

**GETTING AT CHARACTER:
THE SIMPLICITY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF
COMPLEXITY**

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There is no telling how long systematic assessment has been used to select people for jobs. As early as 200 B.C., for example, the Han dynasty used methods of assessment to determine a person's qualifications for a job in the civil service (Wiggins, 1973). The purpose of this kind of assessment was, and is, to educate decision makers about candidates for a position. Only recently, in the last 25 years or so, has assessment been widely used for another purpose: to educate individuals about themselves. If the first kind can be called assessment for selection, this more recent type is assessment for development.

The purpose of assessment for development is to stimulate individuals to see themselves differently and therefore to behave differently and more effectively. To do this, the assessment must help individuals clearly understand the problems with their current ways of operating and, correspondingly, the opportunities to operate more effectively- What individuals understand about themselves must be clear and powerful enough to compel them to change their minds about themselves and, as a result, change the way they behave.

This chapter describes one strategy for helping managers achieve this kind of compelling clarity about themselves. It is an approach that my colleagues and I have developed over a number of years and continue to practice on a regular basis. Although this approach is not unique to us, it is a departure from standard practice, such as 360 degree feedback and the assessment component of much executive coaching. In comparison with standard methods, the data we collect is more comprehensive, both in its quantity and its diversity. Additionally, we probably do a more complete job of funneling all that data down to its essence. For assessment to lead to significant self-realization, what is needed is a great multiplicity of data points followed by a profound simplicity in the conclusions based on that data. Data collection therefore is an expansively, even explosively, divergent activity; data reduction is an intensely convergent activity.

Probably the chief benefit of going to all this trouble is the significance that the eventual output has for the individual. The quantity and diversity of the data set leave little question in the minds of most participants about the validity of the findings. And the definition of the individual's essential problem-and-opportunity that emerges from the systematic, iterative, and collaborative process of analyzing and interpreting the data has obvious relevance and importance for the individual. Whereas the output from most assessments is a list of possibly unrelated characteristics, positive and negative, the output of this process is a coherent picture of the person's basic character, which encompasses and unifies the disparate characteristics. In systematically and yet creatively searching for a way to organize the mass of data, consultant and participant eventually hit upon an organizing principle, which turns out to be an approximation of the way the individual organizes himself or herself-in other words, the person's character. The person's disparate characteristics so often the only output of an assessment, are put in the context of the individual's character. And this increases the meaning of the various pieces.

Participants almost never question the relevance of the picture of themselves that develops out of the assessment process, largely because it is theory fashioned from their own data. The definition fits because it was tailor-made from empirical material that contained no preconceived idea of its eventual design. Different from standard assessment practice, which relies principally on generic data-collection instruments that are constructed on the basis of a conceptual framework that in effect is imposed on the individual's data, this approach relies heavily on verbal descriptions elicited from people interviewed using open-ended questions. As a result this becomes a process of discovery, of groping towards a formulation of a theory expressly designed to fit their own case.

As inductive and faithful to the individual's data as this is, this assessment process also includes a deductive component whereby the consultants, always careful not to force-fit, draw on existing theory to help in the formulation of the individual's specific framework. This chapter will include a description of larger, unifying concepts that have proved helpful in accounting for the data about the executive population with whom we work.

While I concentrate here on the uses of data to precipitate change, this is by no means the only lever for change in assessment. Another critical lever is the social process used to conduct the assessment. It includes the consultant's relationship with the manager in going about this work; for example, the close, highly personal cooperation that develops as the work of constructing a picture takes place. The social process also includes the involvement of significant others at work and possibly also outside of work. The involvement of others in a process of self-discovery can be crucial. It can make all the difference when other individuals, whether certain coworkers, or family members, or friends, or professionals, get personally involved. Limitations on space permit only light coverage of social process here. Also, the helping relationship in one form or another has received quite a bit of attention in the literature; making sense of the data has received less.

A caution: the approach we use is unusually powerful and must be handled with care. Not all managers are up to participating in it. Not all consultants or executive coaches are equipped to use it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLARITY

Before turning to strategies for data collection and data reduction, let us understand better what outcome we are seeking from assessment for development. I would suggest it is clarity. Becoming more clear about oneself, gaining in-sight, can be a powerful impetus for development, especially if it reveals the basic problem with one's current way of operating and simultaneously points the way to improvement. The kind of clarity that leads to change is compelling when it arouses a mix of fear and inspiration, fear of the consequences of continuing on the same path and inspiration at the prospect of finding a better way.

The task of coming to know oneself is a lifelong one, a gradual and intermittent progression towards greater clarity about oneself. A character in one of John Updike's short stories makes this point vividly:

You land, it seemed to him, on the shore of your own being in total innocence, like an explorer who was looking for something else, and it takes decades to penetrate inland and map the mountain passes and trace the rivers to their sources. Even then, there are large blanks, where monsters roam (Updike, 1995,p.243).

The job of understanding oneself is never complete, if only because people change over time as their circumstances change.

If clarity about oneself is the desired outcome of assessment, then in what sense can a person be said to be lacking in clarity and therefore in need of increased clarity?

Sometimes, people are simply unaware of some aspect of themselves. They may never have turned their attention to it, or they may have been denying or avoiding certain painful truths about themselves. As a result of the assessment they discover this thing about themselves; they remove the cover from it, as it were, and it is no longer hidden from them. They may be in for an unpleasant surprise, having had no idea, for example, that they intimidate people. Or the surprise may be pleasant; they hear for the first time that other people think they are appealing personally or exceptionally smart.

It is more often the case that managers already know these things about themselves and that this knowledge is confirmed, made firmer, or certain characteristics are underlined. Perhaps this is why after reading the assessment report participants say almost without fail there were "no surprises." Of course, the fact that they are aware of some characteristic does not mean that they have nothing more to learn about it, as they themselves will later acknowledge.

In particular, they may not have appreciated the significance of a characteristic, the extent of its impact, how pervasive it is. Its importance is underlined for them, and in that way they gain greater clarity. So, they bring something already seen into sharper focus. When people go from having only a blurry awareness to a sharp clarity, they can actually be shocked by what they see, and, as a result, may be moved to act.

Even when people are quite clear about most aspects of themselves, their understanding of other aspects can be absolutely muddled. Otherwise intelligent human beings are capable of being mixed up on certain points, particularly those near and dear to their hearts. In fact, an appreciable proportion of the executives we work with, bright as they are, are muddled on the subject of their own intelligence. Convinced that they are "not that smart," they dismiss comments to the contrary from their coworkers. Some may have been poor students, who got poor grades in school, and therefore have concluded that they are not bright. Never mind that in the work world they have learned hand over fist and developed their intellectual capability. They make a false equation between poor grades and intelligence. Emotions enter in. They are not able to define themselves as smart on the basis of how smart they actually are, on the basis of what they actually know, or how quickly they catch on, or how well they think things through. Their negative associations with formal education left them with bad feelings about themselves intellectually and it proves to be a difficult feeling to shed. It is not, however, only poor students

who make this mistake. Managers with stellar records in school are also capable of underestimating their intelligence.

On those sensitive points where managers persist in a perception that flies in the face of the evidence, I have observed that fear of inadequacy is often the culprit. They are afraid of not being smart or not smart enough, and that fear closes their minds to a contrary view, including a more favorable assessment. We tell the manager: "You're not that smart but you're smart enough to know that these other people are wrong about how smart you are." Emotions cloud people's judgment, including their judgments about themselves. Their thinking is muddled. It is confused in the sense that they merge things that ought to be kept separate. One manager, Richard Waring, whom we will return to later, consistently underrated himself and was hampered by self-doubt that hurt his performance. When we suggested that he focus on the strengths that other people saw in him, he said he couldn't do that. Why not? "Because that would make me arrogant." His thinking was confused on this point: he equated feeling good about himself with arrogance.

Another manager was described by a coworker as "muddled" because the manager had trouble hearing about any of his weaknesses without it spilling over onto other aspects of himself.

He hears suggestions for improving his communications skills as being critical of his thinking, and that's not the case. It's all muddled up in there, the weaknesses and the strengths, all in this one big unit. So a sorting out would be useful so he could see clearly what he is doing (emphasis added).

Given his confusion, what he needed was to sort out his experience of his strengths and weaknesses, make them distinct. This is not a simple matter, however.

To clear up confusions, to make things more distinct from one another, is one way to gain clarity. The main character in the novel, A Thousand Acres, described how her experience of herself as well as her experience of the important people in her life had swum around (her) in complicated patterns." Those things that she "had at best dimly perceived through murky water now all became clear" (Smiley, 1991, p. 305). Coming to this realization, where things were made real, left her feeling "drenched with insight, swollen with it like a wet sponge."

Clarity about oneself can come at a completely different level, a higher level of abstraction. This kind of clarity comes from seeing how various characteristics are synthesized into a larger pattern—a person's character or identity. One could call this an organizing principle. It gives heightened order to a person's experience of himself or herself. This is a step beyond insight into one behavior or another or even insight into a set of behaviors that are not tied together. When the organizing principle is basic enough, it is one of those simple truths that enables a person to see himself or herself in a wholly new light. The organizing principle can make self-awareness coherent. A literary critic observed about a poet's early work that "the iron filings of his imagination lie around in heaps but without the magnet needed to spring them into pattern (Lyall, 1996)." The individual sees an underlying pattern that pulls together the previously scattered elements of his or her self-view, just as a magnet organizes iron filings that had lain in disarray. The protagonist in A

Thousand Acres remarked on her sister's ability to find the "simple truth" of situations, "as if we'd found the basic atoms of things, hard as they were" (p. 239).

An organizing principle introduces a hierarchy of ideas that clarifies what is fundamental and what is not. In the field of biology Richard Dawkins is credited with bringing great clarity to Darwin's theory of evolution. "Very often in science one finds there are ideas in the air, and lots of people hold them. The person who can crystallize them, and lay out not only the central idea but its implications for future scientific research can often make a tremendous contribution ... Lots of scientists had been Darwinians all their lives but they had been inarticulate Darwinians. And now they really understood what was foundational to Darwinism and what was peripheral (Parker, 1996)." Assessments can offer not just a catalogue of characteristics about a manager but a unified view that crystallizes an individual's essential character as a leader, what is fundamental to their leadership.

One executive, having made his way through a one-hundred page report that itemized his various managerial characteristics, came to a realization that stuck with him and later helped him to make some adjustments. He spoke of "this revelation that they want me to lead more." (The root of the word revelation is veil; to reveal is to remove the veil.) He came up himself with the summary idea of "leading more" in response to several weaknesses that came out clearly in the data: not decisive, slow to state his own views, reluctant to confront performance problems, not aggressive enough in pushing the organization to change. The injunction to lead more became a hook upon which he was able to hang several specific weaknesses.

At its most basic, an increase in clarity about one's character represents a shift to a new stage of development. People alter the way they think about themselves as they make a shift from one stage to another. Kegan (1982) used the term *recognition* to describe a developmental shift in the way a person experiences himself or herself, a process by which, as Kegan said, a worldview the individual was subject to, and captive to, becomes object. In general, to become clearer about oneself is to become more objective: one holds one's subjective experience out at arm's length and examines it, much as one would examine any object. In this way people gain a fresh perspective on themselves, in this case from the vantage point of the next stage of development.

This discussion of a *recognition* should not leave the reader with the impression that the learning available through assessment is only cognitive. There is also a sizeable emotional component. Frequently, a jump in self-awareness requires managers to poke through a haze of emotions. The experience of seeing oneself in a new light is always stimulating, often unsettling, and sometimes disturbing and painful, depending on what is revealed. Without an emotional impact there would be no possibility of change. The desired outcome of assessment for development is after all not the information itself, however psychometrically sound the instruments or however expert the analysis. The goal is to generate enough spark so that the assessment changes the way an individual thinks and feels about himself and thereby changes the way he or she acts. Intellectual awareness is not enough. Emotional impact is also required. Clarity is achieved when an intellectual insight is charged with emotional energy. When a gain

in clarity has an emotional as well as intellectual impact, it has a good chance of being compelling enough to precipitate change.

DATA COLLECTION: ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

On top of its obvious purpose, which is to serve as input to an assessment, the data is important in establishing the credibility of the assessment or evaluation itself. If the evaluation seems accurate to the individual but the data is skimpy, then the evaluation will not have the same impact as if the data were extensive.

Especially because it is extensive, all data we collect, as well as the discussions of it, are held in confidence. This is all the more important if data about the manager's personal life is collected.

The output of an assessment process is only as credible and impactful as the input to that process. The quantity of the data is important. A great multiplicity of data points adds to the confidence that the participant and the consultant can have in this "connect the dots" exercise. Beyond sheer numbers, what matters is the types of data points. It is helpful to have multiple sources, not just the individual himself or herself, but other people, coworkers, who know the manager. It is helpful to include more than one category of coworker, not just the superior or superiors, but also peers and subordinates. It adds to the credibility of the data if these others are not limited to people at work, but include, if feasible, family members and friends. In addition to multiple sources, using multiple methods for collecting the data strengthens its impact. Ratings are standard in gathering input from coworkers, but the message is more powerful when interviews are also used. In gathering information from the participant, interviews, managerial ratings, and personality tests are all possibilities. It is ideal to do all three. Also, in addition to these second-hand accounts of the manager's behavior and characteristics, the consultants can benefit from observing the individual directly, either in natural settings or in artificial situations like role plays.

In addition to using multiple sources and multiple methods, the consultant should seek variety in what about the manager is being assessed, the content. The assessment is more nearly complete when it is not confined to managerial behavior but also includes motivation, those forces operating in the person's inner life that affect his or her outward behavior. Further, the assessment has more impact when it covers the manager's behavior outside of work as well as at work. Likewise, the impact is greater when the data includes not just the manager's current behavior but also formative influences, beginning in childhood, on that behavior.

The chief benefit of a comprehensive assessment, with a large quantity of data and variety in the data, is convergence, convergence across sources, across methods, across types of content (see Table 1). When participants see this convergence, along with the weight of the evidence, they are likely to judge the results to be credible. Of course there is also a certain amount of divergence among the different subsets of data, but, in case after case, much less divergence than

convergence. And these inconsistencies turn out, after discussion, to be understandable in the context of a multi-faceted picture of the individual.

On the premise that systematic data collection is leverage for creating clarity-leading-to-change, we first of all follow the principle that more is better. We routinely (but not always) collect great quantities of data. We deliberately collect so much that it borders on too much. We want there to be no question about what the major messages are, and as a result it is almost always true that the headlines pop out of the data clearly. There is no hunting and pecking over data points in search of further clues as to what the message is. One executive announced to us: "There is a lot of redundancy in this report; in the whole thing there really are only three or four major themes!" He meant redundancy in a positive, clarifying, sense.

The need for a substantial data base is evident when one considers what it takes to change managers' minds about themselves. Their view of themselves is well established; there are beliefs and values buttressing it; there are lines of defense that can instantly be deployed when that view is disputed. The data, especially when there are points of difference, must therefore be strong enough to counter their established concepts of themselves.

So the sheer mass of data, a kind of phalanx of data points lined up facing the manager, is useful. In the full-scale version of our assessment process, we present the manager with a five-volume report, three or four inches thick. The sheer mass of it makes an implicit statement that there is a basis, a sound empirical basis, for the picture to be developed of the manager, nothing arbitrary or seat-of-the-pants about the process. Data in great quantity and systematically and impartially collected acquires a property critical for the purpose of changing managers minds about themselves-credibility.

Multiple sources

In addition to quantity, diversity in the data base is a big factor in gaining the confidence of the participant. A large data base with multiple sources builds in an opportunity for cross-validation, another credibility-bestowing feature. In their daily lives managers typically hear about themselves from one person at a time, whether at appraisal time or informally from a coworker on a trip or after tennis or over glass of wine. What that other person has to say is usually to some degree suspect, at the very least because of the inescapable fact that it is one person's view. Rarely do managers hear from as many as 15 or 20 coworkers at once. When they do, and when certain observations are repeated by most or all of this collection of people, the validity of the observation is much harder to question. This might be called consensual validation in the sense that a virtual consensus, on certain of the manager's characteristics, exists among those surveyed.

Reflecting at the end of a day in which he received a comprehensive feedback report, one executive said:

"I think that the most important thing is that the information to me is credible. I've never done anything like this before. The exercises like this that I have done, the problem is the

information itself It's too easy to question the credibility of it one way or another. Therefore it's relatively meaningless to you. You don't buy it or it's meaningless. This information is very different, so the decision about what to do doesn't involve the credibility of the information. I think that's the most important thing.

"I believe the information. I perceive it to be not only accurate but it fits together so you can't deny it. It is so well linked that it is indisputable really. So it makes it easier to focus on what you are going to do about it. There are some things that might seem to conflict with one another, but they're easily resolved. So I find this extremely helpful. It's something I can work with."

The "things that might seem to conflict with one another," divergence in the data, usually turn out to be different facets of the same thing. For example, what might initially seem to be contradictory-that an executive reported to be good with people is shy-is cleared up by appreciating that in relating to other people the executive is warm, friendly, open and constructive, but that she is nevertheless unsure of herself with people and therefore reluctant to be the one who initiates contact.

Three points are especially important with respect to using multiple sources.

1. Not just the participant as a source. Some assessments, perfectly respectable and evidently quite useful, rely exclusively on the subject of the assessment as the sole source of data (Tobias, 1990). Yet as rich a source as people can be on themselves, they are limited by what they have not yet discovered about themselves. Whatever lack of clarity about themselves they come to the assessment in need of transcending will limit the utility of the input they provide. Therefore it seems self-defeating to limit an assessment to a self-report, when it can so powerfully be supplemented by the views of others, especially coworkers. And if the desired outcome is clarity compelling enough to move the individual to change, then the impact of what others have to say is indispensable. Knowing what potent sources of observation and insight other people can be, we would find it strange to conduct an assessment exclusively on the basis of what managers had to say about themselves.
2. Multiple groups. When other people's experience of a manager is tapped, the cross-validation possible is greater when those individuals are drawn from multiple groups and not, for instance, just subordinates. Multiple groups are standard practice for 360 degree feedback, a term that implies a wraparound view of the individual, from the vantage points of people below, above, and beside the individual. If in addition to different individuals, different categories of individuals say the same thing, then the point gets driven home that much harder. An individual whose relationships with peers are rivalrous might be inclined to discount reports from those peers that he is competitive and arrogant, but if superiors and subordinates, with whom he is on better terms, describe him the same way, then he is more likely to look upon the characterization as valid. Of course, when a characteristic is reported by one

category of coworkers and not by others, that too is revealing and provides important differentiation in the description of a manager's behavior.

3. Coworkers plus family and friends. A comprehensive assessment gets truly comprehensive when it gathers data not just from coworkers but also from family members and friends. These people have less to say about the manager's leadership and more about his or her characteristics outside of work. On the assumption that a manager's personal makeup affects how he or she performs, this reading on the manager outside of work can have high relevance. As unusual and tricky as it can be to cross the line separating work and private life, it is useful to do so if it proves feasible and responsible. This type of data adds credibility to the results (Kaplan and Palus, 1994).

These family members and friends fall into two categories: those who know that manager in the present, as an adult, and those who knew him or her in the past, as a young person growing up. Parents and siblings may or may not fall into both categories. By making connections between the manager's current characteristics and the formative influences of his or her youth, the consultants build in another form of cross validation. Talking to members of their original family or to childhood friends is not the only way of taking account of a person's childhood. The consultants can simply take a history from the participant.

Multiple methods

1. Both ratings and verbal descriptions. To continue building this cross-validation, we also use different methods of collecting data. A common strategy in behavioral science and in assessment centers for a long time, a multi-methodological approach generally means some combination of: verbal reports by people who know the person, ratings of the person, personality tests, direct observation of the person in natural settings, and observation in controlled environments like role plays or simulations. It is very useful to include, for example, both ratings of the manager's behavior and verbal descriptions.

When people today refer to 360 degree feedback, they usually mean ratings quantitative data. This is standard practice: ratings generated using a commercially available instrument, with the ratings sometimes supplemented by a page or so of write-in comments. The ratings are the main event or the only event. Yet we have found that the impact of the data is greatly amplified when the verbal part is as large or larger than the quantitative part. The power of people's words, recorded verbatim, is considerable, especially considering that these other people are intelligent, perceptive, and articulate. Once managers have read what their coworkers have to say about their strengths and weaknesses, those observations are corroborated by the quantitative data and much more precisely calibrated by it. By the same token, the ratings typically, average scores on various scales and items, precise but disembodied-are nicely fleshed out by the prose descriptions. At its best, this combination is a happy marriage of the scientific and oral traditions of studying and representing people.

For example, an executive received a low rating on the item, "abrasive; tends to antagonize." (This instrument, SKILLscope for Managers, presents results not as averages but as frequencies. Out of 16 raters, 14 endorsed this item.) No question that this individual was abrasive. But the point was driven home in the interviews:

"He doesn't have to be rude to make his point. His confrontational style is to, "bang, be at the guy's throat."

"He tends to trash people. When he starts working people over, it's clearly mental and verbal abuse."

"He's a bully. He abuses people verbally. He will berate. He will call you an idiot in a meeting. He will humiliate you."

These comments give texture to the quantitative result but they also convey something of the tone-indignant in this case-that people took. This adds detail and power to the words "abrasive" and "antagonizes" in the rating item.

Personality tests are another kind of quantitative data and a kind of self report. Results on tests like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the FIRO-B, the Adjective Check List, the California Personality Inventory, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, provide yet another source of cross-validation. One executive read through the leadership report, ratings, and verbatim descriptions, and the next morning still had his doubts, in part because he distrusted many of the people who provided the input. His jaundiced view of his fellow managers carried over to their evaluation of him. But when he discovered that the test results told a similar story, his skepticism dissipated. The thick report on his leadership that piled up evidence of both his leadership ability and his potentially tragic flaws could not by itself do what the addition of the relatively thin set of several test results accomplished. The contribution of the tests is heightened when a clinical psychologist, going only on the tests and knowing nothing else about the individual, writes up authoritative interpretations of each of the tests and also does an overall interpretation based on all the tests.

2. Not just accounts of behavior but direct observation. As informative as verbal descriptions and ratings of the manager are, they are not first-hand experience for the consultant. The consultant can gain this experience by sitting in on meetings or by spending a day or two following the manager around. Offsetting the vividness of seeing the manager in action, however, is the inefficiency of this method of collecting data and the confounding effects of having an observer present. It is primarily for this reason that we no longer use systematic observation ourselves. We do, of course, observe managers as they interact with us, which, while not "in vivo," is a window into their defenses as they react to the report. We get a further chance to observe if we play an on-site consulting role during the application phase, as managers attempt to apply their newfound insights. While usually not systematic, this opportunistic observation, the results of which we may very well pass on to the manager, helps to refine the picture of the manager as we go.

Observation can also be done in artificial settings. Simulations such as in-basket exercises and role plays in groups are a regular part of assessment centers. In our current practice we do not use simulations because we collect enough data, as well as enough variety in that data, by other methods. In addition, simulations take time, and we already take a day or more of each executive's time in interviewing and in filling out instruments.

Multiple settings and levels

Assessments are generally confined to the work setting, a perfectly reasonable thing to do when the purpose is to assess leadership. If it is practical to approach the assessment in a holistic fashion, the view of the individual as a manager is enriched. And when, as is usually the case, parallels to the individual's managerial behavior turn up elsewhere in his or her life, the leadership assessment gains additional credibility. Participants are regularly impressed with how consistent the data is across settings. After reading a report, the spouse of an executive remarked, "It's amazing to me the tie-ins-between friends and family and colleagues."

A holistic approach can also include the manager's inner life, his or her motivation and inhibitions, as those correspond to the person's managerial behavior. When, as is usually the case, it becomes apparent that the manager's behavior is an outward expression of his or her emotional needs, this convergence further bolsters the credibility of the assessment.

1. The addition of private life. While retaining a focus on leadership, a biographically oriented assessment places the individual's leadership in the context of his or her life. In practical terms this means that we do not confine ourselves to the work setting, but, with explicit permission, enter the private lives of the managers we work with. We interview family, and sometimes friends, about the manager outside of work and therefore create an opportunity for an additional form of cross-validation. Almost always, the descriptions of managers in their home life parallels the description at work. When managers see these parallels, they are more apt to regard the results as valid and not attribute them, for example, to the corporate culture. Incidentally, in those instances where managers act differently in some respects outside of work, the differences are instructive.

An important caveat: the more extensive the assessment, especially when it is personal as well as professional, the more responsibility the consultants assume and the greater the commitment to the client must be. When we conduct a comprehensive assessment we use two consultants and we do everything we can to make sure that the client works through the data. Also the assessment process and our commitment to the client do not end with feedback. We remain available to the client. We continue to meet. We talk on the phone a few days after the feedback session. We talk with the spouse about the data and in fact quite often include that person in the consulting process. We finish what we start.

2. Not just behavior but motivation. We do not consider an assessment of a manager to be complete without a reading on what lies behind that individual's behavior as a manager,

his or her motivation. So much of what accounts for managers' performance is their motivation—their drives and their fears. If the objective is to understand a manager's behavior, then we can always do a better job if we peel the onion, as it were, and consider what needs the individual is meeting in acting as they do. This answers the question of why: why this effective behavior? why that ineffective behavior?

In assessing a person's motivation, psychological tests and direct questions asked of coworkers are both useful. We ask directly about needs and inhibitions, questions such as: "what motivates this person?" and "what does this manager avoid or shy away from?" The answers run the gamut: from achievement to challenge, from getting ahead to the advancing the company's interest, from recognition to doing the right thing. Of course, power, ego, status, and money are also included. We hear less about inhibitions. Two of the most common we do hear about: avoiding conflict and avoiding close relationships.

3. The addition of a person's history. Assessments are usually limited, for good reasons, to the manager's current behavior. This produces a slice of life, but suffers from being a historical. A person's history, whether career history or early history, adds some idea of how the past affects current behavior, clues to what might have shaped the person's behavior. For example, the types of job assignments a person has had help to account for what skills have or have not been developed. Childhood experiences contribute to the development of an individual's basic character, still evident decades later.

Managers who were severely and consistently criticized as children, for example, are likely as a result to possess a mix of sensitivities and predispositions, including a tendency to be hypersensitive to criticism, hypercritical of others, poor at giving praise and recognition, and almost desperate to dispel a painful sense of inadequacy. When managers' emotional needs can be seen to match up with their behavior, that inward view lends an extra dimension of understanding. And when what we are able to learn about early formative influences lines up with the manager's present behavior or motivation, then the apparent validity of the assessment is enhanced. These are two additional types of validation, two additional ways in which the puzzle pieces can fit together.

A comprehensive approach puts a manager's leadership, character, current life, and life history on the table, so to speak, making it possible to look at all of the elements at once. By revealing how characteristics of the person repeat themselves in different settings and at different levels, we confirm their existence. This is what the executive speaking to the credibility of the data meant when he said, "The pieces fit together."

In all these ways the validity of the data that will form the basis for the picture of the manager is established. It is the sheer mass of data, systematically collected and assembled, that wins the manager's confidence in the validity of what the assessment will say about him or her. It is the use of different methods, each potent in their own right, that confers validity when their separate results converge. It is looking at different spheres of the manager's life and it is looking at managers from the outside in and from the inside out. Redundancy like this is helpful. Without it,

managers understandably, harbor doubts about the data and to that extent will not take the conclusions drawn about them seriously. To gain managers' full trust and confidence in the data, a comprehensive assessment is an expansively, even explosively, divergent exercise in data gathering, a casting of nets widely. Having hauled in these various piles of data, however, the client and the consultant have on their hands a daunting task of reducing the input to something manageable and useful.

DATA REDUCTION: ACHIEVING SIMPLICITY

Having assembled a data set complete enough to be credible to the manager, the issue then becomes: what do we make of the data? How do we order the multiplicity of data points and the many different types of data points, which are enough to make the individual's (and the consultant's) head spin, so that its major messages become clear? How do we arrive at a unifying idea or two that ties the data together? How do we analyze and interpret the mass of data in order to move from a loose, fragmented collection of observations and insights to a compact, higher-order interpretation?

The French writer Paul Valery asserted: "Tout ce que est simple est faux; tout ce que ne l'est pas est inutilisable" (all that is simple is foolish and all that is not simple is useless). A comprehensive assessment avoids the simplistic attributions that people so often make about others, but it runs the risk of being so complicated that it is useless. Once all the data is in, the challenge is to reduce it to a form that is neither superficial nor hopelessly complex. At the end of the feedback session, with the several reports sitting on the conference table, we sometimes quote Oliver Wendell Holmes and describe the goal of data reduction as finding the simplicity on the other side of complexity. This is not the simplicity available to us before undertaking a careful study of a manager. It is the simplicity obtainable following an assessment informed and supported by careful study of a considerable body of data. The analysis and interpretation must result in conclusions that are simple yet profound.

We use two approaches to reducing the data. The first approach is highly structured and systematic, very much akin to the way scientists analyze data. Through an iterative process the various types of data are organized and distilled to their essence. It is a thoroughly inductive approach, where the categories used to classify the data are largely derived from the data and not from a preconceived theory or categories imported from psychology or the management literature. This is not to say that the consultants or the participant are blank screens. But the picture of the client that emerges respects the uniqueness of that individual as it is reflected in that person's own data. The inductive process produces a "theory of the case" that is directly informed by the data. The resulting conceptual framework fits the manager like a glove because it is based almost entirely on his or her own data. A fair amount of this analytical work is done as homework, with the consultant and participant working independently.

The second approach to reducing the data is unstructured, opportunistic, and interactive. The consultant and participant work together, in real time, to boil down the data to its essential properties. This is an exploratory process done jointly and interactively for the most part. In the course of exploring one promising area or another, the participant provides additional information about that area. And so together the consultant and participant fill in the sketchy picture and add depth to it. The report, either in its original or its summarized form, serves as a jumping off point for this process of defining the major problem or problems facing the manager. As consultant and manager delve into the problem, as they shape and solidify their understanding, additional data comes out. The interactive nature of the process is an opportunity for the consultant to challenge the participant to see himself as others see him while providing emotional support as the manager does that difficult work.

Structured, systematic approach

Although this part of the work of data reduction is structured and systematic, it is not merely mechanical and without creativity. While proceeding step-by-step, this part of the process is in fact an extended act of discovery. From the mass of data a theory of the individual's leadership is defined, in the way a potter shapes a pot from clay or a sculptor "finds" a sculpture in a block of granite. The theory resides in the data waiting to be pulled out.

The process we use in our practice closely resembles a strategy for building theory in the social sciences formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their classic book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Arguing that theory development should not be limited to verifying or testing small pieces of grand theories through tight, restrictive studies, Glaser and Strauss introduce a complementary approach whereby social scientists, with no preconceived notions about the topic, "accumulate a vast number of diverse facts" from which they carefully discover a theory (p. 243). Because the theory is so thoroughly grounded in the data, it is highly likely to fit the facts and to be useful in informing practical application. The goal is to "develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior" (p. 23).

Theory is discovered from the data less often by great intuitive leaps than by exhaustive analysis. The first step in analyzing the data is to sort like types of data points into groups. Each of these groups becomes a conceptual category. Once all the data has been sorted and an array of categories has been created, then the categories themselves are ordered into an integrated conceptual framework. "Lower level categories emerge rather quickly during the early phases of data collection. Higher level, overriding, and integrating, conceptualizations ... tend to come later" (p. 36).

In our practice we proceed through a process of discovering grounded theory in roughly four steps (the "outputs" column in Table 2 correspond to the following four headings).

1. Data organized by interview question. The first step is to order the data enough so that it is not in complete disarray but not so much that the participant is robbed of the chance to participate in the discovery of the theory. What we choose to do is to organized the data by interview question: we simply reproduce everyone's answer to each question. Thus the large part of what we present initially to the manager consists of verbatim descriptions, scores of pages of other people's actual words characterizing the individual at work and outside of work. Each set of answers to a given question is further subdivided into the categories of people responding-for example, subordinates, non-direct reports, peers, superiors, board members, customers, and the like.

The report does not include an executive summary, because we want the client to encounter the data in a more or less raw, undigested form and feel the effects of that.

2. A preliminary list of themes. The second step in our process takes place during the feedback session. This amounts to an eyeball analysis, typical of what researchers do early in the process of making sense of results and what one would expect to do in taking initial account of a large body of assessment data, which is to spread out the material on the table and look for patterns. This step, which we choose to do with the manager rather than completing it before the feedback session, is necessarily broad-brush, preliminary, and incomplete given the quantity of data. In the course of this session, which lasts a day or two depending on how extensive the assessment was, we join the manager in making observations as we go through the material and in drawing initial conclusions at the end of the session. Typically, the consultants and the manager come up with a few "buckets" that can contain portions of the data. By the time this session is over, the manager has some closure on the messages in the data, but a closure that is quite partial and preliminary.
3. Data re-organized by conceptual category. The third step consists of analyzing the data systematically. Participants are assigned the task of rereading the report and creating lists of themes for each major category of data-leadership, personal life, early history, tests. They vary considerably in how thoroughly they perform this task. The consultants, however, do an extremely careful job of combing through the material. The crux of this analytical step is to organize the data tightly.

The poet Shelley captured the spirit and intentness and patience with which this work needs to be done.

I imagined that if day by day
I watched him, and seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, [I] could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind.... (p. 456)

Our method of studying the data is highly inductive. We create a set of categories from an initial reading of the data and then sort data, bit by bit, into those categories. This is what social scientists call content analysis, and it is a laborious process but one that strengthens our grasp of the material by a factor of two. This stage takes us beyond an impressionistic reading of the data, however insightful those impressions might have been, to a highly systematic analysis, one that provides a basis on which the individual and the staff can make sound judgments. Whereas in the initial report the interview data was organized around the interview questions, this time the data is reordered under headings that are defined by the answers to the questions.

The content analysis of the interview data on leadership proceeds as follows. In the beginning of the section on leadership are the answers to two broad questions, "What are this individual's major strengths?" and "What are this individual's major weaknesses or limitations?" All of those strengths or weaknesses mentioned at least once in these two set of answers receive a tentative place on the list of conceptual categories. Then, using this list, the consultant goes through the rest of the report, all 75 or 100 or 125 pages of it, sentence by sentence, and sometimes phrase by phrase, considering whether a particular mention of a strength or weakness belongs in one of the categories that have been identified. If it does, then that mention is coded accordingly. If it does not, then a new category is added to the list or an existing category is revised to include this particular characteristic not previously identified. A characteristic that originally looked like a single thing may, over the course of the content analysis, receive so many mentions that it subdivides into two or more distinct subcharacteristics. Something that did not appear in the early part of the report may emerge in the later material and warrant a place on the list. A characteristic that makes the list because it was mentioned in the beginning of the report may wash out, if it turns out that it receives only one or two mentions in the entire report. In a process requiring real creativity, the consultants continually test the viability of categories and revise them as necessary. And at the end of the process, when the new product, consisting of the list of categories and all the quotes appearing under its respective category, is in front of them, the consultants take another close look at the categories in light of the evidence marshalled for each one of them. The content analysis entails great interplay between theory and data. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) described it, "...in discovering theory one generates conceptual categories ... from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (P. 23).

This highly analytic reading of the text picks up weak signals that might otherwise be missed, while distinguishing between the weak and the strong signals. The output of this consolidated version of the data consists of the lists of strengths and of weaknesses plus the weights placed on each of those strengths or weaknesses in accordance with the number of comments that fall under each one. Those few strengths or weaknesses that are followed by long lists of comments are obviously the ones that stand out for other people. Of course the enthusiasm people have for the strengths as well as the frustration or dismay they express about the weaknesses also comes through and contributes to the emphasis placed on one or another. Also, grouping the quotes that pertain to a given characteristic, rather than having them scattered throughout the first set of reports, concentrates the message and heightens the impact on the individual, increasing the chance that the message gets through.

4. Categories organized into a conceptual framework. Stage three of this inductive work takes the output from the previous stage and reduces it still further. In our practice, this step takes place during the session in which we cover the consolidated version of the data. After having discussed the consolidated leadership data in depth, we set ourselves the task of detecting the underlying structure of the individual's leadership. Working separately and then together, the two staff members and manager each stare at the list of leadership strengths and try to identify the core strength, the basic quality that ties together most or all of the various positive characteristics, and then do the same with the list of leadership weaknesses.

It is almost always possible to distill down the weaknesses to a single basic quality, the manager's fundamental development need. What the manager could stand to work on usually boils down to one thing, general as it might be. This core weakness or development need then has branching off of it the several specific weaknesses. It is a hub-and-spoke model. The core weakness encompasses the various characteristics, just as the characteristics themselves were a reduction from the many specific data points (see Figures 1 and 2). Likewise, it is usually possible to reduce the list of strengths to a single basic capability.

A hard-driving, results-oriented, and generally quite effective line executive (actually a composite made up of three individuals) had the following major strengths (some of the language comes from the people interviewed). This is the list of categories prepared by the consultants during their content analysis of the data.

1. Very bright. A quick study.
2. Knows the business.
3. High integrity. Wants to do the right thing.
4. Direct; a straight shooter.
5. Consistently gets results.
6. Highly focused. Determined to make plan.
7. Sets priorities well.
8. Gives clear direction. Leaves no doubt about what is expected.
9. His follow-up system won't quit. Sweats the details.
10. High energy. Works incredible hours.
11. Highly organized. Self-disciplined.
12. Dedicated to the company.
13. Holds people strictly accountable. Doesn't hesitate to fire poor performers.

Taking this list from the consultants' summary of the data, the manager and consultants together attempted to identify the core capability that unites the several strengths. They agreed, after some discussion, on "powerful operational leadership," in the sense of someone who is very much on top of the business operation he or she runs and is good at getting results from that

operation. Figure 1 shows how the discrete strengths can be organized around this core capability.

This executive's major weaknesses were as follows.

1. Detail-oriented to a fault. A micromanager.
2. Inflexible. Hard to influence once his mind is made up.
3. Workaholic. Neglects his family.
4. Unrealistic expectations. Expects people to work as hard as he does.
5. Not a strategic thinker. Short-term oriented.
6. Perfectionistic. Tends to find fault.
7. Overly controlling. Things have to be done his way.
8. Poor listener. Monopolizes conversations.
9. Not creative. Doesn't think outside-the-box.
10. Does not encourage innovation. Not receptive to new ideas.
11. Reacts badly when people make mistakes, even honest ones.
12. Persists too long when a course of action he has chosen isn't working.
13. Doesn't take criticism well.
14. Doesn't take good care of himself.

Figure 2 maps out how this set of weaknesses can be arranged around a single core issue: "restrictive overcontrol."

This manager's core strength and his core weakness actually amount to two sides of the same coin. His basic strength was that he focused his operation intently on getting good short-term results, and his basic weakness was that he went too far in doing this. As is so often the case, his weaknesses were his strengths taken to an extreme.

These two maps are the ultimate output of the structured, systematic approach to reducing the leadership data. We could create similar maps for participants' personal life and childhood, but, consistent with the focus of the assessment on leadership, we only take the leadership data that far. Even if not synthesized to the same degree, the rest of the data serves as extremely important input to the exploration of the individual's leadership.

The unstructured, exploratory, collaborative coach

Much of the highly systematic, structured reduction of the data is done by the "experts," in the form of their painstaking content analysis done off-line. The results of this expert analysis could be taken as the final word on the client. After all, the data base is unusually broad, the consultants have taken great care in sorting through the separate batches of data and they have had years of experience with managers and with, this kind of analytic work. However, the purpose of this assessment is not ultimately for the consultants to understand the manager but for

the manager to gain insight into himself or herself. Thus, the process of analysis and interpretation needs to be conducted so that the managers do their share of the discovering. An entirely expert-centered model will not work well. Rather than figure it out for managers, the staff's role is to help them figure it out for themselves. As in ordinary managerial life, people are more likely to accept decisions that they participate in making, including decisions about their make-up and growth and development. At the same time, we do not hesitate to tell participants how we read the data or to make clear recommendations at the appropriate times.

The results of the consultant's summary serve as the input to another equally important analytic and interpretive effort. This is the series of discussions that the consultants and participant have about the data, not once but at several stages. This second approach is indispensable because these discussions generate additional data, critical puzzle pieces without which the puzzle would not come together. Also, the purpose of helping the participants attain greater clarity about themselves would be less likely to be served if they were relegated to a passive role, a receptacle to be filled with knowledge gained by the professionals. It is critical that managers engage actively and fully in the process of discovering the truth about themselves.

This approach is as unstructured, emergent, dynamic, and interactive as the other is structured, systematic, and planned. However, we do plan this approach, and we introduce structure, even as the process is largely spontaneous and opportunistic. Working together, the consultants and manager explore the data in its original form or in consolidated form, ranging widely across the subsets of data, the individual's characteristics, and the various spheres of his or her life.

The purpose of this series of joint explorations is to define the most significant developmental issues; not only identify them, but work out a full definition of those issues. The jumping off point for this exploratory process often is highly distilled output of the systematic analysis, the definition of a core capability and a core weakness. In particular, we delve into the weaknesses, the performance problems. Beyond the symptoms, what are the underlying causes? What lies behind the behavior in question? What are the emotional needs that seem to give rise to the behavior? How entrenched is the problem and how long has the person had it? How serious is it? Is it confined to work or does it also manifest itself in other areas of the manager's life?

In the course of exploring a major developmental issue, we keep our eye out for possible solutions to the problem.

For one executive, let us call him Zachary, the presenting problem was poor interpersonal relationships. He was sometimes arrogant or abrasive. In truth the interpersonal problems were less by commission than omission: generally he failed to develop his relationships beyond a certain superficial point. He kept people at a distance. He failed to engage often or fully enough. People complained that he wasn't available to them, that he traveled too much, that he didn't initiate contact enough, that he didn't give them sufficient direction or sufficient coaching to carry out direction. In addition, the little interaction he did have with people, at work and at home, tended to leave them with a bad feeling. He was extremely critical and conspicuously unsupportive.

He knew coming into the feedback session that he wanted to improve his relationships. The data only confirmed the need to do that. He put it this way: "What I'm seeking is a higher capacity for relationships. I'm confident in all areas of my life but this one."

Later in the session, searching for a better understanding of the problem, we discussed his interpersonal history- The pre-collected data had revealed the difficult family environment in which he had grown up, and as we discussed his childhood during this session, he added to what had come out in the interviews. His father was an alcoholic, who, though he did not beat Zach physically, showered abuse on him verbally. As Zach put it, "I couldn't please him when he was sober and he was hell on wheels when he was drunk." Zach's father, at best unsupportive, was at his worst scathingly critical, sarcastic, caustic, and Zach, being the firstborn, bore the brunt of it. Zach's mother, though well intended, was ineffectual in countering or containing his father's bad habits. She harbored resentment, however, and the tension between his parents made for an aversive climate.

Very bright, Zach threw himself into his schoolwork, and except for a two-year rebellious period in high school when he slacked off, he was an excellent student. He also read voraciously, holed up in his room. From the time he was nine or ten, he had part-time jobs, all of them solitary-a paper route, selling magazines door-to-door, driving a delivery truck.

This excursion into his childhood, aided by the report and amplified by his further comments during the discussion, made the simple point that his interpersonal difficulties had powerful antecedents in his past and reinforced the significance of his current problem. It also led to a clear identification of the problem. At the end of the discussion of these early influences he said, "I have never been close to people, even my children. The only exception has been my wife." And by Zach's own admission, even with his wife he kept his distance. She certainly felt the lack of closeness and expressiveness on his part.

As grim as the content of this discussion was, its tone was actually upbeat because Zach was actively and courageously exploring the problem. We gave him credit for being able to stand outside the patterns to which he had long been captive and see them for what they were. The next morning, however, he came in sounding discouraged. He had lost much of the confidence of the previous day that he could overcome his interpersonal problems. "I'm such a solitary person I'm not sure I will be able to correct this problem."

For a while the session stalled. Nothing that the consultants said, no discussion they initiated with Zach, was productive. Concerned, one of the consultants, a man, decided to reflect back Zach's present mood to him.

Consultant one: "The wind seems to have gone out of your sails."

Zachary: "I know what you're talking about. Reading the report last night I was overwhelmed."

In reading the portion of the leadership report not covered during the day, Zach had been surprised by how dissatisfied some of his subordinates were and how turned off by the way he treated them. This left him feeling deflated and ready to give up.

Zachary: "I have to go back and regroup about where I am on this."

Consultant two (a woman): "You thought you were further ahead with your people."

Zachary: "Yes."

In the past few months Zachary, sensing that his subordinates had a problem with him, had called a meeting and gamely invited them to get their feelings off their chests. The discussion had gone well, and he thought this had cleared the air.

His emotional reaction to the reemergence of this relationship problem, we established that morning, turned out to be extremely telling. He felt like avoiding the whole thing, just as in general he tended to "escape," his word, when a relationship got uncomfortable.

The discussion of his reaction to this leadership issue turned into another discussion of formative influences.

Consultant two (a woman): "There must have been a point in time in your life when you decided you would meet your own needs."

Zachary: "I can't remember the first time I said that, but I've said it a lot in my lifetime."

Consultant one: "You were in a hostile environment growing up. The only way to survive was to look after yourself. You had to find a way to survive in a hostile environment."

Consultant two: "It may be that your mood changed today because you again felt, in this case with your subordinates, that you were in a hostile environment-because of those negative comments your subordinates made in the report."

And the discussion of formative influences gave way to another discussion of the pattern of his relationships. The staff raised the question of safety. As a result of his early experiences he did not feel safe in relationships. The staff also suggested that just as his desire for relationships was nearly extinguished as a child, his interest in having strong relationships with his subordinates was nearly snuffed out when their critical comments made him feel unsafe.

Zachary's response: "I hide from relationships." Later on in the session he made another striking, confessional statement: "I like to keep relationships distant. So I don't get hurt."

A little later in the discussion, appreciating in another way the effect of his early experience on his way of coping, Zachary asked an intriguing question: if aversive early relationships put him off of relationships, would the opposite condition, a nurturing environment, have encouraged a capacity for relationships. In raising this question, he came up with the seed of his relationship

development. We built on that idea. And in our own relationship with him we tried to offer him a model or prototype for a safe, nurturing, yet robust relationship.

We then moved to a more precise definition of the problem, with implications for how he might learn to solve the problem. The diagnosis rested on the distinction between his fear of relationships and his urge to flee. Zach confirmed this reading: "Yes, I'm afraid and I immediately escape."

What he experienced was the need to leave the scene; what he was coming to realize in this session was the fear that precipitated that urge. This was evidently fear of a repetition of the pain he experienced in his early relationships. We suggested that he learn to interrupt the reflex reaction, to recognize the fear and to pause before acting, to ask himself whether what he experienced was the old fear as opposed to a realistic threat in the present situation. If he could catch himself as he was about to have that knee-jerk reaction, and if he could determine that the current situation was in fact not threatening, then he could elect to stay engaged with the other party. And an increase in his capacity to engage would be a big step towards improving his relationships.

This long sequence with Zachary took place off and on over two days, during which he was able to get to the bottom of his relationship problem. The definition we arrived at near the end of the session wasn't the whole story; no doubt Zach would deepen and refine his understanding as he went forward. But it was a solid working understanding that fit the facts available at the time, and it served as a solid platform for him to attempt to change.

As scripted and prescribed as the strict data-analytic work is (and it is not without a creative component), this fluid, opportunistic process has an artistry to it (though it is not without its own emergent structure).

Each exploratory sequence runs a different course depending on the client and his or her issues and also depending on the staff and how they think and work. Though unique to him and the staff working with him, the particular sequence with Zach contains a number of the elements found in a successful exploratory process. It began with the client's complaint, that his relationships left a lot to be desired. This statement of the situation was, in this case, an effective statement of the problem: the work to be done was to add definition to his understanding of the problem. This we proceeded to do by delving into his early experience in relationships, not to dwell on childhood trauma but to appreciate the magnitude of the problem and to identify the conditions that prompted him to adopt his pattern of relating. We wanted to help him see that the patterns that served him badly as an adult were necessary for his survival, emotionally, as a child. As maladaptive as they might be now, they were adaptive for the conditions in which he found himself as a child.

The exploration of the problem took us into his inner life and the emotional needs that corresponded to his interpersonal inadequacies. He was able to develop a more differentiated view of his emotions in interpersonal situations. In particular, he was able to uncover emotions lying a level or two below the surface. He could recognize the reflex-like need to leave

uncomfortable situations-change the subject, end the conversation-and a level beneath that he could see, and own up to, the fear that prompted the urge to escape. And in exposing the way he mismanaged interpersonal situations he saw the potential for managing interactions more effectively.

In the search for the manager's most basic issue or issues, we use the data presented in the report and in the summary of the report as a point of departure, but the search itself becomes an occasion to gather additional data. Once Zach's early relationships became a focal point, he volunteered, as others tend to do at this point in the process, new, vivid facts about influential individuals in his family. Once the psychology of his interpersonal relationships became relevant, he offered fresh insights into his emotional life-really gaining those insights as we went. In this rolling, investigative process, the parts of a person's performance, character, and life that become salient go from being sketchy to filled out. The picture of the critical features gains detail, texture, depth. The problem is defined fully and complexly and at the same time simply and clearly. In this way the diagnosis penetrates to the core.

THE DEDUCTIVE APPROACH: THE USES OF EXISTING THEORY

The structured, systematic approach to reducing the data is, as we have seen, an essentially inductive process out of which comes a "theory of the case" that is heavily determined by the data. It is an inductive approach in that theory is inferred from concrete data. Yet, as distinctly inductive as the process of data reduction is, it is not entirely that. Consultants after all are not blank screens; they cannot encounter the data completely free of preconceived ideas. Nor should they. In fact, they are in a much stronger position to understand a given individual if they are bolstered in that effort by what they have learned about other managers, other human beings. And the more applicable the consultants' repertoire of concepts, the better able they are to guide the manager to the approximate truth about themselves.

The one condition for effectiveness is that they don't force-fit their theories onto the data, that they don't impose their favorite conceptual framework. The data, as it has been organized to that point, must slip snugly into the category or theory as if it were made for that person's data. As this proviso implies, existing theory is not introduced until the analytic/interpretive process has progressed to the point where a definition of the individual's leadership character has begun to take shape. The application of theory in a deductive sense must not be premature. And when time is right to apply existing theory, it almost never fits perfectly in its generic form. It almost always must be altered to fit the contours of the emerging organization of the particular person's data. Glaser and Strauss (1967), advocates for an aggressively inductive approach to building theory, reached the same conclusion: "Categories can be borrowed from existing theory, provided the data are continually studied to make certain the categories fit" (p. 36).

If done adeptly, it is useful then to approach the interpretative task deductively; that is, to make inferences about the individual on the basis of existing theory. To do so does not

contradict or undermine the inductive process, with its high reverence for the data. Dropping in existing theory at the right time in the process of organizing the data lends further clarity to the emerging definition of the individual's leadership character. As that definition takes on still greater sharpness and clarity, the individual is struck by its relevance and fit and aroused by a realization of his or her historic governing patterns and by the possibility and even the necessity of future growth.

The consultant's grab bag of theory fragments, imported from the literature or derived from the consultant's own experience, come in handy in seeing the significance of one or another characteristic. Even more useful is a broad unifying idea or framework that encompasses the bulk of the data and integrates the otherwise fragmented set of findings about the person.

A unifying idea helps to define the person's basic identity as a manager and as a person. It is interesting to note that the root of the word identity is "same." Identity is the sameness that unites the many, otherwise seemingly disparate characteristics of the person-in other words, the higher order consistency in a person that cuts across many of the particularities, including those that are apparently unrelated or contradictory.

One such unifying theory that I find has particular relevance for the executive population is the distinction between what I am calling the orientation to self and the orientation to others. This is a fundamental theory, one that potentially encompasses much or all of human personality.

Although this theory has not dominated the personality literature in psychology, it has surfaced quite a bit in one form or another. David Bakan (1966), writing philosophy and theology as much as social science, proposed two basic sides of human nature, agency (the individual as agent) and communion. Wiggins (1973), in his textbook on assessment, adopted agency and communion as a framework for accounting for much of the literature on personality. Kegan (1982) formulated a stage theory of human development on the basis of two sides of personality- autonomy and inclusion. Beck (1983), a specialist in cognitive therapy, identified two modes of personality, individuality and sociality. McAdams (1988), developing a narrative theory of personality, found that people typically tell the story of themselves and their lives in terms of power and intimacy. Bowlby (1988), a psychiatrist who has studied the effects of relationship deprivation since World War II, identified two components of human nature-the tendency to form strong emotional bonds and the urge to explore the environment. Blatt (1995) wrote a review of the literature on depression that was organized around the distinction between self-definition and interpersonal relatedness.

Each of these orientations, towards self and towards others, while coupled in a dialectical relationship, is each so basic as to be a way of life. It is not just a motivation to be that way, not just the value placed on being that way, not just the skill to behave that way, but all of these things. Kegan (1982) talked about the yearning for autonomy or inclusion as well as the capacity to meet each of these needs.

As I read the literature on orientation to self and orientation to others (Blatt, 1955, Beck, 1983, Wiggins, 1982), the distinction divides into two parts. The first is the difference between being a separate individual and being in relationship to others.

1. Separateness versus inclusion

To be separate is to be autonomous and independent, to rely on oneself, to take care of oneself, to have freedom of movement, to keep one's own counsel, to keep others at a distance—all of these being healthy and useful capabilities. To be inclusive is to be in relationship, to form attachments with others, to join with others (including in groups), to achieve closeness and a sense of belonging, to trust others, to rely on others, to allow others to take care of you, to open up to others—an equally healthy and functional set of capabilities. At a higher level of abstraction this is a distinction between differentiation (as in self-differentiation) and integration.

Both of these orientations are valuable in life. Since human beings tend to develop unevenly, however, many people do not possess both orientations in roughly equal measure. In a sense this is how human development goes wrong. The individual develops a strong preference for one side, relies heavily on it, believes in it, and develops it to a high degree, sometimes to the point where it becomes exaggerated and dysfunctional.

The separateness or autonomy orientation in the extreme case takes the form of being withdrawn or isolated and of avoiding relationships (Blatt, 1995). In the extreme case, individuals become completely alienated, cut themselves off from other people and take a paranoid stance in which they live in fear of losing their autonomy or having their boundaries invaded. They may also become compulsively self-reliant, as a result of a history of being actively rejected and rebuffed when they needed care as children (Bowlby, 1988). In other words, too much self-orientation amounts to too little other-orientation.

An exaggeration of the inclusion orientation, on the other hand, takes the form of an unhealthy attachment, a clinging to dominant individuals, a need for continual reassurance (that they are lovable), a fear of being abandoned (Blatt, 1995). It is characterized by a difficulty asserting oneself for fear of alienating the other party (Beck, 1983). In the extreme case, it becomes an excessive preoccupation with relationships, a state of being anxiously attached; this pattern results from a history of not being able to count on the parent when needed (Bowlby, 1988). It is also associated with a submission to others and to relationships with others that leads to a loss of a sense of self. In other words, too much other-orientation amounts to the too little self-orientation. It is often the case that when individuals place a heavy emphasis on one side, they place a correspondingly lighter emphasis on the other side. They become lopsided.

To return to the case of Zachary. We offered him this distinction during the summary session. Having heard a brief explanation of the idea, he remarked after a break, "The idea of self-orientation got to me. It brought extra clarity." Being exposed to the theory helped him see how one-sided he had become and stimulated him to reflect further on his childhood and the roots of

his relationship orientation. Looking back to the objective he had tentatively set at the end of the feedback session, he declared it to be "directionally correct but too nebulous."

Zach: "I'm just like my parents. It's the way I was raised. They're divorced and neither one of them has any friends, and they don't want any. I was raised to be self-reliant, self-sufficient. There was no hugging in my family. That's what my upbringing was like. It pushed me to that extreme. In my heart of hearts, I am personally closed. It's a defense."

Consultant: "Were you always that way?"

Zach: "I was worse in high school. I've always been self-reliant. I have never relied on a support structure."

Consultant: "Do you have close friends?"

Zach: "No, I don't have any. If I had to name one, it is my wife, and I'm reserved with her. I've become an island and not let anyone into my circle and not let anyone close enough to see a weakness. I see that's exactly what I've been doing. So I've got to let people into my circle."

Self-orientation and other-orientation, the pair, represent a polarity, an opposition of equally virtuous qualities that potentially, in the best case, complement each other. Frequently, however, they do not operate as complements in individuals because one side is much better developed than the other and one side of the polarity is cultivated at the expense of other. Zach had learned to rely on himself, to function as an autonomous human being, but his ability to rely on others to meet his needs had been stunted. So, in his case, rather than acting as complements to each other, the two orientations become almost mutually exclusive. This lopsided condition represented Zach's core problem and his core developmental opportunity rolled into one.

Entering the assessment process, Zach had some awareness of his interpersonal problems at work, and the data and analysis as well as the interpretation of the data only heightened that awareness. If in constructing a theory about him, we never uttered a word about personality theory, he would still have left the process much clearer about himself. Yet the brief explanation of the self-and-other polarity helped to clinch his discovery of his basic pattern. Once he saw the application of the polarity to himself, he again recognized not only how the pattern manifested itself at work but how it extended its reach throughout his life. By coming to an encompassing understanding about himself, the clarity became that much more compelling and his interest in changing to become more effective at work was amplified by a desire to be more effective in his life. Zach declared: "I don't want to be like my parents. And I don't want to be that way with my children." He had found a personal-life motivation as well as a work-life motivation to change. In deciding what developmental objectives to set at work and at home, he said: "It's all related. It's your life. You can't have separate lives. It's all the same. One (change) can help the other. It's all related."

2. Self-assertion versus enabling others to assert themselves

A second distinction that falls under the broad heading of self-orientation and other-orientation is: having an impact personally versus creating conditions for other people to have an impact.

To be self-assertive is to express yourself, to make your presence felt, to have an impact on the environment, to make a difference, to achieve, to attain mastery, to engage in self-expansion, to strive to be valued, to assert yourself, to take the lead, make the rules, set the terms, to define the relationships of which one is a part. To help others to assert themselves is to allow or encourage others to do all of those things, including in relation to you.

Before running across this distinction in the literature on personality, I had first developed an understanding of it in the course of our research-based work with executives. It had struck me, as we attempted to characterize each individual we worked with, that many of them were "forces"-forces to be reckoned with, forces in nature and that their performance problems resulted from being forceful to a fault. The majority of the executive population tends to the self-assertive, forceful side, yet a certain proportion leans the other way, towards enabling others. This distinction was not a new thought certainly but one whose particular content and structure fit snugly the executive-level population that we work with. Just as a parsimonious theory about an individual manager develops from iterating on that person's data, this theory took shape from iterating across cases.

Since I first understood the distinction between being self-assertive and being enabling in relation to the managerial population (Kaplan, 1996), I will describe it here not in general but in managerial terms.

Self-assertive managers make their presence felt, let people know clearly what they expect, are not reluctant to make demands, hold people accountable, step up to the tough decisions (even those that have an adverse effect on people), take charge, and in general let little or nothing deter them from achieving their objectives, for the organization and for themselves.

When self-assertion is exaggerated it consists of an excessive concern with one's own performance and impact. The individual expends a disproportionate amount of energy on attaining mastery personally. Individual achievement becomes the be-all and end-all of self-satisfaction. The individual becomes so wrapped up in distinguishing herself that she has little emotional energy left over for other people and can be said to lack empathy. This is the narcissistic personality, one that is much more interested in being the hero than, as one executive put it, making heroes. Self-assertion can be taken to the point of domination, outright aggression, and even abuse of others.

Enabling-oriented managers create the conditions for other people to put their strength and resources to work. They tap into, bring out, and place a high value on the capabilities and intensity of other people. In effect, they create the conditions that make it possible for other people to be forceful themselves. They do a great job of involving their people and opening themselves to their influence-in setting strategic direction and in making decisions that affect the unit as a whole.

When enabling is taken to an extreme, managers give their people too much latitude and fail to give direction or hold people accountable. They are overly concerned with what other people think, overly responsive to their needs or concerns, overly accommodating. They shy away from conflict and have difficulty confronting people about performance deficits. They do not let their organization know clearly where they stand, strategically or operationally. Overly enabling managers tend to be self-effacing, taking a facilitative or catalytic or behind-the-scenes role to the point where their own direct impact is muted or lost. They are so oriented to others that they subordinate their own sense of self

Richard Reickhart, a composite of four people, serves as a case in point. He tilted decidedly towards the enabling side and, as the process of data reduction proceeded, integrated the various elements of his leadership profile around the assertive/ enabling duality. His strengths were strategic thinking, knowledge of the marketplace, interpersonal skills, and a generally winning personality. His weaknesses were difficulty with executing, with conflict, and with delegating. The breakthrough for him came with the realization that he had been overemphasizing one aspect of the forceful/ enabling dimension.

Indicative of his historic attitude was his initial reaction to the report. The jumping off point was the major finding that he had received strong scores on quite a few major managerial dimensions, yet he had underrated himself on most of those dimensions. This discrepancy was telling. Richard immediately recognized his persistent tendency to discount his strengths as an expression of his basic insecurity. And yet when I suggested to him that he would do himself a lot of good if he were to internalize these views of his strengths, he reacted with horror.

Consultant: "I suggest that you write down all the strengths as well as the high praise you received. Let in these positives, soak them up through your pores so to speak."

Richard: "See, I would have trouble doing that."

Consultant: "Let's imagine that you internalized this high praise. What would happen?"

Richard: "People would view me as egotistical. I don't like people like that. Maybe also fear of failure: if I get to that point, I might fail, from overconfidence."

Affected by his doubts about himself, his hesitance to assert himself acted as a powerful brake on him, as his following comments show.

Richard: "It's not that I'm not forceful. It's being concerned with how it will be received. It's the acceptance thing. Psychologically, it's back to the fear of rejection. The worst fear is I get up and no one follows."

"I can be decisive but then I say to myself, what if, what if?"

"People say here in the report that I'm a good guy. Actually, I worry about that. I'm never sure people like me. And this worry inhibits me."

"A lot of times I know the decision but I'm afraid to make it because I don't want to hurt the person's feelings."

"I worry too much about whether people are happy versus leading people."

"Harmony is very important to me. I don't like fighting at home and I actually undermine my wife's discipline with our children."

One consequence of this orientation was overwork. Rather than making demands on his people, and rather than rejecting unsatisfactory work, he did the work himself. His difficulty with delegation then stemmed not, as it often does, from a need to control others, but from a reluctance to assert himself. In general, his scores revealed him to be someone who shied away from the tough actions required of managers. His spotty record with implementation arose from an inability to hold his people accountable for results. People said that he was not truly on top of his job, despite his long hours, in the sense that he lacked personal organization and did not set priorities well.

He was able to break through to a revised understanding of himself, one that put him in a position to grow, with the help of the theory on forceful and enabling leadership. Along with the leadership-assessment content, what helped him was the idea, built into polarities as conceptual structures, of polarization. He discovered that he had polarized these two approaches to leadership. "I have thought that people in top positions were sons of bitches." He set the objective of becoming a "better leader," meaning, in this case, a more forceful leader. "I want to go forward versus back into or sidle up to." He also set the objective of "eliminating the aversion to confidence: I've come to believe that confidence is okay." When I suggested that it sounded like he wanted to sit in the driver's seat, he said, "Yes, and I feel I can drive that car and not be arrogant." This is a wonderful instance of an increase in clarity. Where previously he had confused (i.e., fused or blurred) confidence and arrogance, he was now able to distinguish the two and free himself to act with greater authority and self-assuredness. This clarification included a cognitive component: he discarded an old assumption or belief. It had also had an emotional component: he overcame a fear, his "fear of arrogance" that had kept him from fully recognizing his strengths, from solidifying his confidence, and from taking strong, decisive action.

Consistent with his difficulty with self-assertion, Richard also did not take good care of himself. He felt that when he was home, he owed it to his wife and children to spend all his time with them, a worthy goal if it were not for the fact that he got no time to rest or exercise. His wife actually urged him to take better care of himself. She saw how worn down he got. What kept him from taking time for himself? It would be "selfish." This was another confusion, between meeting one's own legitimate needs and selfishness, a lack of clarity to which people with a strong other-orientation are liable. He was able to make this distinction sufficiently well to allow himself to begin exercising twice a week, getting up early so as not to take away from

time with his family. Richard's mistake, in confusing taking care of oneself with selfishness, is an easy one to make, conceptually speaking. But all human beings need and want things for themselves and are perpetually seeking satisfaction. It is only a question of the routes they choose for getting their needs met. So while it may seem that self-oriented people are more intent on their own needs, other-oriented people are fundamentally no less self-interested.

Aided by his data and a unifying idea that helped him map that data, Richard was able to locate himself on a psychological and managerial field and see the direction for his further development, not only see it but want to move that way. This is a good first step towards self-development.

The uses of polarities in assessment

Although these are interesting concepts taken separately, orientation to self and orientation to others are especially useful as a unifying tool when they are taken together as a polarity. In rolling up the numerous data-based indications about a manager, the self-orientation and other-orientation polarity reveal the extent to which the manager emphasizes one approach as opposed to the other. Standard practice in management is to assess managerial characteristics piecemeal. By treating them in pairs, especially pairs of characteristics that oppose each other, it is easier to discern patterns. This is especially true when the polarity is broad, basic, and encompassing.

Polarities can prove useful not just in tying together a manager's strengths or weaknesses; it can serve as an integrative device that ties together strengths and weaknesses. Managers who are heavy on self-orientation are often light on other-orientation, and vice-versa. The defining characteristic then becomes lopsidedness on this polarity.

Polarities are unifying ideas that help the manager see not only what is but also what might be. This is a key point. What is revealed is not a static, retrospective analysis, or not only that, but a dynamic, prospective opportunity to do better. By organizing data in terms of whether one or the other side is underdone or overdone, one lights up the need and opportunity for a better way. Contained in the description of what is is the prescription of what could or should be. What managers take away is an assessment and also a direction for development.

The high value in management and life is not on one approach or the other but on versatility, such that individuals are able to take either approach depending on the circumstances. This flexibility does not come easily; managers and human beings have a propensity to identify themselves with one side or the other of opposing ideas.

It is almost as if they have trouble holding two ideas in their heads at the same time. Harlan Cleveland (1980) said it well: ". . . the art of executive leadership is above all a taste for paradox, a talent for ambiguity, the capacity to hold contradictory propositions comfortably in a mind that relishes complexity." The ultimate in human development may not be so much a balancing of the opposing self- and other-orientation but an integration of the two into a broad capability.

A larger concept is useful not only for interpreting data, but also for informing the collection of data in the first place. We have, for example, developed a prototype instrument for measuring forceful and enabling leadership, the results of which can help integrate all of the data on a manager's leadership. The instrument represents only a small subset of the data collected on the individual; the task of ordering the great bulk of open-ended interview data remains. But the results from an instrument like this can help the individual locate himself or herself on the field defined by the polarity. Whether or not unifying theories are operationalized in the actual data collection, it helps to have them in mind during the process of data reduction. The consultants are in a stronger position to get to the crux if they know what to look for.

Self-orientation versus other-orientation in terms of stages of development

In penetrating to the core issue, it can be helpful to understand the individual's present adjustment not just as a cross-section but from something of a longitudinal perspective. The ambitious task of laying out the individual's progress through a series of stages to the present point in his or her life is not one we undertake. Even if it were instructive to do so, which is an open question, my colleagues and I do not currently have the required working knowledge of human development over the life span. What we do find productive, for the consultant and for the manager, is to get some idea of where the individual's basic pattern originated, in particular the relative emphasis on self-orientation versus other-orientation. People tend to be one-sided, relatively speaking, and they tend to get stuck on that pattern. How, one might ask, does this happen?

Two theorists of self- and other-orientation bring a useful historical perspective. Blatt (1995) discussed evolution over a person's lifetime as taking place along these two "fundamental developmental lines." Kegan (1982) proposed a theory of developmental stages operating in spiral fashion in which the person from birth alternates between an emphasis on one side and an emphasis on the other. He described "a continual moving back and forth between resolving the tension slightly in favor of autonomy or inclusion" (p. 108). At no point in a person's life does the resolution of the tension between an orientation to self and an orientation to other become a matter of either/or. Rather it is a question of what is primary at a given stage, a matter of which is in the foreground and which is the background at any given time.

Problems arise when a person becomes fixated on one of these orientations or processes and fails to swing back after a time to the other one and continue the natural process of unfolding. The individual latches onto that one side as the solution to the problem of how to feel good about himself or herself. Ironically, by depending so heavily on this one solution, the person degrades it.

But individuals who get stuck in a developmental rut are not simply fixated on one of the two opposing poles. A heavy identification with one orientation is not merely the product of having been powerfully attracted to it and therefore gravitating developmentally in that direction, as compelling and in some ways rewarding as that orientation may be. People whose development is seriously arrested actively avoid the opposing pole. As much as they associated themselves with one pole, are wedded to it, they dissociated themselves from the other pole, are divorced

from it. As Blatt put it, most development problems "can be defined as a distorted and exaggerated emphasis on one of these two developmental lines and the defensive avoidance of the other (1012-3)."

We saw this pattern in the case of Zachary. He actively avoided relationships. His early experience with relationships was sufficiently aversive that he avoided close relationships just as he depended on individual achievement for self-satisfaction. Zach avoided relationships as a defense against being hurt, disappointed, and let down by other people. We saw this but, more importantly, he came to see this, and it further sharpened the clarity of his insight into himself in these broad conceptual terms. The next step in his development would be to move from virtually "being" his career to having a career, which would free him to invest more in relationships.

Just as the next developmental step for Zachary is to swing in the direction of increasing his investment in relationships, the next step for Richard is to increase his investment in himself. Richard had been stuck in a pattern so thoroughly focused on other people that it was almost as if, as Kegan (1982) would put it, he "was" his relationships. The stage that awaits him is one in which, rather than defining his identity primarily in terms of relationships, he will "have" relationships. This is a stage that stresses the person's authority and control over himself and his world (Kegan, 1982). This capacity for self-organization would address Richard's lack of control over his time and lack of organization in his life.

Historically, psychology has looked upon independence and individual achievement as the ultimate in human development. Lately, that view has been questioned and has been replaced with one, also taken here, that the relationship side of human nature is no less important to individual functioning and fulfillment (Gilligan, 1978; Kegan, 1982; Blatt, 1995). In fact, as Blatt pointed out, "progress in one developmental line facilitates development in the other." A person evolves through a reciprocal development of these sides of personality. "An increasingly differentiated, integrated, and mature sense of self is contingent on establishing satisfying interpersonal relationships, and conversely the continued development of increasingly mature and satisfying interpersonal relationships is contingent on the development of a more mature self-concept and identity (p. 1012)."

To characterize a particular manager and his or her development needs in basic terms like these could easily be superficial and facile were it not for the broad empirical basis in their assessment for this characterization. Because the macro concept is used to derive simple truths from a large, complex set of data, it is welcomed by the participant as a profound organizing principle rather than dismissed as easy, simplistic typecasting. When existing theory is applied in a given case, we virtually never take it off the shelf and fitted in its a *priori* form onto the individual. It is usually always altered to fit the person's particular features. Someone who is primarily self-oriented may in certain specific respects be oriented the opposite way, and the same is true of a largely other-oriented person. The individual's profile on various subcategories is just as significant as the larger category into which he or she falls.

The data and integration of the interpretation are related in a circular fashion. As is true with any subject, to understand the whole of a person, one must understand the parts, in all of their

particularistic glory. And to understand the parts, a individual's various characteristics, it helps greatly to have a grasp on the whole, the person's overall essential character (Hoy, 1978).

CONCLUSION*

While I have concentrated on a particular approach to psychological assessment—comprehensive assessment done for the sake of the individual's development—the major elements of this approach have applicability to assessment in general and thus perhaps also in some respects to assessment for the sake of selection. First, in constructing a picture of the individual, one upon which consequential judgments will be made, it is obviously important to collect enough information to form a sound basis for these judgments. Multiple sources and multiple methods of data collection contribute to the soundness of the data base and to its credibility in the eyes of the end-users, whether the individual in question or decision makers. When these users have less than full confidence in the input to the assessment, the value of assessment itself is undercut.

Second, having collected a sufficiently large and varied set of data, one is faced with the task of reducing it to a useable form. Two complementary strategies suggest themselves. It is critical to adopt an inductive approach, in which conclusions are inferred from the data through highly systematic, step-by-step analysis. A picture of the individual is built from the ground up. This is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) meant by the discovery of grounded theory. This process of analysis and interpretation proceeds through a number of stages until a parsimonious view of the individual falls into place, one that is internally consistent but also highly consistent with the data from which it is drawn. This careful, disciplined consideration of what the data has to say about the individual is inspired by a high reverence for the data (which is why the data needs to be worthy of devotion). The task is to organize the data into something highly coherent so that it hangs together. Put another way, we assessors are seeking an understanding of how individuals organize themselves. The ultimate, I feel, is to discover an individual's basic organizing principle or principles. It is these that allow us to do more than simply specify various characteristics of the person. We can arrive at an intelligent, insightful understanding of how these characteristics are arrayed in a constellation that is given shape by the person's basic emotional needs. It is the difference between an assessment as a list of characteristics and an assessment as a representation of the person's character.

In addition to iterating up from a multiplicity of concrete data points, it is important, in the search for the individual's basic organizing or operating principle, to pull down high-level abstractions that contribute to the definition of what that principle is. This is the value of macro concepts such as forceful and enabling leadership drawn from the population itself or still more basic, archetype-like concepts such as self-orientation and other-orientation drawn from social science more broadly. In informing our thinking about an individual by drawing on theory, we must always be sharply attuned to the difference between lazy, facile pigeonholing of people into buzzword categories and a careful delineation of what shape an encompassing concept takes in the case of the person in question.

The advantage of assessing people in terms of a fundamental polarity is that the definition of the problem becomes the definition of the opportunity to develop. We have seen that to overdo one orientation is typically to underdo the opposite orientation. The prescription is strongly implied by the diagnosis: learn to do more of the thing that you underdo, as well as learn to do less of the thing that you overdo.

When the purpose of assessment is the individual's development, then increased clarity on the part of the individual about himself or herself is what we seek to provide. Done successfully, assessment for development leads to genuine change, a change in which participants internalize-actually make a part of themselves-a modified principle, value, belief, or view of themselves. This increased clarity about themselves or about the importance of conducting themselves differently may very well lead to a change in the way they behave. But even if it does not or does not soon after the realization, the realization itself-a "mind-set change," as one manager called it-represents a change. If such a new mind-set is a principle that the individual embraces but does not immediately practice, that newly embraced principle represents the potential to change in accordance with that principle. Or if the manager goes from being in denial about something she does to recognizing that she does it, even if she doesn't stop doing it, that realization does some good because she will understand better other people's reactions when she acts that way. In any case an awareness gained but not immediately acted on amounts to a creative tension that has the potential for later change in behavior.

Furthermore, the increase in clarity is not typically a jump from complete lack of clarity to total clarity about oneself. It is a matter of increasing degrees of clarity, gained gradually. It is not often that we suddenly see things clearly; more often, the glass through which we see darkly grows clearer in small degrees.

*One final note: although not the focus of this chapter, all of what I have described takes place in a social context, which has a huge bearing on what data will come to light, how seriously the individual will take it, and what use the individual will make of it. The individual's level of trust in the consultants will affect how freely he or she makes data available. The level of support that the individual receives from the consultants will affect how well he or she is able to stand up to the rigors of the feedback process and be equal to the task of encountering disconfirming or disturbing or painful results. The extent of the network of people, beyond the professionals conducting the assessment, who are involved in the person's effort to change will have a potentially big impact on whether the individual changes and whether the change is sustained. To help an adult make a genuine, lasting change for the better, we need leverage. Data and effective strategies for making use of it is one basic type of leverage in assessment. The social aspects, including who is involved and in what manner and for how long, is another type of leverage. We and the people participating very much need both types.

