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WATERLOO LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

ORGANIZATIONAL IN-EFFECTIVENESS

AND

PROFESSIONAL INFLUENCE

**A Research Essay Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of Social Work
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the**

Degree

of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

Robert D. Young

2973

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Considerations

In discussing some of the issues posed by the transaction of welfare services through administrative organizations, Vinter (1959) has noted that "while the ideology and standards of the social work profession are generally compatible with the requirements of the agency as an administrative organization ... not all features of the profession and agency are complementary."¹ Vinter notes that quite different organizing principles underlie agency and profession: "the bureaucratic principle of efficiency impels agencies toward the best possible use of resources (including personnel) in attainment of their goals ...while the highest values of the profession incline practitioners toward mastery of technical skills

¹Robert D. Vinter, "The Social Structure of Service", in Issues in American Social Work, ed. by Alfred J. Kahn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p.248

and dedicated selfless service."¹ Another area where Vinter sees the orientation of the administrative organization at variance with the social work profession concerns their respective perceptions of what constitutes the best possible use of resources. Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958) also make reference to this divergence between professional and agency requirements, in the following statement. "Often agencies have operational requirements, set by law, tradition, policy or public pressures... which depart from professional standards."²

Concern of the Present Study

The present study is concerned with the consequences of this lack of congruence, between the social work profession and the social agency, for the effectiveness with which the agency, as an administrative organization is able to provide

¹Ibid. p.248.

²Harold L. Wilensky and Charles N. Lebeaux, Industrial Society and Social Welfare (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1958), p. 319.

social work services efficiently.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

The reason for the above expressed concern is two-fold. First, the effectiveness of the administrative organization is highly dependent on the extent to which it can control the behaviour of those performing the work of the agency¹, and second, the number of professional social workers performing the work of the agency. In this latter respect, Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958) have noted that "the service code of the professional requires him to give foremost attention to the needs of the clients ... [with the result that] ... he may disregard or short-circuit formal rules and regulations in order to meet client needs. He will be concerned about red-tape impediments to efficient operation and will be ready to make adjustments."² One of the consequences then, of the lack of congruence

¹James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, Organizations (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1963), p. 34-135.

²Harold L. Wilensky and Charles N. Lebeaux, Industrial Society and Social Welfare (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1958), p.245.

between the social work profession and the social agency, is that the effectiveness of the administrative organization may be impaired by the influence or control of the social work profession over the role performance of social workers.

Vinter (1959) has suggested that "when the imperatives and constraints of the profession and agency are not congruent, these strains are usually manifest as role conflicts"¹, and this suggestion has found support in empirical studies by Billingsley (1964), Scott (1965), and Green (1966). The present study wonders if the effectiveness of the administrative organization is not also impaired.

Area Defined for Study

The general question then, that is raised by this study, may be stated as follows: Is the role performance of professional social workers providing direct service to clients, that impairs organizational effectiveness, influenced by the profession ?

¹Robert D. Vinter, "The Social Structure of Service", in Issues in American Social Work, ed. by Alfred J. Kahn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p.249.

Need for the Study

The importance of the question just raised here may be viewed both from the point of view of efficiency in the provision of social work services, and in terms of the extent to which the social work profession exerts control over the behaviour of members of the profession. The former point is especially relevant because of the limited resources (personnel) with which to provide services, the growing public demand for services, and the ever-increasing costs of social work services. The extent to which the profession is able to influence the performance of its members, viewed in the light of social work's current striving for public recognition as a profession gives this point added significance.

Definition of Concepts

Role Performance: Role Performance in this study refers to what social workers do while at work.¹

Professional Social Worker: Professional Social Worker refers to a person who holds a Master of Social Work Degree or its equivalent as defined by the Canadian

¹Andrew Billingsley, The Social Worker in a Child Protective Agency (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1964) p. 42.

Association of Social Workers, who is employed in a direct service Child Welfare Agency, and a person whose function in that setting is to provide direct service to clients.

Profession: Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958)¹ identify two characteristics as criteria of a profession: specialized knowledge and skills, and a set of moral norms that function to govern conduct among members of a profession and between them and their clients. The concept of "profession", as used here, refers then, to that totality of (i) specialized knowledge and skills, and (ii) norms, that characterize the social work profession.

Organizational Effectiveness: Organizational effectiveness has been defined by Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum (1957), as "the extent to which the organization, as a social system, given certain resources and means, fulfills its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and

¹Harold L. Wilensky and Charles N. Lebeaux, Industrial Society and Social Welfare (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1958), p.284.

without placing undue strain upon its members."¹ These authors suggest further that the extent of organizational effectiveness may be conceptualized in terms of the following criteria: (a) productivity of organizational sub-groups, (b) organizational flexibility (as reflected through, (i) the degree of successful adjustment to internal organizational changes, and (ii) the degree of successful adaptation to externally induced change, and (c) the incidence of intra-organizational strain, or tensions and conflict between organizational sub-groups.

The concept of organizational effectiveness as it is used in the present study is confined to one of these criteria -- specifically, organizational sub-group productivity.

Organization: The concept organization, or administrative organization is used here to mean formal organization, or "the pattern of division of tasks and power among the organizational position, and the rules expected to guide the behaviour of the participants, as defined by management."²

¹B.S. Georgopoulos and A.S. Tannenbaum, "A Study of Organizational Effectiveness," American Sociological Review, 22 (1957), 534-540.

²Amitai Etzioni, Modern Organizations (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964), p.31.

Influence: The concept of influence as it is used in this study, is that proposed by March and Simon (1963). These authors describe influence as simply a special instance of causality.

Role Performance That Impairs Organizational

Effectiveness: Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum (1957) define organizational sub-group productivity as the productivity of the group as a whole, and suggest that this variable may be defined empirically as the sum of the productivity of the individual group members.

On the basis of this definition then, role performance that impairs organizational effectiveness is seen here as role performance that impairs the productivity of the group as a whole (ie. role performance that impairs the productivity of one or more of the group members). This may be the role performance of one or more non-group members, one or more group members, or some combination of these.

The present study confines itself to a consideration of only that role performance of individual group members that impairs their own productivity. Individual productivity is further defined in terms of the completed tasks assigned. It was assumed that this may be

evaluated in terms of the quality and quantity of these tasks completed, in relation to the ability of the individual.

In considering role performance that impairs organizational effectiveness then, this study confined itself to considering only that role performance of the individual group member that impairs the quality and quantity of his completed assigned tasks.

Role Performance That Is Influenced By The Profession:

Having defined role performance as what social workers do while at work, and having limited the study to a consideration of what the individual does while at work, role performance that is influenced by the profession was considered to consist of the individual doing "this" rather than "that" while at work, as a result of the specialized knowledge and skills, and/or set of norms, that are characteristic of the social work profession.

Research Question

The question that the present study attempts to answer then, may be stated as follows: Is what the professional social worker does while at work, that impairs the quality and quantity of his completed tasks

assigned, influenced by: (a) the specialized knowledge and skills, and/or (b) the norms governing conduct among colleagues and between themselves and their clients, that is characteristic of the social work profession?

Scope of the Study

Vinter (1959) has noted that "the extremely broad range of organizational types in the social welfare field...make it almost impossible to speak of the social agency."¹ Even when confining oneself to the direct service Child Welfare agency, the wide variations in organizational patterns, would make it almost impossible to find two agencies alike in terms of organizational characteristics that would determine the extent of influence of the administrative organization over the role performance of the social work practitioner. To this end then, the present study attempts to design a model that can be applied in a given agency setting, to answer the above stated research question. This approach seems appropriate in view of the importance of the results of such a study to the individual agency.

¹Robert D. Vinter, "The Social Structure of Service", in Issues in American Social Work, ed. by Alfred J. Kahn (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p.247.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Methodological Considerations

Designing a study to answer the research question previously stated, requires a consideration of the following methodological implications.

1. Identification of what the professional social worker does while at work that impairs the quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned.
2. Identification of the causes or reasons for the professional social worker doing "this" rather than "that" (where "this" refers to what was identified in (1) above).
3. Identification of those causes or reasons identified in (2) that reflect the specialized knowledge and skills and/or norms characteristic of the social work profession.

Measures

The following techniques were employed in regard to the methodological considerations outlined above.

1. One of the instruments employed in this study

to identify what the professional social worker does while at work that impairs the quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned, was a rating scale, previously utilized by Billingsley (1964) to examine how "effective" staff members were in their work.¹ Billingsley divided up the work of the practitioner into seven areas which he labelled as follows: Administrative and Clerical, Use of Community Resources, Direct Work with Clients, Use of Supervision, Relations with Other Agencies, Relations with Agency Colleagues, and Professional Development. In asking the question, of to what extent a person performed well, his performance, in each of the above work areas, was rated by that person's supervisor, on a five-point scale ranging from "Fair" at the lower end through "Good", "Very Good", "Excellent", to "Out-Standing" at the higher end of the scale. The form of this instrument may be seen by referring to Appendix A.

A second instrument used to identify what the social worker does while at work, that impairs the quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned, was

I

Andrew Billingsley, The Social Worker in a Child Protective Agency (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1964), p. 126-129.

a questionnaire that asked for identification of:

- (i) those areas in which the social worker had not obtained a rating of "Out-Standing" but was seen by his supervisor to have the ability for performance that would have obtained a higher rating, and
- (ii) what the worker does and what he does not do, in those areas identified in (i) above, that prevented him from having obtained a higher rating than that assigned. The form of this questionnaire is presented in Appendix B.

2. Partially structured interviews with those social workers who took part in this study were used to determine the causes of, or the reasons for, an individual social worker doing "this" rather than "that" (where "this" refers to that role performance identified through the questionnaire described in (1-ii), above). Information was sought from the worker in the following areas: (a) whether or not the worker could recall the occurrence or incidence of behaviour in question, (b) the worker's description of the nature of the situation, (c) the worker's reasons for engaging in "this" behaviour in question rather than another pattern of role performance.

3. Identification of those "causes" or "reasons" either implicit or explicit in the information obtained in (2) above, that reflect specialized knowledge and skill and/or norms of the social work profession was determined by the rating assigned to each "instance" of role performance¹, on a five-point scale that ranged from "Professional Influence Evident", at the higher end of the scale, through "Cannot Determine" to "Professional Influence Not Evident", at the lower end of the scale. The structure of this scale has been included in Appendix C.

Subjects

The present study was carried out with each of those persons in a given agency who were professional social workers and who gave their consent to participate in this study.

Procedure

An individual interview was arranged between each of the potential subjects in the agency and the researcher. The interviewee was informed that the

¹ The concept of "instance" is used here to refer to the role performance of the worker in a given situation.

interviewer wished to ask the worker's supervisor to identify what the worker did in different areas of his work during the previous three months, that had particularly stood out in the supervisor's mind. The interviewee was then informed that the interviewer would talk with the worker again to see if he recalled this behaviour, and the nature of the situation in which it had occurred. The interviewer stated that he was interested in understanding what had entered into the worker's decision to do "this" rather than "that" (where "this" refers to the particular behaviour in question and "that" refers to any alternative pattern of behaviour). The interviewer mentioned that he could not reveal at this time the ultimate purpose for this inquiry but that he would inform the worker of the entire nature of the study upon its completion. The interviewee was also assured that if he decided to participate in this study, all information given the interviewer would be treated in the strictest confidence.

The worker was also informed that each of the other professional social workers was being asked to

participate under these same conditions. The worker was given an opportunity to ask any questions he might have about the study, following which he was asked to indicate his decision to participate or to not participate as a subject in this study.

This procedure was followed with each of the prospective subjects in the agency. When those persons who were to participate had been identified, similar individual interviews were arranged with each of the supervisors involved.

In these interviews, the interviewer indicated the nature of his interview with the workers who had agreed to be participants and requested the supervisor to indicate whether or not he also would participate in this study under the same conditions as outlined above. When those supervisors who agreed to participate had been determined, the following procedure was employed for gathering the necessary data.

1. Using the rating scale previously described, the performance of each worker, in each of the seven "work areas", was assigned a rating by his supervisor. This rating was to reflect the supervisor's evaluation of the worker's performance over the previous three

months, in terms of the quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned. The supervisor was requested to give each rating considerable forethought and at least in his own mind, a defensible basis.

Having completed this rating of a given worker, in each of the seven work areas, the supervisor was requested to identify those work areas in which he had assigned the worker a rating lower than "Outstanding", but in which he perceived the worker as having the ability to have performed differently and thus obtain a higher rating.

The supervisor was then asked to record, with reference to each of these areas so identified, specifically what he perceived the worker to do or to not do, that led the supervisor to assign the worker the rating he had. In each instance, the supervisor was asked to record the approximate date of occurrence of the behaviour in question and any other information that may identify this occurrence.

2. Individual interviews were then arranged between each of the workers the supervisor had identified as capable of having obtained a higher rating in

at least one work area, and the researcher. The procedure followed in this interview was that which had been outlined with the worker in the initial interview when his participation in this study was being requested. This procedure has been outlined earlier in this paper. There was, however, one addition. The interviewer pointed out that he wished to keep a record of whatever the worker could tell him concerning the behaviour in question in order that the interviewer not confuse what this worker told him with that told him by another worker. Again, the interviewee was assured that the information given would be respected as confidential.

For each worker who had participated in this study, all information, that had been obtained about that role performance identified by their respective supervisors as preventing them from being given a higher rating, which was relevant to understanding this role performance and the underlying rationale for this performance, was gathered together and placed in a folder. The folder was then assigned a code for identification, by the researcher.

3. Three persons were then selected to evaluate this

information: the Chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Professional Association of Social Workers, and the Deans of two established Schools of Social Work.

Each of these persons was provided with the folder of information on each worker and were asked to evaluate, for that worker, each instance of behaviour (role performance) that had been identified by the worker's supervisor. The raters were instructed to rate each "instance" of the worker's performance on a five-point scale, in terms of the extent to which the performance reflected the specialized knowledge and skills and/or the norms of the social work profession.

For each worker, each instance of that role performance described in a worker's file, which received a rating of four or five from at least two of the three raters, was taken to be one instance of that which the worker does, at work, that is influenced by the profession and impairs his quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned.

Analysis of Data

The following procedure was employed in analyzing the data obtained.

I. 1. The percentage of all workers who participated in this study, that were found to have at least one instance of role performance influenced by the profession, was identified.

2. With each of those workers found to have at least one instance of role performance influenced by the profession, the percentage of their total instances of role performance that was performance influenced by the profession was identified, summed over all workers in this population, and a mean percentage obtained.

If any of the workers who participated in the study were found to have one instance of role performance influenced by the profession, the following analysis was carried out.

II. 1. The following calculations were carried out with the data on each worker.

(a) the total number of instances of role performance was identified (T-RP).

(b) the number of instances of role performance in each of the seven work areas was identified (N-RP).

(c) the percentage of the total number of instances of role performance falling in each of the seven work areas was identified ($\%RP$).

(d) the number of instances of role performance in each of the seven work areas that was found to be influenced by the profession was identified ($N-RP_p$)

(e) the percentage of the total number of instances of role performance in each of the seven areas that were instances found to be influenced by the profession was identified ($\%RP_p$)

2. In each of the seven work areas, the percentage scores obtained in (c) above, for all workers, were summed and a mean percentage score obtained ($\bar{X}\%RP$). Similarly, the percentage scores obtained in (e) above, of all workers, were summed and a mean percentage score obtained here also ($\bar{X}\%RP_p$).

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether or not what the social worker does while at work, that impairs the quantity and quality of completed tasks assigned, was influenced by, (a) the specialized knowledge and skills, and/or the norms governing conduct among colleagues and between themselves and their clients, that are characteristic of the social work profession. In an attempt to answer this question, this study produced the following results.

I. 1. ____ percent of all workers who participated in this study were found to have at least one instance of role performance, that impaired their quantity and quality of completed tasks assigned, that was influenced by the profession. With these workers (Ss-RPp) found to have at least one instance of role performance influenced by the profession, the percentage of total instances of role performance of a given worker (I-RP) that was influenced by the profession (I-RPp) ranged from a low of ____ percent

with one worker, to a high of ____ percent with another worker. The mean incidence of role performance that was influenced by the profession, among those workers whose performance reflected some such influence was found to be _____. These results have been summarized in Table 1.

II. 1. That work area, designated in this study as _____, was found to have the highest incidence of role performance that impairs the quantity and quality of completed tasks assigned (\bar{X} -% RP), while that area designated as _____, was found to have the lowest incidence of such role performance. The incidence of this in other work areas was as follows: _____

2. That work area designated as _____ was found to have the highest incidence of role performance influenced by the profession (\bar{X} -% RPP). The incidence in the other work areas, of this role performance was found to be as follows: _____

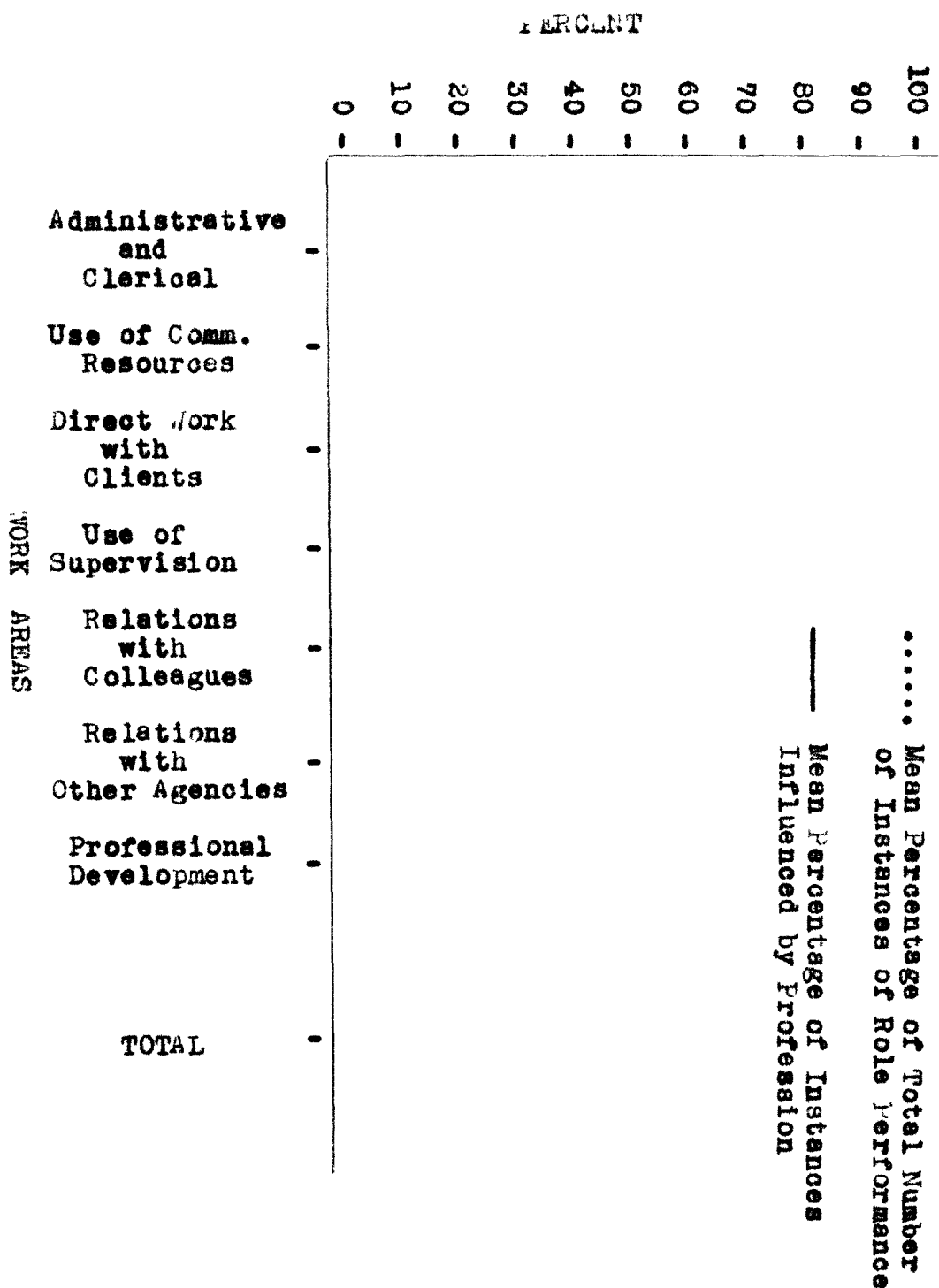
These findings are presented in graphic form in Figure 1. The raw data upon which these findings are based is summarized in Appendix D.

TABLE 1

Ss (RPp)	I-RP	I-RPp	% I-RPp
1			
2			
3			
.			
.			
n			
	—	—	—
\bar{X}			

Mean Percentage of Total Number of Instances of Role
Performance Influenced by the Profession

FIGURE 1



CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Areas for Discussion

1. Interpretation of the findings presented in the Results (Section I-1. and 2.) in terms of the purpose of the study.
2. The practical significance or implications of these findings:
 - (a) to the social agency administrator and others responsible for providing social work services efficiently, in terms of: (i) sources of influence on the role performance of social workers that impairs the effectiveness of the formal organization of the agency, and (ii) the relative extent of the profession as a source of influence as compared with the extent of influence from "other sources".
3. The theoretical significance of these findings:
 - (a) to the social work profession, (i) in terms of its commitment to the agency as the means for providing social work services, and (ii) in terms of the extent of influence that the profession has on the role performance of professional social workers.
 - (b) In terms of adding to existing theory concerning

whether or not the discrepancy between agency and professional orientations are reflected in role performance as well as in role conflict.

3. Interpretation and implication of the findings presented in the Results (Section II-1. and 2.) in terms of the purpose of the study.

4. The practical significance to the social agency administrator, in terms of the importance of knowing those areas of work where the quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned is most impaired and the extent of professional influence , for planning organizational changes that would bring about increased quality and quantity of completed tasks assigned

5. The theoretical significance of these findings in terms of identifying the extent of professional influence over worker performance in various work areas.

APPENDIX A

<u>Work</u> <u>Areas</u>	<u>Performance Rating</u>				
	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Very Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Out-Standing</u>
Administrative and Clerical	—	—	—	—	—
Use of Community Resources	—	—	—	—	—
Direct Work with Clients	—	—	—	—	—
Use of Supervision	—	—	—	—	—
Relations With Other Colleagues	—	—	—	—	—
Relations With Other Agencies	—	—	—	—	—
Professional Development	—	—	—	—	—

APPENDIX B

Instructions:

In each of those work areas where the worker obtained a rating of less than "out-Standing", but where he had the ability for performance that would have obtained a higher rating, mark an (X) in the appropriate place beneath this area.

In each of those areas where you placed an (X) identify specifically both what the subject does or does not do while at work that prevented you from giving him a higher rating in that area.

Work Areas

A&C UCR DWNC UOS RWAC RWOA PD

Mark (X)

Role
Performance

1.

2.

.

(n)

APPENDIX C

Instructions:

Check one of the following ratings for each instance of role performance in the given situation.

<u>Narrative Descriptions of Role Performance</u>	<u>Ratings</u>				
	Professional Influence Evident		Cannot Determine	Professional Influence Not Evident	
	(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

Instance 1:

— — — — —

Instance 2:

— — — — —

Etc.

APPENDIX D

Ss	Administrative and Clerical	Use of Community Resources	Direct Work with Clients
-----------	--	---	-------------------------------------

T-RP	N-RP	%-RP	N-RPp	%-RPp	N-RP	%-RP	N-RPp	%-RPp	N-RP	%-RP	N-RPp	%-RPp
-------------	-------------	-------------	--------------	--------------	-------------	-------------	--------------	--------------	-------------	-------------	--------------	--------------

1

2

3

4

5

.

.

.

.

.

.

n

~~IX~~ RP~~IX~~ RPp

APPENDIX D
(CONTINUED)

Use of Supervision				Relations with Agency Colleagues				Relations with Other Agencies				Professional Development			
-----------------------	--	--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-----------------------------	--	--	--

N-RP	X -RP	N-RPp	X -RPp	N-RP	X -RP	N-RPp	X -RPp	N-RP	X -RP	N-RPp	X -RPp	N-RP	X -RP	N-RPp	X -RPp
------	------------------	-------	-------------------	------	------------------	-------	-------------------	------	------------------	-------	-------------------	------	------------------	-------	-------------------

1

2

3

4

5

.

.

.

.

n

~~X~~% RP~~X~~% RPp

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