

THE EFFECT OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER PROCESS  
ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF PARTICIPANTS

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## THE EFFECT OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER PROCESS ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF PARTICIPANTS

Self-esteem may be defined as the value or importance attributed to the self in comparison with others. In short, self-esteem is an evaluation which individuals make and customarily maintain of themselves. Coopersmith (1967) believed self-esteem expressed an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicated the extent to which people believed themselves to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.

According to Coopersmith (1967) self-esteem develops early in childhood, becoming relatively stable as individuals mature and incorporate more information into their self concept; a view also shared by others (e.g., Morse & Gergen, 1970). Korman (1970) noted however that circumstances involving self evaluation may arise which alter the relatively chronic level of self-esteem. According to Korman (1970) chronic level of self-esteem may be altered due to specific characteristics of the situation. For example, environments which are novel may temporarily alter an individual's opinion about their competence. Furthermore, Festinger (1954) proposed that there is an intrinsic need for individuals to evaluate their opinions and that they tend to rely on social information for their view of reality when objective data are not available. That is, people will actively seek social evaluation of their abilities and opinions whenever there is uncertainty.

Byham (1971) noted that Assessment Centers had the ability to sensitize a participant with respect to achievement and self-worth, that the assessment process was similar to unfreezing, and "there was a great deal of evidence that most participants gained in self-insight from participating in assessment exercises and that this insight was fairly accurate" (p. 12). Assessment centers, because they are novel situations for many participants, create a need for self-evaluation. Moreover, they allow for self-evaluative opportunity in that participants can directly compare their abilities with other participants in group exercises and with some absolute or expected level in individual exercises. Morse & Gergen (1970) revealed that when "others" in a group situation were competing for the same employment openings and opportunity, i.e., where the utility of comparison was high, self-esteem change should be expected.

The manner in which self-esteem changes under these conditions has not been directly investigated. It has been suggested that an individual will be motivated to perform a task in a manner consistent with the self-image with which they approach the task (Korman, 1966, 1967A; 1968; 1970; 1971; 1976; Lecky, 1945). It has also been shown that consistency between a person's performance and expected performance results in feelings of pleasure (Aronson & Carlsmith, 1962).

Past evidence also suggests that high self-esteem (HSE) and low self-esteem (LSE) individuals differ in several aspects. Marecek and Mettee (1972) showed that relative to persons with HSE, individuals with LSE were made uncomfortable by success. This effect was found to be exaggerated when the LSE people were convinced of their low

status and were made to feel personally responsible for the success experience (Marecek et al., 1972). Korman (1967b) proposes that "the longer a person is in a HSE situation (implied competence by others) the more internalized will their self concept become and the more they will be motivated to seek outcomes consistent with it" (p. 66).

Some studies have shown a tendency for both high and low self-esteem participants to limit their cognitive input to information congruent to their self-image. Jones (1973) and Silverman (1964) found that HSE evaluators reacted more favorably to approval than to disapproval and were generally more responsive to success, than was true for LSE participants. Investigations by Stotland, Thorley, Thomas, Cohen and Zander (1957), Gerard (1961), Korman (1967), Baruch (1973), and Dipboye, Zultowski, Dewhirst and Arvey (1978) concluded that LSE individuals were predisposed to believe that success was unrealistic. Three of these investigations (Stotland et al., 1957; Gerard, 1961; and Cohen, 1966) also found that LSE subjects were more vulnerable to outside pressures, more dependent upon situations, and more susceptible to the perception of failure than people with HSE. Furthermore, Cohen (1959) and Byrne (1961) found that HSE individuals tended to protect themselves from negative self-evaluation, whereas LSE people were sensitive to such negative evaluations. Finally, HSE people were found to be systematically different in group performance situations in that they exert more influence (Thomas & Burdick, 1954), have greater confidence in their ability to deal with events (Coopersmith, 1967), and were less negatively influenced by the presence of others (Shrauger, 1972).

In adulthood success in work is a primary determinant of our competence. Moreover, work plays an unparalleled role in the formation of self-esteem and identity (O'Toole, 1973). It is in the workplace that our esteem is constantly on the line and serves as the major focus of our self-evaluation. Perhaps nowhere else is evaluation of our work behavior more clearly the objective than in an assessment center.

Each year thousands of men and women participate in assessment centers, whose purposes include career development, team building, promotion and early manager identification (c.f. Bullard, 1969; Byham, 1971; 1976; Campbell & Bray, 1967; Jaffee, Frank & Rollins, 1976; Kraut, 1975; Moses & McIntyre, Note 1). With the broader application of assessment center techniques there is a concern for potential effects of the assessment process on participants' careers, morals and motivation to perform (Dodd, 1976).

One aspect of the effects of the assessment process on participants concerns self-esteem (Huck, 1973). Specifically, we have seen that a person's level of self-esteem affects his or her behavior in specifiable ways; influencing the way people approach a task and their self-estimated probability of being able to perform it successfully. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of assessment center participation on self-esteem.

### Hypotheses

Thus it was hypothesized that HSE and LSE individuals, because of varying levels of perceived personal adequacy and selective sensitivity to evaluative input, will show post-assessment self-esteem scores in accord with consistency theory. That is, LSE individuals' post self-assurance scores will either remain the same or decrease while HSE participants' post scores will remain the same or increase.

### Method

#### Participants

Forty-eight nationwide sales representatives (42 males and 6 females) of an international pharmaceutical organization were the participants in this study. The sales representatives operated under a district manager and provided doctors, hospitals and clinics within a specified area, with samples and information concerning new pharmaceutical products. The final sample consisted of 36 males and 3 females due to missing data. The selection process for the candidates was not random; requirements for participation in the center were that the individuals have worked at least two years with the company as sales representatives, had to show a desire to participate in the center and in most cases, were recommended by superiors. The participants were not given objective feedback until after the pre and post measures had been given.

#### Measure

The Self-Assurance scale of the Self Descriptive Inventory (SDI) was used to measure self-esteem. This measure has been



extensively used by other researchers both in and out of industry, e.g., Gavin (1973), Hamilton (Note 2), Korman (1966, 1967 and 1970), Weiner (1970, 1973) and London and Klimoski (1975). Although the evidence on most self-esteem measures, including the SDI, is far from complete, it was considered the most suitable because of its brevity, self-explanatory nature, low item transparency, handling of acquiescence and that it allows comparisons with previous studies.

#### Assessment Program

The assessment center began with introductory remarks from corporate officers who explained that the purpose of the center was to identify areas where development would enhance their performance as sales managers. Immediately following the introduction, participants were administered the SDI to obtain a measure of their pre-assessment self-esteem.

The assessors for the two day center were district and regional sales managers, all of whom had undergone several days of training. Most of the assessors were two management levels above the candidates and none previously knew any of the assessees.

Six exercises were developed following a comprehensive job analysis. The assessment techniques included four individual exercises. One consisted of an analytical task lasting one and a half hours followed by a half hour oral presentation by each participant to an assessor. The second exercise was a three hour in-basket task. Two fact finding exercises asked the assessees 1) to deal with a problem employee and 2) to argue for or against a stadium development project. The assessees were given fifteen minutes to prepare for each exercise

and then one-half hour for each exercise presentation. Resource people were employed in the fact finding exercises, each was given the same background information and training to maintain standardization across situations. The final two exercises were leaderless group problem-solving tasks involving six participants. The assessees had thirty minutes to prepare, with the actual exercises lasting one hour. All exercises were typical of those found in most assessment centers (c.f., Huck, 1973; Thornton, 1971a; and Moses et al., Note 1). At the conclusion of the assessment center, participants were readministered the SDI. Both sets of responses were subsequently mailed back to the experimenter.

## Results

A pre-test post-test, two group design was used. The independent variable was initial level of self-esteem and the dependent variable was the post-score on the self-assurance scale of the SDI. Self-esteem level (HSE or LSE) was established through the use of a median split on pre self-esteem scores. Twenty-two subjects were defined as HSE due to pre SDI scores above 29; seventeen LSE subjects had pre self-assurance scores of 29 or below.

A possible confound in the design, namely performance in the assessment center, was ruled out early as a t-test showed that the level of self-esteem did not distinguish performance scores. HSE individuals had a mean performance score of 38.1 while LSE subjects had a mean performance score of 39.0. This difference was not significant (t = .55, df = 37, p = .58) so the performance variable was dropped from further analyses.

It was hypothesized that the post scores on the self-assurance scale of the SDI would increase for HSE individuals and decrease for LSE subjects. In an analysis of variance, this effect would be shown in a significant Level by Time (L x T) interaction. The results of this analysis, using the median split described above, is shown in Table 1. Effects due to L X T were only marginally significant (F (1,77) = 2.87, p = .09).

Table 1  
Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance  
Median Split on Pre Self-Esteem Scores  
29/30

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects			
Level (L)	1	950.234	34.75****
Subject (L)	37	27.345	
Within Subjects			
Time (T)	1	24.820	2.41
L x T	1	29.585	2.87
T x S(L)	37	10.313	
TOTAL	77		

\*\*\*\*  $p < .0001$

The mean change (post minus pre scores) for HSE was -0.04 and for LSE was -2.52. Significant effects due to Level (L) ( $F(1, 77) = 34.75, p < .0001$ ) reflected the fact that participants were assigned to L based on pre scores of the SDI and that the pre-post correlation for the SDI was 0.83. This correlation is an approximation of the test-retest reliability that is confounded with effects due to the assessment process. Another estimate of test-retest reliability was obtained using 100 introductory psychology students over an identical, two day, time period. The coefficient of stability yielded a correlation of 0.65; the low coefficient indicating high measurement error in the SDI instrument.

The use of a median split in assigning individuals to levels of self-esteem is only one of several ways to establish self-esteem levels. Two additional analyses were therefore performed to examine results issuing from alternative groupings of participants. The first alternative removed nine individuals from the analysis who had scored at the median (29 or 30) on the first administration of the self-assurance scale. This split resulted in 15 subjects in each group of HSE and LSE. This analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance  
Having Removed Median Scores (29 and 30)

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects			
Level (L)	1	1411.350	85.47****
Subject (L)	28	16.512	
Within Subjects			
Time (T)	1	2.817	.40
L x T	1	98.817	13.93****
T x S(L)	28	7.092	
TOTAL	59		

\*\*\*\*  $p < .0001$

The L x T interaction was significant ( $F(1,59) = 13.91, p < .0001$ ). The t-test indicated a mean change (post minus pre) of +2.13 for HSE participants and -3.00 for LSE subjects.

A third analysis was conducted to alter the previously arbitrary median split from 29-30 to 30-31 and included the entire applicant pool. There were 15 individuals in the HSE group and 24 in the LSE group. This design turned out to be especially noteworthy, as results were consistent with the hypothesized relationship between initial level of self-esteem and post SDI scores. As is shown in Table 3, there was a marginally significant difference between pre and post levels of self-esteem ( $F(1,77) = 3.26, p < .1$ ). The L x T interaction was highly significant ( $F(1,77) = 17.04, p < .0001$ ) as an examination of difference scores revealed that individuals in the HSE group increased on the average of +2.13 points in post self-esteem scores while individuals in the LSE group decreased an average of -3.16 points in post self-esteem measurement.

Table 3  
 Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance  
 Median Split on Pre Self-Esteem Scores  
 30/31

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Between Subjects			
Level (L)	1	1284.617	70.17****
Subject (L)	37	18.308	
Within Subjects			
Time (T)	1	24.821	3.26*
L x T	1	129.646	17.04****
T x S(L)	37	7.609	
TOTAL	77		

\*\*\*\*  $p < .0001$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

\*  $p < .1$



## Discussion

The results of the present study tend to support the hypothesis that participation in an assessment center affects the individual in accordance with consistency theory. That is, participants' post-test scores were the same or moved in the direction of their initial level of self-esteem. Other evidence that the assessment process affected the participants was revealed in differences in coefficients of stability between assessment center individuals and non participants. For the sales representatives the coefficient of stability on the SDI test-retest was 0.83. Test-retest reliability, over the same two day period, for a group of 100 college students who had not participated in an assessment center was 0.65. The difference was attributed to the treatment, as standard deviation measures between the groups differed.

These results replicate those of Hamilton (Note 2) who found that the variance of SDI scores increased significantly for HSE individuals in an assessment center for the selection of police officers. However, Hamilton (Note 2) did not find a significant increase in the variance of LSE participants. Hamilton's (Note 2) conclusion that effects on participants would be more pronounced under typical assessment center conditions was also supported, in that individuals scoring both below and above the median on the self-assurance scale would show greater variance in scores after participation.

Jones (1973) reviewed the results of self-esteem investigations from the perspective of two broad social evaluation traditions. The first tradition emphasized self-consistency in which "evaluations of

the self and others are mediated by a tendency toward self-consistency" (Jones, 1973, p. 186). The second tradition, "self-esteem," proposed that the individual "had a need to enhance his self-evaluation and to increase, maintain, or confirm his feelings of personal satisfaction, worth and effectiveness" (Jones, 1973, p. 186). Although Jones (1973) concluded that cognitive consistency theories "may be somewhat over-worked," he adopted several boundary conditions to account for results where self-consistency theory had been supported. One such condition proposed that self-exposure, (i.e., where the candidate can anticipate that his successes and failures will be disclosed) would increase the tendency of a participant to make apparently self-consistent responses. This extension is applicable to the present study in that assessment centers are likely to expose and sensitize a participant with respect to self-worth (Byham, 1971) and that typical assessment center exercises allow for direct exposure and comparison. Thus the evidence suggests that a self-consistency framework would be adopted by assessment center participants. The results of the present study also support such a position.

### Limitations

One limitation of the present study was in the use of the self-assurance scale of the SDI as a measure of self-esteem. As noted previously, the measure was chosen because of its brevity, low item transparency and the comparisons which it allowed with past investigations. The SDI has been used in a number of studies (Ghiselli, 1971; Hamilton, (Note 2); Korman, 1966; 1967; 1970; London and Klimoski, 1975)

even though there is relatively little evidence concerning its construct validity. Furthermore, recent evidence by Hamilton and Elliott (Note 3) concerning convergent validity of self-esteem measures, shows that the self-assurance scale is only moderately related to other commonly used measures of self-esteem. The authors questioned the use of the self-assurance scale of the SDI as a measure of self-esteem. Specifically, the self-assurance scale shared only six percent common variance with other measures of self-esteem and, as indicated by the reliability estimates reported previously, contained only 42 percent systematic variance. Because of these limitations it is not possible to unambiguously attribute the changes from this investigation to the same elements of self-esteem as found in other commonly used measures. The self-assurance scale however, is related to important aspects of management performance that reflect components of self-esteem. For example, the self-assurance scale is correlated 0.66 with life histories of managers judged to be effective in dealing with occupational and personal problems (Ghiselli, 1971). Self-esteem, as measured by the SDI, has also been found to correlate with job level (Gavin, 1973) as well as to moderate the relationship between interests and intrinsic satisfaction (Dipboye et. al, 1978) and between task liking and task success (Korman, 1968).

A second limitation, both in Hamilton's (Note 2) investigation and the present study, has to do with the effects of regression toward the mean. According to the regression toward the mean phenomenon, given any standard score  $Z_x$ , the best linear prediction of the standard

score  $Z_y$ , is one relatively nearer the mean of zero than is the  $Z_x$  (Hays, 1973). The idea being that if one uses a linear rule for prediction, then it is usually a good bet that an individual will fall relatively closer to the group mean on the variable predicted than he does on the variable actually known. Nevertheless, this tendency runs counter to the effects proposed in the present study for both HSE and LSE participants and, therefore, the results should be considered a conservative estimate of the true effects.

Regression to the mean is also related to how the sample is divided. The present investigation was based on a revised median split which should have moderated the effects of regression towards the mean when compared to other ways of dividing the group, e.g., extreme group approach. The revised median split was employed to maintain maximum sample size and divide the sample at the point reflecting perceptual differences between those above (HSE) and below (LSE) the splitting score.

### Conclusions

Self-esteem has come to be recognized as an important variable in organizational behavior. For example, it has been related to job attitudes (Korman, 1967b; Baruch, 1973; Lawler, 1973; and Dipboye et al., 1978), job performance (Gavin, 1973; Hechler and Weiner, 1974; London and Klimoski, 1975; and Cohen and Lefkowitz, 1977) and vocational choice (Korman, 1966; 1969; Bedian, 1977; and Leonard, Walsh and Osipow, 1973). Wells and Marwell (1976) have appropriately noted that, "how people think of and evaluate themselves both as a consequence of work conditions and as a predisposition for subsequent behaviors,

is an essential behavioral construct for interpreting human conduct" (p. 250).

Although the economic and societal importance of work has dominated thought about its meaning, it is increasingly clear that work plays a crucial psychological role in the formation of self-esteem and identity. Work contributes to self-esteem in two ways; first, it makes one aware of one's efficacy and competence. Secondly, work reminds the employee daily that he or she has something to offer, i.e., is needed by others. The workplace generally, then, is one of the major foci of personal evaluation. Lawler (1973) suggested that LSE participants' predisposition to believe that success was unrealistic could affect their motivation in the work environment. The author proposed that one way a company could deal with this affect of self-esteem on motivation was to select only those candidates possessing HSE levels. Schein (1970) also stressed the need of supervisors to become more concerned with subordinates' feelings, particularly those associated with self-image and acceptance. These viewpoints are appropriate in light of the present study's finding that self-esteem level could be influenced by simulated work environments.

The assessment center method has seen phenomenal growth in the past ten years in American industry. We can anticipate its popularity to continue in the years to come due in part to its acceptance by governmental agencies. Interest has also arisen because of the validity of the technique as well as the fact that time and money are saved by combining assessment and development in the same procedure. The assessment center process offers the opportunity for managers not only to

observe promising candidates but also to evaluate them objectively and obtain a general feeling for whether the person would fit into the organization. Moreover, the reports resulting from assessment are useful as planning tools to adjust hiring patterns and as career planning devices for candidates. The additional dividends which accrue above and beyond the explicit goals of assessment include: candidate training and a positive influence on job expectations (Byham, 1971). Assessment center popularity is also evidenced in the number of articles present in the business and industrial journals. Byham (1977) has collected a bibliography of over 600 articles on the process. Nevertheless, there are a number of questions remaining. The present study examined only one potential variable related to the effects of the assessment center process on the participants and these results are not entirely clear. Subsequent studies of effects on self-esteem would benefit from both a larger sample size, the use of extreme groups, and the use of a different measuring instrument. Moreover, it is not known how long any effects issuing from the process would last and what effects they might have on motivation, performance, absenteeism or turnover. Furthermore, the strength of effects might well be influenced by the purpose and particular kinds of exercises used in the process. Finally, future studies of the assessment center effects might well benefit from a closer examination of not only the extreme groups but also the moderate levels of self-esteem.

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## Footnotes

1

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APPENDIX A  
Self-Description Inventory

Circled items (31) comprise the Self-Assurance scale

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Admin.	1	2	3
	4	5	6
	7	8	9

DIRECTIONS: The purpose of this questions below is to obtain a picture of the traits you believe you possess and to see how you describe yourself. There are no right or wrong answers, so try to describe yourself as accurately and honestly as you can.

SECTION A: In each of the pairs of words below, check the one you think MOST describes you.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> a. capable<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. discreet   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 12. <input type="checkbox"/> a. sharp-witted<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. deliberate  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. <input type="checkbox"/> a. understanding<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. thorough | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 13. <input type="checkbox"/> a. kind<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. jolly               |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> a. cooperative<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. inventive                                      | 14. <input type="checkbox"/> a. efficient<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. clear-thinking                                     |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> a. friendly<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. cheerful  | 15. <input type="checkbox"/> a. realistic<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. tactful  |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> a. energetic<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. ambitious  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 16. <input type="checkbox"/> a. enterprising<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. intelligent |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> a. persevering<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. independent                                    | 17. <input type="checkbox"/> a. affectionate<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. frank   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7. <input type="checkbox"/> a. loyal<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. dependable       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18. <input type="checkbox"/> a. progressive<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. thrifty      |
| 8. <input type="checkbox"/> a. determined<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. courageous                                      | 19. <input type="checkbox"/> a. sincere<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. calm   |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> a. industrious<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. practical                                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20. <input type="checkbox"/> a. thoughtful<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. fair-minded   |
| 10. <input type="checkbox"/> a. planful<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. resourceful                                       | 21. <input type="checkbox"/> a. poised<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. ingenious   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11. <input type="checkbox"/> a. unaffected<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. alert      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 22. <input type="checkbox"/> a. sociable<br><input type="checkbox"/> b. steady          |

23. ☐ a. appreciative  
☐ b. good-natured

24. ☒ a. pleasant  
☐ b. modest

25. ☒ a. responsible  
☐ b. reliable

26. ☒ a. dignified  
☐ b. civilized

27. ☒ a. imaginative  
☐ b. self-controlled

28. ☐ a. conscientious  
☐ b. quick

29. ☐ a. logical  
☐ b. adaptable

30. ☒ a. sympathetic  
☐ b. patient

31. ☒ a. stable  
☐ b. foresighted

32. ☐ a. honest  
☐ b. generous

SECTION B: In each of the pairs of words below, check the one you think LEAST describes you.

33. ☒ a. shy  
☐ b. lazy

34. ☐ a. unambitious  
☐ b. reckless

35. ☐ a. noisy  
☐ b. arrogant

36. ☐ a. emotional  
☐ b. headstrong

37. ☒ a. immature  
☐ b. quarrelsome

38. ☒ a. unfriendly  
☐ b. self-seeking

39. ☐ a. affected  
☐ b. moody

40. ☐ a. stubborn  
☐ b. cold

41. ☒ a. conceited  
☐ b. infantile

42. ☒ a. shallow  
☐ b. stingy

43. ☒ a. unstable  
☐ b. frivolous

44. ☐ a. defensive  
☐ b. touchy

45. ☐ a. tense  
☐ b. irritable

46. ☒ a. dreamy  
☐ b. dependent

47. ☐ a. changeable  
☐ b. prudish

48. ☐ a. nervous  
☐ b. intolerant

49. ☐ a. careless  
☐ b. foolish

50. ☒ a. apathetic  
☐ b. egotistical

51. ☒ a. despondent  
☐ b. evasive

52. ☐ a. distractible  
☐ b. complaining

53. ☒ a. weak  
☐ b. selfish

54. ☐ a. rude  
☐ b. self-centered



55. ☐ a. rattle-brained  
☐ b. disorderly

56. ☐ a. fussy  
☐ b. submissive

57. ☐ a. opinionated  
☐ b. pessimistic

58. ☐ a. shiftless  
☐ b. bitter

59. ☐ a. hard-hearted  
☐ b. self-pitying

60. ☐ a. cynical  
☐ b. aggressive

61. ☐ a. dissatisfied  
☐ b. outspoken

62. ☐ a. undependable  
☐ b. resentful

63. ☐ a. shy  
☐ b. excitable

64. ☐ a. irresponsible  
☐ b. impatient

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Letter to Directors of Management Development and Sales Training**

## VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

May 8, 1978

Directors of Management Development  
and Sales Training

Dear Directors:

We appreciate this opportunity to get out of the laboratory and into the real world that you have provided for us. The research we are conducting is part of the on-going studies of Assessment Centers at Virginia Tech. At present, we are interested in the effects of the assessment process on job satisfaction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction and any causal relationships among them.

Enclosed are 2 sets of identical questionnaires. Each set will be administered to the participant at different times. The questionnaires marked (PA) on the top left-hand corner are to be given prior to the assessment center. Each set will take approximately 30 minutes for the participant to complete.

The second set of questionnaires labeled (PTA) - are to be given immediately after the participants conclude the assessment process. The questionnaires are self-administering, all directions are provided for the participants. Again, the questionnaires will therefore be filled out by each participant three times. The participants should be unaware that they will be answering the questionnaire at these various times.

Instructions for the participants indicate that completed questionnaires should be sent back to Virginia Tech in the provided envelopes. Please insure prompt mailing.

Virginia Tech will be providing summary results from this information to your company as soon as the data has been received and evaluated.

We are extremely grateful for your cooperation, and are looking forward to evaluating the data.

With best regards,

John W. Hamilton, Ph.D.  
James D. Utterback, M.S.

APPENDIX C  
Letter to  
Assessment Center Participant

## VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

Dear Assessment Center Participant:

The following research is being conducted by Virginia Tech through the cooperation of the Management Development departments. Although the data collected will be considered part of the assessment process, it will not be used in your evaluations. We ask that you fill out the attached questionnaire; it will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. In order to assure frankness in answering, we emphasize that your responses will be treated confidentially. Only summary data will be returned to your company and individual responses will not be revealed in any way. With this in mind, we ask that you write your name in the top right hand corner of each page, in order to insure no mix-ups in the data evaluation.

After completing the questionnaires, check to make sure you have answered each item and that your name is on the top of each page. Return the questionnaire to us using the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

We personally would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your cooperation.

With best regards,

John W. Hamilton, Ph.D.  
James D. Utterback, M.S.

**The vita has been removed from  
the scanned document**

# THE EFFECT OF THE ASSESSMENT CENTER PROCESS

## ON THE SELF-ESTEEM OF PARTICIPANTS

by

James Davis Utterback

(ABSTRACT)

Effects of the Assessment Center process on participants' self-esteem were examined and related to past research and traditional self-esteem theories. Thirty-nine sales representatives were assessed for career-development potential at a large midwestern pharmaceutical company. It was proposed, in accord with consistency theory, that high and low self-esteem participants would show post assessment self-esteem change scores in the direction of their initial level of self-esteem. A two-group, pre-post design was employed resulting in significant changes for high and low self-esteem participants. The implications of the present findings for the use of assessment center methodology and future research needs were discussed.