Assessing Job Relatedness in an In-Basket Test

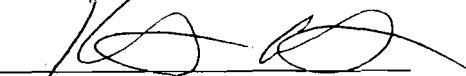Using the Critical Incident Technique

by

Lindsey M. Anderson

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Dr. Kristina Gorbatenko-Roth
Research Advisor

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

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The Graduate School
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, WI

Author: Anderson, Lindsey M

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ABSTRACT

The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) is one of 3,300 PHAs world wide.

The goal of PHAs is to provide a suitable living environment for all families. To do this,

agencies must hire the right candidates to fill all staffing positions.

The purpose of this study was to assess if the in-basket test given to job applicants

for the Assistant Resident Services Managers (ARSM) position is job-related and

therefore hiring the best candidates for the position. The Critical Incident Technique

(CIT) was used to induce what behaviors are critical to successful job performance. The

subjects consisted of 22 individuals with knowledge of the ARSM position. Throughout

this process a total of 113 incidents were collected resulting in seven themes found to be

critical to job performance of ARSMs in 2005. These themes were then compared with

the seven underlying themes of the current in-basket used in selection of ARSMs.

The results show that the current in-basket includes all but one of the most critical

incidents for success on the job. The theme that was not included was, "Effective use of

Human Resources." There was also a scoring discrepancy because the current in-basket given equal weight to all answers containing one of the seven themes when the findings show that some incidents are more important than others. Therefore, a differential scoring methodology should be used.

Future research is recommended to ensure that what is critical to the ARSM job in 2005 is still prevalent in 2007. If this is so, the missing incident should be added to the themes most critical to the job and a differentially weighted scoring algorithm should be implemented. These things added to the in-basked will provide useful in the selection of successful ARSMs.

Acknowledgments

This has been a long road... I want to thank Dr. Gorbatenko-Roth for all of her support and for continuing to challenge me throughout my thesis process. I would also like to thank John, Mike, Kathy, and all of the staff at the St. Paul Public Housing Agency for providing me with this opportunity. I appreciate your patience and willingness to help. The next thank you is to my research assistant for his help and for keeping me sane throughout this process. I appreciate your help and I would not have finished without you! Finally, I want to thank my family for supporting me in my decisions and through graduate school. I finally did it!

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Chapter I: Introduction

Public Housing Agencies

Today, Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) serve over 1.3 million of America's

poorest and most vulnerable households ("Public Housing History," n. d.). WordNet 2.0

(2003), an online dictionary system, defines public housing as "a housing development

that is publicly funded and administered for low-income families" (para. 1). Public

housing was developed to serve low-income families, the elderly, and persons with

disabilities while offering a safe, suitable living environment ("Public Housing History,"

n. d.). People who live in public housing sites may be in a 'hi-rise' apartment or a single-

family house. Currently, there are approximately 3,300 housing authorities nation wide.

This study will specifically examine the St. Paul, Minnesota PHA. To understand the

history behind St. Paul's PHA, one must first understand the history behind public

housing in the United States.

In 1949, the Housing Act established a national policy with the goal of "a decent

home and suitable living environment for every American family" (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b,

para. 2). The Housing Act addressed the postwar housing shortage and introduced a new

standard to better housing conditions (Dreier, 2000). The conditions the Housing Act

specifically addressed were the problems of urban slums, the severe shortage of

affordable housing to working families, and the housing shortage in general. President

Harry Truman's campaign requested that Republicans change their slogan from "two cars

in every garage" to "two families in every garage" (p. 1).

In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson created the Department of Housing and Urban

Development (HUD) as part of his War on Poverty ("Department of Housing and Urban

Development," n. d.). HUD is a federal agency responsible for America's housing needs and enforcing fair housing laws ("Public Housing History," n. d.). HUD assists low-income households with rent subsidies in the private sector through Section 8 Certificates and vouchers ("Public Housing History," n. d.). Section 8 certificates pay federal rent subsidies to private property owners who rent to eligible low-income households (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b). In addition, public housing programs such as HUD provide direct payment to PHAs to develop and operate housing for the residents. People who seek assistance from HUD apply at their local PHA. PHAs are typically managed by Housing Authorities. Housing Authorities administer HUD federal aid to the PHAs who manage the housing units and offer rent that residents can afford ("Public Housing History," n. d.).

As a result of the Housing Act of 1949, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) of the City of St. Paul was developed (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b). Its goal was to remove slums and construct low-income housing in St. Paul. As the next 27 years unfolded, the HRA developed four large family developments and constructed or purchased 16 'hi-rise' buildings for the elderly and disabled. In 1977, the St. Paul PHA was created to take on administrative responsibilities of subsidized housing programs and ownership of the St. Paul public housing properties that are indicated above. At this time, the St. Paul HRA became the St. Paul PHA, an independent governmental unit. Today, the St. Paul PHA has 4,256 HUD-subsidized public housing rental units.

The St. Paul PHA employs 240 people across a variety of positions and has a diverse employee makeup: 52% male, 48% female, 64% White, 13% Black, 11%

Asian/Pacific Islander, 8% Hispanic, 2% Native American, and 2% Unspecified (St. Paul PHA, 2005).

Selection Related Issues

To find applicants who are best qualified for a job, a human resource manager must systematically collect information from each applicant regarding how much of the job necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities each applicant possesses (HR-Guide, 1998-1999). Human resource managers do this using selection tools. Selection tools are used to determine the suitability of employees for a particular job by collecting data on knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some commonly used selection tools are interviews, personality tests, and physical ability tests. Although they hold much promise for selecting top applicants, selection tools are only effective when used properly. If selection tools are used properly they will aid in the reduction of turnover, discrimination lawsuits, and in savings of time and money (Ballard, 2004). On the other hand, if selection tools are used improperly or are invalid, organizations will not be hiring the best people for the positions. Greater detail on selection tools can be found in chapter two.

Organizations that use selection tools in their hiring processes must be sure they are fair, consistent, and valid ("Recruitment and Selection," n. d.). If the selection tools lack validity, organizations will not likely find suitable employees for the position and may face a discrimination lawsuit. Validity means that there is a demonstration of a strong linkage between the material in the selection tool and important work behaviors, activities, worker requirements, or outcomes on the job ("Principles," 2003). The next paragraph will explain the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) where applicants file complaints of discrimination against organizations.

In 1964, the EEOC was established to enforce federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination and to promote the equality of opportunity in the work place (U.S. EEOC, 2004). In recent years, discrimination lawsuits with regards to selection have become more common and typically begin when applicants feel that they have been treated unfairly during the job selection process at a particular organization. For such applicants, the availability and increase in legal options, such as filing a complaint with the EEOC, is a reason for the growth in legal action (Bernardin, 2003). Last year alone, 81,293 EEOC discrimination complaints were filed for racial discrimination (35.1%), gender discrimination (30%), age discrimination (23.5%), and the remainder for disability and national origin (Crutsinger, 2004). The legal concepts are explained further in chapter two.

In order for organizations to avoid such complaints and discrimination lawsuits, the selection tools they use must be job-related. The Society of Industrial Organizational Psychology (SIOP) states that "job-relatedness is evident in selection tools when evidence supports the accuracy of inferences made from scores on, or evaluations derived from those procedures with regard to some important aspect of work behavior" ("Principles," 2003, p. 4). Basically, job-relatedness asks the question: Does the selection tool test for what is actually done on the specific job?

To establish a tool's job-relatedness, one must first demonstrate it has construct validity. Therefore, one must understand content and construct validity before fully understanding job-relatedness. A test is described to have construct validity if it measures what it is actually supposed to measure ("Principles," 2003, p.4). So, for a selection tool, it is construct valid if it assesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the job in

question. A test is content valid if the actual items on the test are reflective of the domain/area of interest, in this case, the knowledge, skills, and abilities found important to the job. A good test is both content and construct valid. However, a test can have high content validity but low construct validity. For example, a test may be based on the idea that eye color and height are important to the specific job and the test, in turn, is actually testing for eye color and height. This would mean the test is content valid because the test measures what it was designed to measure. However, the test would have low construct validity if eye color and height are not necessary to the job and therefore the test is not measuring for what is actually necessary to the job or "job-related."

If a selection tool is not job-related, subjectivity is often the reason. Subjectivity in selection is defined as an opinion-based process that should have revolved around objective; fact-based and measurable criteria (Cross, 2002). An example of a subjective selection tool is one that is developed by an employee based on their opinions and ideas of what the important functions of the job are. Although co-workers may agree with certain things the employee claims, other areas may be skewed due to his/her personal feelings and experiences. Subjective judgment is often a bigger part of the selection decision-making process than organizations would like to admit (Cross, 2002).

Interestingly, although subjectivity in the hiring processes tends to lower job-relatedness, recent legal actions have indicated some non-job-related subjectivity is allowable under certain circumstances. Specifically, in 2002, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the age discrimination case *Chapman v. Al Transport* ruled that an employer can successfully defend employment decisions based on subjective reasons, as long as they have a "reasonably specific factual basis" for their opinion (Clark, 2000, p.

1). For example, an employer could legally base their decision not to hire on the fact that an applicant wore shorts to an interview but not on their opinion that they did not like the applicant.

Due to the fact that the PHA uses several different selection tools, the tools used should be analyzed for job-relatedness and subjectivity. The remaining sections in this chapter will keep the above concepts in mind while focusing on the specific St. Paul PHA position in question, the Assistant Resident Services Manager (ARSM), and the current selection tool used to hire new employees into the ARSM position. Specifically, this study will examine the position to see if the current selection tests are job-related and thus content and construct valid.

Currently, there are 13 ARSMs at the PHA. ARSMs (a.k.a. Assistant Housing Managers) are responsible for maintaining and managing operations in housing developments/buildings including hi-rise and family units (St. Paul PHA, n. d. a). This position is a higher-level position that is ambiguous in nature and requires a minimum of a Bachelors degree. The job is ambiguous in the sense that the job duties are not the same on a daily basis. For example, one day an ARSM may be in his/her office completing paper work and be interrupted by an emergency with residents and the next they may be doing housing inspections all day.

The ARSMs are classified under the first level of a three level housing manager series. The first level consists of ARSMs; the second, their managers, Resident Services Managers (RSMs); and the third, the managers that oversee all of the employees and activity in this series, the Senior Resident Services Managers (SRSMs). ARSMs are

distinguished from the RSMs, in that the latter have supervisory responsibilities and manage their own family or hi-rise units.

Currently the selection process for ARSMs is as follows: applicants apply for the position and send the information to the PHA's human resources department, human resource personnel score the applications based on a 100 point scale giving extra points for veterans' preference and disability. After the applications are scored, the supervisor interviews the top candidates. The best of those interviewed are invited to come to the PHA to complete an in-basket test. The in-basket is the final stage in the selection of the ARSM. At that time, the PHA would begin to negotiate who would be hired.

In-basket tests are designed to simulate important aspects of the particular job for which applicants are applying ("Work Samples and Simulations," n. d.). They are based on typical tasks of current employees in the position. The test taker is given background information on either the actual organization or a fictitious company and is asked to assume the specific role for which they have applied. In-basket tests typically cover a number of different areas, such as work scheduling, personal problems, the ability to prioritize information, and quality of service (Resourcing and Career Management Division, 2004). In-basket tests will be most effective if they are (a) based on thorough and accurate job information that reflects what employees in the specific job actually do; (b) constructed with consideration of guidelines for quality test development and knowledge on how to develop an in-basket that is job related, valid, consistent, and fair; (c) structured so that all individuals are given the same opportunities and are evaluated on the same criteria; (d) include a standardized rating scale so each applicant's answers are scored in a similar fashion and (e) include multiple raters for scoring the test so that more

than one person scores the test and consensus can be established ("Work Samples and Simulations," n. d.).

The in-basket currently used in the selection of ARSMs was developed in 1991 by a local consulting firm. It was created after the consultants completed a series of observations or job shadowing of ARSMs on the job. It is assumed that the in-basket was designed with attention to the five aforementioned concepts because the consultants were experts in this field; however, the PHA has changed over the past 14 years giving reason to reexamine the test. Specifically, the resident population at the PHA has changed dramatically, from mostly white elderly residents in hi-rises and Southeastern Asian residents in family units to a greater diversity of people: college students, people with mental and physical disabilities, people of different cultures, and racial groups. In 1995, the PHA had a residential makeup of 55% Caucasian, 12.7% African American, 0.7% Native American, and 31.6% Asian. Today, 10 years later, the residential makeup is 39.8% white, 33.4% African American, 1% Native American, 25.6% Asian, and 0.3% other. This fact alludes to the possibility that ARSM job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities may have changed with the change in resident makeup. For example, in 1995 the ARSMs did not work with many people who had mental disabilities, while today it is pivotal to ARSM job success that they have an understanding of mental disabilities to address issues that arise from residents who are mentally disabled.

Statement of the Problem

In-basket tests are currently given to applicants for the position of ARSM at the St. Paul PHA. This test was ostensibly developed on related knowledge, skills, and abilities for the ARSM position as it existed in 1991. Many changes have occurred to the

client population served and thus the job-related tasks may have changed. As such, the 1991 in-basket test may no longer be job related and therefore invalid. Due to this fact, the PHA may be basing hiring decisions on non job-related attributes and thus not be hiring the most qualified people for this position. In addition, the use of non job-related selection devices is grounds for legal action from applicants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the in-basket test used in the selection of ARSMs for current job-relatedness.

Methodology

The study is a qualitative design that involves potentially interviewing the 13 ARSMs, seven RSMs, and two SRSMs using a process called the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). The study will include the RSMs and the SRSMs in the interviewee pool to increase the sample size and the availability of information. These two positions have knowledge of the ARSM position, for the RSMs supervise the ARSMs and the SRSMs, in turn, manage both groups.

Each of the aforementioned individuals will be required to present for the CIT interview by his or her supervisor, during which time he/she will meet with the research investigator one-on-one in an office for approximately one hour. A detailed conversation will begin each interview explaining the study's purpose and that participation is voluntary and confidential. The CIT will then begin.

The technique is performed by asking each employee three behaviorally based examples of both effective and ineffective behaviors they have observed of their co-workers on the job. After the data are gathered, the participants' answers will be analyzed

inductively and ultimately categorized according to job characteristic themes. Two raters will be used to increase inter-rater reliability of the analysis. Specifically, the interviewer will begin the process by typing all of the verbatim behavioral examples produced by the interviewees and then printing them. She will then begin to sort through the incidents, categorizing them by which incidents seem similar or connected, and then repeat this process until she feels each incident is in the correct category. If the rater feels that an incident fits into two categories, she will copy the incident and place it into the other appropriate category as well. When the individual is satisfied with the categories she will give each a title and define the category as a function of theme contained within it. The second rater will then repeat the process, unaware of the themes induced by the first rater. After the second rater is finished, the two raters will gather and repeat the technique together comparing and contrasting what each has already done. The raters will come to agreement on the final placement of the incidents into categories before the process is finished. An example of a theme found may be possessing problem solving skills.

The themes generated will be compared to the themes included in the current in-basket measure. In 1991, when the PHA hired the consulting firm previously mentioned, they identified seven themes or dimensions on which they based the in-basket. These seven themes were problem solving and decision making skills, interpersonal skills, assertiveness skills, influencing skills, communication skills, administrative skills, motivation, and personal adjustment.

This paragraph will give a couple of examples of each of the seven themes. Problem solving and decision making skills are defined as demonstrating good judgment when dealing with situations, making sound and timely decisions, etc. Interpersonal skills

include characteristics such as demonstrating tact, diplomacy, tolerance, and patience when dealing with residents. The third theme, assertiveness/influencing skills, addresses the ability to effectively mediate solutions to conflicts or disagreements and taking charge and responding quickly. Communication skills involve expressing thoughts, ideas, or solutions clearly and understandably in one-on-one interactions or in group situations, particularly when addressing non-English speaking persons. Administrative skills are the fifth theme, encompassing the ability to juggle and prioritize multiple tasks and demands simultaneously without losing effectiveness or efficiency. Motivation is the next theme including taking initiative and demonstrating an appropriate sense of urgency and commitment to the PHA and willingness to make personal sacrifice for the good of the agency. The last theme the consulting firm identified was personal adjustment. Personal adjustment includes the abilities to cope effectively under stress; handle multiple demands without undue physical or emotional reactions, and the ability to be honest, straightforward and above-board in dealing with others as well as demonstrate trustworthiness, integrity, and appropriate candor in relationships with others.

The last chapter of the study will discuss whether or not the current selection tool used to hire the ARSM is job related and will include any suggestions for modification to the in-basket test. If the in-basket is job related, the seven themes used in the current in-basket test should coincide with the themes from the interviews. However, if the themes do not coincide, the in-basket may need to be restructured to more closely reflect/match the current ARSM knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Summary

Currently, applicants for the position of ARSM at the St. Paul PHA are given an in-basket test. The specific in-basket was developed in 1991 encompassing the related knowledge, skills, and abilities as they existed fourteen years ago. Since then, many changes have occurred to the client population served and thus the job-related tasks may have changed. As such, the 1991 in-basket may no longer be job-related and therefore invalid. The current in-basket thus should be re-examined for job-relatedness.

The proposed study will use the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to determine if the in-basket is job-related. The themes gathered from the CIT will be compared to the themes within the current in-basket. If the derived themes from the CIT coincide with the in-basket themes and the items on the in-basket reflect the CIT themes, then the selection tool used to hire ARSMs will be considered to demonstrate both construct and content validity, respectively. However, if the derived themes from the CIT do not coincide, the in-basket may need to be restructured and or other replacement selection tool with acceptable levels of job relatedness should be chosen.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Selection of Employees

With the opening of a job position, human resource managers begin one of their important functions: to recruit and select the most suitable candidates for the job ("Recruitment and Selection," n. d.). Personnel selection, as defined by HR-Guide, is the methodical placement of individuals into jobs (HR-Guide, 2001). Selection processes are a two-way street: not only are human resource managers assessing who will be the best fit for the organization but the applicant is simultaneously deciding whether the organization is one they wish to work in (Human Resource Management Division, 2000). Finding the employee who has the abilities to do the work is thus an important, but difficult, task for human resource professionals.

Statement of the problem. Selection is increasingly important as more attention is paid to the costs of poor selection ("Recruitment and Selection," n. d.). This problem arises due to the extreme expenses of employee turnover and of unnecessary employee related legal action and accompanying fees. Turnover is defined by Webster's II New Riverside dictionary (1996) as "the ratio of the number of workers hired within a given period to replace those who have left and the number of workers employed" (p. 412). Substantial money is lost when employees leave after being recruited and then trained, as it is not uncommon for even medium sized organizations to lose several million dollars a year due to turnover (Binning & Adorno, 1997). Research states that it costs about 150 percent of an employee's base salary to replace them (Murtagh, 2003). The factors attributing to this large amount of money are lost production while employees are still on the job but not concentrating fully, hiring costs such as advertising, the forfeited cost of

training, and the expenses to cover for the person who left their position. Along with

turnover, another cost of poor selection practices is legal fees.

Lawsuits based on employment practices have become more prevalent in the past

four decades because of the increase in the number of laws and regulations governing

employment practices (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). The reason these laws have

been developed is to prohibit unfair discrimination in employment and provide equal

opportunity for all applicants. Complaints are filed when applicants feel they have been

treated unfairly when applying at an organization. Last year, 81,293 discrimination

complaints were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC;

Crutsinger, 2004). The complaints range from 35.1% racial discrimination, 30% gender

discrimination, 23.5% age discrimination, and smaller amounts for disability and national

origin discrimination. The EEOC was established in 1964 to enforce federal laws

prohibiting employment discrimination and to promote the equality of opportunity in the

work place (U.S. EEOC, 2004). The availability and increase in legal options such as

filing a complaint with the EEOC for an applicant who feels he or she has been treated

unfairly is a reason for the growth in legal action (Bernardin, 2003).

Due to the increase in legal options, organizations must keep records on all

employee decisions, methods for identifying the job relatedness of selection devices, and

the determination of fair treatment for all applicants (Gatewood & Field, 2001). If this is

done, the organizations will have the records as evidence to support their hiring decision,

thus reducing, if not eliminating, the chance of legal action. As such, organizations who

do not consider all of the legal policies in the development of selection tools can be

vulnerable to discrimination charges. In the next section, the specific laws relating to employment are discussed in more detail.

Legal Mandates Regarding Selection

Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employment decisions were often discriminatory because they were based in part on a person's race, gender, religion, and/or ethnicity (Bernardin, 2003). Today, in order to reduce such discrimination in hiring processes, organizations are bound by several federal, state, and local laws, regulations, executive orders, and rules. These laws, regulations, orders, and rules were designed to punish employers who discriminate against people and to restore the poorly treated worker to the position they would be at had the discrimination not occurred. The next section will explain three selection and employer laws.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964; amended in 1972) is landmark legislation that prohibits employment-based discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). This law pertains to any employers who have 15 or more employees but it does not pertain to employment agencies and labor unions. With regards to selection tools, the Tower Amendment to Title VII states that employers can use professionally developed workplace tests to guide employment as long as they do not discriminate against a protected class.

Two protected classes have been added to Title VII: age and disability. The Age Discrimination Act (ADEA) of 1967 added age and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 added disability to the protected classes. Employees/applicants can file discrimination lawsuits under Title VII, the ADEA, and/or the ADA; however, they may

face their employer defending their practices under "business necessity." Business necessity does not have an exact definition, as the search for one has been ongoing since the *Griggs* decision in1971 (Sauls, 1995). In the famous *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.,* a unanimous Supreme Court decision ruled amongst other things "business necessity is the legal yardstick for assessing the legality of such standards...the Court held that if an employment practice that operated to exclude blacks could not be shown to be related to job performance, the practice was prohibited" (Sauls, 1995, p. 2). *Griggs v. Duke's* impact also stated that "...any test used must measure the person for the job and not the person in abstract" (p. 2). This wording was then added to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (HR-Guide, 2001). The ADEA and the ADA will be reviewed in the next sections.

The Age Discrimination Employment Act. The Age Discrimination Employment ACT of 1967 (ADEA) was developed to prohibit discrimination against age in organizations with 20 or more employees, labor unions, and employment agencies (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). The act protects employees or applicants age 40 and older in all areas of employment. With regards to the ADEA, public law enforcement personnel, such as police officers and firefighters, and uniformed military personnel are exempt based on business necessity. This means that these professions can discriminate based on age because of the nature of the job.

Americans with Disabilities Act. The American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) was created in 1990 to protect qualified individuals with disabilities who can perform the essential functions of a job, with or without reasonable accommodation (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). This law pertains to any employer with 15 or more employees, labor unions, and employment agencies. Reasonable accommodation means that employers

will make necessary changes for employees with special needs as long as it does not cause undue hardship to the employer. An example of a reasonable accommodation may be rearranging file cabinets so an employee's wheelchair can move through the work area. Examples of who is covered under the ADA are people with visual, speech, and hearing disabilities; epilepsy; cancer; serious mental illness; AIDS and HIV; alcoholism; and past drug addiction. Examples of people who are not covered are people with illegal drug abuse/dependence, sexual behavior disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, and pyromania.

The next section will describe the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that enforces the three aforementioned laws.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

The EEOC was established in 1972 to enforce federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination including Title IV, the ADEA, and the ADA (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). The EEOC is responsible for receiving, investigating, and processing charges filed due to claims of unlawful employment practices (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999).

In 1978, the EEOC, along with other federal agencies, developed the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). The guidelines were established as a set of rules to govern the use of employee selection procedures. The guidelines are federally binding and pertain to employers with 15 or more employees, labor unions, and employment agencies.

One of the basic principals under the Uniform Guidelines is that selection tests cannot create adverse impact (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). As defined by the guidelines,

> Adverse impact may be found when a selection process for a particular job or group of jobs results in the selection of members of any racial, ethnic, or sex group at a lower rate than members of other groups. The enforcement agencies will generally regard a selection rate for any group with is less than four fifths (4/5) or eighty percent of the rate for the group with the highest selection rate as constituting evidence of adverse impact... (Affirmative Action Office, 2005, p. 1).

A hypothetical example of this is the selection rate for African American candidates at Organization X is less than 80% of the selection rate for Asian candidates at the same organization.

If adverse impact is found in a selection process, the process can only legally continue if the employer can give evidence that the process is job-related for the position in question and/or that its continued use is justified in business necessity (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999). If adverse impact is found and the employer cannot give evidence that the selection tool is job-related, then the employer may face discrimination lawsuits. An example of a case where adverse impact occurred is *Griggs v. Duke Power* (1971) in which the Supreme Court halted the use of the Wonderlic as a high-school educational requirement for entry-level personnel selection (Bernardin, 2003). The scores of the Wonderlic had an adverse impact against African Americans. Adverse impact is indicated in the findings of the *Griggs v. Duke Power* (1971) in that 58% of white people

who took the test passed while only 6% of African American people who took the test passed (Bernardin, 2003). Further, Duke Power did not show that the test was job related. (Validity is typically .50 for cognitive ability tests.) Therefore, to best protect themselves against lawsuits, an employer should base their selection tools on job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Job Relatedness

In order for organizations to avoid complaints and discrimination lawsuits, the selection tools they use must be job-related. To establish a selection tool's job-relatedness, one must first demonstrate it has construct validity. Therefore, one must understand content and construct validity before fully understanding job-relatedness.

A test is described to be construct valid if the test measures what it is actually supposed to measure. Thus, for a selection tool, it is construct valid if it assesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to the job in question. A test is content valid if the actual items on the test are reflective of the domain/area of interest, in this case, the knowledge, skills, and abilities found important to the job. A good test is both content and construct valid. However, a test can have high content validity but low construct validity. For example, a test may be based on the idea that eye color and height are important to the specific job and the test, in turn, is actually testing for eye color and height. This would mean the test is content valid because the test measures what it was designed to measure. However, the test would have low construct validity if eye color and height are not necessary to the job and therefore the test is not measuring for what is actually necessary to the job or "job-related."

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If a selection tool is not job-related, subjectivity is often the reason. Subjectivity in selection can be defined as an opinion-based process that should have revolved around objective, fact-based criteria (Cross, 2002). An example of a subjective selection tool is one that is developed by an employee based on their opinions and ideas of what the important functions of the job are. Although co-workers may agree with certain things the employee claims, other areas may be skewed due to his/her personal feelings and experiences. Subjective judgment is often a bigger part of the selection decision-making process than organizations would like to admit.

Interestingly, although subjectivity in the hiring processes tend to lower job-relatedness, recent legal actions have indicated some non-job-related subjectivity is allowable under certain circumstances. Specifically, in 2002, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the age discrimination case *Chapman v. Al Transport* ruled that an employer can successfully defend employment decisions based on subjective reasons, as long as they have a "reasonably specific factual basis" for their opinion (Clark, 2000). For example, an employer could legally base their decision not to hire on the fact that an applicant wore shorts to an interview but not on their opinion that they did not like the applicant.

Yet overall, to best protect themselves from charges of discrimination, employers should examine their selection tools for job-relatedness. There are several different ways employers can assess/determine if a selection tool is based on the job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors. Conducting a job-analysis is one such way. Job analysis is defined by Gatewood and Field (2001) as "the gathering of information about a job in an organization" (p. 1). This information should cover the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform on the job as well as the working conditions that characterize the job. One way to conduct such an analysis is to use the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). The CIT was developed in 1954 by John Flanagan ("Critical Incident Technique," n. d.). The technique is performed by asking each employee three behaviorally based examples of both effective and ineffective behaviors they have observed of their colleagues on the job. The examples provided by the employees are them used to induce the critical behaviors necessary to the job; it identifies the job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities of the specific position.

After collecting the data, the researcher will be able to compare what the employees have determined necessary to the job to what is actually tested in the selection tools used. If the employee-identified critical behavior data coincides with behaviors assessed via the selection tool then the selection tool is job-related. However, if the two do not coincide then the selection tool is not job-related and should be changed. The CIT is further explained in chapter three.

Selection Tools

This section will list selection tools most commonly used by organizations. The section will end by narrowing in on a specific tool, the in-basket test, which will be the focus of the remainder of this paper.

Not everyone who applies for a job has the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities. Thus, human resource managers have to separate qualified from unqualified applicants. To do so, the human resource managers must systematically collect information from the applicant that reflects how much of the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities each applicant has. This systematic process can take place in a number of ways ranging from a brief informational interview to the combination of an interview, test, and job simulation.

Information to determine the suitability of employees for a particular job can be collected using one or more selection tools. Selection tools are categorized as follows: interviews, personality tests, biographical data, cognitive ability tests, physical ability tests, self assessment, assessment centers, and work samples (HR-Guide, 2001). This paper will focus on work samples, specifically the in-basket test.

Work samples are often referred to as performance tests. In this type of tests, applicants are asked to perform tasks that reflect actual job duties of the position for which they are applying (Gatewood, 2001). Performance tests should be developed from the results of a job analysis.

Work samples provide direct evidence about the applicant's ability and skill to work on the job (Gatewood, 2001). They do this by having applicants complete tasks that are representative of the job duties of the position to which they are applying, thus

providing evaluators direct data on how any given applicant would actually perform in

the position in question. Work samples give evaluators a chance to form opinions after

applicants actually perform specific job duties. Therefore work samples are a good

predictor/indicator of future job behavior. Some of the most common work samples are

the in-basket, oral presentation, leaderless group discussion, and role-playing. In-basket

testing will be the focus of the remainder of the section.

The in-basket test is a paper-pencil or computer administered test that was named

after the in and out baskets some managers have on their desks (Gatewood, 2001). In this

type of testing, applicants are given background information and must deal with the

materials in their "in-basket" in a certain amount of time (Bernardin, 2003). For example,

if a person were applying for a job as a legal secretary the background information they

may be given is that they are leaving in two hours for a three day vacation and were just

given three documents of high importance that require letters be written. The nature of

each of the situations would be explained as well as to whom the letters should be

addressed. The applicant would then react to this situation as if they were in this position.

After the in-basket is completed, the candidates may be interviewed by the person who

administered the test to discuss the rationale for their answers (Bernardin, 2003).

Candidates' responses will then be scored. Rarely is there one right or wrong answer, but

certain responses will have been determined particularly effective (Resourcing and

Career Management Division, 2004).

In-baskets can include a variety of materials such as letters, memoranda, and

reports that require a response or some form of action (Resourcing and Career

Management Division, 2004). The applicants must decide what they would do first and

how to complete each item given to them. If an applicant feels that a letter or memo should be written they must actually write a hypothetical letter or memo including detail about the specific situation and addressing the background information given. Further, all actions or intentions must be put in writing.

In-baskets are taken individually and, on average, the applicant is given two to three hours to complete the tasks (Resourcing and Career Management Division, 2004). The materials vary in importance and priority to model the materials typically handled by an individual in the specific position. The applicant may be measured/scored on oral and written communication skills, planning, decisiveness, initiative, and organization skills (Bernardin, 2003). Applicants do not need any specialized training, knowledge, or experience to take the in-basket test (Resourcing and Career Management Division, 2004). For example, the individual who is applying for a legal secretary position would not be expected to know the organization's policies. What should be most noted about the in-basket test however is the following: the key to the success of the in-basket is that the content of the required tasks should be determined by a job analysis, thus ensuring it is representative of actual administrative tasks of the position (Gatewood, 2001).

Public Housing

Today, Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) serve over 1.3 million of America's poorest and most vulnerable households ("Public Housing History," n. d.). WordNet 2.0 (2003), an online dictionary system, defines public housing as "a housing development that is publicly funded and administered for low-income families" (para. 1). Public housing was developed to serve low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities while offering a safe, suitable living environment ("Public Housing History,"

n. d.). People who live in public housing sites may be in a 'hi-rise' apartment or a single-family house. Currently, there are approximately 3,300 housing authorities nation wide. This study will specifically examine the St. Paul, Minnesota PHA. To understand the history behind St. Paul's PHA, one must first understand the history behind public housing in the United States.

In 1949, the Housing Act established a national policy with the goal of "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b, para. 2). The Housing Act addressed the postwar housing shortage and introduced a new standard to better housing conditions (Dreier, 2000). The conditions the Housing Act specifically addressed were the problems of urban slums, the severe shortage of affordable housing to working families, and the housing shortage in general. President Harry Truman's campaign requested that Republicans change their slogan from "two cars in every garage" to "two families in every garage" (p. 1).

In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson created the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as part of his War on Poverty ("Department of Housing and Urban Development," n. d.). HUD is a federal agency responsible for America's housing needs and enforcing fair housing laws ("Public Housing History," n. d.). HUD assists low-income households with rent subsidies in the private sector through Section 8 Certificates and vouchers ("Public Housing History," n. d.). Section 8 certificates pay federal rent subsidies to private property owners who rent to eligible low-income households (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b). In addition, public housing programs such as HUD provide direct payment to PHAs to develop and operate housing for the residents. People who seek assistance from HUD apply at their local PHA. PHAs are typically managed by Housing

Authorities. Housing Authorities administer HUD federal aid to the PHAs who manage

the housing units and offer rent that residents can afford ("Public Housing History," n.

d.).

As a result of the Housing Act of 1949, the Housing and Redevelopment

Authority (HRA) of the City of St. Paul was developed (St. Paul PHA, n. d. b). Its goal

was to remove slums and construct low-income housing in St. Paul. As the next 27 years

unfolded, the HRA developed four large family developments and constructed or

purchased 16 'hi-rise' buildings for the elderly and disabled. In 1977, the St. Paul PHA

was created to take on administrative responsibilities of subsidized housing programs and

ownership of the St. Paul public housing properties that are indicated above. At this time,

the St. Paul HRA became the St. Paul PHA, an independent governmental unit. Today,

the St. Paul PHA has 4,256 HUD-subsidized public housing rental units.

The St. Paul PHA employs 240 people across a variety of positions and has a

diverse employee makeup: 52% male, 48% female, 64% White, 13% Black, 11%

Asian/Pacific Islander, 8% Hispanic, 2% Native American, and 2% Unspecified (St. Paul

PHA, 2005).

Selection at the St. Paul PHA. Selection tools are used to aid in successful

selection decisions in all of the positions at the PHA. Job relatedness applies to public

housing in all areas but this paper will specifically examine ARSMs.

Currently, there are 13 ARSMs at the PHA. ARSMs (a.k.a. Assistant Housing

Managers) are responsible for maintaining and managing operations in housing

developments/buildings including hi-rise and family units (St. Paul PHA, n. d. a). This

position is higher-level position that is ambiguous in nature and requires a minimum of a

Bachelors degree. The job is ambiguous in the sense that the job duties are not the same on a daily basis. For example, one day an ARSM may be in his/her office completing paper work and be interrupted by an emergency with residents and the next they may be doing housing inspections all day.

The ARSMs are classified under the first level of a three level housing manager series. The first level consists of ARSMs; the second, their managers, Resident Services Managers (RSMs); and the third, the managers that oversee all of the employees and activity in this series, the Senior Resident Services Managers (SRSMs). ARSMs are distinguished from the RSMs in that the latter have supervisory responsibilities and manage their own family or hi-rise units.

Currently the selection process for ARSM is as follows: applicants apply for the position and send the information to the PHA's human resources department, human resource personnel scores the applications based on a 100 point scale giving extra points for veteran's preference and disability. After the applications are scored, the supervisor interviews the top candidates. The best of those interviewed are invited to come to the PHA to complete an in-basket test. The in-basket is the final stage in the selection of the ARSM.

The in-basket consists of 12 questions and each applicant is given one and one fourth hours to complete the test. Each question has a maximum score ranging from two to 12 points. The 12 questions consist of scenarios in which the supervisor wants the applicant to convey certain ways they would deal with the situations. The supervisors use a scoring sheet to guide them in scoring each applicant's answers. The scoring sheet has examples of what an applicant should include in their answers to get maximum

points. For example, a scenario of a resident receiving a bill for repairs to their housing unit that they claim they have paid should be dealt with by contacting one of the clerks to look into this matter. Upon completion and scoring of the in-basket, the PHA supervisors would decide who to hire.

The in-basket currently used in the selection of ARSMs was developed in 1991 by a local consulting firm. It was created after the consultants completed a series of observations or job shadows of ARSMs on the job. It is assumed that the in-basket was designed in a manner that resulted in it having high job-relatedness for the ARSM position in 1991; the consultants were considered 'experts' in this field.

Themes of the current in-basket. The consulting firm identified seven themes/ domains that were most important for success as an ARSM. They are as follows: problem solving and decision making skills, interpersonal skills, assertiveness/influencing skills, communication skills, administrative skills, motivation, and personal adjustment. The consulting firm called these seven themes dimensions and each one is explained below.

Problem solving and decision making involves analyzing situations quickly and accurately, demonstrating good judgment, handling day to day problems effectively, demonstrating the ability to brainstorm and generate solutions to problems, and understanding data and performing calculations properly.

Interpersonal skills are the second theme and involve considering the needs and feelings of others while developing relationships and seeking to understand cultural differences.

The third theme is *assertiveness/influencing skills*. This encompasses possessing the ability to mediate when problems arise, remaining neutral in conflict so that one is unbiased and impartial, is assertive when appropriate, is able to gain the respect of others, is confident, and responds quickly to unexpected events while taking charge.

Communication skills are the next theme. The skills in this category are to be clear and understandable when expressing ideas or thoughts especially to non-English speaking persons; be an active listener and show that you are interested in what others say, be able to ask questions so that you effectively understand the situation and gather the information needed; clearly communicate public housing policy, procedures, lease agreement, conditions for occupancy, and rent calculations to new or current residents; and possess the ability to write in a clear and concise manner using proper formatting, tone, vocabulary, and grammar.

The fifth category is *administrative skills*. ARSMs should be able to demonstrate the ability to juggle and prioritize situations while completing each task effectively and efficiently; demonstrate time management, organization, and use of appropriate detail; and keep accurate, orderly, systematic records.

Motivation is the next category and involves being internally motivated, going above and beyond what is expected, willing to make sacrifices for the good of the agency, being persistent despite obstacles that may get in the way of progress, setting high standards for work, displaying loyalty to the organization and having pride and commitment to the PHA despite one's own opinions/ideas being overruled.

The last category developed by the consulting firm is *personal adjustment*. This entails demonstrating flexibility and adapting when situations that are emergencies or

cause frustration arise, being able to cope under pressure and handle stress, being able to admit errors, demonstrating integrity and appropriate behavior in relationships with others, honesty, being balanced and able to handle emotional reactions from residents, and adapting to change and seeing it as a challenge rather than a disruption.

Relative weight of current in-basket test categories. The current in-basket consists of the seven themes listed in the above section. When calculating a 'score' for the in-basket tests, each of the seven themes are considered equally critical to successful job performance for ARSMs. As an applicant's test is scored, their essay style answers are assessed on whether or not they discuss/demonstrate understanding of the seven themes. For example, an applicant may write about their ability to work under pressure and handle emotional situations with residents; the person scoring the answer would then assess which of the seven themes the applicant has demonstrated.

After reviewing all of the applicant's answers, the ideal candidate would have covered all of the seven themes somewhere throughout their test. The seven themes are given equal weight when a person is reviewing an applicant's test results. As such, the scores earned by an applicant across all themes are just summed. As mentioned above, the in-basket consists of 12 questions. Although an ideal candidate would include the seven themes in their answers the questions on the test are ambiguous in nature so the person scoring the test must decide what concepts the applicant is discussing.

Issue with the current in-basket. The above mentioned in-basket was developed in 1991 and the PHA has changed over the past 14 years, giving reason to reexamine the test. Specifically, the resident population at the PHA has changed dramatically in the last 14 years, from mostly white elderly residents in hi-rises and Southeastern Asian residents

in family units to a greater diversity of people: college students, people with mental and physical disabilities, and people of different cultures and racial groups. In 1995, the PHA had a residential makeup of 55% Caucasian, 12.7% African American, .7% Native American, and 31.6% Asian. Today, 10 years later, the residential makeup is 39.8% white, 33.4% African American, 1% Native American, 25.6% Asian, and .3% other. This fact alludes to the possibility that ARSM job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities may have changed with the change in resident makeup. For example, in 1995 ARSMs did not work with many people who had mental disabilities, while today it is pivotal to ARSM job success that ARSMs have an understanding of mental disabilities to address issues that arise from residents who are mentally disabled.

In summary, today's ARSM applicants are given an in-basket test that was developed in 1991. Although it was initially assumed to be job related at the time of development, it needs to be reexamined for continued job relatedness 14 years later. Specifically, the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the 2007 ARSM position may have changed over this period. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to examine the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to successfully perform as an ARSM. Once these are determined, they will be used to assess the current job-relatedness of the ARSM selection tool, the in-basket test.

Chapter III: Methodology

Selection tools are often used to aid employers in their hiring decisions. To make

effective selection decisions, selection tools must be used properly. If used properly,

selection tools will assist in the reduction of turnover and discrimination lawsuits, and in

the savings of time and money (Ballard, 2004). This will happen only if the selection

tools are valid and reliable.

The goal of this study is to discover if the in-basket test given to job applicants for

the ARSM position within the St. Paul PHA is job-related. To determine this, the Critical

Incident Technique (CIT) will be used. This chapter discusses the process used to gather

the data and details about the sample used.

Subject Selection and Description

The position of interest for the study is the Assistant Resident Services Managers

(ARSMs). The ARSMs are generally responsible for maintaining and managing

operations in housing developments/buildings that include 'hi-rise' and family units (St.

Paul PHA, n. d. a). These individuals are also responsible for performing management

duties to include lease enforcement of residents and maintaining all records and reports

(St. Paul PHA, n. d. a). People with knowledge regarding this position include ARSMs,

Resident Services Managers (RSMs), and Senior Resident Services Managers (SRSMs).

ARSMs are the position of interest and are explained above, RSMs are their managers,

and SRSMs oversee ARSMs and RSMs. Twenty-two potential subjects will be thus pre-

selected according to their job title: the 13 ARSMs, seven RSMs, and two SRSMs.

Instrumentation

The CIT will be used to gather the data. This technique was developed in 1954 by John Flanagan ("Critical Incident Technique," n. d.). The technique was performed by asking each employee three behaviorally based examples of both effective and ineffective behaviors they have observed of their colleagues on the job. The examples provided by the interviewers are then used to induce the critical behaviors necessary to the job, identifying the job related knowledge, skills, and abilities of ARSMs. To gather the data and then develop the questions asked, the research investigator will use the CIT (see Appendix A).

The 22 subjects will be asked a series of two questions that can yield a possible six examples (see Appendix A). The subjects will be told that the focus is on the ARSMs so their examples need to be specific to that position. Subjects will first be asked to give three examples of effective behavior that they had observed in their colleagues. If the participants can not think of anything, they will be provided a second prompt, specifically to provide an example of a 'behavior they would want other ARSMs to copy' or 'behavior they would not want other ARSMs to copy.' If a subject is still unable to think of an example, he/she will be given the following example derived from a practice interview:

A particular ARSM received a complaint that a resident's children were bullying their neighbor's kids. The accusation was brought to the ARSM attention by the neighbor who was accusing the other's children of bullying. The ARSM met individually with each of the families and found that there were many underlying issues between the families because of misunderstandings culturally that spanned

throughout the years. The ARSM then realized that this matter stemmed from more than an accusation of bullying and contacted a Human Services Coordinator to assist the families in resolving their issues and beginning to understand one another.

If two behaviors are recognized in one example, the investigator will reiterate what the individual had said, ask for clarification, and ask if both are important or one more so than the other. For example, after reading the above example from a practice interview, the research investigator might recognize that the example talks about effective problem solving (i.e. the ARSM brought the residents into their office and talked with them) and the idea of knowing who to contact to further assist residents (i.e. the ARSM contacted the Human Services Coordinator because of their expertise in cultural issues with residents). Therefore, the research investigator would state both behaviors identified in the incident and ask for clarification regarding relative importance.

Data Collection Procedures

The research investigator will give each participant the choice of where the interview will be conducted. After all of the scheduling is done, the research investigator will begin conducting the interviews. Upon arrival at the interview, each participant will be engaged in a detailed conversation about the study's purpose, confidentiality, and what specifically was going to be asked of him/her (see Appendix B). All potential interviewees will have questions answered as well. At this time, participants will be asked to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix C). The participants will have the choice of participation and if they would allow the interview to be tape recorded.

After agreeing, participants will be thanked for participating and the researcher will begin the CIT. The research investigator will take detailed notes throughout the hour interview and use the tape recorder if permitted. At the conclusion of the CIT, the participant will be thanked for participating and the interview will end.

Data Analysis

All of the data gathered will be qualitative and thus an inductive analysis will be performed. To do so, the research investigator will first enter the verbatim responses from each participant into a Word document. Second, the research investigator will print out separate sheets, each with a single incident on them. Third, the investigator will separate the data into categories grouping the similar examples with one another. An example of incidents that may be paired with one another could be if one incident talked about an ARSM who was leaving work at the end of the day and witnessed a fight between residents and stayed to resolve the issue and another talked about how an ARSM is willing to stay after hours to meet with residents who are unable to meet during the day. This process will be repeated until the investigator feels the incidents are in their correct categories. The categories will then be named, and definitions will be given explaining what each category means. For example, the two incidents mentioned above might be part of a category titled 'Initiative' or 'Accessibility to Residents.' An independent reviewer unfamiliar with the ARSM will then repeat the process individually until he too feels his categories are correct, named, and defined. The principal research investigator and the colleague will then meet and have a discussion of their results, compile all incidents into agreed upon categories, and come to consensus on a name and definition for each category.

The final phase of the analysis will consist of the following. The research investigator will conduct an analysis to determine if the current CIT-identified themes coincide with the themes used to develop the 1991 in-basket test. Specifically, this analysis will determine whether the in-basket test is currently job-related. Since job-relatedness encompasses both content and construct validity, both must be measured to determine if the test is job-related.

The first step in doing this will be to check for construct validity. This is done by asking the question: Do the job behavior themes in the 1991 in-basket match the themes identified through the CIT? If the answer is 'yes' then in theory, the test covers the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to the job. If 'yes,' the second step would then be to examine if the 1991 in-basket actually measures for the themes it says it does. If the answer is again 'yes,' then the in-basket is content valid because the content of the in-basket actually measures what purports to measure. Answering 'yes' to both questions thus means that the test is job-related. However, if either construct or content validity is not established through these procedures, the current in-basket will be determined to not be job-related. Chapter four will discuss the results from the data analyses.

Chapter IV: Results

This study examined the in-basket test given to ARSMs at the St. Paul PHA for job-relatedness. Twenty-two possible participants were contacted to participate in the study and all 22 people participated for an overall participation rate of 100%. They include 13 Assistant Resident Services Managers (ARSMs), seven Resident Services Managers (RSMs), and two Senior Resident Services Managers (SRSMs). Of the 22 member population of interest, a total of 11 (50%) were female. Twelve (55%) of the participants were Caucasian, six (27%) Asian, three (14%) African-American. One subject (5%) did not specify his/her racial background. For the 13 ARSM participants, their years of ARSM job-related experience ranged from approximately six months to 20years. Four (31%) of the ARSMs had worked in the position for more than six years, seven (54%) from two to six years, and two (15%) had less than a year of experience as an ARSM. As the above data indicates, the majority of the ARSM participants had been in the ARSM position for durations that allowed them to intrinsically understand the important aspects of the ARSM job.

The participants completed a CIT to examine whether job relatedness was present in the current in-basket test used to hire ARSMs. In the current research presented below, the research investigator found seven themes that identify and encompass the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for ARSMs to possess in 2005. These seven themes were then compared to the seven themes identified in 1991 by the consulting firm who created the in-basket test. The following paragraphs explain the process by which the research investigator and assistant determined the seven 2005 categories found critical to the job.

Through the completion of the critical incident interviews, a total of 113 incidents were collected. Eighty of the incidents were examples of effective behavior and 33 of ineffective behavior for ARSMs. The total sets of incidents were then individually sorted into behavioral categories. The sorting consisted of placing incidents with similar ideas together. For example, when reading through the incidents, if two separate incidents each expressed the importance of ARSM effectively communicating with residents regarding contents of an apartment lease, they would be placed in a pile together. For any individual incident in which two separate behaviors were expressed, duplicates were made of the incident prior to sorting. For example, a single incident may have talked about the importance of effectively communicating the lease agreement to residents while simultaneously being able to deal with interruptions of that meeting at the same time. This incident would then be copied, with one copy each being placed into two different categories; one category dealing with effective communication and the other dealing with time management.

This sorting process was iterative in nature, with the investigator moving incidents between categories and creating new categories as necessary in order to ascertain the underlying constructs implied within the set of incidents. In order to increase reliability and internal validity of the findings, a second individual, referred to from here on as the assistant, independently sorted the data.

Sorting Results: Principal Investigator

The research investigator sorted the data three times. The first time resulted in physical piles of incidents, with each pile containing incidents with similar ideas expressed within its content. The piles (i.e. categories) were then defined and named.

Eighteen categories were elucidated through this first process. Descriptions of each category follow.

Effective communication is defined as effectively communicating with residents and other co-workers. For example, an ARSM may have witnessed a verbal argument between two residents as they were leaving work on a Friday but he or she will not return to work for three days because of vacation time they have planned. The ARSM must effectively communicate to the ARSM who will be at the PHA what happened so that the incident does not reoccur and if it should, the ARSM on duty is aware of the past argument (N=24 incidents).

Effective problem solving is defined as being able to recognize and handle issues in a timely manner and resolve the issue before it becomes a larger problem. The above example of the ARSM communicating the argument between the two residents to the other ARSM is also exemplar of this category, for the ARSM's indicated behavior should lead to effective problem solving of this issue (N=21 incidents).

Motivation/initiative is defined as going above and beyond what their job description entails. For example, ARSMs should get involved with other activities at the St. Paul PHA to get to know residents and become familiar faces at the resident sites. This may mean that an ARSM volunteers his or her time on a Saturday afternoon to assist residents with their taxes (N=16 incidents).

Human resources is defined as knowing what co-workers or human resources are available to them as referrals for residents' situations that ARSMs are not educated/trained to handle. This way, residents' specific needs can be dealt with in the most efficient manner. As an example of this concept, an ARSM recognized when a

resident needed to be referred to a Human Services Coordinator at the PHA to best assist the resident (N=15 incidents).

Poor/lack of documentation is defined as failure to document situations that may require follow up with residents or other members of the PHA. For example, residents sign lease agreements stating the date of move in and the date of lease termination. If an ARSM forgets to document a lease termination and the residents remain living in the PHA, the PHA has no documentation of the resident breaking the lease and that they have not been paying rent (N=12 incidents).

Culturally sensitive effective communications are defined as ability to effectively interact/communicate with people of many different ethnic backgrounds each day. It involves an ARSM recognizing that he or she may not understand a resident's language; in this case, the ARSM should contact a person in the agency who can translate or better assist the resident in a timely manner. An example would be an ARSM checking in with residents who speak English as a second language to be sure that they understand what fliers say that are posted around the building and that mailed letters were understood (N=11 incidents).

Timeliness/organization is defined as getting work done on time and in a systematic way so that a 'paper trail' is created, documents can be located when necessary, and ARSMs know where they had left off if an important task was interrupted. For example, an ARSM may be interrupted with a resident emergency while writing a lease termination. The resident's situation would take precedence and needs to be tended to immediately, however the ARSM should possess the ability to deal with the resident situation and then return to their office to finish the lease termination (N=11 incidents)

Knowledge of PHA policy is defined as being aware of and enforcing PHA policies. For example, if two residents get into a verbal argument, the ARSM should deal with this situation as PHA policy states and properly document the incident (N=9 incidents)

Team work is defined as contacting and working with other PHA employees to best serve residents and the agency's needs. For example, if an ARSM is done with his or her tasks for the day and notices that another ARSM is in the middle of paperwork and a family of residents comes to the busy ARSM for assistance, the ARSM whose work is completed and speaks the residents' language knows he or she can better serve the family and steps in (N=9 incidents).

Ineffective communication is defined as not communicating effectively. For example, an ARSM does not communicate the terms of the rental lease to new residents and they break a rule of the lease without knowing it (N=7 incidents).

Culturally related effective problem solving is defined as being respectful of residents' beliefs and using the best of their abilities to serve residents of all cultural backgrounds. For example, if a non-emergency inspection of a PHA housing unit needs to be done due to a report of a water leak at the home, the ARSM works with the maintenance crew to schedule the inspection at a time that fits around the family's daily religious rituals (N=6 incidents).

Unaware of PHA policy is defined as lack of understanding of PHA policy. An ARSM is not aware of what PHA policy says and therefore is unable to communicate to residents what the importance of the rental lease is to their stay at the PHA (N=5 incidents).

Ineffective problem solving is defined as not handling situations in a timely and sufficient manner. For example, a resident came to an ARSM with a complaint about their neighbor at the PHA and the ARSM did not report this to anyone or document the situation and the next week a large incident with the residents occurred (N=4 incidents).

Accessibility to residents is defined as letting residents know that they are here to assist them, when they will be in the building to assist them, and what their policy is on meeting with residents. This will foster a healthy relationship between the residents and the ARSM while keeping communication lines open. For example, an ARSM has a schedule outside of their office that indicates the times they will be in the office and when residents can come and discuss issues (N=4 incidents)

Confidentiality is defined as keeping necessary information confidential. For example, residents may share information about their medical history with ARSMs that they need to keep confidential. This also involves ensuring that private information is not given to the wrong people, along with developing trust with the residents (N=3 incidents).

Biases are defined as recognizing that biases exist. For example, an ARSM who is unable to separate one situation from the next and imposes his or her judgment instead of dealing with each incident as a clean slate can cause problems within the PHA. A specific example is that an ARSM deals with daily complaints from residents about one individual. The ARSM gets a call one day from the individual who the complaints are usually made against stating that the person's neighbor has damaged their housing unit. Although the ARSM knows that the resident calling has a history of unacceptable

behavior themselves, the ARSM looks into the matter and handles the property damage complaint as if it were coming from any resident (N=2 incidents).

Good/proper documentation is defined as effectively documenting situations in a clear, neat manner. For example, if an ARSM recognizes an issue with a lease violation and documents it properly, the other ARSM will be able to follow the report and take further action if needed (N=2 incidents)

Lack of initiative is defined as not taking the time to go above and beyond their job description to better assist residents or for the good of the agency . An example would be an ARSM who has worked an eight hour day and is heading out the door to go home. In the entrance of the building a resident is struggling with their groceries and the ARSM pushes by them and leaves (N=1 incident).

In the second sort, the research investigator used the same categories but reorganized the incidents within them. That is, the incidents in each category were assessed to determine if they should continue to reside in current category, or be moved to a different but similar category. The number of incidents in the categories changed as follows: effective communication 25, effective problem solving 20, motivation/initiative 16, human resources 13, poor/lack of documentation 9, effective communication culturally related 11, timeliness/organization 11, knowledge of PHA policy 9, team work 9, ineffective communication 7, effective problem solving culturally related 6, did not know PHA policy 5, ineffective problem solving 4, accessibility to residents 4, confidentiality 3, biases 2, good/proper documentation 2, and lack of initiative with 1 incident.

To increase the content validity of the behavioral categories, the research investigator then completed a third sort. Specifically, the research investigator combined categories similar in content, thus reducing the total number of categories under consideration. For example, *good/proper documentation* and *poor/lack of documentation* were combined because they fall under the same content theme of documentation, one an example of effective documentation, the other, ineffective. By engaging in the above process, the number of categories was narrowed to nine. The results of the third sort are displayed in the table below. The table indicates the categories derived from the principal investigator's third sort and the number of incidents in her final nine categories.

Table 1

Categories and Number of Incidents from the Principal Investigator's Third Sort

Categories Derived from the Principal Investigators 3rd Sort of the Data.	Number of Incidents in Each Category
1. Effective Communication	32
2. Attention to PHA Policy	24
3. Problem Solving Skills	24
4. Effective Use of Co-Workers or other Human Resources	21
5. Motivation	18
6. Knowledge/ Understanding of other Cultures	15
7. Effective Time Management	11
8. Accessibility to Residents	4
9. Being Aware of Biases	2

Descriptions of each of the nine categories follow. *Effective communication* is defined as verbal and written communication that is clear and understood by the recipient. Examples include effectively communicating verbally and in writing, remaining respectful to residents and others, stating the facts in a clear manner, sharing information with others when necessary, and being sure understanding is reached by the person with whom the ARSM is communicating (N= 32 incidents).

Attention to PHA policy is defined as knowledge and understanding of PHA policy. For example, this is executed in proper completion of PHA forms, understanding the lease agreement, using proper key practice with PHA keys, having reports in on time, remaining consistent with residents, enforcing PHA rules, using confidentiality with information and remaining bias-free (N=28 incidents).

Problem solving skills are defined as analytical, creative, and timely handling of issues that arise. An example would be ARSMs knowing the boundaries of their jobs and referring residents to other people at the PHA (i.e. maintenance workers, Human Service Coordinators, and other programs offered) when necessary. ARSM must deal with incidents in a timely manner and should research/investigate situations before acting (N=24 incidents).

Effective use of co-workers or other human resources is defined as effectively referring residents to other PHA workers, knowing who the appropriate referral would be, and how to effectively contact and communicate with the person they contacted as a resource on a regular basis. An example is an ARSM who referred a resident to a Human Services Coordinator and potentially saved the resident's life due to a dangerous situation. This category also involves team work, meaning that situations are often solved

in a more efficient manner if people are working together and one person is not trying to singularly solve the whole situation (N=21 incidents).

Motivation is defined as being driven to serve residents to the best of their ability and go above and beyond their duties when necessary. For example, ARSMs will be at the different PHA sites daily and may notice things that do not seem right, so they should take the initiative to alert the proper people or investigate the situation. Another example is an ARSM may find themselves in a position where a situation comes up as they are leaving the building for the night. The ARSM should stop and deal with the situation so that the issue does not escalate. ARSMs should also be able to take on some of the RSM job duties if they are trained to do so and a RSM is not available. The ARSM should deal with the problem in an efficient manner and relay the information to the RSM when he or she returns (N=18 incidents).

Knowledge/understanding of other cultures is defined as respecting other cultures' holidays, religious beliefs, customs, and traditions when scheduling housing inspections, resident meetings, home repairs, etc. For example, ARSMs must understand that some residents have had little to no experience with stoves and cleaning products and the ARSM should recognize this and educate the residents to ensure their safety and lease compliance. An ARSM may be trying to help a resident but is unable to understand what they are saying because of a language barrier; the ARSM should remain respectful and find another PHA employee who can translate what the resident is saying to best understand exactly what the residents need is (N=15 incidents).

Effective time management is defined as prioritizing tasks to use time most efficiently and productively. For example, ARSMs may have several things coming at

them at one time and must be able to handle the most important task first and remember where they left off on other tasks that had to be put on hold. ARSMs who have English as a Second Language (ESL) will have residents who have ESL trying to get their help frequently throughout the day, so ARSMs must develop a routine for getting their own tasks done and meeting the needs of the residents (N=11 incidents).

Accessibility to residents is defined as being accessible to residents with open times for meetings and discussions. For example, ARSMs are at the PHA to serve the residents and should have an open door policy so that residents can feel comfortable coming to them with questions and problems (N=4 incidents).

Being aware of biases is defined as acknowledging that stereotypes/biases exist and working to abate them. For example, ARSMs must be consistent with residents whether or not they have a reputation of certain behavior. For example, a situation may arise where an ARSM thinks "Oh, that resident has a history of complaining about their neighbors and the accusations always turn out to be false." Despite the ARSM recognizing this, the situation should be handled as another complaint to ensure the safety of all residents (N=2 incidents).

Sorting Results: Assistant

The assistant independently sorted through the incidents two times. Similar to the first sorting process of the principal investigator, the assistant's first sorting resulted in physical piles of incidents, with each pile containing incidents with similar ideas expressed within its content. The piles (i.e. categories) were then defined and named. After the first sort, the assistant's categories were as follows.

Conflict resolution is defined as knowing the concerns of the people involved in the situation and setting boundaries for what must be done according to the PHA policy. For example, an ARSM must offer options for those involved in the situation to reach lease compliancy and have good communication while doing so. ARSMs must have creative ideas to be sure that the residents involved in the situations proceed with the guidelines set and then the ARSM must follow-up with the situations to be sure the residents are abiding by the agreement (N=29 incidents).

Integrity is defined as being honest and helping residents. For example, ARSM are compassionate with residents' specific wants and needs, meaning that the ARSM wants to see the residents do well and remain able to live in public housing. ARSMs are advocates for the residents and are able ethically to handle personal information and documents while following PHA policies and procedures in the face of adversity (N=25 incidents).

Poor communication is defined as not communicating specifics of a situation properly, resulting in it becoming out of control. For example, ARSMs must be careful not to waste time handling a situation due to improper documentation, lack of documentation, or that they fail to ask another PHA employee for assistance with a problem (N=16 incidents).

Good way to refer residents to help is defined as understanding cultural differences and knowing where to send residents for assistance. For example, ARSMs must know who to call in an emergency or who to send residents to so that they are kept from harm (N=15 incidents).

Going against PHA policy is defined as not following the PHA policy. A few examples are ARSMs not notifying the correct people promptly in a situation that could put residents in danger; ARSMs not handling documents with discretion and confidentiality; and ARSMs being disorganized which affects their communication skills (N=12 incidents).

Communication/reasoning skills is defined as effectively communicating situations with a rational reasoning for their decisions. For example, an ARSM should be able to think clearly about a situation, make an informed/reasonable decision, and communicate well with others to resolve the problem. ARSMs must treat all residents fairly and be capable of writing detailed reports (11 incidents).

Multi-tasking is defined as successfully handling several situations at once. For example, an ARSM must perform several detailed tasks at one time or simultaneously to be as effective and proficient as possible (4 incidents).

The assistant then independently went through his incidents a second time to increase the reliability of his process and to be sure he was satisfied with the categories, their definitions, and the incidents within the categories. This second sort resulted in a category modification and resulted in a total of eight categories. The table below lists the eight categories and the number of incidents in each category.

Table 2

Categories and Number of Incidents from the Research Assistant's Second Sort

Categories Derived from the Research Assistant's 2nd Sort of the Data.	Number of Incidents in Each Category
1. Effective Communication	36
2. Conflict Resolution	34
3. Integrity	17
4. Knowledge of Contacts	11
5. Initiative	8
6. Multi-tasking	5
7. Effective Documenting	5
8. Knowledge of PHA Policy	4

The eight categories were as follows: *effective communication* is defined as communicating in a clear, concise manner verbally and in writing. For example, an ARSM is able to think clearly about a situation, make an informed/reasonable decision, and communicate well with others to resolve the problem. The ARSM must treat all residents fairly and be capable of writing detailed reports (N=36 incidents).

Conflict resolution is defined as knowing the concerns of the people involved in the situation and setting boundaries for what must be done according to the PHA policy. To expand on this concept, ARSMs must offer options for those involved in the situation to reach lease compliancy and have good communication while doing so. ARSMs must have creative ideas to be sure that the residents involved in the situations proceed with

the guidelines set and then the ARSM must follow-up with the situations to be sure the residents are abiding by the agreement (N=34 incidents).

Integrity is defined as being honest and helping residents to the best of their ability. For example, ARSMs are compassionate with resident's specific wants and needs, meaning that the ARSM wants to see the residents do well and remain able to live in public housing. ARSM are advocates for the residents. ARSM are able ethically handle personal information and documents while following PHA policies and procedures in the face of adversity (N=17 incidents).

Knowledge of contacts is defined as understanding cultural differences and knowing where to send residents for assistance. For example, ARSMs must know who to call in an emergency or to keep residents from harm and ARSMs should have contacts who they can refer clients of other languages to for the best support (N=11 incidents)

Initiative is defined as being helpful in general, not only within assigned job duties but in going above and beyond individual responsibilities at times to keep things going smoothly. To expand on this, ARSMs must realize that their job is a give and take relationship with the residents and other PHA staff. ARSMs should voluntarily get involved to help with situations when they can (N=8 incidents).

Multi-tasking is defined as performing several detailed tasks at one time or simultaneously to be as effective and proficient as possible (N=5 incidents).

Effective documenting is defined as effectively document incidents for others to follow if they were unable to relay the incident. The ARSM should create a paper trail that can be followed later to solve problems and defer liability (N=5 incidents).

Knowledge of PHA policy is defined as having the knowledge of the company structure and policy and communicating this with all employees/residents when necessary. For example, ARSMs should know what standard practices are acceptable and who to report policy discrepancies to. ARSMs share responsibility with all PHA employees to ensure that the standard policy is carried out with the best interest of the PHA and the residents in mind (N=4 incidents).

Sorting Results: Principal Investigator and Assistant

The principal investigator and assistant then met to compare and contrast their respective categories and incidents within them. The investigators read their definitions and explained their categories. Then, the two investigators sorted through the incidents together and placed them into categories after discussing where each thought the incident should go. The investigators then named and defined the categories using their individual definitions as discussion guides. By doing so, the investigators consensually agreed to seven final categories, with the seven categories encompassing all 113 original incidents. The seven categories encompass both effective and ineffective incidents. The titles of some of the categories are indicated with the word "effective;" the reason the principal investigator and assistant chose to keep the word effective in the titles was because the incidents are interchangeable. For example, if an incident read, "ARSM did not deal with a resident's situation in a timely manner so it escalated," this could be an example of ineffective problem solving. However, one can also take this example and use it as a guide for effective problem solving, meaning ARSM handled the incident with a resident in a timely manner and the situation was contained. The word effective also indicates

that the process is working and the outcome is positive. Simply stating communication does not mean that it is effective.

Table 3

Categories and Number of Incidents from the Consensus of the Principal Investigator and the Research Assistant

Categories Derived from the Consensus of the Principal Investigator and the Research Assistant	Number of Incidents in Each Category
1. Effective Communication	42
2. Effective Problem Solving	36
3. Commitment to PHA Policy	24
4. Self-Motivated	23
5. Effective Use of Human Resources	18
6. Effective Time Management	14
7. Knowledge/Understanding of Diversity Issues	12

The seven categories were as follows: *effective communication (verbal and written)* is defined as explaining things to a point of understanding when communicating verbally or in writing to residents and others. This includes being clear on flyers that are posted, letters that are sent, memos, etc. They must use technical writing in composing memos, reports, letters, and other forms of communication. ARSMs should use non-judgmental language so that offense is not taken. For example, if an ARSM is doing an inspection and the resident's stove is extremely dirty the documentation should say

'grease on stove' not 'filthy stove.' Effective communication also means that ARSM remain calm in verbal conflict (N=42 incidents).

Effective problem solving is defined as handling situations in a timely manner and knowing the right people to contact for specific problems. For example, ARSMs are not trained to handle every situation that they will face, so they must refer residents to other people for the best assistance, communicate effectively with other departments to eliminate further problems, and conduct investigative follow-up to minimize the reoccurrence of problems (N=36 incidents).

Commitment to PHA policy is defined as knowing the policy and feeling confident enough to ask if unsure. ARSMs must create a paper trail to assist in recognition of reoccurring problems and to defer liability; have reports in on time to abate problems; use discretion with confidential documents or information; complete PHA documents in a thorough manner so that the documents can be followed by others; remain consistent with all residents regardless of age, race, gender, religion, etc.; notify others about problems when needed; and be responsible for PHA property (N=24 incidents).

Self-motivated is defined as taking the initiative to go above and beyond job duties, partake in a give-take relationship, get involved voluntarily or without being asked or told, attend trainings, and join committees to be sure that they understand all aspects of the job. A specific example of this is that ARSM may notice things that do not seem right and instead of ignoring the issue the ARSM should follow-up on the situation (N=23 incidents).

Effective use of human resources is defined as having the knowledge of what each person's title and job duties are in the agency and having the ability to effectively refer

situations to their co-workers who are better trained to handle the situation at hand.

Therefore the other co-workers are "human resources" (N=18 incidents).

Effective time management is defined as immediately addressing problems to

prevent them from getting bigger and affecting other areas of the PHA. ARSMs must

have the ability to come back to what they were doing after having to leave something for

a period of time. This means that ARSMs must be able to multi-task to be proficient.

ARSMs also must stop what they are doing immediately in the event of an emergency

(N=14 incidents).

Knowledge/understanding of diversity issues is defined as being tactful,

respectful, and having a knowledge base regarding other cultures. ARSMs must be

consistent in enforcing PHA policies regardless of the residents culture, mental ability,

and age. ARSMs must also be creative in explaining things until understanding is

achieved. Residents may not speak the same language as the ARSM, so the use of

gestures, pointing, etc. may be useful. ARSMs must remain patient when dealing with

people of different cultures and do the best to solve problems and answer the questions of

residents in a timely manner. A specific example would be if a resident may come from a

country where their home had dirt floors. This resident may not understand the

importance of keeping the floors clean, so ARSMs must offer education on how to

successfully live in public housing (N=12 incidents).

Relative Importance of the Seven Behavior Categories

The seven behaviors explained above were found the most critical behaviors to

the success of ARSMs. Specifically, it appears that success on the job requires strength

in each of these seven behavior areas. A question remains however, regarding relative

importance. That is, which of the seven is most important for HSRM job success? Which is least important when compared to each other?

When using the CIT, the assumption is made that the category with the most incidents is the most critical to the job in question, as it is referred to most frequently. Based on this assumption, the most critical behaviors to ARSM job success are *effective communication verbal and written* (N=42 incidents), *effective problem solving* (N=36 incidents), *commitment to PHA policy* (N=24 incidents), and *self-motivated* (N=23 incidents). This, however, does not mean that the categories with fewer incidents in them can be ignored (i.e. *effective time management* [14 incidents] and *knowledge understanding of diversity issues* [12 incidents]) but that these categories were less critical, as they were referenced to less frequently during the CIT process. The implications of these findings for ARSM selection will be discussed in the next chapter.

Comparison Results

The following table lists each of the seven themes found by the principal investigator and assistant and lists in the respective column the themes that address the same constructs by the consulting firm who found seven themes in 1991. Please refer to chapter one and two for discussion of these themes. If one of the themes from the principal investigator is not addressed than it can be assumed this is a section that is not addressed directly in the current in-basket test. Also note that communication skills is used several times in the table below. This is because the definition given by the consulting firm for communication skills fits the respective definitions given by the principal investigator and assistant for three different categories.

Table 4

Comparison of the Themes from the Principal Investigator and Research Assistant to the

Themes from the Consulting Firm

Themes of Principal Investigator and Assistant	Themes of Consulting Firm
1. Effective Communication Verbal and Written (N=42)	Communication Skills
2. Effective Problem Solving (N=36)	Problem Solving and Decision Making
	Assertiveness/Influencing Skills
3. Commitment to PHA Policy (N=24)	Communication Skills
4. Self-Motivated (N=23)	Motivation
5. Effective Use of Human Resources (N=18)	
6. Effective Time Management (N=14)	Administrative Skills
7. Knowledge/Understanding of Diversity Issues (N=12)	Interpersonal Skills
	Communication Skills

Comparison Results Content

  To be a most valid indicator of an applicant's potential for job success, the in-

basket content, should cover all seven categories discovered and questions should address

the themes according to the importance of the weight given. Therefore, a new in-basket

test should address communication and should seek to see if, indeed, the applicant is an

effective communicator by giving questions and scenarios that would have an applicant

give examples of how they have communicated verbally and in writing in their past experiences or how they would surmise they would react. Although diversity is not as critical to the ARSM position, it should still be addressed in some form in the new in-basket. The goal of the new in-basket would be to create a tool that assess for the seven themes mentioned above.

Comparison Results Relative Importance

The seven categories found by the principal investigator and the assistant were not given equal importance, therefore, some categories are more important and some less important to job performance. On the other hand, the consulting firm gave equal weight to the seven themes they derived.

The implications for these findings and differences will be discussed in chapter five. For a review of the consulting firm's themes please see chapter two. For a review of the principal investigator's themes, please see chapter four.

Chapter V: Discussion

The most important question under examination in this research study is, "Does the current in-basket developed in 1991 accurately assess what ARSMs do on the job in 2005?" This will be answered in this chapter. The chapter will begin by defining what accuracy means in this study, then reiterating how in-basket tests are scored. The next paragraphs will compare the weights given to the themes derived by the consulting firm in 1991 and the principal investigator and assistant in 2005. This chapter will end in a discussion of the implications of the findings, legal issues, study limitations, and future research ideas.

To assess if the test is accurate, accuracy must first be defined in regards to this study. In this study, accuracy is defined in two ways: (a) Is the content relative? Does the tests content reflect what is done on the ARSM job? (b) Does the weight of the content reflect the content's importance? For example, if effective communication is most important to successful job performance, the test should have several questions pertaining to using effective communication.

To better explain weighting, it is helpful to remember that when an applicant is given an in-basket test they may have a time limit to finish several questions. These questions often give specific scenarios and ask applicants to tell how they would respond, or perhaps ask applicant to write a memo regarding a given incident. When an applicant is finished or time is up, the employer collects the test and scores each answer. The answers are often given weight depending on what skills they highlighted (i.e. communication, team work, time management). The next paragraph will discuss the weighting given from this specific study.

Comparison of Content and Weight

As noted in Table 4 in chapter four, one can see that six of the seven behavioral categories found by the investigator are represented in the content of the current in-basket. The only category that is missing is *effective use of human resources.*

There is considerable variability in the relative weight of behavioral categories in the in-basket. The current in-basket test gives all the themes equal weight while the investigator has given weight to the themes according to relative importance. With these two concepts in mind we can answer the question, "Is the current in-basket accurate?"

Accuracy of Current In-Basket

The current in-basket is not accurate. Specifically, regarding the first component of accuracy, the content is close to being accurate. It would be accurate if the category of *effective use of human resources* was added. Regarding the second component of accuracy, weighting, the scores that are generated from the current in-basket do not truly reflect what is required for job success because the themes are given equal weight.

The inaccuracy of the current in-basket test should be of concern to the St. Paul PHA. Specifically, it is something that they should consider with regards to legality of selection tools.

Legal Issues

In recent years, discrimination lawsuits with regards to job selection have become more common. They typically begin when applicants feel that they have been treated unfairly during the job selection process at a particular organization. For such applicants, the availability and increase in legal options, such as filing a complaint with the EEOC, is a reason for the growth in legal action (Bernardin, 2003).

Organizations that use selection tools in their hiring processes must be sure they are fair, consistent, and valid ("Recruitment and Selection," n. d.). If the selection tools lack validity, organizations will not likely find suitable employees for the position and may face a discrimination lawsuit. Validity means that there is a demonstration of a strong linkage between the material in the selection tool and important work behaviors, activities, worker requirements, or outcomes on the job ("Principles," 2003).

With this in mind, the weighting of the current in-basket should be changed so that it matches the empirically identified content and relative importance of behavioral categories for job-relatedness. As it stands today, an applicant could use the in-basket against the PHA in a court of law because it is not valid; it does not accurately measure what an ARSM does in 2005.

Implications for this Study

The two things that should be re-evaluated in the current in-basket are the content and the weight. Specifically the category of *effective use of human resources* should be added to the test. This could be easily accomplished by adding questions to the test that pertain to effective communication with colleagues or effectively referring a resident to the best human resource.

The weight of the test should also be revamped so that the seven performance categories underlying the ARSM position are given differential weighting. To accomplish this, a revised scoring algorithm is needed. The table below depicts an example of how the answers to an applicant's revised content in-basket test should be weighted.

Table 5

Categories from the Principal Investigator and the Research Assistant with a Suggested

Scoring Algorithm

Categories Derived from the Consensus of the Principal Investigator and the Research Assistant	Suggested Scoring Weight for each Category used in an Applicant's Answers to the In-Basket Test
1. Effective Communication	1
2. Effective Problem Solving	.86
3. Commitment to PHA Policy	.57
4. Self-Motivated	.55
5. Effective Use of Human Resources	.43
6. Effective Time Management	.33
7. Knowledge/Understanding of Diversity Issues	.29

Recall that in the CIT used in this study to identify the behavioral categories underlying a job and the relative importance of these categories for job success, it is assumed that the behavioral category with the most incidents is defined as the most important. The relative importance of the remaining categories is then determined by the number of incidents generated in each, divided by the number in the most frequently addressed category.

To determine the weights in the above table, the investigator divided the total number of incidents in each category by the number in the category of *effective communication*. For example, given that *effective communication* had 42 incidents and is

given a score of one and that *effective problem solving* had 36 incidents, the relative

importance and thus weight of this category is 0.86 (36/42).

By using the above category weights, an overall score for an applicant's in-basket

test could be derived that would be a more accurate and thus valid predictor of his/her

performance as an ARSM. For example, assume an applicant completed the in-basket test

and had the following incidents generated: four examples of *effective communication*, one

of *effective problem solving*, one example of being *self-motivated*, two examples of

effective use of human resources, two examples of *effective time management*, and one

example of their *knowledge of diversity*. Using the equal weighting algorithm as

employed in the current in-basket, his/her score would be an 11. With the algorithm

proposed above, his/her score would be 7.22. It is this latter score that would be most

predictable of future job performance and thus, defensible in court.

Study Limitations

The main issue in this study was that the findings pertain to ARSMs in 2005.

This may or may not be a limitation, depending on if ARSM jobs have changed in 2006.

Future Research

Before any changes are made to the current in-basket, the seven themes found

most critical to the ARSM position in 2005 by the principal investigator and the assistant

should be examined by the ARSM and others at the PHA to see if the themes are indeed

most critical to effective job performance for ARSM in 2007. If the themes are still

valid, the PHA should change the in-basket test to reflect the results listed in the

implications section. Further the scoring algorithm recommended above in Table 5

should be used. Once this is done, similar studies should be done every few years to assure continued relevance of the in-basket tool.

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Appendix A: Critical Incident Technique Questionnaire

1. Give three examples of effective behaviors you have observed in your colleagues.

   For example, behavior you would want other Assistant Resident Services Managers to

   copy.

   a.

   b.

   c.

2. Give three examples of ineffective behaviors you have observed in your colleagues.

   For example, behavior you would not want other Assistant Resident Services

   Managers to copy.

   a.

   b.

   c.

Appendix B: Verbal Discussion of Study

Thank you for coming today, I appreciate that you took time out of your day to meet with me. I would like to take a few minutes to explain why we are here and answer any of your questions.

I am working on my Masters degree at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. This project is part of my thesis. The purpose is to examine the selection tools used in the testing and hiring processes of ARSMs to see if they reflect what ARSMs do on a daily basis. Ideally all of the positions in organizations should be tested to see if the selection tests are job related. The ARSM position was chosen first because of the larger amount of employees to interview. This is where you come into play as an expert in your field. I would like you to tell me effective and ineffective behaviors of ARSM you have observed in your peers. Your participation is completely voluntary as well as confidential.

Before deciding, please read the consent form for additional information. Do you have any questions? If you choose not to participate, you will not be punished and I will be the only other person who knows. We will sit here in this room and talk for an hour and you are free to leave, for a break, at any time. On the other hand, if you choose to participate I will ask you to sign the consent for agreeing to participate.

CONTINUE IF CONSENT IS GIVEN

Thank you for your cooperation. The interview will take approximately one hour and no one but myself and my advisor will review my notes. I would also like your permission to tape record this interview. The only reason I ask this is so I can be sure that

I understand every detail you have relayed to me. I would only review the tape as well. If

I have your permission to tape, please sign the second signature area on the consent form.

Appendix C: Consent to Participate in UW-Stout Approved Research

Title:

Investigator:	**Research Sponsor:**
Lindsey Anderson	Dr. Kristina Gorbatenko-Roth
St. Paul Public Housing Agency	University of Wisconsin-Stout
(651) 292.6104	gorbatenkok@uwstout.edu

This research project is being completed as part of my Masters thesis. A selection test for Assistant Resident Services Managers will be explored for job relatedness and validity. Job relatedness refers to the extent to which a test seems to measure aspects of a job that are critical to performance. Validity is the idea that one is measuring what they want to measure. This study will examine the Assistant Resident Services Managers and is important because it should eventually aid in selecting the best individuals for the job in the future and will avoid legal issues that may arise due to job selection.

Participants will be asked to participate individually in one hour interview sessions. Those who choose to participate will be asked questions regarding effective and ineffective behaviors of their peers on the job.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the project. Your participation is completely voluntary and no adverse consequences will occur if you choose to withdraw at anytime or not to participate.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

IRB Administrator
Sue Foxwell, Director, Research Services
152 Vocational Rehabilitation Bldg.
UW-Stout
Menomonie, WI 54751
715-232-2477
foxwells@uwstout.edu

Statement of Consent:

By signing this consent form I agree to participate in the project entitle, Assessing Job Relatedness in an In-Basket test using the Critical Incident Technique. I agree to answering questions regarding effective and ineffective behavior of my peers on the job.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation and leave at any time and that my choice to participate is confidential.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

By signing this area I have agreed to participate in the study entitled, Assessing Job Relatedness in an In-Basket test using the Critical Incident Technique and am allowing the research investigator to tape record the interview session.

_____   _____
Signature   Date