys thoughts clearly and concisely.

- Presented ideas in a logical fashion
- Spoke clearly, concisely, and fluently
- Spoke loud enough to be understood
- Maintained eye contact with others
- Used good grammar
Appendix D
Dimension Definitions and Minimal Standards of Performance

**Oral Communication:** The ability to effectively express oneself in group situations; includes gestures and other non-verbal behaviors: conveys thoughts clearly and concisely.

- Presented ideas in a logical fashion
- Spoke clearly, concisely, and fluently
- Spoke loud enough to be understood
- Maintained eye contact with others when speaking
- Used good grammar

**Sensitivity:** The ability to accurately appraise the needs, feelings, skills, and competencies of others and to act accordingly.

- Listened attentively (did not interrupt frequently; had forward posture, nodded, looked interested in what the speaker was saying
- Did not manipulate the conversation
- Showed evidence and awareness of the probable reactions of students to the new policy (e.g. ideas showed an awareness of students' probable reactions to the policy)
- Incorporated ideas of others in group when suggesting solutions to problems
- Asked others to share ideas

**Leadership:** The ability to establish an appropriate course of action, for self or others, to accomplish a specific goal; to take tasks and/or resources and to structure them in a meaningful and useful manner.

- Showed evidence of managing the group's time
- Ensured that the discussion moved along
- Stuck to the point of the discussion: did not go off on tangents
Showed at least one piece of evidence of a methodical, orderly way of handling the problem (e.g. took noted during the discussion; organized group's consensus into a clear, concise summary)

**Assertiveness**: The ability and willingness to take action in a firm, positive, yet nonaggressive manner.

- Criticized or supported ideas of others in an effective manner (e.g. provided evaluative feedback to others; feedback reflected both strengths and weaknesses of ideas)
- Used first person pronouns in stating opinions (e.g., "I think", "I don't agree")
- Prompted others to participate
Appendix E
SCRIPT FOR THE ABOVE STANDARD CONDITION

Chris: As you know the state legislature prohibits those under 21 from drinking alcoholic beverages. The university administration has asked us to come up with a policy for handling abuse of this law when people under 21 are caught drinking on campus and that's why we are meeting today.

Lee: I think it is good that the university administration is getting our input on this issue. Drinking on campus has really been a problem lately. You know, there were seven wrecks last year on campus resulting from the carelessness of drunk drivers. Most of the students involved in those wrecks were under 21. Also, at some of the parties I attended last year, several students were drinking a lot. Some got violent and started fighting with the other students. Several innocent bystanders were hurt as a result of those fights.

Pat: (NODS HEAD) Yes, it is a serious issue. I've been thinking about it a lot lately and I have been concerned that students might rebel against a policy that is too tough. Given the sensitivity of this issue I think that we really should take the feelings of the students into account.

Chris: (NODS HEAD) Yeah, we need to take students' opinions into account, after all, we represent them. I think we have a tough job ahead of us.

Lee: Well, I think that although developing and enforcing a policy on alcohol abuse may be difficult, as student assistants we have a responsibility to at least try to develop a fair policy and to attempt to enforce the drinking law and university policy.

Pat: Oh, I agree we should give it our best shot.
Chris: Well, I have written down three areas that I think we need to discuss. Would you guys like to hear my ideas?

Pat: Sure.

Chris: (NODS HEAD, GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING)

Chris: First, we need to inform students of the policy and give them information regarding alcohol abuse. By giving students information and hopefully opening the lines of communication, we'll let them know that we are interested in their well being. Second, we need to discuss who will enforce the policy. Third, we need to discuss punishments that will be delivered if a student who is under 21 is caught drinking.

PAT AND LEE LOOK ATTENTIVE, SMILE AND NOD IN AGREEMENT WHILE CHRIS EXPLAINS THE 3 ISSUES

Pat: I think that is a great plan for discussion. I have thought of a way we can inform students of the possible hazards of alcohol abuse while also finding out how they feel about this issue. I'd like to see what you guys think of my idea.

Chris: Sure!

Lee: Why don't you tell us about it?

Chris: (NODS AND SMILES)

Pat: I thought of having talks with the students in the cafeterias at mealtimes. We'd inform the students that the university is going to take new steps to enforce the law and we'd also warn them of the consequences of alcohol abuse.

Chris: Hmm, although there would be no way to force attendance at these talks, it would be a good way to get input from the students regarding their opinions of the policy we come up with.
Lee: Well, I think that at least having the talks in the cafeterias is a good idea. It will enable us to talk with the students on an individual basis.

Chris: (GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING) The only drawback to this idea is that we might reach only the people who live on campus. As you know, most people at this school live off campus. We need to also think of ways to reach people who live off campus.

Lee: (SMILES AND SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) In addition to having talks in the school cafeteria, we could inform the people who live off campus of the policy by writing newspaper articles for the school newspaper. Also, we could probably get brochures free from the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and pass them out to all students.

Pat: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Great idea! If we make an attempt to contact students using several methods, maybe we will prevent any miscommunication or misunderstanding. Also, by using the student newspaper as a medium, we can encourage students to write letters to the editor so that they can express their opinions on the policy.

Chris: Exactly! I think that by having talks in dorms, writing newspaper articles, and passing out brochures, students will be informed of this issue. It seems like we now need to decide who will enforce the policy.

Pat: Sure, what are your ideas, Chris?

Chris: (GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING) Well, I think that it will be most difficult to enforce the new drinking policy at school sponsored parties. It might be wise to have cops dressed in plain clothing at the parties, so it will be less intimidating to the students.

LEE: LOOK CONCERNED
Pat: I think you've raised a very important point. We don't want to alienate the students.

Lee: Well, I think that having cops at the school sponsored parties, whether they are in full uniform or not, might discourage attendance at the parties. It would be intimidating to the students.

Pat: I thought about having student monitors 'planted' at the parties. They would be anonymous and might be less intimidating to the students than cops.

Chris: (LOOKS CONCERNED) But do you know of many students who would want that job?

Pat: Not many, it is a lot of responsibility for a student. Monitors might lose a lot of friends if other students found out. Besides that, if we have any sort of checking for alcohol at parties, students might just move the parties off campus and not attend the school sponsored parties. There is no reason for them to have to have parties on campus.

Lee: (NODS HEAD) That's a good point. Although we need to enforce the policy, we want campus to be a place for people to relax and have a good time as well as attend classes and study.

Chris: (NODS HEAD) Right! We don't want all parties to be moved off campus.

SHORT PAUSE

Pat: (LOOKS AT WATCH) Since out time is about half up, maybe we should discuss other alternatives to enforcing the policy.

Chris: Okay.

Lee: (SMILES) Right. We should discuss several ideas in the time that we have remaining so that we will have a variety of recommendations for the university administration. To discourage drinking at school sponsored parties on campus,
what do you guys think about having alternatives to drinking at parties?

Chris: Sounds like a good idea. It might just work.

Lee: (SMILES) I was thinking that we could have good music, a dance floor, and good refreshments rather than just the potato chips and dip that we usually have.

Pat: (NODS) Yeah, and we could have barbecue for everyone.

LEE & CHRIS: (NOD IN AGREEMENT)

Pat: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Great idea! (BRIEF PAUSE) Also, I think that people, especially college students, like to hear live music at parties. What do you guys think?

Chris: That's a wonderful idea!

Pat: (NODS IN AGREEMENT)

CHRIS: LOOK ENTHUSIASTIC

Pat: I have a friend who knows about a lot of good bands in the area who are just starting out. I could get in touch with him and see about the possibility of getting these bands to play at our parties. I'm sure he'd recommend some really good bands. The new bands would get exposure to a large audience so we might get them to play at a very low price.

Chris: And the students would get to listen to live music.

Chris: So it looks like we have agreed on a tentative way to enforce the policy. We can have alternatives to drinking alcoholic beverages at parties such as refreshments, a dance floor, and perhaps even live music.

Pat: Yeah, I'll get to work on lining up good bands right away.
Chris: Great. Now I think we should probably talk about the punishments for those who disobey the policy.

Lee: How do you guys think we should punish the students?

Pat: I thought about having a progression of punishments starting from a minor penalty for the first offense (like a fine) and gradually working up to a serious penalty, maybe even suspension for a semester. Hopefully, if we are consistent and fair about enforcing the minor penalties, we will not have to suspend anyone.

Chris: How much of a fine were you thinking about?

Pat: About fifty dollars. That amount of money would not destroy anyone financially but it might be enough to keep them from drinking on campus.

Chris: Perhaps the money we get from fines can be used for on campus parties and spent on getting better food, decorations, and things like that.

Lee: (LOOK CONCERNED) Unfortunately, one problem with this idea is that rich kids would be getting off much easier than poor kids. Rich kids might just pay the fine and keep on drinking at parties.

Pat: That's a good point. I thought about that and that's one of the reasons that the next level of punishment - putting students on probation - would effect everyone equally.

Lee: What would probation involve?

Chris: Well, it prohibits students from participating in any extracurricular school activities, like sports or any other school - sponsored activities.

Pat: Right, and also being on probation goes on a student's permanent record.
Chris: Yeah, I think probation might work.

Lee: I agree.

Pat: And I think the harshest level of punishment should be suspension from school.

Chris: Hopefully, we won't have to resort to that, but it would be effective as a final punishment.

Lee: NODS HEAD

Lee: Suspension is harsh, but I suppose it's okay if used as a last resort.

SHORT PAUSE

Lee: (LOOKS AT WATCH) It seems as if we are running out of time. I think we should summarize what we talked about now.

Pat: Okay.

Chris: (LOOKS AT WATCH) Since we are almost out of time, why don't I summarize from my notes? (LOOKS DOWN AT NOTES BRIEFLY). First of all, we will inform students by writing newspaper articles, passing out brochures on alcohol abuse, and having talks in dorms.

Lee: That way we will get to students living on and off campus.

Chris & Pat: Right.

Chris: We will also provide alternatives to drinking at parties. Pat, will you check out the possibility of getting live music at the parties?

Pat: Sure.
Chris: And then the punishments for drinking on campus will be (HOLDS UP FINGERS) for the first offense, a fine; for the second offense, probation ...

Lee: And finally, as a last resort suspension from school.

Chris: Right.

Pat: I think the ideas we came up with today are great, but I think we have left out one important issue.

Lee: What is that?

Pat: (LOOK CONCERNED) Well, I think that if we do not reward the students who abide by the policy, our ideas won't work.

CHRIS AND LEE LOOK CONCERNED

Pat: Think about it. We are taking something away from the students - drinking on campus - and not providing any incentive for them to stick by the rules. We should provide incentives for them to abide by the policy. That way we probably will not have much trouble enforcing it.

CHRIS NODS

Lee: I agree that using punishment as the major factor in enforcing the policy is rather stringent and that rewarding students might be better in the long run. But any incentive that we think of might cost money.

Pat: (NODS HEAD) You're probably right about that. But the university administration felt that the issue was important enough to get our input. Therefore, they would probably be willing to support an incentive program to reward those who follow the policy.

CHRIS: LOOK INTERESTED
Pat: Chris, the university administration contacted you about this issue. What do you think their reaction would be to providing incentives to obey the policy?

Chris: I think they would like the idea. We can certainly talk to them about it.

CHRIS AND PAT LOOK INTERESTED WHILE LEE EXPLAINS IDEA

Lee: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Maybe if we suggest an incentive program to the university administration like having school-sponsored picnics or some other special school-sponsored activity once a week, provided no student is caught drinking on campus, the university administration would be more likely to agree with us. Also, we could let the university administration know that providing incentives to obey the policy would create peer pressure not to drink. Providing incentives is in the university administration’s best interest because it will take some pressure off them.

Pat: Right.

Chris: (LOOKS AT WATCH AND SMILES) Well, our time is up. It seems to me that we accomplished all of our objectives for this meeting. We came up with ways to inform, enforce, and punish those who disobey the policy. We will also suggest that the university council provide incentives for students who obey the policy.

Pat: (PAT SMILES) Well, I think we came up with some really good ideas today. I think we’ll be able to help out the university administration in implementing the new policy as well as be fair to the students. I wrote down the ideas we came up with and I will be happy to talk to the administration about them.

Chris: Okay.

Lee: (NODS HEAD AND SMILES) I think these ideas might work.
Chris: And maybe we could get together at this same time next week to see how the administration liked our ideas.

Pat: Sounds good to me!
**SCRIPT FOR THE BELOW STANDARD CONDITION**

Chris: The state legislature prohibits those under 21 from drinking alcoholic beverages. The university administration has asked us to come up with a policy for handling abuse of this law when people under 21 are caught drinking on campus and that's why we are meeting today.

Lee: I think it is good that the university administration is getting our input on this issue. Drinking on campus has really been a problem lately. You know, there were seven wrecks last year on campus resulting from the carelessness of drunk drivers. Most of the students involved in those wrecks were under 21. Also, at some of the parties I attended last year, several students were drinking a lot. Some got violent and started fighting with the other students. Several innocent bystanders were hurt as a result of those fights.

Chris: Well, the wrecks and the fights have resulted from drinking but it's still going to be hard to enforce a policy like that, whether or not it's needed.

Pat: None ever likes policy or change in policy, we have a tough job ahead of us.

Lee: Well, I think that although developing and enforcing a policy on alcohol abuse may be difficult, as student assistants, we have a responsibility to at least try to develop a fair policy and to attempt to enforce the drinking law and university policy.

Chris: (LOOKS CONCERNED) I suppose we've got to try and solve this problem. In order to accomplish something in this meeting we should discuss several different issues like informing the students of the change in policy. We should also discuss how we will punish them if they disobey the policy. Then we will
have to talk to the administration about our ideas and recommendations.

PAT NODS; LEE SMILES, NODS, AND LOOKS ATTENTIVE.

Chris: I have an idea about informing students of the policy.

Lee: Why don't you tell us about it?

Chris: I thought of having sessions with the students in the school cafeteria during mealtimes. We have to tell them the consequences of disobeying this law. That way, they can't say that they didn't know about the policy. Yeah, we'll make it mandatory to attend the talks, then we can punish them if they disobey the policy. They won't be able to give us any grief because they would have been informed of the new policy. This method will be especially effective if we force students to attend the talks.

CHRIS LOOKS IMPATIENT WHEN PAT STARTS GOING OFF ON TANGENT

Pat: (LOOKS CONCERNED) But I don't think we should make them like mandatory, you know. Students aren't gonna come if we tell them that they have to go to the talks. I hate attendin' mandatory things. You see, it's kinda like in high school. We had to attend a lot of talks. People, [`, made a game out of skippin' the talks just to see if they would get caught. Mandatory talks are just one of the things I hated about high school. I hated the cliques too. I was never one of the `in people', you know. I did have two really good friends. We've managed to stay in touch. As a matter of fact, I'll be seeing them next week. We'll probably go out and ...

Chris: (INTERRUPTS AND SPEAKS SARCASTICALLY) Good! We are so happy about your high school friends coming to visit. But we need to get back to what we were talking about: having mandatory talks for all students.

Pat: (NODS HEAD) We can have talks. That's a good idea. But should they be mandatory?
Lee: Well, I think that at least having the talks in the cafeterias is a good idea. It will also enable us to talk with the students on an individual basis.

Chris: But what about the people who live off campus? You guys know that most of the students at this school live off campus. How will we let them know that there is no drinking on campus? We can't just assume that those who know about the policy will tell others. I don't think this idea will work.

Pat: Well, maybe you're right. We would just be gettin' to people on campus. But gettin' to people on campus is better than no-one at all! What do you think, Lee?

Lee: (SMILES AND SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) In addition to having talks in the school cafeteria, we could inform the people who live off campus of the policy by writing newspaper articles for the school newspaper. Also we could probably get brochures free from the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and pass them out to all students.

Chris: That might work. (LOOK STERN) Although if we are going to do this, we have to let students know that we mean business. We have to enforce the policy. I think we should have cops at all school sponsored parties at both the entrances and the exits so that the cops can check for possession of alcohol and they can also make sure that people are not coming to the party or leaving the party drunk.

Pat: You mean like cops that are in plain clothing so they will not scare students?

Chris: No. I mean cops in full uniform at the parties.

Lee: LOOK CONCERNED
Pat: Well, if the police are in uniform, they should not carry guns because it might lead to an accident. You hear about a lot of, you know, accidents with guns and stuff. Why I read somethin' in the paper yesterday about a kid who shot himself while playin' with a gun. It was an accident, you know. We might get in trouble for recommendin' somethin' like that, if there was an accident or somethin'.

Lee: Well, I think that having cops at the school sponsored parties, whether they are in full uniform or not, might discourage attendance at the parties. It would be intimidating to the students.

Chris: (A LITTLE DEFENSIVELY) I think that having cops at the parties is a good idea.

Pat: (LOOKS CONCERNED) Well, I don't think students will like it. They might just well, uh, not even party on campus.

Lee: (NODS HEAD) That's a good point. Although we need to enforce the policy, we want campus to be a place for people to relax and have a good time as well as attend classes and study.

Chris: I think we should move on to something else, okay?

Lee: (SMILES) Right. We should discuss several ideas in the time that we have remaining so that we will have a variety of recommendations for the university administration. To discourage drinking at school sponsored parties on campus what do you guys think about having alternatives to drinking at parties?

Chris: I don't know what you mean.

Pat: I don't know either, could you explain more about it?

Lee: (SMILES) I was thinking that we could have good music, a dance floor, and good refreshments rather than just the potato chips and dip that we usually have.
Pat: Well, I guess the money that is usually spent on alcohol could be used to get a good DJ and better food at the parties.

CHRIS and LEE: NOD IN AGREEMENT.

Pat: (SMILES) And maybe we could get food and a DJ that is better than the ones we usually have. But what are we going to do about the students who don't do what we say?

Chris: (LOOKS STERN) Well, we will just have to punish them.

Lee: How do you guys think we should punish the students?

Chris: Maybe we should fine them. That would hit them where it really hurts.

Pat: How much money is the fine gonna be?

Chris: We'll fine them about fifty bucks or so. Make it a lot of money so that we won't have too much trouble enforcing the policy.

Pat: That might work.

Lee: (LOOK CONCERNED) Unfortunately, one problem with this idea is that rich kids would be getting off much easier than poor kids. Rich kids might just pay the fine and keep on drinking at parties.

Chris and Pat: NOD

Pat: You know, I guess what you would like call, uh, an easy solution that might work - but it might not - I don't know if I like this idea or not - I'll tell you guys anyway - would be just to like tell them that they can't go to no more parties.

SMALL PAUSE

Chris: No, that won't work! I think it should be stricter. We should put them on official probation.
Lee: What would probation involve?

Chris: Well, they couldn't go to any more parties and they couldn't do anything that is sponsored by the school - like sports for instance. Also it would go on their permanent record. That'll really zapp them.

Pat: Probation seems like a good idea.

Lee: I agree.

Chris: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) You know what I think? My idea would accomplish what we want to accomplish - have students stop drinking on campus- and it would accomplish it immediately. We should suspend them right away. One offense and they are gone. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. Yeah, people don't like policy and sometimes the best way to deal with them is to be real strict.

Pat: (LOOKS CONCERNED) Oh, I don't think we should ever suspend anyone. It would not be good for student morale.

LEE: NODS HEAD

Pat: I remember when one time my brother got suspended from college for somethin' stupid and boy were my parents mad! We don't want to make parents mad. If we do, kids won't come here to school. We would be opening up a can of worms for sure if we started suspendin' students. Who would want wanna to come to a school that suspends people for drinking? I sure wouldn't. I'd rather go to a school ...

Chris: (INTERRUPTS) Oh, you're being too easy on the students. We can't let them drink on campus. We have to be harsh. We have to suspend. They have to know the consequences of disobeying our policy.

Lee: Suspension is harsh, but I suppose it's okay if used as a last resort.
SHORT PAUSE

Lee:  (LOOKS AT WATCH) It seems as if we are running out of time. I think we should summarize what we talked about now.

PAT and CHRIS: NOD

Pat:  I don't write down notes and I don't remember much about what we said. I hate taking notes in class. Don't you? It really is a waste of time.

Chris: We're going to have alternatives to drinking at parties and we have to let students know about the new policy through talks, brochures, and the school newspaper.

Lee:  That way we will get to students living on and off campus.

Chris: We decided to have cops at parties.

Pat:  (LOOKS CONCERNED) No, I don't think we decided to do that.

Chris: (ON THE DEFENSIVE) Well we are going to punish people who disobey the policy in some way! We did decide that, didn't we? Like fine them.

Pat:  (NODS HEAD) We did decide to fine them.

Chris: And maybe, if they drink on campus again, we will put them on probation and that will go on their permanent record.

Lee:  And finally, as a last resort, suspension from school.

Pat and Chris: Right

Pat:  Well, uh,uh. Although these ideas are good there is something we left out.

Lee:  What is that?
Pat: (LOOK CONCERNED) Well, what I mean to say is uh, well do you guys think that we should just like punish people? Don't you think that might be hard on the students. There is a possibility that students might rebel and we might accomplish nothin' at all. Right now, as it stands, there is nothing positive that comes out of obeying the policy.

LEE: LOOK CONCERNED

Chris: Oh, no! Are you talking about rewarding people? We shouldn't have to reward people for obeying the law!

Lee: I agree that using punishment as the major factor in enforcing the policy is rather stringent and that rewarding students might be better in the long run. But any incentive that we think of might cost money.

Chris: (NODS HEAD) Yeah. Money that the university administration doesn't have or won't spend on us even if they had the money. Besides that, the students need representatives who can enforce rules. We really need to hit this issue in a heavy-handed manner. If the students run around drinking on campus, the representatives will look like they have no authority and we certainly don't want that to happen, do we? Students will take advantage of us if they can.

Pat: (SHAKES HEAD IN DISAGREEMENT WITH CHRIS) I think that like, you know, combining rewards for doing what the policy says with punishments for disobeying the policy will be effective. Would there be any harm in mentioning the possibility of rewarding students for obeying the policy to the university administration? I think it is a good idea.

Lee: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Maybe if we suggest an incentive to the university administration like having school-sponsored picnics or some other type of special school-sponsored activity once a week, provided no student is caught drinking on campus, the university administration would be more likely to agree with us. Also, we could let the university
administration know that providing incentives to obey the policy would create peer pressure not to drink. Providing incentives is in the university administration's best interest because it will take some pressure off them.

Chris: (SORT OF IMPATIENTLY) Okay, I'll mention it to the university administration. Well, is that it?

Pat: (NODS HEAD) Yes.

Lee: (NODS HEAD AND SMILES) I think these ideas might work.

Chris: Okay.
SCRIPT FOR THE MIXED PERFORMANCE CONDITION

Chris: As you know, the state legislature prohibits those under 21 from drinking alcoholic beverages. The university administration has asked us to come up with a policy for handling abuse of this law when people under 21 are caught drinking on campus and that's why we are meeting today.

Lee: I think it is good that the university administration is getting our input on this issue. Drinking on campus has really been a problem lately. You know, there were seven wrecks last year on campus resulting from the carelessness of drunk drivers. Most of the students involved in those wrecks were under 21. Also, at some of the parties I attended last year, several students were drinking a lot. Some got violent and started fighting with the other students. Several innocent bystanders were hurt as a result of those fights.

Pat: Well, no one ever likes policy or change in policy, we have a tough job ahead of us.

Lee: Well, I think that although developing and enforcing a policy on alcohol abuse may be difficult, as student assistants, we have a responsibility to at least try to develop a fair policy and to attempt to enforce the drinking law and university policy.

Chris and Pat: NOD HEAD

Chris: Well, I have written down three areas that I think we need to discuss. Would you guys like to hear my ideas?

Pat: Sure.

Chris: (NODS HEAD, GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING)

Chris: First, we need to inform students of the policy and give them information regarding alcohol abuse. By giving students
information and hopefully opening the lines of communication, we will let them know that we are interested in their well being. Second, we need to discuss who will enforce the policy. Third, we need to discuss punishments that will be delivered if a student who is under 21 is caught drinking.

PAT AND LEE LOOK ATTENTIVE, SMILE, AND NOD IN AGREEMENT WHILE CHRIS EXPLAINS THE 3 ISSUES

Pat: I have an like, a idea about informin' students of the policy.

Lee: Why don't you tell us about it?

Pat: Well, uh, uh. Let me think, uh, uh. I like thought like uh, we could have talks sometime. Like maybe in the school cafeteria, you know, and tell the students about the policy.

Chris: Hmm, although there would be no way to force attendance at these talks, it would be one way to get input from the students regarding their opinions of the policy that we come up with.

Pat: Well, but I don't think we should make the them like mandatory, you know. Students aren't gonna come if we tell them that they have to go to the talks. I hate attendin' mandatory things. You see, it's kinda like in high school. We had to attend a lot of talks. People, uh, made a game out of skippin' the talks just to see if they'd get caught. Mandatory talks are just one of the things I hated about high school. I hated the cliques too. I was never one of the 'in people', you know. I did have two really good friends. We've managed to stay in touch. As a matter of fact I'll be seeing them next week.

Chris: I'm sure you'll have fun with them. And I agree with you about the talks. They shouldn't be mandatory.

Lee: Well, I think that at least having the talks in the cafeterias is a good idea. It will enable us to talk with the students on an individual basis.
Chris: (GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING) The only drawback to this idea is that we might reach only the people who live on campus. As you know, most people at this school live off campus. We need to also think of ways to reach people that are off campus.

Lee: (SMILES AND SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) In addition to having talks in the school cafeteria, we could inform the people who live off campus of the policy by writing newspaper articles for the school newspaper. Also, we could probably get brochures free from the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and pass them out to all students.

Pat: NODS HEAD

Chris: Right! I think that by having talks in the dorms, writing newspaper articles, and passing out brochures, all students will be informed of this issue. It seems like we now need to decide who will enforce the policy.

Pat: Sure, what are your ideas on that, Chris?

Chris: (GESTURES WITH HANDS WHILE TALKING) Well, I think that it will be most difficult to enforce the new drinking policy at school sponsored parties. We might need to have cops at the parties to enforce the policy, although I think it might offend the students.

LEE: LOOK CONCERNED

Pat: Well, if we have police at the parties, and they are in uniform, they should not carry guns because it might lead to an accident. You hear about a lot of, you know, accidents with guns and stuff. Why I was readin' somethin' in the paper yesterday about a kid who shot himself while playin' with a gun. It was an accident, you know, We might get in trouble for recommendin' somethin' like that, if there was an accident or somethin'.
CHRIS: NODS HEAD

Lee: Well, I think that having cops at the school sponsored parties whether they are in full uniform or not, might discourage attendance at the parties. It would be intimidating to the students.

Pat: How 'bout havin' student monitors like 'planted' at the parties.

Chris: (LOOKS CONCERNED) But do you know of many students who would want that job?

Pat: No, I don't. And another thing is that, uh, if we are too strict at school sponsored parties, students might just well, uh, not even party on campus.

Lee: (NODS HEAD) That's a good point. Although we need to enforce the policy, we want campus to be a place for people to relax and have a good time as well as attend classes and study.

Chris: Right, we don't want all parties to be moved off campus.

SHORT PAUSE

Chris: Maybe we should think of another idea, since having cops at the parties would be intimidating to students and students would not want to be monitors at the parties.

Lee: (SMILES) Right. We should discuss several ideas in the time we have remaining so that we will have a variety of recommendations for the university administration. To discourage drinking at school sponsored parties on campus what do you guys think about having alternatives to drinking at parties?

Chris: Sounds like a good idea. It might just work.

Pat: Could you tell us more about that?
Lee: (SMILES) I was thinking that we could have good music, a dance floor, and good refreshments rather than just the potato chips and dip that we usually have.

Pat: Well, I guess the money that is usually spent on alcohol could be used to get a good DJ and better food at the parties.

CHRIS and LEE: NOD IN AGREEMENT.

Pat: (SMILES) And maybe we could get food and a DJ that is better than the ones we usually have, but what are we gonna to about the students who don't obey the policy?

Lee How do you guys think we should punish the students?

Chris: Well, in college, a common punishment is fining people.

Pat: How high would the fine be?

Chris: I'd say about 50 dollars. That amount of money would not destroy anyone financially but it might be enough to keep them from drinking on campus.

Lee: (LOOK CONCERNED) Unfortunately, one problem with this idea is that rich kids would be getting off much easier than poor kids. Rich kids might just pay the fine and keep on drinking at parties.

Chris and Pat: NOD

Pat: You know, I guess what you would like call, uh, an easy solution that might work - but it might not - I don't know if I like this idea or not - I'll tell you guys anyway - would be just to like tell them that they can't go to no more parties and put em on like probation.

Lee: What would probation involve?
Chris: Well, it prohibits students from participating in any extracurricular school activities, like sports or any other school-sponsored activities.

Pat: I think it like also goes on a student's permanent record.

Chris: Right, I think probation might work.

Lee: I agree.

Pat: (LOOKS CONCERNED) The harshest level of punishment would be suspension from school. But, I don't think we should ever suspend anyone. It would not be good for student morale. I remember one time my brother got suspended from college for somethin' stupid and boy were my parents mad! We don't want to make parents mad. If we do, kids won't come here to school. We would be opening up a can of worms for sure if we started suspendin' students. Who would want to come to a school that suspends people for drinking? I sure wouldn't. I'd rather go to a school ...

Chris: Hopefully, we won't have to resort to suspension, but it would be effective as a final punishment.

Lee: NODS HEAD

Lee: Suspension is harsh, but I suppose it's okay if used as a last resort.

SHORT PAUSE

Lee: (LOOKS AT WATCH) It seems as if we are running out of time. I think we should summarize what we talked about now.

Pat: I don't write down notes and I don't remember much about what we said. I hate taking notes in class. Don't you? It really is a waste of time.

CHRIS SMILES BUT DOES NOT RESPOND TO PAT'S COMMENT
Chris: (LOOKS AT WATCH) Since we are almost out of time, why don't I summarize from my notes? (LOOKS DOWN AT NOTES BRIEFLY) First of all, we will inform students by writing newspaper articles, passing out brochures on alcohol abuse, and having talks in dorms.

Lee: That way we will get to students living on and off campus.

Chris & Pat: Right.

Chris: We will also provide alternatives to drinking at parties.

Pat: Right.

Chris: And then the punishments for drinking on campus will be (HOLDS UP FINGERS) for the first offense, a fine; for the second offense, probation ...

Lee: And finally, as a last resort suspension from school.

Chris: Right.

Pat: Well, uh, uh. Although these ideas are good there is something we left out.

Lee: What is that?

Pat: (LOOK CONCERNED) Well, what I mean to say is uh, well do you guys think that we should just like punish people? Don't you think that might be hard on the students. There is a possibility that students might rebel and we might accomplish nothin' at all. Right now, as it stands, there is nothing positive that comes of obeying the policy.

CHRIS NODS: LEE LOOKS CONCERNED

Lee: I agree that using punishment as the major factor in enforcing the policy is rather stringent and that rewarding students
might be better in the long run. But any incentive that we think of might cost money.

Pat: Well, would there be any the possibility of providing incentives to obey the policy to the university administration? I think it's a good idea.

Chris: I think they would like the idea. We can certainly talk to them about it.

CHRIS AND PAT LOOK INTERESTED WHILE LEE EXPLAINS IDEA

Lee: (SPEAKS ENTHUSIASTICALLY) Maybe if we suggest an incentive program to the university administration like having school sponsored picnics or some other special school sponsored activity once a week, provided no student is caught drinking on campus, the university administration would be more likely to agree with us. Also, we could let the university administration know that providing incentives to obey the policy would create peer pressure not to drink. Providing incentives is in the university administration’s best interest because it will take some pressure off them.

Pat: Right.

Chris: (SMILES AND LOOKS AT WATCH) Well, our time is up. It seems to me that we accomplished all of our objectives for this meeting. We came up with ways to inform, enforce, and punish those who disobey the policy. We will also suggest that the university council provide incentives for students to obey the policy.

Lee: (NODS HEAD AND SMILES) I think these ideas might work.

Chris: And maybe we could get together at this same time next week to see how the administration liked our ideas.

Pat: Okay.
Appendix F
## PERFORMANCE LEVELS ON DIMENSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Assertiveness</th>
<th>Sensitivity</th>
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SBSTD = Significantly Below Standard  
BSTD = Below Standard  
STD = Standard  
ASTD = Above Standard  
SASTD = Significantly Above Standard

Guidelines for each performer, minimal standards, dimension definitions, and the scripts are enclosed. Please note that in the control condition, Chris is the ASTD performer, Pat is the BSTD performer, and as always, Lee is the STD performer.
GUIDELINES FOR CHRIS, THE ABOVE STANDARD CANDIDATE

General Guidelines for Behavior

This script has been developed so that you are 'significantly above standard' on the leadership dimension. Therefore, take it upon yourself to provide order in the discussion, but do not be overbearing. When you suggest a method of discussion, look at both Pat and Lee to make sure they agree with you. Also take notes throughout the discussion. Briefly look at your notes when you are summarizing what has occurred in the meeting.

On the oral communication dimension, you are 'above standard'. You meet all of the minimal standards (maintain eye contact, use good grammar, etc.) as well as use hand gestures when talking. On the other two dimensions, sensitivity and assertiveness, you should meet all of the minimal standards.

As indicated in the script, you will:

- Take it upon yourself to provide order in the discussion, but do not be overbearing
- Smile and nod head in agreement
- Speak very clearly and with confidence
- Take notes during the meeting
- Listen attentively
- Look interested in what the speaker is saying
- Have a relaxed posture - do not cross arms
- Maintain eye contact with both Pat and Lee while you are speaking
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker when you are not speaking
GUIDELINES FOR PAT, THE ABOVE STANDARD CANDIDATE

General Guidelines for Behavior

This script has been developed so that you are 'significantly above standard' on the sensitivity dimension. Consequently, you are extremely sensitive to the students' reactions to the new policy. All of your ideas regarding the policy reflect an understanding of students' probable reactions to the new policy. You always look interested in what the speaker is saying. You also have a forward, relaxed posture throughout the taping session. Additionally, you attempt to incorporate others' ideas with your own and enhance others' ideas when possible.

On the assertiveness dimension, you are 'above standard'. Consequently, you criticize others' ideas in a constructive manner. You enthusiastically support others' ideas when you agree with them. You are also willing to take action on your own ideas. On the other two dimensions, leadership and oral communication, you should meet all of the minimal standards.

As indicated in the script, you will:

- Remember that your primary concern is ensuring that the students' reactions to the new policy are taken into account
- Smile and nod head in agreement
- Speak very clearly and with confidence
- Maintain eye contact with both Lee and Chris when you are speaking
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker when you are not speaking
- Take notes during the meeting
- Listen attentively at all times
- Look interested in what the speaker is saying
- Have a forward, relaxed posture - do not cross arms
GUIDELINES FOR LEE, THE STANDARD CANDIDATE

General Guidelines for Behavior

The script has been developed so that you are 'standard' on all four dimensions. Consequently, you meet all of the minimal standards for each of the dimensions - you do not exceed the minimal standards or fall short of the minimal standards. As the target stimulus of the study, it is especially important that you follow the scripts very closely. Your performance is identical in all three performance conditions.

As indicated in the script, you will:

- Smile and nod in agreement
- Speak very clearly and with confidence
- Maintain eye contact with both Chris and Pat when you are speaking
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker when you are not speaking
- Listen attentively
- Take notes during the meeting
- Look interested in what the speaker is saying
- Have a relaxed posture - do not cross arms
GUIDELINES FOR CHRIS, THE BELOW STANDARD CANDIDATE

General Guidelines for Behavior

This script has been developed so that you are 'significantly below standard' on the sensitivity dimension. Your primary concern is to stop the illegal drinking on campus, and you are not at all concerned with the reactions of students to the policy. Do not have a relaxed, open posture, sit with your arms crossed. Do not incorporate others' ideas with your own. You also manipulate the conversation as much as possible.

On the assertiveness dimension you are 'below standard'. Do not prompt others to participate. Also criticize others in an abrupt manner, but do not be too rude. On the other two dimensions, oral communication and leadership, you meet all of the minimal standards.

As indicated in the script, you will:

- Speak clearly and with confidence
- Not show concern with how students react to the change in policy, your primary concern is to stop drinking on campus
- Criticize others in a rude manner, but don't get too belligerent
- Take notes during the session
- Look stern part of the time
- Smile and nod occasionally
- Keep arms crossed most of the time
- Maintain eye contact with Pat and Lee when you are speaking
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker when you are not speaking, but try not to look too interested in what the speaker is saying
GUIDELINES FOR PAT, THE BELOW STANDARD CANDIDATE

General Guidelines for Behavior

This script has been developed so that you are 'significantly below standard' on the leadership dimension. Therefore, take no responsibility for managing the group's time or ensuring that the discussion moves along. Go off on tangents during the session. Do not help the group summarize the results.

On the oral communication dimension, you are 'below standard'. Consequently, you have trouble expressing ideas. Also, you should make a few grammatical errors. Pronounce words ending in 'ing' as 'in' (i.e., say 'somethin' instead of 'something'). On the other two dimensions, sensitivity and assertiveness, you meet all of the minimal standards.

As indicated in the script, you will:

- Go off on tangents
- Make some grammatical errors
- Be concerned about students' reactions to the policy
- Take no responsibility for ensuring that the discussion moves along
- Do not take notes; do not even have a paper a pen with you
- Maintain eye contact with Chris and Lee when you are speaking
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker when you are not speaking
Appendix G
### Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Group Effect

#### Consensus Ratings

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Appendix H
Manipulation Checks: Results of Scheffe Tests and Univariate F

Values for Role Player One

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Note: ASTD = above standard; BSTD = below standard; Cond = condition; *** = \( p < .0001 \)
Manipulation Checks: Results of Scheffe Tests and Univariate F Values for Role Player Two

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Note: ASTD = above standard; BSTD = below standard; Cond = condition; *** = p < .0001
Appendix I
Univariate Analysis of Variance for Individual Ratings of Overall Performance

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Note: *** = p<.001
Univariate Analysis of Variance for Individual Ratings of Oral Communication

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Note: *** = p<.001; * = p<.05
### Univariate Analysis of Variance for Individual Ratings of Sensitivity

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Note: * = p < .05
**Univariate Analysis of Variance for Individual Ratings of Leadership**

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Note: ** = p<.01
Univariate Analysis of Variance for Individual Ratings of Assertiveness

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Note: *** = p<.001