

A STUDY ON THE RELIABILITY OF SELECTION
JUDGMENTS MADE BY COMMITTEES
INTERVIEWING RESIDENT ADVISOR APPLICANTS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Review of Related Literature	3
The Reliability of the Interview Technique	3
Establishing Predictive Validity	6
Identification of Appropriate Selection Characteristics	8
Summary and Overview	12
2. Methodology	14
Research Questions	14
Assumptions	15
Definitions	15
Limitations	16
Program Investigated	17
Selection of Applicant Characteristics	20
Instrumentation	21
Data Collection and Analysis	24
Summary	24

	Page
3. Results of the Data Analysis	26
Responses to the Interview Committee Questionnaire	26
Results of Factor Analysis of CIRP Items	31
Results of the Discriminant Analyses	35
Summary	48
4. Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations	50
Summary	50
Discussion	51
Recommendations	57
References	59
Appendices	
A. RA Questionnaire on Effective Behaviors	64
B. Questionnaire on Interview Criteria	66
C. Definitions of RASI Scales	68
D. CIRP Items Used in Factor Analysis	69
E. Items Used to Define CIRP Factors	72
Vita	75

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Three Decision Points in the Selection Process	19
2. Mean Responses of Interview Committees to Questionnaire Items	28
3. Mean Values for Committee Questionnaire Items in Ascending Order with Associated Applicant Characteristics and Probability of Univariate F Test for Each Item	29
4. Rotated Factor Matrix (Decimals Omitted) with Items Grouped According to Factors	32
5. Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Applicants Grouped by Interview Committee Recommendations	36
6. Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of Applicants After Decision Point One (Interview Committees and HRA Panels)	37
7. Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of Applicants After Decision Point Two (Residence Management Staff Interviews)	38
8. Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of Applicants After Decision Point Three (Training Offer)	39
9. Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups of Applicants at Decision Point One (RA Staff Interviews)	41
10. Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants at Decision Point One to Statistically Predicted Recommendation Groups	42
11. Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups of Applicants After Professional Staff Interviews (Decision Point Two)	44
12. Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants at Decision Point Two to Statistically Predicted Recommendation Groups	45

	Page
13. Variable Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups of Applicants After Training Offer (Decision Point Three)	46
14. Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants at Decision Point Three to Statistically Predicted Recommendation Groups	47
15. Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups of Applicants After Committee Interviews . . .	49

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The practice of employing undergraduate students as paraprofessional staff in college and university residence halls is popular across the country. Brown and Zunker (1966) surveyed a sample of four-year institutions of higher education in the United States on the use of undergraduate students as paraprofessionals and found that 118, or 65%, of 180 institutions reported using students as "resident advisors." Students so employed have been given a variety of titles, such as "resident counselor," "student assistant," "resident assistant," "personnel assistant," and "resident advisor." For consistency, the term resident advisor (RA) was used throughout this paper to refer to this group.

Job functions for RA's tend to vary, especially in emphasis, from institution to institution. Areas of responsibility may include such diverse roles as: disciplinarian, counselor, manager, educational facilitator, referral agent, group advisor, behavior model, communications liaison, and problem solver (Graff & Bradshaw, 1970; Dixon, 1970). Hoyt and Davidson (1967) cite this diversity as a major difficulty in evaluating RA effectiveness. Nevertheless, RA's are potentially an important factor in the environment of students living in residence halls because of their close identity with student needs and problems (Harshman & Harshman, 1974; Riker & DeCoster, 1971).

The importance of selection to an effective RA program is supported by Murphy (1964). The results of his survey of 107 colleges and universities indicated that recruitment and selection were most often cited

as critical to a successful male RA program. Powell, Plyler, Dickson, and McClellan (1969) justified the need for careful selection of RA's on the basis of the importance of their role. Additionally, they suggested that the selection process usually involved a series of interviews and recommended the use of current RA's as interviewers. Dixon (1970) reported that 71% of the 244 respondent institutions in her survey of small, private, coeducational colleges and universities used personal interviews in selecting RA's. The prevalence of an interview in procedures for selecting RA's is reflected by Greenleaf (1974): "With very few exceptions the selection process should not be completed without an interview" (p. 188).

Statement of the Problem

Considering the popularity of RA programs and their potential contribution to the success of housing programs, the selection of undergraduate students to be employed as RA's is a basic concern in the effective administration of programs related to housing students. To the extent that personal characteristics are associated with successful job performance, selection of RA's on the basis of these characteristics should tend to improve the effectiveness of an RA program.

Evaluation of applicant characteristics during the selection process presents some problems, however. The widespread use of interviewers to make these evaluations raises the question of interviewer reliability, since studies in other areas have suggested that there is a tendency for different interviewers to evaluate the same applicant characteristics differently as a basis for making employment recommendations.

Further, studies on the relationship of characteristics used in the selection process to job performance criteria may result in misleading conclusions if information is not considered about the impact of the selection process on measures of these characteristics. Were RA's with only high, or only low, measures on a characteristic selected and later measured on job performance? If so, the limited range of values for measures of applicant characteristics may reduce indices of relationship with measures of job performance. The interpretation of later validity studies on RA selection criteria depends, then, on information about the influence of the selection process on the range of values for applicant characteristics.

Additionally, studies concerned with the characteristics of RA's that are considered effective by some job performance criteria have been inconclusive in providing general characteristics for widespread institutional use in selecting RA's. Each institution, then, is in the position of having to determine its own set of valid characteristics for selecting RA's.

This study was undertaken to examine the consistency with which certain applicant characteristics were used by interviewers making selection recommendations at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI&SU). There was an additional interest in comparing the characteristics of applicants grouped at different decision points in the selection process. Implications for the selection process and further research at VPI&SU suggested by the results of the data analysis were reviewed and presented.

Review of Related Literature

The Reliability of the Interview Technique

There are several issues related to the reliability of the interview that have relevance to RA selection. Mayfield (1964) reviewed published research on the selection interview and noted a wide diversity in the designs, methodologies, and variables studied which made comparisons difficult. However, he concluded that, while there is evidence to support intrarater reliability, different interviewers tend to weigh the same applicant information differently. He further suggested that when this tendency is combined with an unstructured interview format low reliability is more likely to occur than when a structured format is used.

A series of studies at McGill University over a period of years investigated the phenomenon of interviewer bias in selection judgments and were summarized by Webster (1959). Based on studies using primarily subjects and data collected in industrial or military settings, he made the following conclusions:

1. Applicant evaluations made early in the interview predict the final decision as well as evaluations made near the end of the interview.
2. Negative early evaluations of applicants predict the final outcome better than positive early evaluations.
3. Interviewers tend to have a stereotype of a "good employee" that is active during the interview.
4. Interviewer-applicant interaction may proceed differently depending on whether the early evaluation is positive or negative.

5. Interviewer style is difficult to change with a short training period.

In a study using college students as subjects and business and industrial interviewers as raters, Bass (1951) compared the outcome of individual interviews with leaderless group discussions. He concluded that both methods of evaluating applicants were about equally reliable and that in individual interviews differences in job criteria by interviewers seemed to result in a lack of agreement between interviewers on applicant ratings. Banta (1969) studied the relationship of interview method to performance effectiveness for a group of student orientation assistants. The results of this study failed to support the reliability of either the individual interview technique or the leaderless group discussion when interview evaluations were compared with performance ratings made by freshmen after summer orientation. It was concluded that a leadership rating based on a self-report of past activities may be a better predictor of leadership performance than interview evaluations.

These studies suggest for an RA selection process involving several interviewers that failure to use such controls as structuring the interview or adequately training the interviewers may result in inconsistent measures of the characteristics of hired RA's as distinguished from those of applicants who are not hired. In other words, reliability of the selection outcome in terms of selected applicants being higher in a particular characteristic than non-selected applicants is no better than a random method of selection. Such a situation tends to undermine the purpose of the selection process, which is to select applicants that are higher in some characteristic related to effective job performance. This

point is noted by Webster (1959), who suggested that studies on the impact of interview decisions on employment outcomes should precede validity studies.

Establishing Predictive Validity

In addition to the problems presented by the use of an interview technique, concepts related to establishing predictive validity of applicant characteristics to be used in selecting RA's need to be reviewed. Schein (1965) discussed the validation of criteria used in selection to predict job performance and noted the necessity of adequate measurement variation, since minimum variance in either predictors or job criteria tends to reduce indices of correlation between the two and can thus lead to misleading conclusions in validity research. Schein suggested the desirability of testing as many candidates as possible and hiring sufficient numbers with both high and low scores to protect the variance of the predictor characteristics.

A concurrent model of validity, used in many RA studies, can present problems in investigating the relationship of RA characteristics to job performance. Miner (1969) cited differences between present employees and future applicants in motivation for test taking as a potential source of error in the concurrent model. Additionally, he cautioned that success or failure on the job may determine the measured level of certain characteristics, such as confidence, rather than the reverse, which is usually assumed.

Haire (1971) maintained that few personality measurement instruments can be applied directly to new situations. This tendency for the validity of tests to be specific to situations suggests that it should be estab-

lished for each new situation. Additionally, a test may be more valid in a research situation than in a selection process, where an applicant may think it is advantageous to appear more qualified in certain characteristics than is actually the case. French (1974) cited personality tests as being particularly susceptible to this "faking" and thus having reduced validity when used as sources of selection criteria.

Miner presents three essential phases in a longitudinal model of validity:

1. Development or identification of characteristics to be used as predictors based on their association with job performance.
2. Measurement of a large number of applicants on these characteristics and selection without regard to them.
3. Validation of the characteristics as predictors by analyzing their relationship to job performance once the employee has been working for a sufficient period of time.

The study of selection criteria for RA's, then, begins with the identification of characteristics that might be associated with effective RA behavior. Characteristics suggested by studies at other institutions would need to be evaluated for compatibility of RA job functions and adequacy of controls in design procedures. Although the experience and information from other institutions can be valuable in identifying characteristics as possible predictors of effective RA performance, it is expected that each RA program will face the necessity of validating its own set of selection criteria. In such a case, measurements of characteristics should be taken in a way that minimize the likelihood of applicants giving false information in order to improve their chances

of being selected. Large numbers of applicants should be available for measurement on the characteristics under study, and the relationship of the selection procedures to characteristics of selected RA's should be estimated.

Identification of Appropriate Selection Characteristics

Hay (1971) supports Miner in suggesting that characteristics to be used in selecting employees should be related to job function. RA program studies in this regard have been inconclusive, however. Although several related characteristics have been suggested, the use of specific measuring instruments has met with limited success. Graff and Bradshaw (1970) attempted to identify an instrument that would improve selection decisions and studied the relationship between the scores of male RA's on the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), a measure of self-actualization, and ratings of RA effectiveness by peers and supervisors. They hypothesized that self-actualized RA's would be living up to their full potential and would be more effective in their diverse responsibilities. They found certain POI scales related to effectiveness ratings and concluded that the instrument might be valuable as an RA selection tool.

Later studies failed to support the finding of Graff and Bradshaw. Mullozzi and Spees (1971) administered the POI to applicants for an RA position and, based on the Graff and Bradshaw results, used the Inner-Directed scale as one of several predictors of the final selection decisions. They found that ratings from leaderless group discussions were the best predictor of selection outcome and that the POI scale did not significantly improve this prediction.

Schroeder and Wills (1973), in a similar study designed primarily to test the value of the POI as a selection device, assigned applicants to one of four groups based on their point of elimination in the selection process, with one group representing those who were hired. They found no group differences on any of the POI scale scores. Atkinson, Williams, and Garb (1973) measured RA's after they had been selected and before they had begun work. They found that the POI scales were not related either to evaluation of RA effectiveness or to RA self-reports of job related activities.

It would appear on examination of these four studies that the POI as a source of predictor variables in the selection of RA's is not supported. However, if one recalls earlier points on the establishment of predictive validity, it seems clear that the designs of these studies were not controlling for important sources of error. The Graff and Bradshaw study, for example, is really a concurrent validity study and was implemented late in the academic year. Whether the RA's were rated higher because of their self-actualization characteristics or whether they had become more self-actualized because of their effectiveness as RA's is unknown. The Mullozzi-Spees and the Schroeder-Wills studies reported no previous investigations at their institutions that would indicate that the POI scales were related to RA's effectiveness in terms of program emphasis on job functions. Neither did they cite similarities between the RA job at their institutions and the RA job at the institution of the Graff and Bradshaw study.

Atkinson, Williams, and Garb studied the relationship of POI scales to job effectiveness only for those applicants who were selected as RA's.

If the POI scales had been related to job effectiveness but characteristics represented by the scales had been used in selecting RA's, the resultant loss of variance may have sufficiently reduced the correlation indices so as to lead the authors to the incorrect conclusion of no relationship. Again, because of lack of information on the influence of the selection process on the variables related to the POI scales, conclusions about the POI as a selection tool at this institution must be speculative.

The results of other studies using standard tests have been similarly inconsistent. Schroeder and Dowse (1968) concluded that the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB), the Edwards Personal Preference Scales (EPPS), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) did not provide scores that were related to effectiveness of graduate RA's. Murphy and Ortenzi (1966) reached similar conclusions for the relationship of the SVIB and the EPPS to ratings of effectiveness for their male RA's. Holbrook (1971), however, found the EPPS scores of statistically significant value in discriminating between effective and ineffective student volunteers, who performed a referral and liaison role in the residence halls. He further concluded that different personality factors contribute to the effectiveness of males and females. Morton (1976) compared RA scores on the CPI with supervisor ratings and found that effective RA's mean scores were significantly higher than those of ineffective RA's on the scales of dominance, capacity for status, self-acceptance, responsibility, socialization, good impression, achievement via conformance, and intellectual efficiency. He additionally suggested that applicant pro-

files on the CPI might be compared with the profiles of effective RA's as an aid in selection decisions.

Zirkle and Hudson (1975) grouped RA's according to degree of counseling-administrative orientation and measured freshmen on the Perceived Self-Questionnaire. Freshmen assigned to RA's high in counseling orientation were compared with freshmen assigned to RA's high in administrative orientation. They concluded that freshmen with RA's high in counseling orientation are more mature and have higher grades than freshmen with administrative oriented RA's.

In an attempt to develop a method of evaluating RA characteristics without the use of standardized tests, Wyrick and Mitchell (1971) compared rating levels of empathy, warmth and genuineness made for RA's during a simulated counseling interview with peer and supervisor ratings of RA job behavior. They found that ratings on empathy and warmth were related to higher performance ratings by peers for female RA's but not for males. Ratings of effectiveness for male RA's were related to higher grades. It was concluded that the findings were a function of the source of the rating and the sex of the RA. However, Newton and Krauss (1973), using peer and supervisor ratings of women RA's "health-engenderingness," a dimension that relates to warmth and liking of others and a concern for the welfare of others, found no relationship between RA scores on this dimension and student emotional adjustment as measured by Kleinmuntz's Mt scale, taken from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Kleinmuntz, 1961).

Since the role of the RA can be viewed from a leadership model, studies related to characteristics of effective leaders were reviewed

for relevance in selecting RA's. The literature in the leadership field however, is highly contradictory (Cartwright & Zander, 1953; Stogdill, 1948). A recent work by Stogdill (1974) represented a comprehensive review of the numerous investigations into leadership. Based on a survey of 163 studies, Stogdill concluded that both the early trait theorists and the later situational advocates tend to represent extreme positions. Most recent theorists, he maintained, view the leadership phenomenon as an interaction between leader characteristics and situational demands. That is, while characteristics of leaders can be identified, they tend to vary from situation to situation.

Summary and Overview

This chapter presented the contention that the use of interviews in the RA selection process requires that the reliability of interviewer criteria for selection decisions be examined so that a judgment can be made about the efficiency of the selection process. Additionally, the final employment decision in hiring RA's is such that the potential loss of variance in measures of characteristics used during selection as a basis of predicting future job effectiveness may lead to misleading conclusions in validation studies concerning the relationship of these characteristics to criteria of job performance.

Also, studies of characteristics of effective RA's have not provided a set of characteristics for general use in selecting RA's. While some authorities support the assumption of a relationship between RA characteristics and effective performance, such that more effective RA's could be selected on the basis of these characteristics, the findings of related studies fail to conclusively support any particular set of characteristics

for general use. It is concluded that the appropriate characteristics to be used as RA selection criteria must be at least partially derived from investigation of the RA program at individual institutions.

This study was an investigation related to the application of phase two of the Miner longitudinal validity model, measurement of applicants on characteristics associated with performance in a specific job situation and determination of their use in the selection process. The major interest in this investigation was the consistency with which certain applicant characteristics were used as criteria by committees that interviewed applicants for RA positions at VPI&SU. Also of interest were the differences in characteristics of groups of applicants at decision points in the selection process. Results from an analysis of the characteristics of these groups are discussed in terms of the commonality of group profiles with profiles of characteristics reported by committee members as being useful in deciding whether or not to recommend that an applicant receive further consideration in the selection process.

In Chapter Two is presented the methodology used in implementing this investigation. Research questions, assumptions, definitions, and limitations are stated. Descriptions are given of the RA program investigated, the applicant characteristics studied, the instruments administered, and the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data from these instruments. The results of the data analyses is reported in Chapter Three, a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for improving the selection process and for future research are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the consistency with which certain applicant characteristics were used by interviewing committees to decide whether or not to recommend that an applicant receive further consideration in the selection process. Also, examination was made of the relationship between applicant characteristics and assignment to selection status groups. Specifically, these questions were considered.

1. Do the members of each interview committee differ from members of other committees in ratings of items on a questionnaire that deals with the relative importance of certain applicant characteristics in deciding on a recommendation of further consideration or no further consideration?
2. To what extent can applicant characteristics be used to predict assignment of applicants to groups based on their selection status at different decision points in the selection process?

Although the data collected in this study was such as to preclude direct analytical comparison of characteristics related to committee ratings on questionnaire items and applicant recommendation, profiles of characteristics suggested by analysis of questionnaire items were compared with profiles of applicant characteristics at later decision

points in the selection process. Discussion is presented on relationships suggested by commonalities between various sets of profiles.

Assumptions

The pursuit of this study was based on the following assumptions.

1. A non-random selection process improves the effectiveness of RA job performance in general by improving the quality of individuals hired as RA's, in terms of certain characteristics related to job performance.
2. The applicant characteristics used in this study are related to effective job performance at VPI&SU.
3. Assessment of current applicant characteristics is related to future prediction of the same characteristics.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study the following definitions were used.

Interview committees are groups of Head RA's (HRA), RA's, and Residence Hall Federation (RHF) student government leaders who interviewed applicants in the selection process. Head RA's are undergraduate students employed with overall responsibility of a residence hall and are assigned a staff of RA's, undergraduate students who have responsibility for a floor in a residence hall. RHF refers to elected officers in the residence hall governance structure.

Structured interview format refers to an interviewing style that includes a standard list of questions and criteria used by all interviewers.

Applicant is an undergraduate student who requested formal consideration for employment in the RA program at VPI&SU. Applicant characteristics refers to a set of personality dimensions measured by the instruments used in this study.

Further consideration refers to a recommendation that an applicant be reviewed at the next decision point in the selection process for possible employment as an RA. No further consideration is a recommendation that an applicant be eliminated from candidacy for employment as an RA.

Selection status is the assignment of an applicant to a category of further consideration/no further consideration based on an evaluation made by an interview committee or the Residence Management Professional Staff (RMO).

Limitations

1. Data for this study were obtained only from participants in the selection process for RA's at VPI&SU during the Winter Quarter, 1976.
2. The number of members in each of the interviewing committees was small, so that statistical breakdowns on dimensions other than committee membership for analysis of questionnaire item ratings were not feasible.
3. Data on the evaluation of each individual applicant by the interview committees and RMO on the characteristics used in this study were not available, which prohibited the statistical testing of a relationship between such evaluations and applicant characteristics as measured by the administered instruments.

4. Cross-validation with on-the-job performance criteria, the third phase of the Miner (1969) longitudinal model of validity, represents an investigation beyond the scope of this study.

Program Investigated

This study was conducted with students in the RA program at VPI&SU, a land-grant university with an enrollment of slightly more than 18,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Only undergraduates live in the residence halls that house approximately 5,000 men and 3,500 women. All undergraduate classes are represented in the halls, although the freshman class is the largest and is the only one required to live on campus. The RA program employs an all undergraduate staff of 132 RA's and 25 HRA's. The residence hall staff is supervised by a full-time professional staff of three career specialists in student personnel work.

During the Winter Quarter, 1976, approximately 225 students applied for an RA position at VPI&SU. The initial evaluation of an applicant was made by an interview committee of hall staff and governance leaders. Although the committees ranged in size from five to nine, the typical membership breakdown was: one HRA as chair-person, one RHF, and four RA's. Eleven committees interviewed at different locations within the residence halls across campus. Members of interview committees attended a one hour orientation session on the interview process, which included suggestions on interview questions and techniques. However, committees were not required to use a standard set of criteria for making evaluations and recommendations about applicants. Each committee was heterogeneous in sex of membership and interviewed both men and women applicants.

Decision making in the selection process is illustrated by Table 1. As indicated, there are three major decision points in determining an applicant's status. The first decision point begins with a recommendation made by an interview committee after meeting with an applicant. This recommendation may take one of three forms: (1) an interview with RMO is recommended, which is a positive evaluation that the applicant receives further consideration; (2) a HRA panel interview is recommended, which indicates indecision by a committee on an applicant's qualifications and another evaluation is suggested; and (3) no further consideration is recommended.

The task of the HRA panel is to decide whether or not to recommend an applicant for an RMO staff interview. The HRA's on the interview committees meet in groups of two or three to comprise these panels. Their recommendations along with those of the interview committees result in two status groups of applicants as the outcome of decision point one.

The second decision point involves only those applicants that received an interview with RMO staff. After RMO interviews each applicant, applicants are assigned to one of three status groups: (1) hire, with no reservations, (2) hire, with reservations, and (3) no further consideration. After all applicants have been interviewed by RMO and the number of anticipated job vacancies has been estimated, decision three begins. Applicants assigned to the status group of hire with no reservations are offered training for the RA position. Applicants assigned to the status group of hire with reservations are re-evaluated and a number needed to fill anticipated

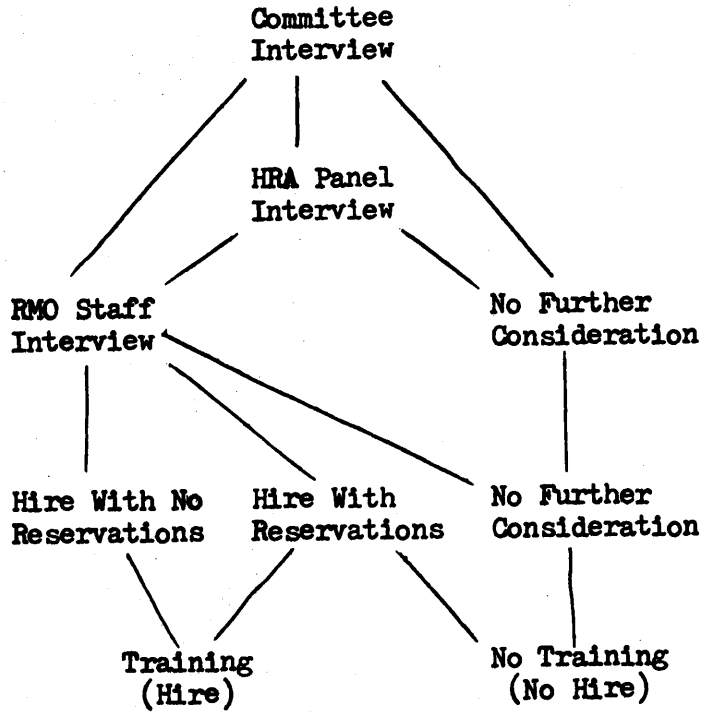
Table 1

Three Decision Points in the Selection Process

Decision Point 1:
Results in two groups
of applicants

Decision Point 2:
Results in three
groups of applicants

Decision Point 3:
Results in two groups
of applicants



vacancies are offered training. The remaining applicants are notified that the final selection decision was not positive in their case^s. The offer of training to an applicant is tantamount to a commitment to employ, provided training is successfully completed.

Selection of Applicant Characteristics

Twelve characteristics were used in this study: poise during crises, consideration of others, concern for others, initiative, confidence, acceptance of institutional authority, academic achievement, sincerity, maturity, and sociability. Past research on the RA program at VPI&SU provided a primary basis for these characteristics, while secondary support was from authors who have investigated RA effectiveness.

Using a delineation of staff functions that assumed an RA must demonstrate a leadership style emphasizing both person-oriented and task-oriented behaviors, Yost and Williams (1972) administered a questionnaire to RA's in order to identify effective job behaviors. Analysis of data resulted in 43 items: 28 items were rated as more likely to be characteristic of effective RA's and 15 items were more characteristic of ineffective RA's. The content of these items is presented in Appendix A.

A review of the content of these items suggested that several deal with the following characteristics of effective RA's: poise during crises, consideration of others, concern for others, and initiative. Item phrases that are supportive of these characteristics have been underlined. Other characteristics are implied by item content.

Knowledge and articulation are associated with effective explanations of policies and procedures. Maintaining poise during a problem or crisis would be facilitated by confidence in personal abilities. These latter three characteristics are also supported by Stodgill (1974) as general leadership traits. Additionally, in order to effectively represent University authority through a disciplinary role, an RA would need to be personally accepting of institutional authority.

Characteristics supported by authorities who have investigated RA effectiveness are academic achievement (Greenleaf, 1974), sincerity (Zirkle and Hudson, 1975), maturity (Murphy and Ortenzi, 1966), and sociability (Morton, 1976).

Instrumentation

In order to investigate the consistency of interview committee criteria, the twelve characteristics indicated above were used to design a questionnaire, a copy of which is presented in Appendix B. Each characteristic was represented by both a positive and a negative item statement. Responses to item statements were coded into a five-level scale, related to the frequency with which an item served as a basis for a committee recommendation. Additional information requested dealt with committee composition.

The search for instruments with scales related to the twelve basic study characteristics resulted in the identification of two instruments for measuring applicant characteristics: the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory (RASI) (Dickson and Ritter, 1975) and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) questionnaire

(American Council on Education, 1975). Although not all of the set of twelve characteristics were measured by these instruments, the RASI and the CIRP offer other features that are advantageous to a study of an RA program.

The RASI is a self-report, 50-item instrument designed to provide an index of stress level for RA's or RA trainees on six scales: Emotional Resiliency, Facilitative Leadership, Counseling Skills, Environmental Adjustment, Confrontive Skills, and Values Development. Further elaboration of these scales is in Appendix C. The instrument was developed through a series of administrations to RA's, with applications of factor analysis, from a pilot instrument of 146 items to its present form. Reliability measures for the scales were computed using the split-half procedures with Spearman-Brown formula for unequal number of items. Dickson and Ritter (1975) calculated that all coefficients were between .77 and .99, and reported that validity for the instrument was justified through the procedures used in its development and its special purpose.

The RASI was designed to identify the type and level of job-related stress anticipated by RA trainees. It assumes that anticipated stress in job situations would be related to actual perceived stress on the job and that level of perceived stress would be related to job performance. A training strategy is suggested in the RASI manual for reducing stress related to job situations and thereby increasing the likelihood of effective job performance. Similarly, evaluations by an interview committee on an applicant's poise during crises is an anticipation or

Prediction of that applicant's poise on the job, such that negative evaluations on this characteristic predicts ineffective job performance and tends to result in an applicant's being recommended for no further consideration. Consequently, the RASI is considered an appropriate measure of an applicant's poise during crises.

The CIRP questionnaire, developed and published by the American Council of Education, is designed to provide certain demographic and attitudinal information on students; e.g., sex; religious background; parents' income, educational levels, and occupations; high school activities; degree aspirations; career plans; attitudes on social and campus issues; and life goals.

Although the CIRP questionnaire was designed as a descriptive instrument, the use of such instruments as sources of predictor variables has been supported (Kleinmuntz, 1961). Further, since it was administered well before the beginning of the RA selection process at VPI&SU, the problem of false responses in order to gain an advantage in selection was minimized. If the instrument proves to be useful in identifying characteristics of selected RA's, as distinguished from characteristics of non-selected applicants, future research would not depend on an additional testing program, since the CIRP is routinely administered to all new freshmen at the beginning of the fall term.

Data Collection and Analysis

The RASI was administered to all applicants for RA positions during the Winter Quarter, 1976. The administration took place in

groups of 6-20 prior to an applicant's being interviewed by a committee. After all interviews had been completed, each member of the interview committees was asked to rate the items on the questionnaire designed for this study as to the frequency with which an item was used as a basis for making recommendations about applicants. Scale scores for the RASI were calculated for each applicants.

CIRP administrations for the 1973-75 Freshmen classes at VPI&SU had been stored on computer tapes. This data was accessed and used in a factor analysis, which identified five factors. CIRP "factor scores" were calculated for each applicant by summing responses to items that loaded onto a factor.

Two primary analytical procedures were used to obtain statistics relative to the two research question. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), with committee membership as the independent factor and item ratings as dependent variables, was applied to data from the interview questionnaire to test for committee consistency. To investigate the second research question, discriminant analysis was used to calculate discriminant functions for selected applicant characteristics, with a dependent variable that represented group membership at the three decision points in the selection process.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology used in implementing this study. Research questions, assumptions, definitions, and limitations were delineated. Features of the RA program under investigation and the applicant characteristics that served as a basis of this investi-

gation were presented. Instrumentation and the procedures for collecting and analyzing data from these instruments were described. The results of the study are presented in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

Results of the Data Analysis

The data used in this study were obtained from three primary sources: responses to items on a questionnaire administered to interview committee members, responses of resident advisor (RA) applicants to items on the Resident Advisor Stress Inventory (RASI), and scores computed for applicants from the results of a factor analysis of the 1973-1975 administrations of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) questionnaire at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI&SU). Specific summaries and analyses of data were selected for their relevancy to discussion of the research questions presented in Chapter Two.

Responses to the Interview Committee Questionnaire (Appendix B)

Of the 95 RA's, Head RA's (HRA), and Residence Hall Federation (RHF) students that participated in interview committees, 52 (54.7%) returned questionnaires. While the percentage of return was less than expected, it was assumed that a higher return would not have significantly affected the results of the study and that the data obtained from those that completed questionnaires was a valid representation of the criteria used by the interview committees in evaluating applicants. While it is possible that the non-returned questionnaires expressed a systematic variable, such as dissatisfaction with not having a minority view-point on applicant qualifications result in a desired recommendation, it is more likely that the non-returns expressed an element of procrastination for paperwork not valued as important to the RA's functioning.

The mean for the responses of each committee as well as across all committees to the questionnaire items are presented in Table 2. Across all committees, the values range from a high of 3.86 to a low of 1.40. The lower a mean value for an item the more likely that item was rated by committee members as being associated with a recommendation decision. Standard deviations for item mean values across committees ranged from .63, indicating relative agreement among committees on that item's importance in making a recommendation, to 1.21, indicating relatively low committee agreement.

MANOVA procedures were used to test whether the linear combination of responses to questionnaire items was different among committees. The analysis resulted in a probability of .594 for rejecting a true null hypothesis of no committee difference. Based on this, the statistical hypothesis of committee difference was not accepted and the committees were assumed to be similar in their use of applicant characteristics to make recommendation decisions.

For descriptive purposes, committee difference on individual questionnaire items was examined by calculating univariate F values. An F value with a probability of less than .20 for rejecting a true null hypothesis of no committee difference was used to suggest which of the items on the questionnaire may have been more likely to be judged differently by the committees. Of the 25 univariate F tests, six met this criteria. These items related to maturity, lack of initiative, inarticulation, high level of stress, initiative, and sincerity.

In Table 3 the item numbers and their associated applicant characteristics are presented in ascending order of mean values. The

Table 2
Mean Responses of Interview Committees to Questionnaire Items

Item	Committee											Total	SDT
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
1	1.60	1.80	1.40	1.33	2.20	1.50	1.20	1.20	1.50	1.25	2.50	1.58	.80
2	2.00	1.60	2.00	2.67	2.20	3.00	1.80	2.00	1.75	2.75	2.75	2.21	.85
3	1.80	2.20	1.80	1.67	2.40	2.25	1.60	1.80	2.00	2.75	2.25	2.02	.80
4	2.60	2.80	2.00	2.33	1.60	1.50	2.60	2.20	2.00	2.00	1.75	2.15	.96
5	2.40	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.40	1.00	1.60	1.60	2.00	2.25	2.25	1.87	.87
6	1.60	2.20	1.40	1.50	1.20	1.00	1.40	1.20	1.50	1.00	1.75	1.44	.80
7	2.40	2.60	2.40	2.33	1.80	2.25	2.60	1.60	2.75	2.00	3.50	2.37	.90
8	2.40	3.80	2.40	2.00	2.40	1.50	2.20	2.40	2.50	2.75	2.25	2.42	1.21
9	4.40	3.20	3.60	4.33	4.00	3.00	4.20	3.80	3.25	4.25	4.25	3.87	1.07
10	1.80	2.20	1.60	2.33	2.20	2.00	1.60	1.20	1.50	2.50	2.75	1.96	.88
11	1.80	2.80	1.20	1.50	1.20	1.00	1.40	1.20	1.50	1.75	1.50	1.53	.78
12	1.40	2.20	1.60	1.00	1.20	1.25	1.20	1.80	1.00	1.00	2.25	1.44	.89
13	2.20	2.20	1.60	2.00	2.20	2.00	1.80	1.80	1.75	2.50	2.50	2.04	.76
14	2.00	2.20	1.60	1.33	1.40	1.25	1.80	1.40	1.25	1.50	2.00	1.62	.72
15	2.20	2.40	1.60	1.67	1.40	1.25	1.60	1.40	1.50	1.75	2.75	1.77	.81
16	3.00	2.00	2.20	1.83	1.60	1.50	2.60	2.40	1.25	2.25	1.75	2.06	.98
17	1.60	2.20	2.00	1.67	1.80	1.25	1.40	1.40	1.25	1.00	2.25	1.63	.84
18	1.80	2.20	1.60	1.67	1.60	1.75	1.60	1.40	1.75	1.25	2.50	1.73	.82
19	2.60	3.00	3.40	2.33	1.80	3.00	2.00	1.80	3.00	2.50	3.00	2.56	.92
20	1.80	2.20	2.40	1.33	2.00	1.75	1.60	1.40	1.50	1.75	2.50	1.83	.76
21	3.80	3.60	3.20	3.83	3.00	2.75	3.20	2.60	3.00	3.25	3.25	3.25	1.10
22	1.80	2.60	1.80	2.0	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.80	1.25	1.25	2.25	1.77	.81
23	1.40	2.20	1.20	1.5	1.20	1.25	1.20	1.40	1.00	1.50	1.50	1.40	.63
24	1.60	2.40	1.80	1.33	1.00	1.25	1.20	1.40	1.50	1.25	1.75	1.50	.73
25	1.40	3.00	2.00	1.5	1.40	1.75	1.80	1.40	1.25	1.25	2.00	1.71	1.10

Table 3

Mean Values for Committee Questionnaire Items in Ascending
Order With Associated Applicant Characteristics and
Probability of Univariate F Test for Each Item

<u>Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>P</u>
1.40(.63)	23	immature	.31
1.44(.89)	12	insincere	.27
1.44(.80)	6	unconcerned for helping	.60
1.50(.73)	24	sincere	.18
1.53(.78)	11	mature	.02
1.58(.80)	1	confident	.25
1.62(.72)	14	poised under stress	.44
1.63(.82)	17	inconsiderate	.43
1.71(1.1)	25	compatible co-worker	.44
1.73(.82)	18	concerned for helping	.68
1.77(.81)	15	inarticulate	.11
1.77(.81)	22	sociable	.27
1.83(.76)	20	accepts authority	.22
1.87(.87)	5	considerate of others	.47
1.96(.88)	10	unsociable	.21
2.02(.80)	3	articulate	.56
2.03(.76)	13	lacks confidence	.78
2.06(.98)	16	understands job	.22
2.15(.96)	4	lacks job understanding	.54
2.21(.85)	2	lacks poise under stress	.14

Table 3 (continued)

<u>Mean (SD)</u>	<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>P</u>
2.36(.90)	7	initiative	.16
2.42(1.21)	8	challenges authority	.45
2.56(.92)	19	lacks initiative	.05
3.25(1.1)	21	low grades	.81
3.86(1.07)	9	high grades	.44

probability results of univariate F tests are also indicated. The first twenty-two items were rated as being frequently or more often the basis for a recommendation. (Mean less than 2.50). Items related to applicant immaturity, insincerity, and lack of concern in helping others were rated as almost certain to produce a negative recommendation. The item related to applicant sincerity was rated as almost certain to produce a positive recommendation. Items dealing with low grades and lack of initiative were rated as being used relatively less frequently in making recommendations, and the item concerning high grades was rated as seldom a basis for recommendations.

Results of Factor Analysis of CIRP Items

Factor analysis was performed on the responses of 7895 students who completed the CIRP between the fall of 1973 and the fall of 1975. Questionnaire items entered as variables in the analysis are listed in Appendix E. Student responses to these 56 items were correlated and factor analyzed with computer program BMD08M "Factor Analysis" (Dixon, 1973). An unrotated factor matrix was obtained using the principal factors method with squared multiple correlations as communality estimates on the diagonal. Application of the scree test (Cattell, 1966), which examines curvilinearity of eigenvalues, indicated five factors should be used in rotation. Varimax rotation resulted in the matrix presented in Table 4. Items with a loading of .31 or greater (absolute value) were used in factor definitions and were summed for CIRP factor scores. Only 11 of the 56 items did not load on any of the factors and were lost in the analysis. The five factors and their associated items are

Table 4

Rotated Factor Matrix (Decimals Omitted) With
Items Grouped According to Factors

<u>Item</u>	<u>Factors</u>				
	I	II	III	IV	V
(Academic Confidence)					
1	41	13	-06	09	05
38	66	-06	22	-00	03
43	67	-07	21	00	04
44	69	-10	24	-00	05
49	53	-23	27	-06	07
53	43	-15	28	-13	00
54	49	-18	27	-16	00
(Directedness)					
35	00	-57	09	16	-03
36	07	-57	09	16	-02
37	-20	-51	10	-13	04
41	16	-32	16	06	13
42	00	-40	10	09	18
45	02	-48	18	-07	04
46	16	-38	12	00	10
47	15	-48	16	06	06
48	12	-45	21	-06	09
50	-06	-64	-02	-00	07
51	-09	-59	-04	-04	03
52	08	-46	09	12	08
55	16	-39	08	-16	-02
56	25	-31	11	-20	-05
(Social Leadership)					
23	23	-04	46	-13	02
24	01	-07	63	06	11
25	02	-10	64	02	07
26	17	-15	31	-27	-16
27	12	05	43	-30	-06
29	12	-14	57	02	04
30	05	-10	34	-20	-02

Table 4 (continued)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Factors</u>				
	I	II	III	IV	V
31	06	-12	51	05	24
32	19	-17	50	16	10
33	09	-11	65	-01	06
34	13	-08	60	07	04
39	28	-19	37	-05	-00
 (Liberalism)					
5	05	05	04	35	07
7	-05	02	05	-40	-03
17	-00	03	02	-38	02
18	01	03	-03	-44	-00
 (Political Awareness)					
3	-00	00	10	08	48
4	-03	-02	07	-03	42
8	05	02	02	-11	37
9	-10	-17	-00	22	33
10	07	-00	-01	00	33
11	11	-00	09	11	33
14	05	-06	07	-03	33
16	01	-07	-06	-01	32
 (Items Lost)					
2	-03	-06	08	21	30
6	-11	-03	-02	-16	21
12	-01	-05	-18	-19	20
13	01	04	04	-25	04
15	-20	-17	02	-10	28
19	-14	-07	08	-18	22
20	-17	-11	00	-17	23
21	12	00	02	-09	22
22	11	-14	27	10	07
28	16	-13	22	-29	-03
40	28	-22	27	-09	-01

presented in Appendix F. Examination of these items resulted in the following factor descriptions.

Factor I. The seven items associated with this factor deal with various aspects of academic success: "Graduate with honors," "Be elected to an academic honor society," or "Make at least a 'B' average," for example. Students who score high in this factor tend to believe that there is a good chance that they actually will experience these aspects of success. Because of this, the factor was labeled "Academic Confidence" (AcadCon).

Factor II. Fourteen items load onto this factor. The higher loadings are for items on changing major field and career choice, dropping out of college temporarily or permanently, and failing one or more courses. Other high loadings were for items on needing extra time to complete degree requirements, seeking counseling, and transferring to another college. High factor scores are related to student responses that indicate their expectations that these items are not likely to be their experience. Because of the lack of ambivalence indicated by the tendency of students to rate these items low in expected frequency this factor was labeled "Directedness" (Direct).

Factor III. The twelve items associated with this factor represent a desire for involvement in community affairs and a desire to influence societal values and structures. Items with high loadings were "Participating in a community action program," "Influencing the political structure," "Influencing social values," and "Keeping up to date with political affairs." Students who score high on this factor tend to rate these items high in personal importance. The factor was labeled "Social Leadership" (SocLead).

Factor IV. Four items related to the traditional conflict between the rights of individuals versus the authority of institutions load on this factor. The factor was labeled "Liberalism " (Liberal) because students who score high on the factor tend to disagree with "College officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus," "Student publications should be cleared by college officials," and "There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals."

Factor V. The eight items associated with this factor deal with a number of issues on the current political scene. Consequently, the factor was labeled "Political awareness" (PoliAwar). Students who score high on this factor tend to agree that "The Federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution," "The Federal government is not doing enough to protect the consumer from faulty goods and services," and "Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now." Other items deal with the legalization of marijuana, population control, women's rights, and faculty evaluation.

Results of the Discriminant Analyses

Of the 158 students who completed the RASI as part of the Winter Quarter, 1976, RA selection process, 82 had records on the combined 1973-1975 CIRP computer tape. Scores for each factor were calculated for each of these applicants by summing the values of the responses to items associated with a specific factor. Tables 5-8 present the mean values for the five CIRP factors, as well as the mean age, quarters at Tech, grade average, and RASI scales for the same group of 82. The

Table 5

Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Applicants
Grouped by Interview Committee Recommendations

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>RMO Interview</u>	<u>HRA Interview</u>	<u>No Further Consideration</u>
Age	19.149	19.222	19.080
Quarters at Tech	3.340	3.111	2.760
Grade Average	2.702	2.557	2.908
<u>(Resident Assistant Stress Inventory)</u>			
Emotional Resiliency	2.726	2.292	2.590
Facilitative Leadership	2.684	2.667	2.793
Counseling Skills	2.440	2.204	2.323
Environmental Adjustment	2.110	1.982	2.100
Confrontative Skills	2.796	2.519	2.733
Values Development	2.525	2.241	2.473
<u>(Cooperative Institutional Research Program)</u>			
I. AcadCon	26.362	25.667	25.920
II. Direct	30.681	33.000	30.720
III. SocLead	29.681	29.889	27.440
IV. Liberal	8.489	8.222	8.240
V. PoliAwar	22.723	22.111	22.280
n =	47	10	25

Table 6

Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of
Applicants After Decision Point One (Interview Committees
and HRA Panels)

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>RMO Interview</u>	<u>No Further Consideration</u>
Age	19.132	19.143
Quarters at Tech	3.245	2.927
Grade Average	2.677	2.886
<u>(Resident Assistant Stress Inventory)</u>		
Emotional Resiliency	2.686	2.540
Facilitative Leadership	2.689	2.768
Counseling Skills	2.423	2.292
Environmental Adjustment	2.107	2.066
Confrontative Skills	2.764	2.711
Values Development	2.509	2.417
<u>(Cooperative Institutional Research Program)</u>		
I. AcadCon	26.208	26.036
II. Direct	31.113	30.643
III. SocLead	29.830	27.464
IV. Liberal	8.491	8.179
V. PoliAwar	22.736	22.107
n =	53	29

Table 7

Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of
Applicants After Decision Point Two (Residence Management
Staff Interviews)

<u>Characteristics</u>	Hire	Hire With Reservations	No Further Consideration
Age	19.290	19.000	18.500
Quarters at Tech	3.871	2.500	1.750
Grade Average	2.742	2.558	2.710
<u>(Resident Assistant Stress Inventory)</u>			
Emotional Resiliency	2.649	2.729	2.781
Facilitative Leadership	2.715	2.593	2.917
Counseling Skills	2.393	2.440	2.583
Environmental Adjustment	2.102	2.065	2.333
Confrontative Skills	2.712	2.810	2.958
Values Development	2.446	2.537	2.875
<u>(Cooperative Institutional Research Program Factors)</u>			
I. AcadCon	26.065	26.167	27.500
II. Direct	31.258	31.056	30.250
III. SocLead	29.161	30.167	33.500
IV. Liberal	8.226	8.944	8.500
V. PoliAwar	22.258	23.778	21.750
n =	31	18	4

Table 8

Means of Variables Used in Discriminant Analysis for Groups of
Applicants After Decision Point Three (Training Offer)

	<u>Training</u>	<u>No Training</u>
<u>Characteristics</u>		
Age	19.297	19.000
Quarters at Tech	3.757	2.614
Grade Average	2.688	2.801
<u>(Resident Assistant Stress Inventory)</u>		
Emotional Resiliency	2.598	2.668
Facilitative Leadership	2.712	2.720
Counseling Skills	2.365	2.388
Environmental Adjustment	2.059	2.121
Confrontative Skills	2.691	2.792
Values Development	2.414	2.530
<u>(Cooperative Institutional Research Program Factors)</u>		
I. AcadCon	26.000	26.273
II. Direct	31.541	30.455
III. SocLead	29.216	28.841
IV. Liberal	8.162	8.568
V. PoliAwar	22.460	22.568
n =	37	45

tables give the mean values on these 14 characteristics for the appropriate group of applicants at four points in the selection process: committee interview recommendation, decision point one (a combination of committee interview recommendations and HRA panel recommendations), RMO recommendations (Decision Point Two), and the final training offer (Decision Point Three).

In order to determine which characteristics would be most useful in predicting group membership at different decision points, students were classified using equations based on the stepwise (Wilks' lambda) procedures of the SPSS program "Discriminant" (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1970). The analysis computes a discriminant function, a regression equation with a dependent variable representing group membership. The discriminant function can be used to make group assignments based on an individual's scores on two or more measures (Kerlinger, 1964). Based on the discriminant function, equations were calculated to classify applicants into their "predicted" group membership.

Table 9 presents the results of the discriminant analysis at Decision Point One. Of the 14 variables entered for analysis (age, quarters at Tech, grade average, 6 RASI scales, and 5 CIRP factors) four met the stepwise criteria of minimizing Wilks' lambda by maximizing the multivariate F ratio. These were Social Leadership, Grade Average, Counseling Skills, and Facilitative Leadership. The p value associated with the test of group difference on these characteristics was .036. Table 10 gives the results of using classification equations which measures these four characteristics. Of the 53 applicants who received

Table 9

Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups
of Applicants at Decision Point One
(RA Staff Interviews)

<u>Step Number</u>	<u>Variable Entered</u>	<u>Wilks' Lambda</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Social Leadership	.9462	.035
2	QCA	.9234	.044
3	Counseling Skills	.9081	.057
4	Facilitative Leadership	.8749	.036

Table 10

Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants
 at Decision Point One to Statistically Predicted
 Recommendation Groups*

<u>Actual Group</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Predicted Group</u>	
		<u>RMO</u>	<u>NoFur</u>
RMO Interview	53	35(.66)	18(.34)
NoFur Consider	28	8(.29)	20(.71)
Total Correct Predictions		55(.68)	

*Percentage of accurate predictions in parenthesis.

an actual recommendation for a RMO interview, 66% were correctly classified or "predicted." Seventy-one percent of the "no further consideration" group were correctly classified. Overall, the classification equations correctly grouped 68% of the applicants.

At Decision Point Two (RMO recommendations) four of the initial characteristics best discriminated among the three recommendation groups. As indicated in Table 11, these were Quarters at Tech, Values Development, Social Leadership, and Political Awareness. The p value associated with the test of group difference was .097. The results of using classification equations to group the applicants are indicated in Table 12. Sixty-one percent of the 31 applicants who actually received a "Hire" recommendation were correctly classified. Overall, 51% of the applicants were correctly classified into their actual recommendation group.

In Table 13 is indicated the results of the discriminant analysis at Decision Point Three (final training offer). Three characteristics best discriminate between the two groups. These were Quarters at Tech, Values Development, and Social Leadership, with a final associated p value of .046. The classification equation for the "Training" offer correctly "predicted" 62% of the 37 applicants who actually received this offer were correctly classified. Sixty-four percent of all the applicants were correctly classified, as given in Table 14.

In order to determine which of the fourteen characteristics were the most important in explaining the variance among the recommendation groups after the committee interviews so that commonalities with the Decision Points could be discussed, a stepwise discriminant analysis

Table 11

Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups
of Applicants After Professional Staff Interviews
(Decision Point Two)

<u>Step Number</u>	<u>Variable Entered</u>	<u>Wilks' Lambda</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Quarters at Tech	.8776	.037
2	Valued Development	.8341	.061
3	Social Leadership	.7936	.078
4	Political Awareness	.7576	.097

Table 12

Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants
at Decision Point Two to Statistically Predicted
Recommendation Groups

<u>Actual Group</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Predicted Group</u>		
		<u>Hire</u>	<u>Hw/R</u>	<u>NoFur</u>
Hire	31	19(.61)	8(.26)	4(.13)
Hire with Reservations	18	7(.39)	6(.33)	5(.28)
No Further Consideration	4	0(.0)	2(.50)	2(.50)
				27(.51)

*Percentage of accurate predictions in parenthesis.

Table 13

Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups of
Applicants After Training Offer (Decision Point Three)

<u>Step Number</u>	<u>Variable Entered</u>	<u>Wilks' Lambda</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Quarters at Tech	.9319	.018
2	Valued Development	.9145	.030
3	Social Leadership	.9025	.046

Table 14

Results of Using Discriminant Equations to Assign Applicants
 at Decision Point Three to Statistically Predicted
 Recommendation Groups

<u>Actual Group</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Predicted Group</u>	
		<u>Train</u>	<u>No Train</u>
Training	37	23(.62)	14(.38)
No Training	44	15(.34)	29(.66)
Total Correct Predictions			52(.64)

*Percentage of accurate predictions in parenthesis.

was performed with these groups as the dependent variable and the measures of the characteristics as the independent variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 15. Three characteristics emerged as best explaining the group differences. These were Social Leadership, Emotional Resiliency, and Grade Averages. The final F ratio was .149.

Summary

This chapter has presented the results of the data analyses performed in this study. To answer the first research question dealing with committee consistency, responses of interview committee members to questionnaire items were tested for committee differences with MANOVA procedures. It was concluded that the committees used applicant characteristics similarly in making recommendation decisions.

To obtain information relevant to the second research question, applicant characteristics of Age, Quarters at Tech, Grade Average, six RASI scales, and five CIRP factor scores were used in a discriminant analysis in order to determine which characteristics would be most useful in classifying applicants into groups at different decision points. Classification equations at each decision point accurately assigned applicants to groups at a better than random level.

Chapter Four presents a summary of the study, discussion of results, and recommendations for future research.

Table 15

Variables Retained in Discriminant Equations for Groups
of Applicants After Committee Interviews

<u>Step Number</u>	<u>Variable Entered</u>	<u>Wilks' Lambda</u>	<u>Significance</u>
1	Social Leadership	.9529	.150
2	Emotional Resiliency	.9149	.140
3	QCA	.8845	.149

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

Summary

This study was concerned with investigating two questions. The first was whether interview committees in the RA selection process at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University differed from each other in using applicant characteristics as a basis for making recommendations about an applicant's continuance in the selection process. The second consideration was how accurately applicant characteristics could be used in prediction equations to assign applicants to recommendation groups at three different points in the selection process.

The source of data for this study was the participants in the RA selection process at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University during the Winter Quarter, 1976: applicants for the RA position, members of the interview committees, and staff members in the Residence Management Office (RMO). A questionnaire on whether certain applicant characteristics were used as a basis for a recommendation was administered to the committee members and analyzed for committee differences. Fourteen characteristics derived from applicant responses to the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory and the Cooperative Institutional Research Program were used in discriminant equations to predict group membership at three decision points in the selection process.

The major findings of the study were:

1. The research question of committee difference on the interview questionnaire was not supported. However, committee

difference on individual characteristics were identified.

2. Certain characteristics derived from the RASI and the CIRP have value in predicting the assignment of applicants to recommendation groups.

3. Two negative characteristics (relatively lower grades and lower tolerance for non-supportive behavior in others) tend to be associated with a positive recommendation from the interview committees.

Discussion

Using an F statistic calculated from MANOVA procedures as the test for committee differences on the items of the questionnaire instrument resulted in a probability of .594 of rejecting a true null hypothesis of no committee difference. Since this is well above the level traditionally used as a criteria for rejecting the null hypothesis (i.e., .01 or .05), it must be assumed that the committees were not different overall in the characteristics that they used as basis for assigning applicants to recommendation groups.

However, the fact that univariate F tests for the individual questionnaire items resulted in F values for six items of less than .20 suggests that the committees may have used certain characteristics differently in their evaluation of applicants. The six items identified in this study dealt with the applicant characteristics of maturity, sincerity, initiative, lack of articulation, nervousness under stress, and lack of initiative. Depending on the relationship of these characteristics to RA job performance, this finding may have important implications for the RA selection process. Whether these results

represent real differences or a random variation in questionnaire responses might be a topic of future research.

The finding of no committee difference is particularly interesting in light of the lack of support suggested by Mayfield (1964) and Banta (1969) for the reliability of interview procedures for evaluating candidates. It should be noted, however, that these studies were based on using individual interviewers as raters, whereas the present study was concerned with groups of interviewers. It may be that the use of committees for interviews results in an internal commonality of evaluation criteria, or an averaging out of deviation, that reduces the variation from committee to committee. A comparison of the two procedures might also be an appropriate topic for further research.

Moderate success was achieved in using discriminate equations to predict group membership of applicants at different decision points in the selection process. At each of the three decision points used in this study, use of a discriminant function to classify applicants into their recommendation group was better than a random assignment would have been.

At Decision Point One (after committee and HRA interviews), the equations used for classification correctly grouped 68% of the applicants into one of two groups (accuracy of random assignment = .50). The most accurate identification was of those applicants that had received a recommendation of no further consideration (71%). At Decision Point Two (after RMO interviews), 61% of the applicants that received a hire recommendation represented the most accurate identification. Overall, the classification equations correctly assigned 51% of

the applicants to one of three groups (accuracy of random assignment = .33). At Decision Point Three (formal training offer), 64% of the applicants were correctly assigned to one of two groups (accuracy of random assignment = .50). The most accurate classification at this point was of those applicants that had received no training offer (66%).

This suggests two things. First, discriminant scores calculated from applicant characteristics may be useful in the RA selection process. Secondly, the RASI and the CIRP may be valuable in providing measures of these characteristics. The selection of RA's often involves the re-evaluation of applicants initially rejected because estimates of staff needs made during the selection process were less than the number actually needed to fill vacancies. A discriminant score that assigns an applicant to the "no training" group could weight against an employment offer being made to that applicant. Such might be particularly useful when a proportion of a seeming equal group of rejected applicants must be offered training. The CIRP might be especially valuable as a source of applicant characteristics, since it is already routinely administered to entering students at VPI&SU.

Although the data collection procedures in this study were not such as to allow a direct statistical comparison of committee ratings on questionnaire items with applicant characteristics as measured by the RASI and the CIRP, some discussion of commonalities is possible.

A discriminant analysis of applicant characteristics and groups of applicants after the committee interviews indicated three characteristics that best explain group differences. These were Social Leadership, Emotional Resiliency, and Grade Averages. Applicants that received

a recommendation for a RMO interview tended to have lower grades, to have less tolerance for job related situations in which significant others behaved in a manner that was not supportive of the RA, and to assign greater personal importance to involvement in community affairs and to influencing societal values and structures.

Comparing this analysis with the results of the committee questionnaire indicated that, although the interview committees seem to assign little importance to grades in making recommendations, the groups of applicants tended to differ on grade averages. This suggests that either the committees used grades more often in making recommendations that they were willing to admit on the questionnaire or that some other applicant characteristic(s) inversely related to grades was used by the committees in making recommendations. The latter seems more likely, since it is difficult to imagine that the committees would directly recommend applicants for further consideration on the basis of low grades.

Results from the analysis of the committee questionnaire indicated that applicant immaturity and lack of concern for helping others were important characteristics in making recommendation decisions. It may be that the Social Leadership factor is related to the committee evaluation of an applicant's concern for helping others. Since neither age nor quarters at Tech distinguished among groups of applicants after the committee interviews, it would seem that some other characteristic was used by the committees to judge immaturity.

At Decision Point One, the group of applicants recommended for further consideration by RMO differed from the applicants recommended

for no further consideration on four characteristics. Two of these were the same as resulted from the analysis based on the recommendations by the interview committees: Grade Average and the Social Leadership factor. However, instead of the groups being different on the RASI scale of Emotional Resiliency, they tended to differ on the Facilitative Leadership scale and the Counseling Skills scale. Applicants receiving a recommendation for no further consideration tended to be less comfortable in job-related situations dealing with group leadership and more comfortable with situations requiring sensitivity and mediation.

Applicants rejected as a result of RA staff input into the selection process through the committee interviews and the HRA panel interviews tended, then, to have higher grades, to have less confidence in their ability to handle group situations, to have more confidence in their ability to function as a mediator in sensitive situations, and to be less concerned with becoming involved in social problems. This group was the most accurately identified by the discriminant equations at this Decision Point. The question of RA staff input resulting in applicants with high grades and confidence in their mediation skills being rejected in the selection process might appropriately be considered in further research.

Applicants grouped on the basis of RMO interview evaluations (Decision Point Two) differed most on four characteristics: quarters at Tech, the Values Development scale, the Social Leadership factor, and the Political Awareness factor. It should be recalled that this analysis was made for the 53 applicants referred to RMO by the interview committees for further consideration. Applicants initially assigned to

a "hire" group at this decision point tended to have been at VPI&SU longer, to express less anxiety about conflict between personal values and role expectations, to be less concerned about becoming involved in social problems, and to be more aware of current issues.

It is interesting to note that applicants recommended for further consideration by the interview committees tended to express concern for involvement in social problems, while applicants given an initial positive evaluation by RMO tended to be those who had scored lower on this factor. This raises the question of whether there exists a difference between RMO and the RA staff concerning the importance of this characteristic in selecting RA's. If RA's are considered better judges of applicant characteristics, perhaps their evaluation should be given more weight in the selection process. If not, then additional training of interview committees may be needed.

At Decision Point Three, applicants offered training differed from those not offered training on three characteristics: Quarters at Tech, the Values Development scale, and the Social Leadership factor. Applicants not offered training (which was the most accurately identified group by the discriminant equations) tended to have been at Tech for a shorter period, to express more anxiety about situations that involved a conflict between their personal values and RA role expectations, and to be more interested in involvement in societal problems.

Two of these characteristics (Quarters at Tech and the Values Development scale) were the result of RMO input into the selection process. The third (the Social Leadership factor, with selected applicants having a higher score) was a result of the RA staff input.

The selection process outcome would seem, then, to be based on an interaction between RMO and RA staff criteria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. The procedure of using groups of RA staff to interview applicants for the RA position at VPI&SU should be continued. Additional training of these groups may be needed, however, to reduce discrepancies between RA staff criteria for selection and that of the professional staff. Structuring the interview format might help increase the reliability of the committee recommendations.

2. A logical extension of this study would be to cross-validate the fourteen applicant characteristics with job performance criteria. Since Miner's validity model recommends selection without regard to prediction variables, the impact of the selection process on applicant characteristics data should be taken into account in interpreting the relationship between predictor characteristic and performance criteria. Indices of relationship between performance and quarters at Tech, Values Development, and Social Leadership, for example, may be misleading, since these three characteristics were associated with selection outcome, as evidenced by their accuracy in predicting group membership at Decision Point Three.

3. The design of this study did not allow a statistical comparison of committee criteria and applicant characteristics. Additional study

is needed to examine the relationship of committee judgments to applicant response on the RASI and the CIRP.

4. Additional research is needed in the area of consistency between the RA staff and RMO on specific applicant characteristics.

5. Further research comparing the individual interviewer technique with the committee approach is suggested.

6. Factors from the CIRP questionnaire were valuable in this study in distinguishing between groups of applicants and should be considered in investigations comparing RA applicants with non-applicants for information about recruitment effectiveness.

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Appendix A

RA Questionnaire on Effective Behaviors

Effective Behaviors

1. Kept head and acted as leader when major problem occurred
2. Enforced rules on open house violation in firm but diplomatic manner
3. Explained implications of actions to rules violator
4. Kept calm when someone broke into dormitory
5. Remained calm in face of possible physical danger
6. Reasoned with noise violators
7. Brought group pressure to bear on floor residents causing noise
8. Explained reasons for rules
9. Required those making mess to clean it up
10. Caused noise to quiet down by presence and non-verbal actions
11. Reprimanded rule violators in private
12. Obtained aid from another RA when someone refused to open the door to their room
13. Sought professional counselor to help a student with serious, personal problem
14. Prevented probable trouble makers from entering dormitory
15. Obtained I.D. Card without antagonizing student
16. Sought medical assistance for injury or severe physical difficulty
17. Caused minimum disturbance to other students in dealing with problems
18. Took pride in the appearance of the bulletin board and dormitory floor
19. Showed persistence in helping someone who had a problem
20. Explained regulations in terms of responsibility to other students
21. Encouraged consideration of others

Effective Behaviors (continued)

22. Showed tact when dealing with an intoxicated person
23. Resolved interpersonal problems among residents of the dormitory floor
24. Helped a student develop friendships
25. When time was available, sought help on serious problems
26. Requested compliance with rules prior to taking formal action
27. Acted directly to calm down someone who was emotionally very upset
28. Recognized and helped student having adjustment problem

Ineffective Behaviors

1. Made unkind personal comments about or to an individual
2. Showed favoritism or inconsistency in enforcing rules
3. Failed several times to enforce quiet hours
4. Lost temper and shouted at students
5. Cut off or ridiculed a student who wanted assistance
6. Continually harassed a specific individual
7. Failed to recognize when a student needed counseling
8. Created a disturbance while enforcing a rule
9. Absent from floor when disturbances were very likely
10. Did not stay knowledgeable on issues of major concern to students
11. Failed to assume leadership in a critical situation
12. Entered room immediately after knocking without announcing self or giving reason
13. Attempted to intimidate people rather than reason with them
14. Allowed specific individuals to repeatedly violate quiet hours
15. Did not act to help resolve personal conflicts after becoming aware of the problem

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire on Interview Criteria

TO: MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN OF RA AREA SELECTION COMMITTEES
Winter Quarter, 1976

FROM: Jerry Gasser and Landrum Cross

For several years, the Residence Management Program at Virginia Tech has relied on input from current hall staff about the qualifications of applicants for a Resident Advisor position. One level of this input has been recommendations based on interviews held with prospective RA candidates. However, there seems to have been no formal attempt to identify the criteria used to arrive at these recommendations, so that what is known about them is assumed to be subjective.

Your participation is requested in a data collection effort that will begin the process of discovering what criteria are used by interview committees in making recommendations about candidates for selection as a Resident Advisor at Virginia Tech. The method being used is to ask each member of the various interview committees to respond to the attached questionnaire.

Although your time during the demands of beginning the Spring Quarter is certainly valuable to you, the information that your responses will provide is essential to the work of this study. Hopefully, you will find that the time necessary to complete the questionnaire is brief. The relatively small number of each committee means that it is especially important that responses be obtained from each member.

You will notice that identifying information such as name and student number has not been requested. While this was done in order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, it has also resulted in there being no system for follow-up on unreturned questionnaires. Consequently, you are urged to complete the questionnaire and to return it to the Office of Residence Management, 113 Patton Hall, before Friday, April 2, 5:00 pm. Your help is greatly appreciated.

READ THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH CAREFULLY BEFORE COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Your experience last quarter interviewing applicants for an RA job required that your committee reach a decision as to whether the applicant should be recommended for further consideration or whether he/she should be discontinued in the selection process. Several possible applicant characteristics are listed below. Using the following scale, circle the number by each characteristic that best represents your opinion of your committee's basis for making a decision about which recommendation an applicant should receive:

SCALE

- 1 --- Almost certain to produce a positive/negative recommendation
- 2 --- Frequently the basis for a positive/negative recommendation
- 3 --- Sometimes the basis for a positive/negative recommendation
- 4 --- Seldom the basis for a positive/negative recommendation
- 5 --- This characteristic was completely useless in deciding on a recommendation

"The Applicant..."

1. Answered interview questions with confidence.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Became confused and nervous under stress.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Gave clear, concise responses to questions.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. Did not seem to have an adequate understanding of the RA's job.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Seemed to be considerate and tactful in dealing with others.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Did not express particular interest in helping students.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. Volunteered information and opinions during the interview.....	1	2	3	4	5
8. Challenged the right of the university to make rules governing student life.....	1	2	3	4	5
9. Had a cumulative Q.C.A. above 3.0.....	1	2	3	4	5
10. Was withdrawn and shy.....	1	2	3	4	5
11. Was more mature and stable than the average student.....	1	2	3	4	5
12. Gave phony, shallow answers to questions.....	1	2	3	4	5
13. Gave hesitatnt, unsure answers to questions.....	1	2	3	4	5
14. Seemed to be able to handle job pressures.....	1	2	3	4	5
15. Gave ambiguous, vague responses during the interview.....	1	2	3	4	5
16. Had a good understanding of policies and procedures.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Was insensitive to the opinion and feelings of others.....	1	2	3	4	5
18. Was concerned about the needs and problems of students.....	1	2	3	4	5
19. Responded only to direct questions.....	1	2	3	4	5
20. Seemed comfortable with the RA's role of representing university authority.....	1	2	3	4	5
21. Had a cumulative Q.C.A. of 2.0 to 2.1.....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Was friendly and out-going.....	1	2	3	4	5
23. Gave immature and naive answers to questions.....	1	2	3	4	5
24. Seemed sincere in expressing opinions and motives.....	1	2	3	4	5
25. Was someone I would like to work with as an RA.....	1	2	3	4	5

PLEASE ANSWER THESE ADDITIONAL ITEMS AS THEY APPLY TO YOURSELF

- 1. Who Chaired your committee _____
- 2. Sex _____ (Male) _____ (Female)
- 3. Your status a) Head RA b) RA c) Federation Representative (on Committee)
- 4. How many applicants (approximately) did you interview?
a) fewer than two b) two to six c) more than six
- 5. In general, did you have enough time to decide on a recommendation? a) Yes b) No

Additional Comments would be welcomed. (Use back of this sheet)

APPENDIX C

Definitions of RASI Scales

1. Emotional Resiliency. This factor is associated with feelings of being non-supported by persons in primary relationships, both staff and floor residents, when these persons renege on a commitment to the RA.
2. Facilitative Leadership. Interactions with groups of students in situations that demand a leadership role of the RA characterize this factor.
3. Counseling Skills. This factor is characterized by an RA's feelings about personal abilities of perception, articulation, and persuasion in situations where sensitivity and mediation are expected.
4. Environmental Adjustment. This factor deals with the RA's feelings about adjusting to new roles and relationships in which personal needs may become secondary.
5. Confrontive Skills. This factor is represented by intense situations in which the authority of the RA may be challenged.
6. Values Development. This factor is associated with situations in which the RA may experience internal or external conflicts from an interaction of personal values with priorities of students, staff, or the system.

APPENDIX D

CIRP Items Used in Factor Analysis

1. High school grades (A+, A=1, A-=2...D=8).
2. Political views (Far right = 1...Far left = 5).

(The following items were scored: 4=agree strongly, 3=agree somewhat, 2=disagree somewhat, 1=disagree strongly).

3. The Federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution.
4. The Federal government is not doing enough to protect the consumer from faulty goods and services.
5. There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals.
6. As long as they work hard, people should be paid equally regardless of ability or quality of work.
7. The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.
8. Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now.
9. Marijuana should be legalized.
10. Parents should be discouraged from having large families.
11. Women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions.
12. Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society.
13. College officials have the right to regulate student behavior off campus.
14. Faculty promotions should be based in part on student evaluations.
15. College grades should be abolished.
16. Colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized.
17. Student publications should be cleared by college officials.
18. College officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus.

19. Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions.
20. Open admissions (admitting anyone who applies) should be adopted by all publicly supported colleges.
21. Even if it employs open admissions, a college should use the same performance standards in awarding degrees to all students.

(The following items were scored by indicating personal importance: 1=not important, 2=somewhat important, 3=very important, 4=essential).

22. Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.) or creating artistic work.
23. Becoming an authority in my field.
24. Influencing the political structure.
25. Influencing social values.
26. Raising a family.
27. Having administrative responsibility for the work of others.
28. Being financially well off.
29. Helping others who are in difficulty.
30. Being successful in a business of my own.
31. Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment.
32. Developing a meaningful philosophy of life.
33. Participating in a community action program.
34. Keeping up to date with political affairs.

(The following items were responses to "What is your best guess as to the chances that you will.." and were scored: 1=no chance, 2=very little chance, 3=some chance, 4=very good chance).

35. Change major field.
36. Change career choice.
37. Fail one or more courses.
38. Graduate with honors.

39. Be elected to a student office.
40. Join a social fraternity, sorority, or club.
41. Live in a coeducational dorm.
42. Live in a commune while in college.
43. Be elected to an academic honor society.
44. Make at least a "B" average.
45. Need extra time to complete your degree requirements.
46. Have to work at an outside job during college.
47. Seek vocational counseling.
48. Seek individual counseling on personal problems.
49. Get a bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.).
50. Drop out of this college temporarily (exclude transferring).
51. Drop out permanently (exclude transferring).
52. Transfer to another college before graduating.
53. Be satisfied with your college.
54. Find a job after graduation in the field for which you were trained.
55. Get married while in college (skip if married).
56. Get married within a year after college.

APPENDIX E

Items Used to Define CIRP Factors
(Principal Items Underlined)

<u>Factor One</u> (Academic Confidence)	<u>Factor Loading</u>
1. High school grades	.41
38. <u>Graduate with honors</u>	.66
43. <u>Be elected to an academic honor society</u>	.67
44. <u>Make at least a "B" average</u>	.69
49. Get a bachelor's degree	.53
53. Be satisfied with your college	.43
54. Find a job after graduation in the field for which you were trained	.49
<u>Factor Two</u> (Directedness)	
35. <u>Change major field</u>	-.57
36. <u>Change career choice</u>	-.57
37. <u>Fail one or more courses</u>	-.51
41. Live in a coeducational dorm	-.32
42. Live in a commune while in college	-.40
45. <u>Need extra time to complete your degree requirements</u>	-.48
46. Have to work at an outside job during college	-.38
47. <u>Seek vocational counseling</u>	-.48
48. Seek individual counseling on personal problems	-.45
50. <u>Drop out of this college temporarily (exclude transferring)</u>	-.64
51. <u>Drop out permanently (exclude transferring)</u>	-.59
52. Transfer to another college before graduating	-.46
55. Get married while in college (skip if married)	-.39
56. Get married within a year after college	-.31

Factor Three (Social Leadership)

23. Becoming an authority in my field	.46
24. <u>Influencing the political structure</u>	.63
25. <u>Influencing social values</u>	.61
26. Raising a family	.31
27. Having administrative responsibility for the work of others	.43
29. <u>Helping others who are in difficulty</u>	.57
30. Being successful in a business of my own	.34
31. Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment	.51
32. Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	.50
33. <u>Participating in a community action program</u>	.65
34. <u>Keeping up to date with political affairs</u>	.60
39. Be elected to a student office	.37

Factor Four (Liberalism)

5. <u>There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals</u>	-.35
7. The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	-.40
17. Student publications should be cleared by college officials	-.38
18. <u>College officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus</u>	-.44

Factor Five (Political Awareness)

3. <u>The Federal government is not doing enough to control environmental pollution</u>	.48
4. <u>The Federal government is not doing enough to protect the consumer from faulty goods and services</u>	.42

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 8. | <u>Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now</u> | .37 |
| 9. | <u>Marijuana should be legalized</u> | .33 |
| 10. | <u>Parents should be discouraged from having large families</u> | .33 |
| 11. | <u>Women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions</u> | .33 |
| 14. | Faculty promotions should be based in part on student evaluations | .33 |
| 16. | Colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized | .32 |

Items Not Loaded on any Factor

2. Political views (conservative vs. liberal)
6. As long as they work hard, people should be paid equally regardless of ability or quality of work
12. Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society
13. College officials have the right to regulate student behavior off campus
15. College grades should be abolished
19. Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admissions
20. Open admissions (admitting anyone who applies should be adopted by all publicly supported colleges
21. Even if it employs open admissions, a college should use the same performance standards in awarding degrees to all students
22. Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts (acting, dancing, etc.) or creating artistic work
28. Being financially well off
40. Join a social fraternity, sorority, or club

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A STUDY OF THE RELIABILITY OF SELECTION
JUDGMENTS MADE BY COMMITTEES
INTERVIEWING RESIDENT ADVISOR APPLICANTS

by

Landrum Lee Cross

(ABSTRACT)

This study was concerned with investigating two questions. The first was whether interview committees in the RA selection process at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University differed from each other in using applicant characteristics as a basis for making recommendations about an applicant's continuance in the selection process. The second consideration was how accurately applicant characteristics could be used in prediction equations to assign applicants to recommendation groups at three different points in the selection process.

The source of data for this study was the participants in the RA selection process at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University during the Winter Quarter, 1976: applicants for the RA position, members of the interview committees, and staff members in the Residence Management Office (RMO). A questionnaire on whether certain applicant characteristics were used as a basis for a recommendation was administered to the committee members and analyzed for committee differences. Fourteen characteristics derived from applicant responses to the Resident Assistant Stress Inventory and the Cooperative Institutional

those offered training in that they tended to have been at the institution for a shorter period of time, to express more anxiety about situations that involved a conflict between personal values and role expectations, and to be more interested in involvement in social problems.